



This reflective journal is a collection of meditations / writings from the pre-service teachers at the Schulich School of Education, Nipissing University, 2011 – 2012. Thank you to all the teachers who generously shared and contributed.

It is meant to be an example and promotion of ongoing reflective practices for all teachers. The authors hope to encourage other teachers to start journal writing and to share their own responses with each other. It is meant as a means of starting much deeper conversations about teaching, learning, schools and education in general. As a way of nurturing “reflection-in-action” as outlined by Schon;

“And this is teaching in the form of reflection-in-action. It involves a surprise, a response to surprise by thought turning back on itself, thinking what we’re doing as we do it, setting the problem of the situation anew, conducting an action experiment on the spot by which we seek to solve the new problems we’ve set, an experiment in which we test both our new way of seeing the situation, and also try to change that situation for the better.”

Donald Schon, “Educating the Reflective Practitioner.”

This booklet contains selected entries from [Zen And The Act Of Teaching](http://bit.ly/sBFrh6), a free reflective journal available on EFL Classroom 2.0. - <http://bit.ly/sBFrh6>

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“Don’t let your schooling get in the way of your education”- Mark Twain

What to you is, “the purpose of education”. Why did you become a teacher?



The purpose of education depends on the place you view this gem from. For some, it is about standards and a core set of skills and knowledge our young should know. For others, it is about character building and creating an informed, questioning citizen. Others view education as a way of being, its purpose to light a fire of learning that will last the student a lifetime. Beyond these, we have to be honest and say school also has a purpose of housing the young, keeping them off the streets, “babysitting” as some say. Whatever the purpose, I’m glad we have the means to provide this place where miracles truly can happen and coal turn to gold.

Why did I become a teacher? Well, I fell into education. I was a steelworker and fell off a building and had to start a new career. There was a teachers’ college in my town and as I recovered and found out that I couldn’t do my former job, I went back to school. A very fortunate thing I believe and it taught me that often the best things in our lives happen when we least plan or count on them!

I’ve always been a self learner, curious type. Spent hours in libraries, “the headquarters of civilization”. To me, teaching is just an extension of my normal curiosity about the world. My wish to “be” of the world. I think a good quality of a teacher is that they be a “Curious George”.

I’ve always been an idealistic type and think that is the motor that drives me to be a teacher. I yearn to change or as the saying goes “touch eternity” – to make a difference. After all is said and done, we won’t be able to take the things, the money, the possessions of our lives with us at the end. We stand before eternity and are asked the Socratic question about “the good” – “Did you leave the world a better place than when you came?”. Teaching for me is one way to bring this into being and for me too, when my time comes and my light dims, to feel good about who I was and how I had lived.



“The best teacher teaches from the heart, not the book.”



What do you think students value in a teacher? What is important to them and makes them excited about “that” teacher’s class?

I think that this quote tells a lot about what students value in a teacher. As a student I always found that my teachers and professors who cared deeply about their subjects as well as their students were the ones who I most wanted to learn from. I think that this is extremely important to students and is a large part of what makes them excited about “that” teacher’s class.

During my practice teaching placement in December I had many opportunities to learn from students about what they liked and disliked about their past and present teachers and student teachers. They clearly valued teachers who they connected with as fun, entertaining, or “cool”. They did not look forward to classes where they considered the teachers to be boring, or whom they had no connection with. Their favourite teachers were those who explained things to them on their level. The ones who could explain material to them so that they could understand and were patient with their mistakes, struggles, and shortcomings were their far favourites.

It is clear to me that students value teachers who teach them, not curriculum. I believe that this ability to teach in this manner comes from the heart rather than a book. No book can teach how to have rapport with your students as well as how to understand their needs and their hearts. This rapport and understanding of what they require to learn creates an environment in a classroom that students want to be in. They want to have “that” teacher who they can trust with their questions, with their mistakes, and with their day-to-day struggles. Students rarely care about the “books” so much as the heart of what is contained within them. In the same way, when teachers care only for the books, they are missing the important heart of learning and of their students.

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Students value many things in a teacher depending on the grade level of the student, but there are many key components that all teachers should possess, and that all students look for in a teacher. They expect their teacher to be fair and equitable, to believe in them, and to be positive towards their students and their subject.

