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Educator Autobiography

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When I tell people that I am a high school teacher, this is one of the most common responses I hear:

“Oh, I couldn’t do that.”

I often laugh it off and tell them it is not as bad as they would think, and that is usually where the conversation turns to something else. But sometimes, people will ask me, “What is that like? *Really?*” It’s almost an impossible question to answer.

What is it *like* to be a teacher? What are the kids like? Why is it worth it to do what I do?

Answers, in short: It is exciting, they are amazing, and it’s worth it because every single day, I make a difference.

I wake up every week day during the school year and know that approximately 120 young people will walk through my classroom door, and I will be responsible for teaching them things to help them become better people and lead happy, successful lives. It is a tremendous responsibility, but it is also an incredible opportunity. As I spend 50 minutes a day with them from August to June, I get to know these students. I learn about their pasts, their home lives, and their hopes and dreams, and I help them make those dreams reality. Respecting students for the people they are and the people they will become enables me to truly invest my time and energy into making their lives better. There is nothing more amazing than that.

I will be starting my eighth year teaching in August at Bryant High School. I taught freshman English for five years, and for the last two years I have taught Digital Photography and advised the yearbook and newspaper staffs. This job is especially rewarding for me since I was part of the yearbook staff at Bryant when I was in high school, so I understand how being part of a publication staff can build skills that students will use for life, even if they do not pursue journalism as a career. I also really love teaching Digital Photography, since it is a creative outlet for students and is often a much-needed break in their day full of reading, writing and thinking in their other classes. Many of my students come in unaware they have any artistic ability, and it is wonderful to see them gain confidence and express themselves with a camera, creating images that show the world through their perspective.

One of the most difficult aspects of teaching that I have encountered is student apathy--it is difficult when I have a student who claims not to care. However, I have found that if I have high expectations for students, they will do their best to meet them. Despite what some students may tell me, I know they want to succeed in life. Students need adult role models to give them positive behaviors that they can then emulate as they grow and mature. As a teacher, I have the privilege to help students become happy, successful adults, so I must take that role seriously and give them the high expectations they deserve.

While I am extremely satisfied with my career as an educator and feel confident that my teaching ability has improved drastically over the last seven years, I think one of the keys to becoming a great educator is to never settle. I should always evaluate my lesson plans and my teaching strategies to remain effective in the classroom, and I should never be satisfied that I have somehow reached peak educator status and I have no more room to grow. That will never be true, especially in the ever-changing world of education, so I have to keep challenging myself to get better so that I can be the teacher that my students deserve.