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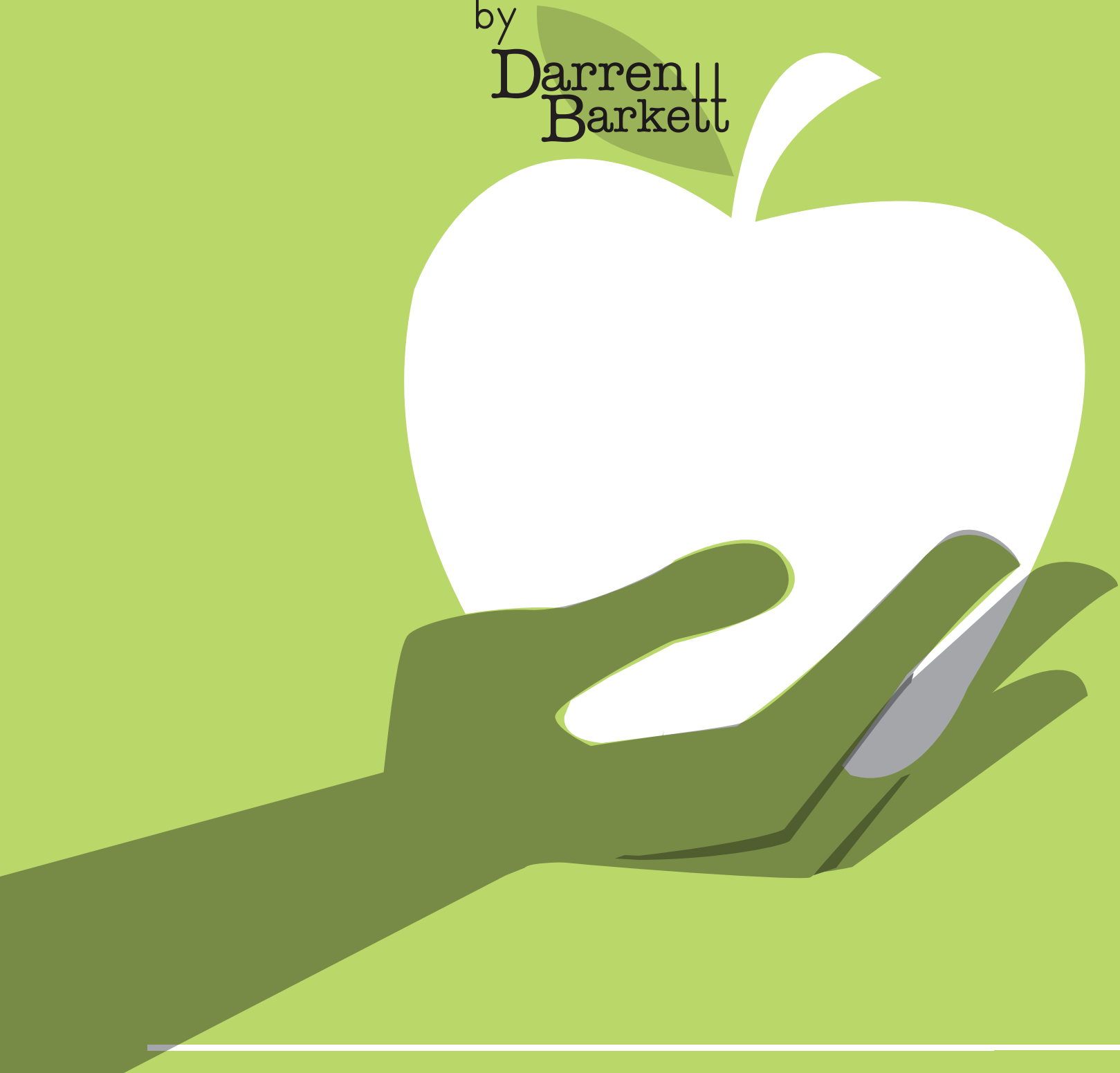
# Take Back That Class

How I Learned to Love Teaching All Over Again

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by  
Darren ||  
Barkett





a brief introduction:

## Darren Barkett

**A**FTER STRUGGLING THROUGH student teaching and nearly quitting the teaching profession before even getting started, Darren found himself in the mountains of western North Carolina working as a substitute teacher in a rural school on the Tennessee-North Carolina state line. Three difficult days struggling to keep up with first and second graders left him exhausted but thrilled at the chance to work with young people. A supportive principal saw something in Darren and offered him a part time job teaching fourth grade Language Arts.

Halfway through that year, though, Darren was dealing with many of the same issues countless other teachers were dealing with on a daily basis. The students just didn't listen or even seem to want to learn. Knowing how important an education was to these rural children's future, Darren often became visibly frustrated and occasionally lost his temper with these young students.

Feeling defeated and ineffective, Darren began contemplating a switch of careers. Luckily, his principal saw that not only was Darren suffering through a lack of classroom management skills, but nearly the entire staff was struggling too! The whole staff was bundled off to attend an intensive seminar in how to manage student behavior with a group called *"Taking It All Back Home."*

Little did he know that this would be the defining moment in his young professional career.

