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“Ten”

 I was convinced by my friends to take a college level teaching course in high school because it was an “easy A.” I followed through with enrolling in this course thinking all that I would receive from this class was an A at the end of the year. I am working in the classroom setting observing the students one day when I look over at an empty desk. Ten is the number of days since I have seen the student sit at his desk. Ten days is the number of days that this student has been counted absent. I am grading papers when I come across this student’s quiz. I read the question along with his answer. The questions read “what is five times one.” His answer reads “ten.” I grade his paper and write zero out of ten at the top. Ten is the age of this student. I go to my mentor teacher and voice my concern for this student. She responds with words that have never left me, “I know this student is struggling and has been absent, it is because this student is homeless.” I am left in disbelief. I was unprepared to comprehend that this ten-year-old student of mine is homeless. I begin to think of how I may be able to help this student catch up so that he can continue to the next grade level. Then I begin to think, will I see this student again? All I can think is he’s been gone for ten days; will he be here tomorrow?

Educators take on the responsibility to not only educate their students but equip them for life and their future. As a future educator I believe that teachers play many essential roles in the classroom: the educator, the encourager, the comforter, and the protector.

After being able to experience working in the classroom setting every week for a year, I have grown so much in my understanding of what it truly means to be an educator. Throughout my time working in the school system, I was given a chance to work with a vast diversity of learners. I was also given the chance to create relationships with any students. I taught students who were homeless at age ten, students with severe attention deficit disorders, students with special needs, students who have lost a parent or sibling, students who were struggling at home, students who were struggling with being bullied, and students who have already had bad experiences with teachers.

All of these student interactions have better equipped me to become a successful educator. While nobody is prepared to walk into a fifth-grade classroom and wonder if their homeless student will come back to school this week, I feel like I am better prepared to play the role of educator, protector, encourager, and comforter and truly understand the importance of each of my roles as an educator. Ten is the number of days since I have been able to encourage and comfort one of my students. Ten is the number of days since I was able to teach my student. Ten is the age of the student in my classroom that is struggling with homelessness. Ten.