Four Square and the Politics of Sixth Grade Lunch

By Arthur Goldman

Reviewed by Donna Jellico, Class of 2013

Book Summary

Mr. Goldman takes us through his wonderful life inspiring journey of being a teacher. For those of us studying to be one someday this is a great book for you to read. He expresses how each and every one of us is not a finished product after graduating college, and making it as a teacher takes time and experience. Taking all his past knowledge, experiences, and former essays he came up with this way of explaining the importance of teaching. Throughout each chapter you will find yourself smiling with a warm heart, hoping that one day you will be as “GREAT”, as Mr. Goldman. Middle school is about growing, changing, and learning, thinking out loud and also having consequences. You will take adventures through unexpected moments and real world situations that you would never think would happen, and not always being prepared for things to come is part of the job. He describes this as always being on your toes at all moments and compromising. You have to be able to control time, space, and stuff. He goes into depth and various examples of what that is all about and how it can make you or break you as a teacher. “To have a good class you have to establish relationships, and good teachers bring who they are into the classroom …”, read this and discover the possibilities.

My Reflection

As a student, I can relate to everything we have been learning within the educational program at Campbell University. I really enjoyed this book and how the author, Arthur Goldman, wants to prepare future teachers with his own experiences and acknowledgement of being a teacher. So at least there are no surprises, but that’s not always the case. Goldman doesn’t want you going into the job being the definition of a teacher. He talks about change, and how teachers have to everyday because they don’t know what is expected. Growing and building relationships with your students is very important because the students feel safe and trusted. Also, learning is what is being done, and it doesn’t matter how the concepts are being taught as long as the students are having a great learning experience. In my “Teaching in the Middle” class [EDUC 365] we have discussed all of these terms, and have taken our experiences outside the classroom to gather more resources for our own knowledge.

Goldman says, “The best thing about being a teacher is that you want to be there for your students.” You are the one changing lives and making dreams come true, “it’s an inspiring feeling,” just to see their happy faces when they finally understand something. Goldman talks about this huge book bag he carries to class everyday just in case one of his students forgets something or is unprepared for class. No matter how many time you tell them, they are just kids and will forget and ask the same question several times. Even as college students, we still don’t put our own names on some of our papers or assignments we hand in to our teachers. In this book bag he has several outside pockets for
different things like pencils, pens, erasers, chalk, and dry board eraser markers. Within the larger parts of the book bag he carries snacks and scrap paper. I think this is a great idea; I remember seeing pens and pencils dropped on the floor through the halls of a middle school. They do lose them very quickly and unknowingly. Controlling time, space, and stuff is a chapter in this book that is really interesting to me because Goldman explained how controlling time made students work, rearranging the space and making it look like a living room made the kids feel at home. The stuff is having things around that are education, but also fun to mess with. So you can gather a lot of great ideas to get started with just by reading this book. For the future teachers, we do have so much more than just the standard course of study to look forward to, as Goldman would say “It’s a whole other world.”