

8-2018

Grow

Erin Entermann

Ipswich Adventist School, Queensland, erinentermann@gmail.com

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Recommended Citation

Entermann, Erin (2018) "Grow," *TEACH Journal of Christian Education*: Vol. 12 : Iss. 1 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://research.avondale.edu.au/teach/vol12/iss1/11>

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Grow

Erin Entermann

Ipswich Adventist School, Ipswich, QLD
erinentermann@gmail.com

Key words: Growth, reflective practice, graduate teacher, feedback

As many of you know, I am a teacher. Well, I'm what they call a graduate teacher, sort of like a glorified probationary period that you exist in before you are accepted into the fold of fully registered teachers.

In Victoria, to exit this stage you must complete an inquiry project based on an aspect of your teaching practice, with a goal to enhance student learning, and demonstrate that you are a reflective teacher.

As a part of this process I have been subject to a number of visits from a member of our organisation's state office, with the purpose of observing my teaching practice, in order to provide feedback to enhance my performance, and give me information to include and reflect on within my inquiry report.

The person who comes to observe me is one of the loveliest people I have ever had the pleasure to know. She is generous in her praise and gentle in her critique. But after her visit today, I found that I had learnt a far more valuable lesson than I had ever gained from any of her visits previously. It was a lesson I thought I already knew, but one I learnt all the same.

I have always been a reflective person. I wouldn't say that I particularly enjoy the process of reflecting and addressing the shortcomings and deficiencies that come with reflection, but I advocate for its necessity. In short, before today, I felt comfortable in my ability to reflect and improve.

And then I sat down for my post-observation feedback conversation.

The praise that had already come my way based on the lesson that I had taught was generous and encouraging. As our conversation commenced, the praise continued. I had yet to hear a comment of constructive criticism. And I had one single, fleeting moment where I thought to myself...

I did it. I made it. I'm here now. I have climbed the mountain, placed my flag at the top, and I'm here to stay.

The moment vanished, because the suggestions, couched in the utmost kindness and respect, inevitably came.

Next time...

Have you thought about...?

I would like to see...

I turned around on my mountain and looked up. Yes, I had climbed a mountain, but I now stood in the shadow of another. I allowed myself a moment of bewilderment.

I thought I had made it. I thought this was the top.

Oh Erin. Proud, silly, naive little Erin.

Somehow, somewhere I had let myself believe that there was a finish line, a top of the world, a tumble of whimsical, synthesised notes that dissolve into a flashing 'Game Over' screen.

Of course, that's not reality. In life there is no finish line, there is no top of the world, there is no game over. It's just the next race, the next mountain, the next level.

In that moment, though slightly deflated, I saw why life is so brilliantly exciting.

As in my experience, it is possible to fool yourself into believing that there is some level of completion in life, that reflection is only useful as a means to an end, but that, I realised, is the surest way to stagnate. It is the surest way to determine whether you flourish or fail.

And what I learned in that single moment was that growth is unlimited.

There is no ceiling. No highest mountain, or furthest race, or final level.

How far you can grow is limited only by you. **TEACH**

Author information:

Erin Enterman is a primary school teacher who graduated from Avondale College of Higher Education and her blog *Erin Lucie – I write to discover* is sited at <https://erinlucie.wordpress.com>.

These reflections were posted on 21st August, 2017 in her first year of teaching professionally.



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