

## Pivotal Moments in Student Teaching

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When we first discussed a forum devoted to current and recent student teachers, we simply thought it would be worthwhile to highlight the voices of teachers preparing to work with English Language Learners (ELLs) in our public schools. What we didn't realize is that we would also hear the voices of their young students—and, in the process, be asked to rethink our own vision of the importance of student teaching.

As educators of teachers, we spend an enormous amount of time thinking about how best to observe new teachers. We design rubrics, we sit in the classroom taking notes, and we plan post-observation conferences. It can be easy to forget the observation that student teachers are also undertaking. Their own strong “call to teach” (Hansen, 2017) combined with their recent immersion in current theories and methods means that student teachers may see what is happening in our schools—and with their students—more clearly than the most experienced classroom teacher.

Reading these essays, several themes come to light. First, the moments described here remind us of the importance of connection, not just for students, but also for teachers. It is within single encounters with individual students that teaching becomes real for these writers, and that they find ways to both use and question the theories and methods they have been learning in their graduate classrooms. We also see a series of parallel journeys, as one group of students takes on the role of language learner, and another group takes on the role of language teacher.

Thus, for Jingjie Li, a young girl's tears remind us both of how much we don't know about our students and of the fact that “immigrating to a new country...is never a choice that a child gets to make.” Jennifer Park also witnesses a child's tears, as she, like Katharine Morgenegg, is present for students who manage to share their experiences as immigrants despite sharing few or no linguistic resources with their teachers. Park and Morgenegg also experience both the powerlessness of teachers tending to the needs of too many students, and the one kind of power that student teachers may have—the time to devote themselves to single students. Kate Murphy describes her own sense of the contradictions inherent in student teaching, as she is simultaneously moved by her students' honesty and distressed by harsh responses on the part of some of her fellow educators. Finally, from Kate Sanford, we read of an interaction that encapsulates both the difference between intent vs. impact and the amount of pressure language learners face in every single interaction throughout the school day. At the same time, Sanford offers a picture of a student teacher realizing that what she has learned about teaching may not be the most helpful response to a specific student in a given moment.

Most of all, we begin to understand why, as, Katharine Morgenegg writes, “student teaching is something...we get right.” Given the increasing pressures on teacher educators to abbreviate the time teachers spend as learners, we are grateful to these writers who remind us why the liminal space of student teaching, when we must embrace the not-knowing of being simultaneously learner and educator, is so important.

## REFERENCES

Hansen, D. T. (1996). *The call to teach*. Teachers College Press.