

# REWILD SCHOOL

## B BUT LEAVE

Our clients counted on reliable and timely access to our lending services year-round. So, during the semester, my students had to work. There was no stopping for Parents' Weekend, Fall Break, or Homecoming. If I had had things my way, they would have dedicated all their time to La Ceiba and La Ceiba only. Unrealistic? Yeah, sure. They did have other classes. But as was so often the case, many students too often chose their other classes over us. To refocus their attention, I started sending out the following email around mid-semester:

Hey LC.

La Ceiba is about making choices.

And, once again, it's time for you to make another choice: STAY or GO

Before making your choice, let me explain. At the end of the semester, you and I will sit together. I will ask you to show me your work. I will weigh this work in light of what others in this class have made and those before you have made. At that moment, your semester's worth of seemingly innocuous choices will be pulled together for a moment of judgment. So, looking ahead to that moment, I need to ask:

Will we marvel at your work, be satisfied, or be disappointed?

We want to marvel at your work, and getting there by the end of the semester requires you to make choices today. So, we're giving you a choice: STAY or GO.

If you choose to STAY, that's wonderful! That's what we want to hear. If you choose to GO, you will be guaranteed a B in the class; however, you must leave La Ceiba. You will no longer attend classes or meetings. You will no longer have obligations to your project or us.

We need to know who to invest our love, encouragement, and attention into. These things are not in infinite supply, and we need to allocate them wisely. Hence, the B but leave.

Now, do I think you can do this work? Yes, I do. Will you do this work? I do not know. That's for you to decide. Select your choice below and turn the attached sheet back in before our next class. Thanks. - dr H

I attached the following document and asked them to sign it and turn it in:

\_\_\_\_\_ STAY

I choose to stay and accept the consequences of this choice. If I fail to deliver, it is my fault. No one or anything else is to blame. Not my group. Not my parents. Not my past or lack of expertise or pedigree. I own it. And if I kick ass, I own that too. But I also know that my kicking of some ass would not have been possible without La Ceiba, my group, and the cohorts of students who came before me.

\_\_\_\_\_ GO

I accept a B as my final grade in this class. I choose to leave La Ceiba and understand that I cannot return to the class.

Sign Your Name Below:

X\_\_\_\_\_

Like our costly rituals, “B but Leave” was a screening device—a mechanism for sorting students into those committed to our work and those not.

For “B but Leave” to be effective, I had to set the incentive to leave (the guaranteed letter grade) high enough so that those in the class for the letter grade and the letter grade only would leave. But not too high that everyone would leave. I considered setting the guaranteed letter grade at an A- (too high), a B+ (still too high), and a B- (too low). I went with a B.

No one ever took the B. They chose us over the grade, which is what we wanted. We did not want anyone who enrolled for the letter grade. We wanted those committed to the work, engaged, and a good fit for our culture.

While “B but Leave” served as a screening method, its purpose was not to encourage my students to leave. We would have lost the opportunity to learn with and from any students who did go. The purpose was to focus their attention on the choices they were making. In that light, the B was effective. It served as reinforcement. The moment of decision reminded rookies of the promises they made to us.