Pernell—

This is a really strong piece. I like how specific you were in your choice of examples, and, most of all, I like how you theorize Molly’s teaching. Many students sort of stuck to safe stuff about nice teachers reaching out to them, but you spoke more directly to pedagogy and what it did for the class. I have some suggestions about organization that I think might make the paper move in a more powerful way—one that builds momentum rather than diffusing it. It would take some tinkering, and you may ultimately decide that you don’t want to do it, but it’s just an idea. I’m wondering if you started with the situational literature story, moved then to the paragraph about the general feel of class discussion, talk about the student-led discussion presentations. And here, I’d like for you to be specific—use you as an example, your presentation topic, the experience of it for you as a student. You have another paragraph about how the class conversation works (and right close to it) so it feels repetitive the way you’ve got it. Then move to the story of your paper experience and here again, be specific about your work—the book you wrote on, your idea for it. The trick is that you essentially have two epiphanies and working those in where they best fit is the challenge with this new organization. But I think that it will allow you to cut down on what starts to feel a bit repetitive in how you talk about the success of the class and the teaching. Great work here Pernell. Very much looking forward to the revision.

Devon—

You ask at the end if you should talk about your own experiences in this paper, and my answer, though perhaps not that helpful, is that I’m not sure. This was your experience essentially and it did tell you a lot about what you admire in teaching. So it seems like the right story to tell. I feel like it gets repetitive in the last two pages of the essay, and so I think you could cut a lot of that out. And that might be then a place for you to bring in your own experience a bit. Did you recognize scaffolding in any of the learning experiences you had? Did you recognize the lack of it? I don’t think it is wrong to focus in on the story of this one boy, but I do think that sort of contextualizing it with your own experience might work too. Finally, you speak in generalities about Miss Ellen with the sole exception of the scaffolding. I’d rather you either keep a tight focus on the scaffolding story and cut the vague paragraphs of praise, or take out some of the scaffolding and really provide examples of the qualities you assign to her in the second paragraph. Finally, watch how you are constructing some of these sentences. They are overly complicated and have more words than they need. The meaning gets lost in them. It’s perfectly appropriate to write the way a person might actually talk.

Jane—

I don’t have a problem with the twist at the end—that the teacher you despised actually is the teacher that taught you the most, but I feel like the moment of discovery goes by so fast that I entirely miss it. I had to go back and read the one small paragraph that says Stone taught you long division well. When I’m reading the essay, all I get from nearly the first three pages is how much you hated her. It feels really mean spirited. And because so little time is spent on recovering her reputation, it doesn’t really lesson the effect. So, in a revision, I would suggest toning down some of first part of the essay, and definitely making it shorter. A page will do. Spend more time on your realization that she was a good teacher. I think this will take some work, because I’m not sure that knowing long division is really the mark of an excellent teacher. She must have taught you something else—an approach to learning, an understanding that not everything is easy. That needs to be talked about. Spend more time, also, on your actual learning process. I don’t get how you went from hating it and crying next to Mrs. Rodriguez to knowing long division. Did you get tutoring after school from Stone? That’s not clear. I think that with some shifting of emphasis, this will be a strong piece.

Lacey—

This is a strong draft because of how individualized your story is. You are unique among your peers for talking about maybe wanting to do something that was not teaching. I think in a revision, you might consider making sure you are not repeating ideas or sentiments expressed in different places in the text. In four pages, it’s not worth repeating ideas that have been expressed elsewhere. The other thing is you might think about your or organization. Not because your organization is bad, but a different arrangement might give the piece more punch. I like how you open with a story about always wanting to teach. I like the detail (didn’t see a lot of it from your colleagues). I think then setting up this idea that you didn’t know why you wanted to be a teacher, you move directly into your school successes and troubles—slight though they were. You end that section by saying that it could have gone differently for you, but you were OK, but you see how it can go badly for students with your boyfriend. I thought his story could include a few more telling details—like your section has. Then, and here is the kicker, what if you moved your lawyer story with your grandmother to after your boyfriend story? You harken back to a time when you were waffling on this whole teaching idea, but then your boyfriend’s experience made you see what you really wanted to do. Then you can cut down a little on saying so many times how you want to reach out to students and save them. You’ll have shown us a logical progression of why that was. What do you think? Nice work Lacey. Excited to see where it ends up.

Elizabeth—

You ask the question on the back of your paper if you are too general in your essay because you do not talk about a specific teacher. I don’t know if your essay is too general because you don’t talk about a specific teacher or teachers, but it is too general because you don’t have any examples of actual good teachers. Your paper reads like an overview of what you think good teachers should be. The assignment was to analyze your experiences with teachers, classrooms, assignments you had as a student that made you think about what good teaching looked like. So, in a revision, I would consider mining your own experience to find concrete examples of some of the qualities you address broadly here. The other issue you might focus on in a revision is your organization. I feel like you’ve got three places where your paper might start. You’ve got your actual opening, then another one on page two, then another one on page three. Interspersed, you’ve got a lot of wind up and not a lot of pitch. What I mean is sort of what I addressed initially, you spend a lot of time telling me what you think a good teacher should be, but offer no examples of that in practice. I would consider looking at the two other places in your paper that might serve as an opening and see if that might help you both focus your paper, cut out some of the telling, and give you guidance on what to show.