

Student Thoughts Upon Receiving their Teaching Credential or Masters Degree in Education

Cal State Fullerton is known to have the best credential program around for a reason. We were provided with the necessary resources by instructors that guided us through our odyssey and supported us when we needed it. I know I can speak for all of us when I say, for the last year I have been surrounded by amazing people that all share a passion for teaching. Our credential program offers many opportunities to enrich our experiences both in and outside of the classroom. Some of these great experiences include the fine arts blocks, bilingual blocks, the technology rich block, and many professional development experiences. I appreciated the opportunity to participate in the technology-rich block. The “tech” knowledge that I gained will be sure to help me in my own classroom in the future. Not every block is the same, but we all had a wonderful experience because of our instructors. They not only taught us the necessary information to be successful teachers, they taught us how to implement it in the best ways possible.

None of us would be here if it were not for some very influential people in our lives. It could have been a parent, principal or teacher. But for me, it was my sixth grade teacher, Mrs. Patakas. She was the most patient and understanding teacher I ever had in my years of public education. She challenged me to be the best student that I could be; much like I hope to push my own students. Mrs. Patakas opened my eyes to the exciting worlds of language Arts; a world with endless possibilities that we have all come to know and love. I hope to one day live up to her high standard. Every student deserves the chance to fall in love with learning. And I know you all wish the same for your students.

Over the years I am sure we have all learned very valuable lessons in patience, self-reflection and courage. These lessons were learned gradually. We will all need to be patient, reflective and courageous when entering the professional field. In the time that we are currently in, everything is uncertain. Some of us will be taking substitute teaching jobs; short and long term. And for those of us lucky enough to be in our very own classrooms next year, we will still have to be on our toes and keep developing as teachers. Although our situation is difficult, this is our opportunity to show perseverance in the choice that we made. I wish you all the best of luck in this noble career. I know you will all do wonderful things with your students.

- Heather Kelley, Multiple Subject Credential

We all entered the credential program with one common goal, to inspire and make a difference in the life of a student. We each came from different backgrounds and learning experiences. We each have different reasons for choosing this pathway in life. Through your learning experiences you may have had that teacher who inspired you. My inspiration for becoming an educator was due in part to my high school teachers Judy and Craig Herrick. Their passion and enthusiasm they expressed towards their students was evident. They not only taught the academic curriculum required, but they also taught life lessons that inspired me. One of their treasured fables, “Making a Difference,” was about

a mid-westerner who was vacationing on the sands of the New England shores. She saw from a distance a man who was throwing starfish into the sea and asked why he was doing this. He explained that the tide was going out, and when the sun rose, the starfish would die. She exclaimed that his action was “ridiculous” and that he could not possibly throw all the starfish back into the sea. He then smiled, bent down, picked up a starfish, and exclaimed, “it makes a difference to this one,” and with that he threw the starfish into the sea. I have carried this fable with me because I was inspired to be that one person who can make a difference in the life of a student and become a better educator. People have the ability to change, motivate, and encourage others in many forms. I hope that one day you will be the inspiration for one of your future students.

Being a part of nationally accredited institution has challenged us in various ways. The faculty brought forth with them their prior knowledge and experiences of teaching in classrooms. Every day was a learning opportunity for us. The amount of work we were set to complete sometimes put us in emotional states. I remember one day during Reading in the first semester, Ruth Yopp said, “Take out a piece of paper. Write one sentence about how you feel right now.” Ok, this is a simple assignment. I wrote on my piece of paper, “I feel stressed and overwhelmed!” She then said, “Crumble up your paper and throw it across the room.” She then had us pick up a crumbled paper and read out loud what other students in our block felt. Oddly enough, most block 2 students felt “stressed and overwhelmed.” But one optimistic block 2 student said, “I feel excited.” Excited? I want to feel excited. So then I had to think, how can I feel that way? Should I feel excited about being stressed and overwhelmed? No. I should feel excited because of the outstanding and distinguished program that I am a part of. We are all privileged to work with dedicated faculty who teach and provide us with enriching curriculum. The department states “where learning is preminent.” This is why I feel excited.

