

Acknowledgements: I'd like to give thanks to my parents who tempered each other's advice to give me the right mix of keeping my feet on the ground (Be the best!) and reaching for the stars (You can do whatever you want!). I sure wish you weren't in Europe so I could run some of this by you before I turn it in. I'd also like to acknowledge Judith Viorst, author of Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, who influenced my attitude as a kid and influenced my writing as a graduate student of curriculum theory.

I'm not the kind of person who wears my personal feelings on my sleeve. In fact, I think if I saw them on my sleeve, I might even change my shirt (but that's for another paper). Now, don't think that this means that I don't have feelings (even strong ones) or that I'm not in touch with those feelings and their origins. In fact, I consider myself a very reflective person and I am quick to take an objective (and sometimes judgmental) view of myself. So, true to form, I am going to write about the role of my feelings during my experiences as a student.

Hamlet says, "For there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" (Act II, sc. 2). When slightly modified, this quotation expresses my attitude toward my experiences as a K-12 student: There is nothing either good or bad but feeling makes it so. My goal is not to characterize any of my experiences as either good or bad because I think even the bad experiences have their good points whether they make me a stronger person or they teach me something new about life (even trips to the orthodontist's office). My goal is instead to trace my feelings in response to school experiences and examine how, as a teacher, I created my classroom based on those feelings that, missing in my school experiences, affected me most as a kid.

I like very much being an accomplished person. As a kid, these accomplishments can be as simple as winning the award for the best valentine box in the 4th grade (a train with heart-shaped wheels and a fringy cowcatcher) or as major as being able to add three digit numbers in 1st grade (with carrying). As much as being accomplished mattered to me is as much as feeling like I wasn't accomplished stung. As excited as I was for receiving my 4th grade award, I was equally upset at not graduating high school with honors (that gold sash seemed awfully important). As important as it was for me to prove my math ability at the board in 1st grade, it was equally devastating to get my first C on a test in junior high geometry.

In addition to feeling accomplished, feeling worthy was a big deal for me as a kid. I needed to make a valuable contribution to my class. In 2nd grade this meant helping Mrs. Bumpas hang up pictures in the hallway during recess (and getting to use the stapler) and as a high school senior it meant cleaning lab equipment for Mrs. Wonderly during study hall. I almost felt lost when I could not make a contribution and definitely felt jealous of others in the class who could. Coach McKee never asked me to run errands in junior high, but he always asked the athletes and Mrs. Morini called on Steve Tagtmeier to read examples from his writing in AP English to demonstrate syntax and diction and never called on me.

As a kid I always loved to feel intelligent and recognized for my intelligence. I loved seeing my name on the bulletin board in the elementary school library as one of the best readers and I couldn't wait to get home with my "Good Citizenship" Award to show everyone in my family. I could have used some of that recognition in chemistry class while I was trying to balance equations (and avoid getting called on in class) or in

American literature when I could never remember the picky details of the readings (like some scene about an umbrella and a rainy lake from A Farewell to Arms).

I also wanted to feel special in school. The kind of special I felt when I was picked to square dance front and center on stage at the PTA festival in 3rd grade, and I couldn't feel more special than my principal choosing me to represent the school on a Phil Donahue television special (I only got about 4 seconds of air time – too normal for Phil I guess). I could have used some of those special feelings when I was wandering the halls with 749 other high school sophomores or even when I declared myself an English major as a college sophomore.

Of course I was feeling many more things during my experiences as a student, but those were the ones that are the poignant to me on reflection. In fact, when I look closely at the times when I felt accomplished, worthy, intelligent, and special and the times when I felt lacking in these emotions, I find that 5th grade was a big turning point. During 5th grade for some reason I quit looking to my teachers to fill me up with these feelings and started looking to my classmates (this was a heavy responsibility to give to a group of adolescents). The first explanation that I landed on was pretty obvious: I had marvelous teachers K-4 and only the occasional marvel after that time. I don't know if I was really the top dog in K-4, but that didn't matter to me because I had teachers who made me feel like I was top dog. But that was too easy; there had to be something else. Maybe it had something to do with the emotional development of girls after age 10. Okay, so the teachers weren't there for me and I was growing more needy. That still seems too obvious.

After some major thought I think I've got it: (audible click) in the 5th grade I was placed in a gifted and talented (GT) pullout program. I was the smart fish pulled

out of the little bowl and slam dunked into a large tank with other smart fish. As an adult I wonder if I was equally as smart as my GT peers were and realize that I probably was but will never know the real answer. I know then I was so in awe with what my classmates were capable of that I assumed I was in GT by the grace of God (or a few well-placed phone calls by a doting mother). My GT complex followed me through the program in 5th and 6th grade and then continued to dog me in the honors and AP programs in junior high and high school. After college I realized the social implications that my GT complex had (the friends I made then are the only friends from k-12 that I still keep in touch with – everyone else labeled me a goody-goody and didn't want to play anymore), but I had never examined the learning implications of my participation.

