

A Teacher's Love

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Introduction

Teachers have one of the most unique and complex positions in the world. In some ways they act as a parent acts, holding their student's hand and guiding them through difficulties. They encourage exploring new knowledge and sometimes challenging the knowledge that the student has already attained. Teachers must understand their students and try to use their students' talents and interests to encourage curiosity and discovery. There is nothing wrong with openly displaying to students how much a teacher cares about their benefit. Every student recognizes empathy just as every teacher strives to understand their students. If students realize how much a teacher cares and loves, they begin to trust in the teacher and themselves.

During my senior year, I was blessed to be able to study piano with Dr. Hyun-Sook Park. I went to her while in my college search, curious as to how far I would have to dig up my roots to audition at a school like Peabody Conservatory. I had a lesson with her and she told me that I had to rebuild my technique and repertoire completely, in which she was willing to help me. At first I politely declined because I knew that this would mean no life my senior year. However, she still persisted and offered to help me simply prepare for auditions. I do not think I have ever learned more in a year or worked harder for any other teacher in my entire life. She rebuilt me from the ground up.

Dr. Park was the best segway for coming to Westminster. She embodied so many of the teachers here in teaching technique, work ethic, and most of all, her level of love for her students. She never tired, and was always mindful that I wanted to be a teacher myself and would constantly be giving me advice on how to approach teaching. I know that she always thought of my benefit and how I would use her teachings to make myself a better pianist,

musician, and teacher. She truly “honored my world” because of how much she loved and cared about my future.

The Place of Conscientization in “Love”

I was really struck by a story in Joan Wink’s *Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the Real World*. Carmen, a very experienced and sharp teacher, “used the entire context of her students’ lives for her curriculum” (Wink, 2011, p. 58). She took an incident of an attention-seeking student getting a new haircut and transformed it into a lesson. As she led the student around the classroom, her students were learning new English words relevant to the haircut. She redirected their attention to a learning goal which benefitted them.

Carmen entered the students’ worlds and helped them realize that they now know more English vocabulary to describe an everyday life experience. She invoked the process of conscientization and “enabled [her students] to have confidence in their own knowledge, ability, and experiences” (Wink, 2011, p. 57). Carmen would not have gone through her own critical thinking process without caring for her students and their future success with their knowledge attained in her classroom. She also went through her own transformative process of conscientization because “she knew that she knew” how to engage her students and help them learn something relevant to their lives (Wink, 2011, p. 58).

Conscientization can also be seen as a direction in learning. The love of the teacher gives a reason for learning, and conscientization is the way to get there. A teacher’s love will give strength to the student to begin exploring new knowledge. This process may be vexing and unsure, but the teacher’s support will encourage the student to strive for conscientization. Once

the student reaches this realization, they can use their knowledge to provide a better future for themselves.

Loving the Learning Types

Understanding and helping each and every student is a tall order. Teachers must learn to recognize and comprehend different learning types in students to help their students realize their full potential. A teacher must care and be dedicated to applying themselves to this process of recognizing the learning types. Each student has different needs and requires a teacher who loves and cares about personal understanding of new knowledge and overcoming weaknesses in personal learning processes.

Type One learners are affected by their feelings from experiences. They like reflecting, finding clarity, and also helping others find clarity. Many Type One learners may need help in “working under pressure and taking risks” (McCarthy, 2000, p. 42). An empathetic, loving teacher recognizes that Type One learners may need help in learning to deal with more pressing situations.

A Type Two learner succeeds best in a traditional learning environment, such as a traditional classroom with lectures and readings. “They take time to reflect and ponder on what they experience” (McCarthy, 2000, p. 43). One of the weaknesses of Type Two learners is their sense of creativity. All learners have creativity, but some learners need different avenues of expressing that creativity. A caring, loving teacher will offer many different opportunities to help their students realize that they are creative and innovative.

Type Three learners are task masters. They get things done and are most comfortable either tackling the problem on their own or working with competent people. They enjoy productivity and “creating solutions” (McCarthy, 2000, p. 44). Type Three learners are very competent, but need to improve on their people skills. Teachers need to show these learners that they do have a creative side and provide them with a comfortable environment to invoke creativity with others.

Type Four learners are the most innovative and active learners. They enjoy self-discovery, challenging situations, and “tackling problems with their intuition” (McCarthy, 2000, p. 45). A loving teacher gives this student the chance to use their intuition to solve problems while guiding them through details in problem solving that may be missed in the process.