With everything that we have learned through this program, we hold the responsibility of shaping students learning through our teachings. Let us now step out into the world as educators because the future is now in our hands.

- *Pamela Gutierrez, Multiple Subject Credential*

I spent my entire elementary school life at home, I never actually went to school and my uniform often consisted of pajamas: I was home schooled. I got a top-notch education, and I can never thank my parents enough for their love and dedication. I always had someone to help me with my assignments, I could always go at my own pace, and I always knew that my teachers loved me unconditionally, regardless of my performance. However, their love inspired me to do my best work. Because I loved them so much, I wanted them to be proud of me and I wanted to impress them and make them proud.

As an educator, I will inspire those around me by my passion for education. I will encourage my colleagues to incorporate the multiple intelligences into their classes so that the needs and interests of each student are met. In my classroom, I will always allow for exploration and active involvement. I will tell the students that they are important to

me and make my care for them apparent through my actions towards them as well as my attitude towards my career. I want them to know that I am there for them and that I will do anything I can to help them excel as students. I will never leave them behind in their studies, never let them feel emotionally abandoned, and I will never let failure be an option. I will ensure that all students are engaged and that all students have opportunities for success.

Not every student is gifted in obvious ways, but every student is gifted and every student is a gift.

- *Ruth Reinker, Multiple Subject Credential*

In 2nd grade, I proudly declared, “I want to be a doctor when I grow up.” I was trying to impress everyone. As I continued to mature, I became more determined than ever to be a physician. As I started college, I began to reconsider. When I thought about why I wanted to be a doctor, I realized that it wasn’t the prestige that I wanted, but rather, I liked the idea of helping others, particularly children. Shortly thereafter, I had the opportunity to spend some time in Spain teaching English. It was so rewarding to watch my students use and understand the concepts that I was teaching them. I realized at that time that teaching would give me the satisfaction that I was seeking of helping others.

By the time my own children came along, I knew that teaching was my calling in life. I watched my children grow and become curious about the world around them. Asking “why” seems to be a particularly favorite activity of young children -- sometimes to the point that you don’t think you can take another question! However, I knew that they were genuinely eager to learn and I had so many rich experiences to share with them. When they entered school, I felt the need to be there in the classroom to see what they were learning. I watched in awe as the teachers quietly performed their duties and ensured the progress of each student.

As we have gone through our programs, we’ve been asked to think about our past educational experiences both within and outside of the classroom because each and every one of them has impacted our lives. We’ve all been inspired from them in some way. Either we have chosen to give to others in return for what we have been given, or we have chosen to give to others what we did not have. Either way, we are giving the gift of education. It takes much dedication and love to make such a selfless gift. There is an old Chinese proverb that says, “A child’s life is like a piece of paper on which every person leaves a mark.” What kind of mark do you want to leave?

- *Rachel Whittle, Multiple Subject Credential*

Whenever I was overwhelmed by the papers I had to grade, or the papers I had to write, I would think of some of my students who had inspired me to forge on. There was Lathan, an intelligent young man whose sensitivity and extensive vocabulary were often hindered

by his autism. Then there was Martha, a young woman whose tenacity and strong will were only matched by her inability to control her violent outbursts and fits of despair. Whenever I was frustrated because I did not think I was getting through to any of my students, Jenny and Neyamatullah thanked me for teaching them. Finally, as I struggled to make it to the end of the week, Michael, whose father recently passed away and whose mother was recently released from jail, smiled as we worked together on his clay sculpture. These students, and many others, are my true motivators, and the main reasons why I continue to teach, and I am certain everyone here today can think of at least one student who has motivated you.

Mark Twain wrote, “Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you did not do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover. Looking back on the past 25 years I do not have much to be disappointed about. There are many opportunities awaiting you. I hope you have the courage and wisdom to enjoy them all. Congratulations graduates!

- Tim Cabrera, Masters of Science in Education