Journal 5

After reading some interesting articles and reflecting on the question of what makes an effective teacher, I believe that it all boils down to one word: love. If you love your students, all the other qualities needed to be an effective teacher seem flow from that starting point. When you love your students you see the need to be well organized and prepared. You take the time to figure out how to take a complex subject and break it down into manageable bites. You present contrasting viewpoints and are comfortable with differing opinions. If you love your students you enjoy teaching them and are confident in your teaching. You have the needed energy because you feed off of the students’ energy and love of learning. When you love your students, you use wit and humor to get points across and to defuse sticky situations. You know your students well enough to know if they’re following the material and if the material is motivating them. You also care about the quality of your teaching and make revisions to your plans so the kids get “it”. You are more approachable and fair because you have taken the time to get to know and love your students and they feel your love and acceptance of them.

I’ve spent the last twenty years working with young people of all ages in various different settings. I think the secret to my success has been that I love them and continue to love them as the years have gone on. My first group of “kids” is now in their mid to late 30’s with families of their own. I love that I’m still a part of their lives and now the lives of their children. When I’ve taken the time and energy to get to know the kids, I have discovered not only who they are, but also who I am. They have taught me as much as I have taught them. When I love, all the qualities of an effective teacher are much easier for me to achieve because my heart and soul is involved and it becomes a labor of love. If and when I get to the point in my life that I can no longer call my students, my kids, and mean it in the terms fullness, I will retire.