Students of all ages expect that teachers be fair and equitable. Students in the Junior/Intermediate division will be adamant about this quality and will challenge their authority in order to receive it. Student in either the primary or senior divisions will also value this trait, but it is not their most important aspect as they either obeys because they

have been told to (primary) or they reject or disengage from the teacher because they do not agree (senior). Students value equity. They value whether or not the consequences are suited for their actions, and whether or not they are treated fairly in comparison to someone else. Teachers walk the tightrope line when they make decision regarding a student's behavior, but teachers should know to stick to the guidelines that they and the class have collaborated on in order to find the appropriate solution. Lastly, students value teachers that value them. They want a teacher to be positive, and to believe in them. They want to teachers to challenge them to achieve their next level, but make the challenges measurable and fair. They want a teacher that can look at them with wide eyes and a big heart, and let them know they believe in them not by saying it, but feeling it. Students want someone who is genuine.

What makes them excited about “that” person’s class? Underlying components of an open, safe and expressive environment, as well as a place where students can call ‘home’ when they walk into the classroom are what makes students excited to be in a classroom. A place where their ideas are on the walls, where they feel content and provided for, and a place where what they say and do matters. Students would say that the teacher is fun, exciting, always has new ideas and stuff to play/work with in their classroom. Students would say that the teacher is nice, and there are many different ways they can do things in the classroom. What students say is important, but often it is what students don’t say is what really affects them.



“The future of teaching is learning”

What are some ways a teacher can improve? Reflect upon how you might become a better teacher.



As a beginning teacher I think I can do lots of improving. I'm just starting out so I know that I can learn from each of my teaching experiences and grow from them. With each class or type of teaching I have done I have always said to myself “What can I take away from this class/lesson/experience?” There have been some experiences that were extremely challenging and others that were a lot of fun and exciting. But from each job, placement or scenario I want to learn from it. I believe that teaching is like building blocks- with each experience we have in teaching the further we'll get. We can build onto our block tower with more pieces or blocks that we get.

I believe that a teacher can always improve. Even those teachers who have been teaching for 20 years can still improve. It is our job to improve! If we stay stagnant,

always doing the same things, teaching the same lessons do different groups of kids we will lose our effectiveness. We need to stay fresh, excited and challenge our students to do the same thing.

There so so many ways that a teacher can improve. First, teachers should talk with their colleagues, both at the school and with other teachers at other schools. It's good to have dialogue about what is working and what isn't working in other classes. If we can bounce ideas off of one another than we might improve in our own classrooms. If we're having problems in one area, another teacher might have found a solution that works for them that we could apply to our classroom. We might be able to help others out too. The more we talk to other teachers the more we can continue to learn and strengthen the school. This can be an excellent example for our students too. If they see that we work well with the other teachers then they might be inspired to work well with their classmates.

Another way that teachers can improve is through taking additional courses. Not only will we learn more about subjects that we may not be as familiar with, but we will also feel more confident when teaching these subjects. The more we know, the better we will become at using what we've learned. If we don't consistently learn and seek knowledge then we might become stale. We should search out new information to pass onto our colleagues and students. In my opinion it's a great idea to take additional qualifications that will get us pumped up and excited about teaching. I don't want to ever become bored or tired of what I'm doing because I know that that will be contagious and the students might feel the same way. However, if I'm fresh and excited about learning the subject I'm teaching then the students will pick that up and be curious to learn.

One more way that a teacher can improve is by talking with their students! I plan on asking my students what they thought of lessons or units or activities we've done in class. I want to know what their opinions are. Did they learn anything from it? Did they like it? Why or why not? If we can have an open dialogue about their learning and the students feel like they have some control in their learning then they might be more open to the learning. If they can tell me what needs improvement then I can change or modify lessons so it works well for both me and my students. I believe that teachers often forget that they're teaching real people and that they have opinions and if they're able to express themselves in mature ways, then a lot of improvement can be made.

