

## **Educators Who Change Our Lives Forever**

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We were in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, working on a unit about narrative writing. Students had just completed personal narratives in which they depicted a challenging moment in their lives. The narratives were surprisingly frank and vulnerable. One student wrote about watching his baby sister being taken to China; another wrote about her dog's death. These 11-year olds were writing about the most difficult and harrowing experiences of their young lives. I was moved, nearly to tears.

My fellow educators responded to the essays by laughing. "Don't they [Chinese people] normally kill their daughters? He should be grateful!" "Well, they normally eat their dogs. So that's probably what happened." "Don't you agree?"

I stared in stunned silence, now fighting back tears for a different reason.

At the end of every day, I took the train back to Teachers College with a friend who was also in the program. I told her what I had seen and heard, and she held my hand as I cried. She gently reminded me of the other educators we had met, such as my 7–12 CT who constantly, tirelessly advocated for her students; and my CT from my undergrad internship who provided her kindergarten students with one of the first healthy, safe environments of their young lives; and our professors who gave us the tools to advocate for our students, and to provide them with unconditional support and positive challenges, to foster their cognitive and socioemotional development in order to help them empower themselves. This is our duty.

Student teaching exposes us to the best and worst in our profession. We meet educators who inspire us, but we also meet educators for whom the passion which drives us is either gone or was never present, educators for whom children no longer bring joy, but only problems. Either way, we meet educators who change our lives forever.