Book: *The Good Pre-school Teacher*

Author: William Ayers

Presenter: Emily R. Aguilo Perez

I. Relevant information:

In the foreword to this book, the “secret” to becoming good teachers is goes as follow: “they know how to talk to children and show them affection. Their dialogues are warm, personal, and open-ended, each child receives the teacher’s attention and respect in seemingly endless quantity” (vii). [My own emphasis]

In this book, Ayers presents the “life-narratives” of six pre-school teachers: Anna, Chana, JoAnne, Darlene, Michelle, and Maya. In these narratives teachers reflect on their teaching practices, experiences in the classroom, and past personal experiences which may influence their teaching. Ayers invites every teacher to be reflective because it is important to understand our own processes, struggles, and successful experiences. Moreover, it is important for teachers to have a voice because they are often “dehumanized, de-intellectualized, and disempowered by many of the current reports on education” (2). Thus, he asks:

-Where in the national reports are the voices of the teachers?

-Where are the living accounts of those most intimately bound up with schools?

Herein, lies the importance of self-reflection and letting the teacher’s voice be heard.

II. Questions to be discussed:

1. What is a good [pre-school, elementary, intermediate, high school, university] teacher?
2. Do teachers need to solve every social problem?
3. How many of us have ever sat down to reflect on our teaching?
4. How much do our childhood or past experiences affect our teaching?

In addition, these are some of the many questions Ayers provides for self-reflection:

1. What do you like about teaching?
2. What is most difficult about teaching?
3. Do you ever feel like leaving the profession?

III. Conclusion:

In analyzing together all six life-narratives, a common element shared by the teachers was the influence their childhood and their experiences in the past affect and inform their own teaching.