

Teaching us about life

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When I was asked to write about how students have impacted my life as a teacher, I wanted to start by writing a quote. Strangely enough I couldn't find a suitable one! The only student-teacher connection was about how teachers have changed the lives of students. I have been a teacher for 22 years now and I have learnt that teaching-learning works both ways. It's an eternal cycle. Yes, teachers do play an important role in shaping a student's future, but it is equally true that students also influence the life of a teacher. I learnt to challenge myself in order to challenge my students. I became a better mother to my own children because I had to understand the needs of so many children. In fact one incident with a student also led me to enhance my career with a degree in guidance and counselling!

One of my students in grade 10 was brilliant in academics. She was a merit holder and therefore her parents insisted that she take up science in grade 11. It turned out to be the wrong choice and as a result she failed her 11th. The trauma of failure led her to deep depression. I was her teacher in grade 10; she continued to confide in me because she was close to me. It shook me up to see this child in distress so I contacted a counsellor (in those days there were very few) and along with her advised her parents to let her repeat but with her choice of subjects. After a lot of pressure, the parents agreed and my

student did her 12th in humanities, passing with merit!

This incident played a huge role in my opting to do a course in guidance and counselling so that I could help students like her. I felt that a teacher is the best counsellor for a student as she spends a lot of time with the students and understands them more than anyone else and can influence the student and parents to make the right choices based on their aptitude, interest and personality. This was in 1997!!!

Just as being a teacher made me a good mother, being a mother helped me understand what children go through when teachers ignore their feelings. In my journey as a teacher I came across different types of students, but I never looked at them closely until something happened to my daughter, which made me realize the pain of rejection. She was chosen for a dance but at the last moment was replaced. She was so heartbroken that I vowed to myself that I would never do such a thing to any student of mine. I remember one student who wanted to participate in the annual concert but had no talent whatsoever. I also choreographed for school annual days and was conducting an audition for selection. This girl wanted so badly to dance, imploring me to select her that I decided to create the character of a cloud in my dance where all she had to do was glide in and out of the stage. Few months back she traced me through Facebook and recounted

this incident and told me that it had taught her never to give up. She is now a professor in a university and encourages her students similarly.

Just as students learn from teachers, we also learn from them. When I conduct workshops for teachers and principals, I always tell them, if you have a problem, trust your students to find the solution. One such incident comes to mind. The school dispersal at the end of the day always ended in chaos. This problem was given to the student council and they sorted it out so well that today the dispersal happens very systematically and since it was the students plan, they

executed it with full responsibility and ensured a smooth and organized dispersal.

“While we try to teach our children ALL ABOUT LIFE our children teach us what LIFE IS ALL ABOUT.”

The author has been in the field of education for three decades now as a teacher, principal, director, consultant, teacher trainer and as Inspector of schools in India and Abroad. Currently she is the Director of Trinity International School and Junior College. She can be reached at shakun.jaisinghani@gmail.com