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I feel that one thing that teachers can do in general to improve is to remember to take time to reflect on their own work. Some ways might include digital audio recordings or jotting down some notes of reflection on the day. As a teacher in training, I feel that one way to facilitate the learning process is to try completely new things or styles every so often and watch closely to see how it works. Just because one way seems to work well now does not necessarily mean it's the best way, or the best way in all cases. By trying new things and reflecting on the results of those changes the teacher can measure their success as well as find out how and why their old methods worked or did not work. By contrast, they might find out what worked about their 'new teaching'. The relative perspective gained might help a teacher be flexible or make the appropriate 'game-time' decisions with different and varied groups of students. During my practicum I think I was already starting to develop a fairly predictable pattern and teaching style. This is something I will have to keep my eye on and experiment with in the future.

Some of the observations that I made during this last placement about how I could improve my teaching were expected while others were surprises. One surprise observation that I made was that I needed to be aware and considerate of my own physical condition. I did not eat well during my practicum. It might have been caused by lack of time, stress-caused lack of hunger, or both. The result was that I lost a few pounds but more substantially I was often much more exhausted than I had to be and this certainly hindered my ability to teach, learn and concentrate on the tasks at hand.

I was not surprised that I had to focus on my lesson delivery. Although I know that some more patience and poise might come with experience, there were times when I could have taken a few more deep breaths and a bit more time to ensure that I was not rushing through lessons. I also have to improve the proficiency with which I make decisions on lesson topics and selection of materials. By the end of the placement my pace was improving but I still feel I fall short. It feels as though time to dig deeply into teaching methods and materials is hard to come by once the practicum has begun.

When I made a concerted effort to concentrate to improve one or two key things at a time (usually things suggested to me by my associate teacher) this worked well for me: I tried to hone in on timing issues and remembering aspects of preparation of certain lessons (Gym) and the results were positive.

“Be the guide at the side, not the sage on the stage”

What are some ways that a teacher can “disappear” and be less of the focus in the classroom?

Latent Structure Rules Obvious Structure



The most important thing that a teacher can teach is the love of learning.

Passion and curiosity are things that can't be taught from a textbook, but they need to be transmitted invisibly by demonstration. Looking back on my own education, I don't remember too much about the actual content that was taught, although that knowledge is definitely there, but I do remember how teachers taught and how passionate they were about what they were doing.

There are two examples of teachers teaching invisibly that stick out in my mind. The first was in grade 3 English when we would have DEAR time (Drop Everything And Read). My teacher would always spend that time reading herself. This showed us as students that she valued reading and thought that it was important enough to spend her time on. Several of my other teachers in other grades would be marking or preparing while we were having independent reading time. By reading at the same time as the students, that teacher showed us her passion for reading and helped us to be passionate about it as well.

My second example comes from my grade 12 Classic Civilizations class. The teacher was probably in his late 60s and he had a very monotone voice. Many people found this class to be quite boring because his voice wasn't very engaging and they would be put to sleep. However, what pulled me in and helped me to love History was his great passion for the subject material. It was very obvious that he adored studying History and wanted us to do the same. The simple fact that he spoke both Greek and Latin fluently (the languages spoken by the two cultures we studied: Ancient Greeks and Ancient Romans) showed us that he had spent a lot of time learning about these cultures himself and that he was very enthralled with the cultures.

These two teachers had a positive impact on my personal love of learning and I certainly hope that I am able to pass on the same joy and curiosity to my own students.

In my practicum, I was teaching grade 7 core French. I love speaking French and learning about the French culture and I strive to pass that on to my students. One example of something I demonstrated rather than taught, was using a dictionary. The dictionaries are always available in the classroom, but the students rarely think to use them. So when I got stuck on the gender of a word, I went over and used the dictionary myself. One of the boys sitting closest asked me why I was using a dictionary when I

already knew how to speak French. I explained to him that there is always room to grow and learn more about everything, especially French where there are so many intricate and irregular grammar rules. Hopefully by letting the students see me using a dictionary they will remember to use one themselves.

There are so many more things to be taught in the classroom that go above and beyond the curriculum and what is found in the textbooks. This part of teaching is equally, if not more, important than the actual subject matter, since a love of learning is useful throughout a person's entire life, whereas they may forget the specific things they learned.

Teachers must strive to teach invisibly and pass on passion and enjoyment of learning.



“What we want and what we need are usually two different things.”