Years later, that same training would still be the defining force in helping Darren

through his 13 years of teaching. Even now, he finds himself enjoying the next group of students more than the last one. He comes to school every day knowing that he can face any challenge his students might choose to throw at him. In addition, Darren enjoys more and more the opportunities of working with other educators and helping them through their issues of managing difficult student behavior.

Darren attended the University of Colorado at Boulder, where he achieved his Bachelors of Arts degree in English as well as his certification for teaching high school and middle school English and Social Studies. After working in the schools of western North Carolina for several years, he decided to further his education with a Master's Degree in School Administration from Western Carolina University. This degree helped him shape his larger view of how a school functions as well as cementing in his mind the vital importance of having capable teachers who can manage their students.

Living in Asheville, North Carolina, Darren currently works with students at Canton Middle School in nearby Canton, NC as an eighth grade teacher of Language Arts. His website, [www.HelpingTeachersGrow.com](http://www.HelpingTeachersGrow.com) continues to provide online and offline training and support for teachers looking for better ways to respectfully handle student behaviors.

Darren can often be found playing with his two young daughters or walking his three little dogs with his wife Lesley.

# Take Back That Class

How I Learned to Love Teaching All Over Again

a book by

Darren  
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book design and illustrations by  
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# Chapter One.

## Why Can't I just Teach?

The start of a journey...

I started my teaching journey way back when I was in high school. I was sitting in my biology class listening to my incredibly boring teacher stumble through various aspects of the human anatomy. I remember clearly having a single thought that was like a seed being planted in my psyche. I thought to myself with typical teenage arrogance, "I can teach this class better than him."

And with that one thought, my journey began.

It wasn't until much later that I actually got around to getting an education in how to teach. I made it out of high school, stumbled through various other majors before dropping out of college for a couple of years. And then I realized that unless I wanted to be stuck selling shoes for what amounted to peanuts, I had better get back on track.

I reenrolled in school as an education and English major. I finished in a couple of years, filled with how to teach grammar and reading and writing and all sorts of other subject matter I was excited to deliver to my students. I thought to myself, "How cool this teaching will be! I'll get to sit around and talk about stories with my students!"

I had no idea what I was getting into.

Student teaching was quite the wake up call. Would you agree? There I was, fresh from college, idealistic and ready to change the world one student at a time. But do you know what I was totally unprepared for?

Managing student behavior.

As I struggled through a horrible student teaching experience, and said to myself that teaching might not be my thing, I realized how little my university education had prepared me for this one

overwhelming aspect of teaching—classroom management. It seemed like a terrific oversight, seeing that so much of my time as a student teacher was spent trying to get students to do what I was so looking forward to doing.

I thought to myself daily, “Why don’t these students want to do this? Why don’t they want to learn?” What couldn’t I just teach them instead of dealing with all the other issues that were preventing me from... teaching?

I took another break from teaching, deciding to travel a bit before jumping into a teaching position. I wasn’t entirely sure that teaching was the right choice for me. It pained me to think that I’d spent so much time and money on my education, only to throw it out the door.

I eventually realized, through several transformative moments, that I had been called to teach, and to turn my back on that would be to deny so much of who I was. So, I began looking for a teaching job.

My early years of teaching were very similar to my experience in student teaching. It was really quite interesting when looked at from a distance. I did my student teaching with 9th and 10th graders, and I struggled with motivating them and keeping distracting behaviors to a minimum. My first three years teaching were with the fourth and fifth grades, but I was plagued by the exact same problems.

It was surprising all over again! The students didn’t want to learn what I was teaching in the way I was teaching it. Again I asked myself, “Why can’t I just teach? Why won’t they just learn?”

I found myself at the end of the day frustrated, stressed out, exhausted, and contemplating a career switch. Many times I told myself that I would never make it past my first three years of teaching, that I would become that statistic I’d heard in university about the third of teachers who quit before their fourth year of teaching. (That statistic has now gone up! Nearly half of our new teachers quit within their first four years of teaching.)

And then everything changed.

My principal saw that I was struggling, and she sent me to an intensive training that gave me much of the foundation of my classroom management systems you’ll be reading about in this book. She opened my eyes to the plain-and-simple fact that as a teacher, if you can’t manage student behavior quickly, efficiently, and respectfully, you’ll never reach your potential as an educator. You wouldn’t enjoy your job, and if you decided to stay in the teaching profession, you would become one of those teachers who was always grumpy, who suffered various stress-related health problems, and who eventually developed a negative attitude about so much of the teaching career—parents, students, other teachers, administrators and more.

I’ll admit. I was lucky. The timing was perfect. I knew I was struggling, and I knew I wouldn’t make it as a teacher if I didn’t learn how to manage student behavior. And I didn’t have a whole lot of bad habits to overcome yet. I was ready for change.

As are you.

You’ve found this book because you looked within yourself and owned up to the problems you’ve been having in the classroom. You’ve realized that the difficulties in your classroom aren’t simply “kids today” or an “unsupportive administration” or kids with a “terrible home life.” You

know that there is only one thing that can change your future as a teacher.

You.

I'm glad you've found me, this book, my videos, and our community of learners at [HELPINGTEACHERSGROW.COM](http://HELPINGTEACHERSGROW.COM). Together we can grow into the empowered and effective educators our schools need and our students deserve. Together we can become the teacher we always knew we wanted to be.

Are you ready to take those first steps on your journey to becoming a better teacher?

Let's begin!