Eternity McDonell

Rutherford

Oxford Scholars

15 November 2021

The Art of Teaching

Teaching, the practice of learning, the education system, and academia- when I was presented with this topic at the beginning of this school year; I was overwhelmed. I thought to myself, how am I- a 17 year old girl to be entrusted with writing about such a complex and multifaceted subject matter that has many preconceived notions surrounding it. Yet here I am before you all feeling a sense of accomplishment because I believe that I have completed the challenge. However, I will let you all be the judge. I compare learning to a starved lion. On every first day of school of my life, I have arrived at a classroom doorstep starving for knowledge. Metaphorically, my ribs are tearing through my chest, my stomach growls with a thunderous deafening roar, and my eyes are red with insatiable hunger. This hunger can only be quelled with the consumption of knowledge.

Now many of you are probably thinking about how graphic and pessimistic my description of learning is. And to that I say, how many of you have left a classroom feeling this same hunger, this desire to know more, to understand the human experience. This is because we all yearn to learn, to know, and to understand. What makes this difficult is that everyone is different. We all absorb and retain information differently and if we enter a classroom and these needs are not met, we can be left feeling defeated or as if something is wrong with us.

The gatekeepers, the guardians, or the administrators of knowledge are teachers. Teaching- a service that seems so simple and basic that is actually quite the opposite. Teaching should never be taken lightly. Those that choose this as their profession are heroes. Heroes- a term typically used to describe those in combat or who have saved a life. Teachers do this everyday. The doctors who perform meticulous surgeries, the firefighters that jump out of their red flamboyant trucks to put out fires, the officers that ring their sirens who keep the streets safe were all taught by these brave men and women. The best teachers are those that instill a sense of confidence in their students, teachers that view them as more than a number, and truly ingrain a love for learning within those that look up to them for guidance. There have been many times in my life when I have felt discouraged by a grade that I received and lost a love for that subject completely. As I’ve grown, I have become aware that the most meaningful learning experiences have been stimulated by teachers that have encouraged my growth by giving me the tools I need to be successful. I relate this to taking care of houseplants. Something that many are incapable of doing. Those that do have house plants know that plants require attention that lies within an extremely delicate balance. Plants, like humans, need water to survive- without this water they cannot create food for themselves and the leaves will droop and wilt. However, the most common way that humans miscare for their plants is by overwatering. People think that by over caring for their specimens, the leaves of their plants will never droop. This is a misconception. The overwatering will cause the leaves to lose their color and fall, the roots will grow fungus. This same method of care should be applied to students in the classroom. The best teachers give their students just enough information to have time to process, give them just enough work outside of school to practice, but not take away from their personal time. The best teachers are not overbearing or harsh, demanding, or critical. The best teachers give their students the perfect amount of water and set them in the sun to absorb the light that will also contribute to their personal growth. The greatest responsibility of a teacher is to instill a sense of wonder and nurture this curiosity so that their students may go on to inspire this same wonder in those around them.