My response to my newly acquired GT complex was to change from a hard working, motivated to succeed, straight A student into a lazy B student who was occasionally motivated to earn A's. I was no longer motivated by the competition found in my traditional classes because I knew I couldn't win (or even place or show for that matter). This left me looking to the teacher, my family, or myself for the motivation to continue as a straight-A kid. Well, my laziness and my family's acceptance of this laziness cancelled out any strong inner motivation (good enough was my war chant). That left the motivation in the hands of my teachers. As a result I was as easily motivated to earn solid A's to impress the teachers that I liked and made me feel like a top dog in AP Biology and Journalism, but as easily unmotivated and slid to C's for teachers who seemed not to notice me or to dislike me in trigonometry and honors English. As a result of the learning implications that my feelings caused in my school experiences, while teaching, I was sure to be one of those

teachers who made every student feel special and for whom all my students were motivated to do their best.

Reflecting on my classroom as a teacher, I see that I looked for the quieter students who did not demand attention and especially for those who did not believe in their own abilities. I constantly adjusted seating arrangements so that students like Josh (a strong B student and quiet, hard worker) and Ashley (an extremely shy and extremely bright student) were in the front since I didn't feel like I had gotten to know them. I engaged all my freshmen in book talks about the novels they had read, making every one of them sit down one-on-one with me and just talk about their book.

A vital principle in my classroom was that all students came in with their own gifts and that those gifts should be appreciated. Troy was not a strong writer, but his artistic representations of the symbolism he saw in readings were amazing (and his portraits of Rob Zombie were pretty impressive too). Melissa sometimes forgot to finish her homework, but she loved having the opportunity to lead a cooperative group. While I considered all of my students' talents, I constantly praised them those strengths of which they could be proud and look to as accomplishments.

My classroom had a safe atmosphere where students were not competitive with each other and where they felt comfortable and even rewarded for taking risks. In this way, I aimed to make all of my kids feel like they were worthy and that they had something valuable to contribute to our class. This atmosphere took time to create each year (sometimes a full 6-week grading period), but the resulting environment had to have enhanced the students' feelings toward learning in my class. When the students completed their family story projects they knew that every single one would get posted in a place of honor in the hallway. Students and parents

also knew that each student regularly had the opportunity to show off the work they were most proud of at back-to-school nights.

Finally, I made sure that I provided multiple, different opportunities for my students so that each one could show off his or her intelligence. Our field trip to see Robert Rauschenberg's abstract art exhibit was followed by each student creating his or her own abstract art (Matthew's so touched my soul that it still hangs in my apartment). Any major project allowed students to communicate through their chosen means. As a result, I have a collection of video cassettes (overdubbed movie clips to represent Chaucer's *Plowman* and amateur actors in scenes from Wuthering Heights), original songs (Romantic poetry in the style of Bob Dylan), wood carvings (a medieval sword custom-whittled to fit my hand), and papers (including Eric's comparative essay relating Romeo and Juliet's relationship to the warranties on new and used cars).

My final act each year as a teacher really spoke to the emotions that I missed from my junior high and high school teachers. Throughout the year I tried to convey to my students that each was special through birthday cards and supportive conversations about personal experiences happening in and out of my class. As one last effort to reinforce that each of my kids was special, I sneaked a hand-written note into each one of my 130 students' diplomas offering them personal praise and encouragement.

Early in every school year, I explain to students that the learning that I will hold them responsible for in my class will differ from that in most of their other classes. I also tell them, "5 years from now, 10 years from now, you may remember some fact about Beowulf and that's super, but I guarantee that you will remember how

you felt when you were in Glazer's class." As for me, the sense of worthiness I craved during my school years is still a big part of me (and I'm glad for that). Some of this craving is satisfied by the knowledge that I am in a profession that helps people. Some of this craving can be satisfied in other odd ways. Two years ago I ran across the email address of Miss Celebucki, my 6th grade teacher and dropped her a short note. When she responded she wrote, "You were such a wonderful student - and such a reliable helper!! I expected you to succeed in what you chose for your future. And you certainly have!!" For weeks after I told everyone I saw that my 6th grade teacher thought I was a good helper. Even 17 years later, the emotions I felt were spectacular.

As a teacher and now as a graduate student, I have learned to satisfy my own needs in these areas and that skill has certainly served me well. But I have to admit, hearing words of praise from a teacher or a peer ranks up there for me with a no-hitter in baseball, a double-dip ice cream cone, and playing in the snow as things that are wonderful to witness.

Description of Aesthetic Representation Based Currere Paper

My mother is fond of saying that she has worked to give me opportunities to grow roots (history) and sprout wings (the future) and that those two things will help me the most in life. Some of my stronger roots which have added to the shape of my wings are the feelings that I felt were lacking in my school experiences. I would love to protect my students from the feelings that I felt were missing in my life as a student. Since that is not entirely possible, I must protect my students the best I can. My birdhouse serves as that protection. It is constructed from my roots (events, people, things from my school days) and serves as protection for my students while they strengthen their own roots. When each student is ready, he or she will take flight from my classroom, hopefully with a beautiful and strong pair of wings.

