

As an education major, I was all set to write about how I believe in teaching; and I do. I have had countless teachers in my life, both in school and out, who helped me become who I am today. However, as I was composing my first draft, something felt off. There are only two semesters left until I have to go out into the world and get a big kid job (Yes, it will happen. I will graduate despite my current state of denial.), and even though I took all my music and education classes and passed them, I still don't feel ready to be a real, honest-to-goodness teacher with my own class and everything. Who am I to tell kids what to do? I'm still learning, too. I'm not qualified to talk about how I believe in teaching, because I'm not even sure I'm qualified to be a teacher. I wondered if maybe all teachers have felt like this at some point, and maybe this feeling will never go away. And maybe I don't want it to. If I settle with the knowledge I have now, and never try to improve, of course I'm not qualified to be a teacher, at least not a very good one. I realize now that, even though I technically have all the knowledge I need to teach, that I never want to stop learning. It isn't fair to my future students if I stop bettering myself with new knowledge, methods, and points of view; and it isn't fair to me to stop learning just because my formal education is complete. I can use my experiences and the help of others to be a lifelong learner, which is what I believe a teacher really should be. How can I ask my future students to learn if I am not willing to do the same?

I believe in learning by asking questions. This summer I was able to work as a Tutor Counselor for Central College Upward Bound, a program for first generation college students to help them excel in academics and prepare for college. Each morning at breakfast, the director of UB reminded the students of one of our UB mottos: We are a community of scholars, and scholars are naturally curious. She would then challenge the students to ask a certain number of questions a day, once as many as sixty questions. My first thought was how absolutely annoying I would be if I tried to ask sixty questions in a day, like a five-year-old who won't stop asking, "why?" Then I realized how much I would learn if I asked sixty, well-thought-out questions a day. I was inspired as I watched one hundred-something students make a habit of asking questions. They really did become naturally curious, wanting to know about college life, academics, and the world around them. Asking questions does not, as I previously thought, make you seem like you don't have a clue what's going on. It shows that you are someone who wants to know and cares enough to ask.

I believe in learning from your mistakes. When I was fourteen, I learned that you shouldn't play baseball with a kickball. You might hit yourself in the face with the bat. During the musical as a high school freshman, I learned to make sure your microphone battery pack is secure before you go on stage. If it's not, it might fly off during a dance scene, swing around in circles by the chord (which, by the way, is still connected to your ear) nearly take out two other actors, and knock over the Christmas tree. My senior year of high school, I learned to double check everything . . . especially your basketball uniform before you run out on the court. You might end up wearing your 6 foot 3 brother's shorts the entire first half, struggle to keep them up when running down the court, and end up making the sneakiest switch in history at halftime.

I believe in learning through teaching. I also had the opportunity this summer to be one of the instructors at the Union Street Players Youth Drama Camp. I worked with a group of eleven students, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, to create our very own play. The students decided they wanted to form a

fractured fairy tale combining Jack and the Bean Stock, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, and the Little Mermaid. They also wanted a unicorn. It was my job to go home and write the entire script based on those ideas, cast the show, and direct in only four days, when the students would perform a fully-costumed, memorized version for their parents on an actual stage. From that experience, I learned that kids are often much smarter than we give them credit for, and when treated with respect, they will contribute creativity, talent, and positivity that makes for an amazing end product. I also learned, judging from the audience's laughter at my script full of horrendous puns, that I must be a lot funnier than I think I am.

I believe in learning from your peers. College is a unique environment. You have a campus full of experts in almost any field, as well as a number of student groups, activities, and clubs to be a part of. I encourage all of you, especially new students, to make the most of it. Go check out a student group, go to a concert on an instrument you know nothing about, take a class just because it sounds interesting. Take a look around. Just in this room, there are students studying sciences, math, psychology, business, arts, languages, and so much more. There are singers who participate in basketball, golf, mock trial, band, theatre, CAB, and probably a ton of other things I'm forgetting. So much of what I've learned during my first three years at Central has come from conversations within the A Cappella Choir. New members, please don't hesitate to strike up a conversation with anybody here. They're fascinating people, and I'm sure they want to find out about how fascinating you are as well.

I want to challenge you all to become lifelong learners. Never settle with what you know or understand. Be like my Upward Bound students and push yourself to become naturally curious. Don't let your education stop with a college degree. Learn from your mistakes and from experiences with others, even if you're the teacher. After the kids I taught at drama camp completed their performance, the little boy playing Jack approached me and thanked me for being his teacher. I thanked him for being mine. My name is Lexie Waymire, and I believe in learning.