My Dream as a Teacher of English Learners

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Language is a great privilege and a competency, gifted only to humans for communication. Being able to express our thoughts and feelings to others, and having them understand our opinions are indispensable ability that we humans do not want to lose. People tend to take this talent for granted, but at the same time, they are often intimidated and belittle themselves when it comes to learning a new language, even if they are already fluent in their first language. What I hope to gain from California State University at Long Beach Times Media TESOL Certificate program is to learn various methods and techniques of teaching English, to acquire the qualifications and right attitude of an English teacher for EFL students, and to put conviction into myself that I can become a great teacher who has a positive impact on her students.

My dream to become a teacher began since I was very young. I admired my first grade teacher who had a soft voice and a pretty smile. My family and I moved back from Japan to Korea when I turned 7. Even though I am Korean by blood, I was struggling with my Korean language after 6 years of stay in Japan. I remember that I was often picked on by my classmates for my slow and awkward use of Korean. However, my teacher was patient with me and always encouraged me, so that I did not lose confidence or motivation in learning. I decided to become a teacher who takes care for students, especially ones that are feeling left out or struggling with low self-esteem.

I was serious about my dream and my passion to become a teacher grew as time passed by. In growing up, I had many chances of interacting with younger children. For about eight years, I worked in various ways to teach and care for students: babysitting, tutoring, co-teaching at English summer camps, and teaching as a full-time English teacher at a Hagwon and private school in Japan. I always loved my students and enjoyed teaching them. However, I came to realize that despite of being an English teacher, I wasn’t able to give my students a lesson in English. Also my teaching style was causing the opposite effects in the students from what I expected my students to gain from me. I wanted them to learn that if they put their best, they can achieve whatever they are aiming to achieve. Hoping to be a friendly and understanding teacher, I tried to provide them a stress-free environment for learning, to encourage them from giving up easily, and to motivate them to work better. It really brought me down when I found myself forcing my students to memorize vocabularies, running out of patience and not believing in them. The children deserved better treatment and respect from the teacher, but I failed to do so. I started to doubt about my qualification and decision to become a lifelong teacher. I asked myself what was the most important quality for a teacher. *A Teacher’s Story* and the classes I’d taken at TESOL program so far taught me that a great teacher must be authentic and have faith in her students, rather than to judge and limit them through the first impression. Giving my everything to the students is the first thing to keep in mind. Without contributing my whole passion, love, proficiency, patience, and my other strengths to my students, I should not expect them to put their best effort in learning from me.

In the next 10 years, I will keep improving both proficiency in knowledge and quality as an influencing teacher based on the lesson I learned from my mistakes in the past. I will admit that teachers are not superior nor better than the students - they are just the same human beings who develop through making mistakes. It is true that teachers have immense influence on their students since he or she is one of the few adults the children will interact with, but it’s also true vice versa. Great teachers are made from the great students. Ten years later from now, I will be a teacher who observes each of my students carefully to know what is the best method for their learning, to see if they are struggling with any problems at home or at school, and to encourage those with lack of confidence or low self-esteem. I will be patient and understanding that all of the children have different methods through which they learn the best. Ignoring and limiting their ability to learn just by looking at how they learn from one method of teaching will never happen. I will not hide behind the title of the teacher, but will show them I really do care for their success and will be always ready to listen to them.

Students are not robots that I can manipulate to do what I want them to do. They will not get a perfect score for every test, nor always pay attention to me for the whole class time, nor be hardworking and participating all the time. However, I should not give in to those difficulties. I will change first and will believe in them constantly. Students are so kind that they put efforts to improve when they understand the teacher is being authentic, respectful and helpful. When a teacher truly believes in the students, they will receive courage and motivation. They will realize that their teacher will not humiliate them for their mistakes; rather, the teacher will recognize what is done well or will praise them for their trial. I will involve many discussion activities during the class to elicit the students’ thoughts and opinions. My true willingness to help the students, instead of forcing and oppressing them to do whatever I ask them, will provide them a stress-free environment where they are believed and encouraged by the teacher, and will make the students find their potential and evoke the excitement of achievement.