Reflect on the questions your students might ask at the beginning of the year. What do they want to know and find out? Make a list.



As a new teacher, the very first day of school is both exciting and nerve wrecking for both you as well as your new students. They have no idea the type of person you are or what you are like.

Your students will come up with a variety of questions for you because they know nothing about you, except for the fact that you are their teacher for the year. They ask all sorts of questions so that they can find a connection with you. They want to know what kind of person you are and their questions help them to decide whether they can trust you or not. Students will ask many questions such as: Are you married? How old are you? What is your favourite color? Do you have any kids? What is your favourite sport? Where do you live? Do you have any brothers or sisters? What do you like to do for fun? These questions as well as many others help to create a community within the classroom. On my very first day of placement my students asked me these questions. It helped them to see me as not only their teacher but also as a real person outside of the school. It is very important to create a community setting within your classroom not only between the students but also between the students and yourself. A community will create trust in the classroom and will help to contribute to creating a positive classroom environment. Allowing your students to ask questions about you seems like such a minimal task but it can open the door creating a positive environment and setting a positive tone, which will allow you to do many fun activities with your students.



“You can pass a test but fail in life.”

What is your opinion about “marks”? Do you compare students, use standards? What is the role of assessment in teaching?



During my practicum, after I handed back assignments, tests, or quizzes a lot of the students would ask if they could re-do the assignment, test, or quiz; even if they received a level four grade! I soon realized that to intermediate students “marks” mean a lot! But depending on the classroom marks can cause anxiety to some students. In high school, particularly grade 12, students can become overwhelmed with their marks to get into a good university. The education system preaches to future teachers that they should come up with different ways to assess their students but then turn around and expects students to get high marks to further their education. Does not sound very fair to me. As I continued to mark throughout my practicum a new epiphany came to me, I realized that teachers do not give marks to see where their students are in the spectrum of learners, but rather, where the teacher stands in the spectrum of teachers. Unfortunately, the teacher’s success is granted at the expense of the anxious students.

Comparing students and using standards, or even setting standards for your students, sets them up for failure. Knowing that students are compared to the school athlete, the A+ student, or the best artist, when they themselves may not be very good, causes low self-esteem and low-motivation. Why would the student who performs lower than the set standard care if they will never achieve the standard of perfection?

Assessment should not just be about marks. It should be about if the student learns to throw a ball in gym, if the student learns how to resolve conflict verbally than physically, or if the student makes an honest effort in their work. I know that some things are important for the students to learn, specifically things in the curriculum; however, education is not all about the curriculum, so why should the marks be?





“Good teachers are costly, but bad teachers cost more.” – Bob Talbert

Reflect upon your own strengths. Describe what makes you a great teacher.



I believe that a successful teacher takes a genuine presence in the room. They are able to present themselves to the class in such a manner that is open, vulnerable, and confident and yet at the same time receive respect by giving respect to their students. This is the strongest version of myself that I can present as a teacher entering this profession. To say that I am all of these things and more is true, but to what extent I do question. I am an open, calm, understanding, levelheaded, patient, and empathetic person, and I know that these qualities make me a better teacher. On my practicum I was able to establish close relationships with my students where they would tell me the gist of what happened on the playground at recess, to telling me that they don't have a lunch today because maybe his mom doesn't think about him enough. I was able to remain professional in all situations, but not remove my attentiveness towards the feelings of these children. I am humbly proud to say that I was able to deal with such situations.

I think that I possess a fine balance between being confident and vulnerable. True confidence is only gained through taking a risk and making oneself vulnerable. I am able to stand in front of the class and show them my true personality, inspire them by being who I am, and allow them to explore who they are. Yet, that all comes at the cost of being vulnerable. The perfect example of how I experienced this on practicum occurred with a girl in my grade 6 class. I was walking around to check that bell-work questions were being answered, when I saw that this girl had put her book away. I asked to see her answers, and she said she wasn't done, and further explained that she was embarrassed to do it because she was bad at math. I knelt and asked her if she liked to try at things in her life, like basketball (which she played at the rep level)? She answered yes. So I asked, has basketball ever been hard for you? Has there ever been something that you just don't get, like a lay-up? She answered yes. I asked her if she stopped trying just because she was bad at something, and she came to realize that it's not about whether or not she is 'good' at math, but how hard she tries. I told her that I was once 'bad' at math too, and it wasn't until I realized that it was my effort that counted, not whether everyone else got the answer and I didn't. She never once put her book away again while I was on my practicum, and I hope she never does again.



