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Who Educates the Educators?

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Happy Pagans

Sally's name got changed to "Sunflower" late last week. She went to the girl known as "Starpower" cause she was feeling weak. Starpower said, "Meet me by the lockers today after school." There she crushed a crystal, pronounced Sunflower as cool. Now Becky doesn't like the way Starpower acts at lunch; Says Sally doesn't come around church now much.

Happy Pagans everywhere,
Floating up and down academia's marble stairs,
Surviving on red beans and rice,
Never thinking twice about Jesus Christ.

Every weekend
Every fourth weekend they'll tide fully, pridefully pay eleven percent.

Hazy, crazy incense, guaranteed to cure your broken heart
They've got themselves a new building plan (only need another ten grand),
They're white, they're young, wearing dreads in their hair,
Happy Pagans every place,
Keeping up with the Joneses' church-pace.
They've got themselves a new building plan (only need another ten grand)
They've themselves a new building plan (only need another ten grand)

Happy Pagans everywhere,
They're white, they're young, wearing dreads in their hair,
Selling hemp and dancing like banshees,
Going for groceries at the Pakistani Pantry,
Never really fancied Jesus Christ.

Kjel Alkire

Thanks to Bill Bright for the phrase, Sara Vickery for the motivation, and Heidi Norton for the "banshee."

Who Educates the Educators?
by Katy Zelinka

"The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life." — Plato

Educating the mind is no longer a luxury in society. Rather, it is a necessary endeavor, pursuing higher ideals, searching for truth, and assimilating the ensuing values into one's culture and lifestyle. Some argue that higher education simply leads to anguish, that "the more we learn, the less we know." I prefer to look at education as homage to our creator, because, as we maximize our intellectual capabilities, we provide a finite glimpse into the vastness of His eminence, a potential bestowed only upon human beings. We are not ordinary mortal beings, or inert geological formations. God created us in an illustrious capacity for use of higher levels of thought, such as logical or philosophical musings, in an effort to be in His "likeness." We fill our lives with anguish only when we refuse to act on this potential, placidly living lives devoid of challenge or progression.

Whatever your views, it is blatantly apparent in today's society that education is imperative. To what level and extent is often under debate, but the pursuit of knowledge is nonetheless looked upon as an inherent stage of maturation. Most of us who believe in this paradigm have continued our own education beyond society's minimum standards. Another portion of our population wants to not only continue their self-edification, but to go a step beyond, dispensing knowledge and a love of learning to future generations through the teaching profession. I myself am one of these "chosen few."

Pedagogy is constantly being reevaluated, reanalyzed, and reprioritized. I believe that as a future educator, I, too, should examine and criticize the training I am receiving. Soon I will student teach and then graduate, so it seems an appropriate time to look at the benefits of my education here at Concordia, as well as to vent about the elements I either disagree with and/or envision as benefiting from change.

First and foremost, I am pleased with the core of my liberal arts education. The learning environments encouraged throughout the various humanities and science courses are advantageous for all, yet in particular for future educators. If nothing else, it is intriguing to study the diverse teaching styles of professors — which ones encourage involvement, and which stifles creativity and participation. This analysis, in my opinion, has bolstered my training I am receiving.

As an astute education professor once put it: "Teaching is the one unique career you have been preparing for your whole life, through observing past teachers, and you probably didn't even realize it."

However, I do not feel that I have received proper training to be teaching high school English next fall, as I hypothetically could be. I have chosen to seek more education at the master's level, primarily because of this overwhelming sense of deficiency. It still baffles me that I can graduate from this institution and teach English never having taken a poetry or British Literature class. I have, however, taken numerous classes in the rigor of teaching "properly," of writing impeccable lesson plans, of managing a classroom with the greatest of ease, and of discussing varying theories of the "utopian" educational system. These are all well and good, and yes, they will help me pass my state exams. Indeed, part of the debate stems from whether we are teaching our "students," or teaching our "subject." I feel that these cannot be separated in such a debate and that we are doing our students a great disservice if we are proficient in the theory of being an ideal teacher, yet have no knowledge which we are able to impart to them! Think back on your favorite teachers from
high school — weren’t they the ones who not only had an innate love for the subject they were teaching, but lived it and breathed it as well? Weren’t they the teachers who could share obscure yet enticing facts about their subject? Weren’t they the ones who knew the information so well already that they could shape it and share it in such a way that you not only enjoyed learning but actually retained the information?

It frightens me that I have to take the NTE in my subject area in order to gain my teaching credentials, when I have not previously learned much of the information I will be tested on. Standardized tests required in professional programs should be reviewed and studied for in great depth, but after 4+ years of higher education, I should not have to learn new material in order to pass. But I will.

Why do we continue to insist on more and more education classes which seem so far removed from actual classroom experience, when our Secondary Education students could benefit so much more from increased time studying their respective subject areas? I, personally, have taken a British Literature class. I greatly enjoyed studying British works in high school, and this was part of my motivation for choosing Secondary Education Language Arts. However, I have been unable to “fit” one of those classes into my schedule, due to the plethora of ed classes which have occupied my time. According to the school, I took Shakespeare, so that is all of the “British experience” that I need. That is incredibly naive. I am doing my future students no good whatsoever if I have never heard of Byron, or cannot distinguish a Canterbury Tale from a fairy tale, but I can certainly tell them all about their mental and moral development at this time in their lives.

Yes, I have been given the tools to seek much of this information out on my own, but if that is the case, why am I paying to be educated by others? Why spend two hours studying for every hour of class, only to spend another twenty hours a week reading works like Wuthering Heights in my spare time? (Although I have done that, and it was well worthwhile!) Should we ignore the schools surrounding us who have gone to a five-year education for teachers for similar reasons? Indeed, it is beneficial to start your teaching education early on, but shouldn’t we reevaluate the types of classes we are using in this training?

I am writing all of this for public consumption not only because it is a subject which is sincerely aggravating me at the moment, but also in response to rumors I have heard that more and more English classes are being removed from the English department and being handed over to the Education department. This notion deeply disturbs me, and as a member of a community that encourages challenging the status quo, I implore you to rethink this decision. I am not the only Secondary Education major who feels this way, but perhaps I am the only one who has taken the time to put it in print. PLEASE look at the way we are training our teachers at Concordia. Ask students their opinions on their education, and they will gladly share. Seek out the “raw data” available in excess here before you look to more theoretical tools. We, the students of Concordia, have been taught to think, and our brains are prime for the picking. Use us as tools, not only to be the best teachers we can be, but to aid in training future educators as well.

Refuge

A solemn figure
Surveying the sea
She stands alone
Against an indifferent world
Time raped her beauty
Its hands ravaged her innocence
Options, stoked materialism,
Forced away her soul
Greedy desolation
Now fulfills her needs
She's calm upon shivering currents
She is free.

Charlotte Evensen

photograph by Masako Saito