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In the fall of 2006, high school English teacher David Menasche, then age 34, was diagnosed with an aggressive and deadly brain tumor, glioblastoma multiforme. An eleventh grade English teacher at Coral Reef Senior High School in Miami, Florida and the son of a bookstore owner, Menasche shared his love for language and literature with his students through the works of Shakespeare, Walt Whitman, Jack Kerouac and Tupac Shakur.

After teaching through his illness for six years, David Menasche had to step away from the classroom he loved in 2012 when he suffered a catastrophic seizure that left him crippled and mostly blind. His students were his reason for living, so Menasche decided to reinvent his classroom. He set out on a 101-day journey to learn firsthand how his former students were doing and to witness how he had helped to shape their young lives, if at all.

Three months and nearly 8,000 miles later, Menasche visited with hundreds of his former students. From Miami to New York, to America’s heartland and San Francisco’s Golden Gate, Menasche was surprised to discover that what his students remembered most about their time with him wasn’t a favorite lesson or book from his class, but the personal time spent between the lessons.

Featured Educator

This month’s IEI Featured Educator spot is dedicated to the 150+ Teacher Ambassadors attending this year’s Emerging Issues Forum, Teachers and the Great Economic Debate. Representing K-12 public, charter and private schools from across the state, these featured educators will help to facilitate discussion among Forum attendees. Read more here.

Featured Opportunity

Voting is now open for the $50,000 SECU Prize for Innovation. Seven student teams beat out teams from colleges, universities and community colleges from across the state for a chance to win the SECU Emerging Issues Prize for Innovation. See
Menasche learned from his travels that his students had grown up to be kind and caring people, he shared when he was spotlighted on CNN last week. His students taught him what he calls “the greatest lesson of all.” He said, “…What matters most is not so much about what we learn in class, but what we feel in our hearts.”

As we at IEI prepare for the upcoming 29th Annual Emerging Issues Forum, Teachers and the Great Economic Debate, Menasche’s story reminds us of the important roles teachers play in the lives of their students. While they enter classrooms each day prepared to facilitate learning in such topics as literature, history, mathematics and science, sometimes it’s the time between these lessons where life’s most valuable lessons are taught. It is in this space where students learn things such as coping, empathy, living in the moment and simple kindness. For that, we say to our state’s teachers: THANK YOU.

Join us at the 2014 Emerging Issues Forum, Teachers and the Great Economic Debate, to examine the many ways world-class teachers are influencing all of our futures and tackle the tough questions of what must be done to increase the numbers of highly-effective teachers in our schools.

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Do you know a teacher who is working hard to help students succeed? Let us know, and s/he could be featured in the next education issue!