“A teacher doesn’t teach a subject, they teach students.”



**Think of a student that was very important to you.
Why? What did that student mean to you?**

Last year, while teaching on a Cree reserve in northern Quebec, I encountered many students who were very important to me. However, one student in particular stands out. In a place where absenteeism rates were close to 50%, and graduation rates around 5%, this student had a perfect attendance record. He never failed to show up and was prepared for class every day. Few of his peers valued education as he did. He toughed out every class, even if he was the only one in attendance.

What’s more: he had a fairly severe, yet unidentified learning disability. His mother had been fighting for years to have the school identify and support him, though nothing came to be. He was sixteen, had yet to pass grade nine and had difficulties completing the simplest of tasks, such as writing a complete sentence. It was clear that he had a strong desire to learn, but was not given the support he deserved. He had a great sense of humour, a wonderful ability with music, and was incredibly gentle and considerate to those around him.

I had the privilege of teaching him in several classes. Given my limited resources, I was able to work with him in class and after school to accommodate his learning. I was in regular touch with his mother and tried to get the paperwork rolling to be able to proceed with his identification. It was a slow and arduous process.

What impressed me most about this student was his perseverance. His years of struggle had led him to believe that he was “just too stupid”. He told me this on several occasions. It was very difficult to have him break this thought pattern, though he did take small steps over the course of the year. Slowly but surely, he began to gain confidence in his abilities as he noticed a growing amount of support around him.

I’m not sure where the process of his identification is today, but I do know that his mom was planning on sending him to a school off reserve, as the school was simply not providing him with the support he needed. It was a disheartening situation, which speaks of greater problems with First Nations education in our country.

I have learned a lot from this student. It takes only one individuals in a school to provide help and support to those struggling. It can be as simple as showing a student that you care, and that you will take the time to support them. It was clear that the administrative red tape had been a significant excuse for his previous identification. But this student showed a willingness and dedication to his education that I couldn’t ignore. I know that not all students exhibit such strong will while faced with so much adversity. This student was an exception.

This was also an incredible lesson about the rewards of teaching. Sure, there are times where teaching will spark great “aha!” moments for both the teacher and student. But they are not always evident or measurable. They are seldom quick or painless. It is more a question of planting seeds and hoping that the care with which you have planted them means that one day, they flourish. I’ve learned not to expect ground-braking changes unfold before my eyes. I have to trust that I do my work with the utmost care and dedication, and that this may one day transform itself in ways that I may never know.

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As short as our placements are, that did not stop one of my students from impacting me in a positive way. Ihtsham was one of my students in grade 6, and he truly had a positive impact on me.

On my first day of placement, I suppose I may have looked a little scared or nervous, and Ihtsham definitely picked up on this vibe from me. He came to my table and introduced himself to me, and told me that it is ok to be scared on the first day of school and that he was too! I thought that was the sweetest thing ever, and I was actually quite surprised to hear that from a student! From that day on he was always the first one at my desk in the morning with his agenda in hand and smiles all over! Having Ihtsham in my classroom also helped me gain many valuable teaching strategies.

First of all, he taught me to slow down! All I had to do was look at him to see the look on his face, and that would indicate whether or not I had to slow down my lesson. If I were teaching too fast, he would have this look of despair on his face. During my first few lessons when I noticed this, I approached him after class to ask him what was wrong and that was when he indicated to me that I was talking too fast and he was lost.

Also through Ihtsham, I learned that hefty hand-outs are very overwhelming for some students and causes them anxiety and tears. Even though I would indicate to students that my packages were not all due in homework for the next day, I realized that for some students such as Ihtsham, this causes them to go into a panic mode. For students like this, I have altered the way that I do my handouts. Rather than handing them all out at once, I only hand out small amounts at a time. That way, it is not as overwhelming for them and they do not feel like it is all to be completed right away. These two things that I learned from him may seem small, but I believe that in the long run they can make a great difference.

