

A Final Reflection

Student teaching was a blast—an adventure in the truest sense of the word. (And I’m not exaggerating.)

All in, my experience at Kearns high school was one for the books. Student teaching felt like jolts of missionary activity. I was reminded of my days of joy as a full-time missionary in the Philippines. What stories!

Student teaching, more or less, was a similar high. I was excited to wake up every morning and beat the alarm clock. I was chomping at the bit, always wanting to do more, teach more...do more...teach more. I worked so hard, I fell asleep when my knees hit the carpet one night. I never suffered helpless nights: I was too exhausted.

In life, I prefer to suffer exhaustion at the price of giving 100%.

At first, my lessons lacked depth, my classroom management skills lacked consistency, and my lectures and directions lacked potency—most of which were riddled with stammerings of “...uh...” or “...eh...” I was tired, cranky, irritable, and, needless to say, less effective. (Perhaps I was trying too hard and exceeding limits.)

Was I neglecting wisdom? Was I disorderly? Was I running faster than my strength would allow?

You can’t teach *everybody, everything, everyday*.

My father is an accomplished marathon runner. He teaches that runners must “save some fuel in the tank for the finish line.” While on the phone one afternoon, he said, “Save some fuel for the finish line, son. You’ve got plenty of time and you’ve got plenty of fuel in the tank.” (Thanks, dad. Your words echo the wisdom of Darrin Hammond, Kip Hartvigsen, Ralph Kern, Thomas Morley, Zeb Weeks, and Chris Wilson—my college mentors.)

I learned to slow down...breathe deeply...and focus on *what* would *help* my students *learn* and *remember* what I had taught them.

I learned to circulate the room in order to manage the class with “proximate authority.” I learned to accomplish more with one look than a man with 500 words. I learned to say the words, “I need your attention up here” and “That’s off-topic.” I learned to ask questions: “Well...what do *you* think?” “How will *you* use *this* principle in *your* writing?” “How will *this* affect *your* life?”

I learned from my mistakes—never descending or backsliding into cynicism or heartlessness.

And yes, as a result, I learned patience.

My cooperating teachers and my university supervisor are not without credit. Kathryn Wilkins, Jim Flanagan, and Ron Hermansen offered invaluable guidance at every turn. These fine folks gently encouraged me—never passing judgment; always speaking and counseling as mentors.

I want to continue. I want to improve.