Love in the Learning Environment

Creating a proper learning environment for students includes a teacher's love. A teacher needs to be able to understand where the student comes from in order to set up a comfortable, caring learning environment. Students may begin to seek their own grasp of their knowledge. The teacher must empathize and strive to create a learning environment to channel the student's attention based on the obstacles created by previous learning environments. The authors of *John Dewey and the Art of Teaching* state very rightly that the students “become *the* curriculum when they seek to influence or control a classroom” (Simpson, Jackson, & Aycock, 2005, p. 165). Students need to feel a sense of control and comprehension of why they are learning what they are learning. The same authors also state that Dewey's response to students' different learning environment backgrounds is to “build a learning environment or curriculum that is grounded in

but leads beyond the purposes and life of each student” (Simpson, Jackson, & Aycocock, 2005, p. 165). If a teacher is going to accomplish this goal, he or she must be willing to fully accept the student’s learning environment needs and try to create an environment based on their comfort levels so that they can go above and beyond the purpose of their learning.

When considering codification in the classroom, the teacher must think of the student’s ability to feel comfortable enough in the learning environment to explore possibilities. Problem posing could be more difficult for some students than others, such as Type Two learners. The ability to be creative in finding problems in situations may be more difficult for these students. A teacher needs to reflect on how best to create a learning environment in which students can experiment with problem posing and feel comfortable giving their own ideas. As Wink states, the three main jobs of the teacher in problem posing are “to create a safe place for it to happen, to ask hard questions for the students’ musing, and to assist students with codification” (Wink, 2011, p. 150).

Once the students have identified the problem, the teacher needs to start focusing on their comprehension. I think this is one of the most important steps in learning. In high school, I felt that I sometimes did not realize why I was learning what I was learning and never felt the need to question why. It is important for students to want to question this because it shows that they comprehend the information and want to experience the use of this new knowledge in their lives. Wink summarizes this thought quite well. “*Comprehending* is a process; *comprehension* is a product” (Wink, 2011, p. 159). Many students may miss having the experience of comprehension because the teacher does not care enough to show their students where this new

information can be used in their lives. In order for a student to fully comprehend, they must experience their new knowledge in a way that matters to them.

Love in the Music Setting

Every musician does what they do because of one moment in time when they realized that they love the art of music. Music can never truly be judged by others because it is an art form made of pure personality. Sometimes students are hesitant to be vulnerable and honest because it can be scary to expose your soul to the world. Expecting that students will realize who they are within the first few music classes is impossible. Guiding them through finding themselves through their art and giving them a life-long means of expression is possible and should be the goal of every music teacher.

Dewey talks of desires in a learner's environment. He states that "an individual's desires take shape under the influence of the human environment" (Dewey, 1925-1953, 274-275). If the teacher provides a safe atmosphere in which to explore self-discovery and personal growth through music, the student will learn to be honest with their self. The teacher must also be accepting of whoever the student may be and help them feel comfortable in their artistic expression. If the teacher does not express and demonstrate a love for artistry, their students will never realize the freedom of being a musician.

Music teachers have especially difficult conscientization goals. When is the true moment of conscientization in music, or any art form? Sometimes art is vague and free, and feels safe being this way. Some of the truest moments of conscientization in music are in performance.

This is not necessarily to say literal concerts or recitals, but personal performance. A student has to experience but one moment, and their notes become clear artistry and their means of expression becomes a true direction of character. Sometimes these moments are best experienced with others first and are then applied to the self. The only way these moments can be created is if the teacher repeatedly reaches out to the student to think about what they love and care about themselves. The music teacher can show their students what he or she cares about, but only the student can decide what matters most to them. When the student finally realizes what *is* important to them and can understand that they understand, they have reached their goal of conscientization as a musician and can use their artistry as a path to self-discovery.

Conclusion

I have been so lucky to have so many wonderful teachers in my life. I did not realize how amazing they were until I learned more about the difficulties of teaching. So many teachers have reached me through the love of their subject, and love and support of me and my endeavors as a student. They have overcome obstacles such as school regulations, standardized testing, and politics to give me a full education of myself. The biggest gift that I have ever received as a student is the process of self-discovery through the new knowledge given me. As a future teacher, my biggest hope is that I can give my students the same liberation and discoveries that I was given. The love I give as a teacher is the best tool for self-discovery because I am “honoring their world” by appreciating all they have to offer.

References

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