I really loved having a student like Ihtsham during my first placement. What he meant to me and the impact he had on me during my short stay at Green Acres will always be remembered!

“If a child can’t learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn.” – Ignacio Estrada



Cooperative learning is an important part of learning. How can teachers get students “teaching each other” more?

The main way to get students to teach each other more is to set up a cooperative learning environment where the entire class is comfortable with teaching other students. One way to get students to teach each other is to set up a system with another grade, where the older students learn a skill or research a topic, and then teach this to the younger grade. I saw this occur on my last practice teaching placement. The Grade 6 class that I was observing researched different dance moves and learned to perform these moves in a small group. They created a small, choreographed dance using these moves and then taught these moves to the Grade 5 class that they share the gymnasium with. Each Grade 5 group had to move through the gymnasium in a circuit to visit each of the Grade 6 stations and learn the new dance moves. The Grade 5s learned about many more dance moves than they would have from just learning from the teacher, and the Grade 6s got the opportunity to perfect their dance moves through teaching. When it came time for both classes to choreograph a much longer dance routine, both grades had a bank of inspiration to draw upon from what they had learned through the peer teaching process.

Another method for getting students to teach each other is through activities such as a Jigsaw activity. A group of students is separated and each student from that group is assigned a portion of information to learn with a different group of students (such as properties of different polygons). After each of the groups have learned about their respective polygon, the original groups form back together and each member of the group teaches the other members about the properties of the polygon they were assigned to learn. This method makes reinforces the information that each student had to learn, and increases their knowledge about the rest of the polygons that the other group members were assigned.

Having students teach each other benefits both students. The student who is teaching has what they are trying to teach reinforced in their mind. The student who is being taught gets things explained to them from a peer, who may know how to explain the information at a level that they will be able to understand more quickly.

“A good teacher is like a candle, it consumes itself
to light the way for others.”

**Think of this poem. What does it say to you as a
teacher. Reflect and let your pen move!**



At The Thatched Hall Of The Ts'ui Family

It is autumn at the grass hut on Jade Peak
The air is cool and clear.
Temple bells and chimes echo from the canyons.
Fishermen and woodsmen wind over sunset trails.
We fill our plates with chestnuts gathered in the valley and rice grown in the village.
For what, Wang Wei?
Bamboo and pine, silent, locked behind a gate.

The quotation listed above does a good job of describing the role of a teacher because the role of a teacher has a lot to do with self-sacrifice. Teachers put a lot of time and energy into creating lessons that they hope will be engaging for their students and their dedication to their craft is ongoing. Teachers are constantly preparing lessons and their work week is not simply 9-5, but extends through weekends and after school hours. Teachers often put their students needs first and their own needs second which ensures student success, but can also take a considerable toll on a teacher.

Many people think that teaching is an easy job and the teaching profession is often underappreciated. I have heard the term before, “Those that can’t do, teach” which upsets me greatly because many people fail to recognize the amount of time and dedication that is involved in teaching. Some individuals also do not understand the passion that is behind people’s decision to teach and how many teachers (including myself) have a profound desire to make a positive difference in their students’ lives and the world around them. To achieve this positive difference, similarly to a candle, many teachers burn themselves out. But even if some teachers burn themselves out to the point where they are merely a “wick” it is important to note that apart of their legacy still lives on. As the quotation says a candle “lights the way for others.”

Furthermore, being a teacher means carrying a lot of personal responsibility to not only model appropriate behaviours, but also to make sure that the next generation of children have the skills and knowledge to become successful adults. Teachers like candles must guide their students in the proper direction and hopefully through their guidance “illuminate” their students in some way. Children deserve the opportunity to be taught by a teacher that appreciates their unique talents and strengths. It takes a special kind of teacher to recognize each child’s talents and strengths and part of my job as a teacher is to help each student utilize their gifts in a meaningful way.

Therefore, the metaphor that teachers are like candles is a very fitting metaphor because the role of a teacher involves self-sacrifice as well as many rewards. A candle eventually burns itself out, but also leaves a valuable legacy behind. It is this legacy that inspires the next generation and lights the flame of learning for the future.

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“Students are no longer obligated to follow teachers – teachers must lead.”

