



Hello class! My name is Akemi Parker and this is my first semester here at the graduate campus. I recently graduated from UMW with a B.S. in Psychology, but took a short break from school to allow myself a little down time! However, I found that I like having some structure to my day, so taking classes is certainly helping with that. Right now, I live in Stafford where I grew up and attended school. This year I began my first “big girl” job where I am a kindergarten T/A at Lake Ridge Elementary School in Prince William County. Other than work and school, I am part of the Masters Swimming League, enjoy trying to play golf, and love shopping for bargains!

I believe part of the reason I want to become a teacher is because of the experiences I had throughout my grade school years as well as my experience as being a swim coach. And even though I am just beginning this journey of learning about teaching and how to manage a classroom, I have already begun to mold my own philosophy of education.

Although I was not a disruptive child, my parents were quite worried about leaving me at school because I tended to be shy around strangers. In fact, they spoke

with my kindergarten teacher and assured her that if she had any problems with me, not to hesitate contacting them. However, at the end of that day, my parents were shocked and relieved to hear that I had done just fine and cooperated nicely. I still remember my kindergarten teachers, and nearly all the rest of my grade school teachers, because of their abilities as teachers to make me feel important and enable me to come out of my shell. As I entered middle and high school, I began having problems with homework and tests, because I did not understand the material. But once again I was lucky enough to have the kind of teachers that mix kindness, and patience, with well intended challenges. I was able to see first hand how much a teacher has an impact on a child, and I feel as though teaching is one of the few careers that has this opportunity to create a bond with a child, strengthen and maintain it over several months, and watch as your impact on the child becomes apparent. I admire the teachers that helped build my confidence, and hope one day I may do the same for my students.

Although my teachers were able to quickly and positively affect my attitude as a child, I will expect and will be prepared for students who do not have such an instantaneous response. Currently, I am a kindergarten T/A, and have already been dealing with children who are having behavioral and emotional problems that have not been worked out yet. But I think observing and participating in situations liked these are helping me to shape my philosophy on education. Currently, I feel as though the perfect environment for teaching and learning is that of flexibility within structure. I believe the rules and discipline outlining a teacher's expectations need to be clearly defined so there is no confusion. I also believe that a teacher needs to plan out each day with a few target objectives. But on the other hand, one can not be too rigid in their methods, because

problems and surprises will occur. A reading lesson may take longer to complete because not all children are reading on the same level or there may be one child who is more advanced and needs additional tasks to keep he/she stimulated. It is important that a teacher be able to notice and spot these weaknesses and strengths in the classroom and be flexible enough to deal with them effectively.

Right now I am taking the Foundation of American Education class this semester, and we are using critical issues, such as medicating and testing standards, as well as other educational philosophies to shape our own. And I am learning quickly why any ideas concerning education can only be theories and not laws. As teachers, not only will we be educators but also life long learners as well. So, as we constantly digest new information and meet new students with ranging personalities and abilities, we will be forced to alter and shift our views and teaching methods respectively in order to best serve the students.