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November 11, 2014

An English teacher, to be or not to be?

To change or not to change? Those are the questions.

Why I became an English teacher is more a culmination of different facts and events swirled together that landed me to where I am today. I began working with children when I was 13 as a camp counselor. There I took care of young children and lead them in many involving/enabling activities, promoting them to involve themselves through songs, activities and discussion. This continued until I was the age of 25 counseling high-schoolers, working at a number of different camps with various themes (adoptee, sports, Christian, Boyscouts). Over the course of 10 years I acquired knowledge to manage/guide a group of people. Not to just manage, but to counsel, to listen to and empathize with. These things were never taught to me by any book, I learned them only through my experience as a counselor. The urge and enjoyment to teach also grew inside me due to those experiences.

As a Korean American Adoptee I had a very strong desire to return to Korea arriving in February 2010, and quickly learned that the work of an English teacher in Korea was quite different than that of a camp counselor. But more interestingly, many things were the same. I still had to manage a group of children, and found that my explaining/involving abilities obtained as a camp counselor truly helped in many situations.

However, my enabling and eliciting needed and still need some work. This answers the question: what can I change as a teacher? I desire to focus on my ability to uncover my students’ abilities, but with my guidance, for them to uncover the knowledge within. In fact, this very day tried some eliciting exercises, and I could actually see the sparkle in my students’ eyes as they came up with the answers themselves.

It was actually hard for me to not just blurt out an answer to my own questions to them, but as a result of answering their questions with questions, I could actually feel them learning. The amount of audible “Ah-has’!” have increased exponentially today. This is one of the largest changes/improvements that I would like to continue to work on in the future as an English instructor.