Classroom management is difficult. What do you think is important to do so that a teacher can successfully manage the class?



Classroom management is one of the more challenging aspects of being a teacher. I think it is first off very important to establish class rules and expectations such as mutual respect and appreciation. It is then important to be consistent with these rules and model them as a teacher yourself. A child’s perception of what mutual respect is will be formed by the actions of the teacher and the school community as a whole. If you earn the respect of your students they are more likely to respect your rules and your classroom. I believe it is also important to reflect a positive attitude towards learning onto my students.

During my teaching placement, I noticed the importance of having a daily schedule visible to the students. The students can refer to the schedule to be prepared for the next lesson, without having to constantly ask them to get their books out, they will learn to automatically do so when we change subjects. This will help ease the transition periods during the day. I also noticed the importance of having bell work ready for them once they come into the classroom in the morning. If there is not something for them to get started on right away, they will be chatting, wandering around the class or taking too long to get to their seats. Along with that, washroom procedures must be established to avoid constant disruption during a lesson. Simple things like grabbing their lunch bag before lunch must also be managed to avoid the chaos of the whole class up and pushing to get to their bags at the back of the classroom.

To manage the class, I believe it is also important to have a significant amount of organized hands on activity in the classroom. Kids cannot sit for a lengthy period of time so they must be up and moving around the class, being more engaged and interactive in the lesson.

As a teacher, it is important to have good communication skills. You must be clear and concise in your expectations for a task or an assignment or you can expect that there will be a lot of chatter because they don’t know what they are to be doing.

Lastly, I believe a huge part of classroom management now is keeping the students engaged. To keep students today engaged, it often means the integration of technology. Children go home to a world of video games, iphones, laptops etc., so it would be unrealistic to expect that we could keep them engaged with pen and paper. The integration of technology is, at this point in time, one of the most important management tools on the classroom.

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I believe classroom management is one of the most important aspects to being a successful teacher. In my classroom one of the most important details of classroom organization is respect. Respect in the classroom is not a one-way process where the children are expected to respect the adult. Rather, respect in the classroom is between the staff, including teachers, Educational Assistants, and volunteers, and the students, as well as between groups of staff members and between groups of students. Any rule or expectation within the class should all refer back to this one assumption. In order to support this expectation of civility, I believe a teacher should be clear and consistent in his/her expectations and consequences, both within the room and the school. As a former Educational Assistant, and now a Teacher Candidate, I find that the students I engage with are far more responsive to me and to the expectations I place on them because they know what to expect from me. They can anticipate my reaction to whatever act, behaviour or work they've put forth because I am reliable in my attitudes and reactions. When I began my journey in education I don't think that I was constant in my reactions to behaviours and students didn't know what to expect, sometimes I didn't know what to expect. I've learned over the last 5 years that shouting at my students is not the solution that I need. I don't want to model some teachers I know and intimidate a class to have them 'under control'. I'm a firm believer in earning respect from others and I believe through my actions I do that. As a result I feel very confident walking into any classroom and being successful in managing their actions.

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“What counts is not what is poured in
but what is planted.”

**What is your favorite lesson or teaching recipe?
Describe it and in your opinion, why it is effective.**



My favourite lesson that I taught was actually part of the culminating project in a grade 9 French class on my first placement. The student's were learning the future tense in French and for the culminating project, I had the students write ten sentences describing what their life (real or imaginary) would be like in the next ten years. They were allowed to choose the visual method of presentation.

I received the projects during the last week of placement and I was blown away by some of the levels of creativity in my students. I had one student write about how he wanted to be just like “Cake Boss” and, in French, told me how he is going to get there in the next ten years. I am also particularly proud of this lesson because of how well I managed to get all of my students involved in the project. One male who was habitually unengaged answered with a sarcastic comment when I asked where he would be in ten years. He said, “I will be living in a box.” So I asked him what would have to happen in his life to make him end up homeless and all of a sudden the project became interesting and he could use his sense of humour to write in French. All of my students submitted projects, went through the editing process and were able to complete oral presentations on the written material, in French, without reading from another piece of paper.

