

What it means to become a teacher



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I used to think that the best part of being a teacher was the brightly colored bulletin boards, the smell of freshly sharpened pencils, the Crayola Crayons, and the endless supply of organized office supplies neatly placed on the teacher's desk.

I spent countless summers of my childhood assisting my mother, a third grade teacher, with the annual set up of her classroom. On those hot summer days, I admired the creativity, organization, and enthusiasm my mother holds for her profession. It inspired me so much that I decided I too wanted to be a teacher. I've come a long way in my initial reason of why I want to be an educator. With my experiences and education in ED109, the reading requirements, class discussions and interview, I now know that teaching is much more fulfilling than what I first observed so many years ago. It takes dedication, willingness to learn, thoughtfulness and compassion to thrive and survive in this profession.

The following paper will explore my observations of this experience. I'll begin with my interview with my mother, a third grade teacher for the past fifteen years, in a low socioeconomic school district. I sat down with her and asked her to share her insight that might help me continue my journey as an up and coming educator. I asked her, ' what is the best part of being a teacher?' She responded, ' every day you feel that you have made a difference in a child's life. Whether it is teaching them to read, enhancing their social skills or celebrating their achievements – you know that you mattered. When it's the end of the day and kids say ' I want to stay here in school – it's so much fun!' you know you are the one that got them to love to learn.'

When discussing this with my mother is made me look back at my experiences and helped me to anticipate the fulfillment of student success and the joy of learning. This made me understand the importance of teaching and how teachers impact students every day. I went on to ask her about the challenges she faces in the teaching profession. My mother explained that it can be the work outside working and teaching students. She gave me examples of the paper work involved in keeping accurate scores and grading papers, bus duty, and at times endless school meetings that could be done more efficiently.

She explained that it comes with the profession, but definitely not a favorite amongst teachers. When reading the chapters in Pearl Rock Kane's book *My First Year as a Teacher*, I saw other challenges teachers face. For example in chapter two, Ms. Nehemiah struggles to get her class on topic. The book states " I wanted to discuss F. Scott Fitzgerald's use of metaphor in *The Great Gatsby*. They wanted to throw spitballs and whisper dirty words in the back of the room"(Kane 1991). This shows me that it is difficult to control a classroom as a first year teacher and how first year teachers need to come up with effective strategies to be in control. Ms. Nehemiah figures out strategies by communicating with her peers and other teachers that have the experience she doesn't.

This helped her realize her strengths and weaknesses. Her ability to take constructive criticism and reflect on herself is why she is still a teacher today. When interviewing my mother and reflecting on my readings, I was able to gain a better understanding of challenges in a classroom and what I can do to surpass the challenges to be the most effective educator. I wanted

to know what she felt new educators needed to know before entering the profession.

My mom clearly stated that “ if you are not going to give it your all, don’t do it.” She reflected on a poor experience she had with a student teacher placement she had several years ago. She explained that the student teacher’s heart and passion just wasn’t there and the students and staff could feel it. I gathered from my mom’s response that a strong work ethic, passion for the profession, and willingness to reflect is what is needed to be an effective educator. Her response went along activities on pursuing the profession of teaching.

During the class discussions and activities, I learned that there are multiple steps to become a teacher, such as in the state of Massachusetts, you are required to take the MTEL tests for you area of study to become a licensed teacher. Also, you have to maintain a master’s degree in art or science. I would not have had the knowledge of this if I wasn’t in this education class. This class has provided me with a deeper understanding on what it takes to become a teacher and what life as a teacher will be like. Later in the interview, I asked what do colleges need to do in order to prepare new teachers for the profession? My mother’s response was that all colleges and their education students need to dissect and interpret the new Common Core Standards.

I gathered from our conversation that new educators will be required to know the standards and will have to develop instruction accordingly. Principals and school districts will search out new educators that are experienced and familiar with the Common Core. This conversation about

the Common Core Standards made me realize that although we have not explored this topic in ED109, as I delve deeper into the education classes at Lasell College, I will look for opportunities to grasp these standards. Finally, I asked what can I expect if I become a teacher? She said ‘ Expect that you will lose sleep at night thinking about how you will help Johnny read or that Mary needs a winter coat for recess.

You will get out of bed and search your closets for a coat for Mary. You will finally get Johnny to read and when he does, you will celebrate on your car ride home with the radio blasting. You will celebrate and get discouraged. Your patience will be tested, but your heart will be filled. You will have to manage your time and give it your all every day.’ Her response can be connected to the reading and the discussions in class.

I remember in class Jess stated something along the lines of ‘ You worry about your students even though you aren’t in the classroom. You will lose sleep thinking about lesson plans and you will be stressed out. You can’t let the students see you crumbling if something doesn’t work out exactly as planned, because many things do not go perfectly in a classroom.’ This really stuck with me after being in the class, because it shows the passion and heart you have to have for the profession and if you don’t have that heart and passion you will not survive in the classroom. As for the readings, they connected to my mother’s response, especially in chapter six of *My First Year as a Teacher* by Pearl Rock Kane because it explains that this teacher worries about her students even after she has taught them.

Ms. McClurg says “ And I wonder if any of the students who shared in that fourth-period class remember the long dark winter that turned into spring

and how they changed the life of a friendless boy named Leo – and the life of an inexperienced teacher”(Kane 1991). When reading this quote it really shows that a teacher really thinks and reflects about every student they have and had over the years. My thinking about education has developed over the course of the semester.

I’ve been able to integrate the class discussions/activities, readings and experiences to develop a deeper, more meaningful understanding of what it takes to become an educator and why I belong in this profession. I plan to further investigate the best teaching practices and skills needed for teaching right here at Lasell College. I will utilize what I learned and now know I too will make a difference in a child’s life.