

Holly Sroka

EDG590

March 22nd, 2022

“We know that suffering produce perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Romans 5:3-4

When asked to reflect upon my experience as a teacher, and why teaching is important to me, the first thing that comes to mind is: to teach children how to unlock potential and to open their eyes to the benefits of perseverance. I have always felt that young students come to school to learn content- this is true. But, I also know that the *purpose* is to learn how to be strong, hardworking, and contributing members of society. In order for this to happen, young students need nurture, structure, discipline, and guidance. This means that they must be exposed to an upstanding adult who serves as their mentor, teacher, guiding light, and role model of perseverance and grit. A wonderful book titled *Can't Hurt Me* by ex-Navy Seal David Goggins offers a nice quote regarding hard work: “Some criticize my level of passion, but I’m not down with the prevailing mentalities that tend to dominate American society these days; the ones that tell us to go with the flow or invite us to learn how to get more with less effort. Stay away from these shortcuts. The reason I embrace my own obsessions and demand and desire more of myself is because I’ve learned that it’s only when I push beyond pain and suffering, past my perceived limitations, that I’m capable of accomplishing more, physically and mentally—in endurance

aces but also in life as a whole. And I believe the same is true for you.” (Goggins, 2020, pg. 72).

I believe that the role of an educator is to be just that- a child’s guiding light. In the educational system, this is done through curriculum and content. Inside of all the formalities, there exists the “hidden curriculum”- this is the driving factor of what character, social, and emotional skills educators teach their students. The hidden curriculum is a very sensitive piece of a child’s educational experience, as it includes the teacher’s personal values. However, the hidden curriculum often gets abused as a playground to insert personal bias, opinions, and ulterior motives into the school day. It is *not* an educator’s duty to sway a child one way or the other in terms of politics, opinions, religion, or biases. It is however the duty of an educator to serve as a role model for children so that they can witness a good example of how to be a functioning member of society, display good character, and apply perseverance into their workday. The role of an educator is to relay content and curriculum to students that require rigor, perseverance, grit, and critical thinking. By persisting through school work, students develop the above-mentioned skills that will carry them through the obstacles that life *will* throw their way upon graduation.

In order to become this type of educator, one must carry certain beliefs, attitudes, values, and experiences. As I reflect upon my most recent experience working in a first-grade classroom, I begin to realize the beliefs, values, and attitudes that drive my style of teaching. As for my beliefs in regard to educating young students, I believe that all students are entitled to an equal and quality education, no matter the circumstances. I also believe that students (both those struggling and those who are gifted), deserve the resources that they need in order to be successful. My experience working in a highly inclusive classroom has made me truly

understand how much need exists among students, and how there are so many resources that exist- if a teacher is willing to put forth the effort. This is reflective of my value and attitude of always doing what is right, even if it takes a lot of work. We must do what is right for these young students in order for them to progress and succeed.

In addition, it is also imperative that an educator view all of their students as minds that are in need to guidance and teaching. Students come to school each day *relying* on their teacher to provide them with yet another day of guidance and content- we cannot let students down. Each student is an individual and needs to be tailored to as such with things like differentiation and care. Each student has their own story, and an educator must be aware of those stories for the sake of understanding whom they are teaching, and what learning styles exist in the classroom. Also, we must remember that learning is a process (perceiving input, processing the input, acting and creating output, and receiving feedback on output). This will require patience- especially with young minds. In order to maintain this style and philosophy of teaching, I will always expect the following from myself: maintain rigor in the classroom, implement engaging activities to yield maximum learning, allow students to share their voice with confidence, never underestimate a student, implement care and nurture to my students, and always keep personal bias and beliefs out of my classroom and instructional strategies.

In conclusion, my passion for teaching has truly blossomed during my time working with elementary students. They have not only given me passion in my professional life, but has given me a passion to continue striving for more, and to be a better person and educator. I have developed a strong sense of selflessness while working with my first graders, and hope that it will grow stronger each year. I am developing a confidence that I am excited about, and cannot wait to see what my future holds as an educator, a role model, and a nurturing entity for children.

Most of all, I hope to instill within my students the ability to be self-sufficient and to stay the course in every aspect of their lives, despite any obstacles. The following excerpt from Theodore Roosevelt's speech titled *Citizenship in a Republic*: "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither knows victory nor defeat." (Roosevelt, 2020, pg. 1). This is the mindset I wish to provide to all of my students during my teaching career.

References

Goggins, D. (2020). *Can't Hurt Me*. Lioncrest Publishing.

Roosevelt, T. (2020). *Citizenship in a Republic*. Good Press.