My project was so successful because I allowed students the freedom and creativity they need to learn. The project became applicable to their lives and it was about more than just the curriculum. They not only learned the formation of the verb tense, but they learned where they can use it in their own lives.



“The illiterate of the 21st century won't be those who can't read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.” – Alvin Toffler



Technology is becoming an important part of teaching. How do you feel about that? Should you use more technology in your teaching?

When I was a student, apart from overhead projectors and the giant t.v. set on wheels, very little technology was used in the classroom. I don't think that I learned less than the students of today just because I wasn't taught with copious amounts of technology. However, I do understand that times are changing and technology is the way of the present and future. Children are used to having all kinds of technology around them at all times and so it only makes sense to bring what they're used to into the classroom.

I do agree that technology enhances learning in that it's much more fun and allows for more creativity from the students. It certainly adds to the ways that students can produce pieces of work. When they are just sitting at their desks listening (or not really listening) and writing they might not internalize the topic if it doesn't mean something to them. Let's face it, kids get excited about video games and electronics and t.v.s and computers. If that's a way to get their attention and keep it, then I say we should do it!

I have seen in my last placement the way that the students were more engaged and excited to do work in the computer lab rather than just at their desk. They like applying what they learn in one subject and using in on the computer, whether it be through researching more about the subject, or finding clip art to add to their paper or even just typing it up rather than writing it by hand. I did a unit on bullying in my last placement. I tied it in with media literacy and had them create and film their own anti-bullying commercials. It was great to see how enthusiastic they were about doing this. They were able to really think about the topic and how they wanted to get their point of view across the the audience. We watched other videos and commercials to see how the professionals do it and how they could apply that to their own work. This is a case where technology was necessary in creating a fun lesson that taught them a lot. They were also able to take charge of their learning by filming their commercials themselves. They felt empowered and every student had a major role to play in this unit. That is the perfect example of how technology can and should be used in the classroom today.

I do agree, though that there can be an over usage of technology and having it just for the sake of having it in the schools. I think that if a school gets a new piece of technological equipment then they should have the proper training for the teachers to go with it. If all teachers know what is available to them and how to use it then all students will benefit.

Another major plus to having new technology is all the wonderful educational tools now made for students with learning disabilities. The fact that there are devices that

can help a student keep up with other students who might not have been able to in the past is very exciting. When I took the workshop on adaptive technology I was blown away by the amount of useful programs and devices for those who need them to learn. All of this new technology can be a little daunting for a new teacher at times. There are moments when I feel overwhelmed by everything I need to know about and how to use this new technology, but I guess the best way for me to sort through it is to talk to other teachers to see what they use in their classrooms to find out what really works well and what doesn't work as well. If I go from there and learn one thing at a time, then I'll be well on my way to having a successful, technologically savvy classroom.

“Be the change you want to see in the world.” – Mahatma Gandhi

What do you plan on doing in the future to keep learning and develop professionally? What is your “SMART” goal this year?



I am always willing to learn and develop because I think that teaching is a lifelong journey of learning. I think that there is always room for improvement and there is no such thing as a ‘perfect teacher.’ My goal this year is to be accepting of the mistakes I make because errors always lead to improvement. If I know what I can improve on then I will grow successfully and become an effective teacher.

Another goal of mine is to endure as many positive and negative experiences while practice teaching because any experience I have is a step further to knowing how to act for the next time. Another major goal of mine this year is to listen very closely to every outlet around me such as my peers, my professors, my associate teachers and most importantly my students. I think that listening carefully and considering and understanding what people say around me, I can make improvements and add to my overall knowledge as a teacher in training.

I have in the past made a habit of being discouraged if I made a mistake or am unsure of an answer. My goal this year is to embrace the mistakes I make and consider them not as mistakes but as pathways to my success. I believe that not knowing eventually leads to knowing.

In February, I will be completing my second placement in Ecuador teaching English as a second language. I am excited about the teaching experience I will receive in an unfamiliar environment and a goal I will take with me is to be both the teacher and the learner. I will be in a classroom of English language learners and I will be able to identify with my students that I am also learning and that we can all be learners together.

Growing up assuming you can publish whatever you want to say, to whoever you want to say it, is going to make people different - Russell Davies



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"When 1 teaches, 2 learn"