

# The Success of Failure: Examining a Student Teacher's Relationship with Failure

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## ABSTRACT

- For the entirety of my undergraduate career, it had been explained to me persistently by upperclassmen education majors, sometimes subtly hinted at by professors, and even implied in the student teacher manual that failure, mistakes, and misfortune were all to be treated as essential components of student teaching. I thought about what it could be like if I embraced these seemingly inevitable failures rather than run from them. I wondered what kind of teacher or person I could become after such immense and meaningful growth.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

How does accepting/acknowledging my own failures affect my teaching practice?

## METHODS/DATA ANALYSIS

- In order to collect data on my personal failures and reactions to those failures throughout the student teaching experience I used a developmental portfolio.
- The developmental portfolio included a focused daily “failures” journal that I used to log things that happened that I thought could’ve done better.
- I reviewed my journal entries monthly to see if I could link my mental state and present perception of failures to my later teaching practice.
- I asked myself questions such as “Did I become more or less confident after this failure?” and “What did I do to ‘make up’ for this failure?”.

Date	Day Rating	Patterns Logged	More Confident	Less Confident	Notes
25-Jan-21	Yellow	Felt nervous and awkward	+		I was a bit more anxious about today
26-Jan-21	Yellow	Felt awkward giving read aloud	+		Today was actually a snow-day so it
27-Jan	Green	N/A	+		Today Lewisberg was on a half-day
28-Jan	Green	N/A	+		I did another read aloud today and it
29-Jan	Yellow	N/A	+		Overall, I think this week went well.
31-Jan	Yellow	N/A	+		We had a worst day today. They call
1-Feb	Green	N/A	+		Lewisberg was virtual again! I joke
2-Feb	Green	N/A	+		This was Lewisberg's half-remote d
3-Feb	Green	N/A	+		There was a substitute in the classro
4-Feb	Green	N/A	+		The substitute was still there today b
5-Feb	Yellow	N/A	+		

Key	
Great	Ended the day more confident, enjoyed my time at school
Above Average	Had a pretty great day, but nothing amazing
Average	Average day, no major ups or downs
Below Average	A messy day, maybe slow or chaotic
Bad	A terrible day, crash and burn failures

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- Placements:**
  - The more imperfect the placement, the more room the student teacher has to grow, learn and adapt to the situation.
  - Professional employers seek out teacher-candidates who can adapt and survive “imperfect” situations.
- Preparation of Student Teachers:**
  - The leading causes of student teacher failure include classroom management and discipline issues, inability to relate well with students, poor teaching methods, lack of commitment to the profession, and personal characteristics.
  - The majority of these issues can be mended through as much in-class involvement as possible during their teacher preparation program.
- Perceptions of Failure:**
  - Properly designing for failure requires that learners identify their failures, environments be designed to intentionally encounter failure, learners question their failures, and support be provided to resolve failures.
  - It is imperative to note that the profession of teaching is more or less founded on the idea of failure. The curriculum, the world, and kids are constantly changing so it is imperative for teachers to be adaptable, flexible and able to use failure in a productive way.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

- As early as the first month of student teaching, I struggled to find data. I was dedicated to my failure chart, but my days were consistently going well, and I was not encountering nearly as much failure as I had anticipated. In the early days of my placements, I logged feelings of nervousness before taking on new classroom tasks as well as awkwardness when presenting lessons for the first time, but nothing crashed and burned like I expected it to.
- Although I didn’t experience the failure that I expected to throughout my student teaching experience, I can still see growth within myself when watching my recorded videos and reading my student teaching notebooks. Whether it be due to nerves or actual experience, I can definitely see that I grew throughout my student teaching experience regardless of failures.

## DISCUSSION

- Limitations:**
  - All uncontrollable factors (placement, cooperating teacher, and grade levels) all worked in my favor.
  - Susquehanna’s teacher preparation program was vital to my success in the classroom.
- Perspectives of Failure:**
  - The literature review for this study changed my perspective of failure.
  - My mindset changed from “I am going to fail” to “I am going to grow”.
- Preparation and Planning:**
  - I always planned my units and lessons either a week or a month in advance. This also included creating, printing, and copying materials.
  - I believe a lack of preparation would’ve caused more stress and failure.

## IMPACT FOR PRACTICE

- It is important for upperclassmen or current student teachers to be wary when complaining about student teaching to underclassmen.
- A student teaching experience does not have to be miserable if you do not want it to be.
- It is vital for student teachers to take hold of the controllable factors that cause student teachers to fail into their own hands (i.e. preparation and planning).
- The more uncontrollable factors however, such as placement and cooperating teacher, can be worked though with the right attitude paired with dedication to the profession.

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