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I was raised in Rowland Heights, California and have attended several colleges and universities since graduating from high school. These include Mt. SAC; East Los Angeles College, where I received my AA; UC Davis; CSULA, where I received my Bachelor's degree in English; and Whittier College, where I completed my credential and will receive my Master's degree in Teaching in September.

While at ELAC, I had an English instructor who believed in my writing ability and recommended that I be a tutor in an ESL class. During this semester of tutoring I realized how many skills (basic writing, grammar, to name a few) I didn't recall ever learning during my education because it was assumed I already knew them. I decided at that time in my life that I wanted to make a difference in students' lives so that those who passed through my class wouldn't look back after five or ten years and say, "I never learned about participles" or "I didn't learn about identifying theme."

As a paraeducator, I received flyers about Career Ladder's Forums. The opportunities that the Career Ladder provided sounded interesting to me so I attended one and applied to become a member. Becoming a CSPTTP scholarship recipient helped me financially with tuition and sometimes with books. It was a great morale boost to know I was on a scholarship as well.

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My experience as a paraeducator provided me with the opportunity to work with a wide range of personalities and situations. The Performance Assessments were also great practice for the Teacher Performance Assessments that I needed to complete during my Credential Program.

I was challenged with juggling work, school, and family. What kept me going was remembering that it was going to be worth it when I reached my goals and keeping in mind the satisfaction I would feel when I accomplished them. My advice is to "just keep on keepin' on," as someone once said to me, because sometimes that's all we can do when it comes to things we want out of life.

Getting parents involved has been one of my biggest challenges because my discussions with parents have revolved around trying to change their students' negative behavior and/or raising their grades. However, once the relationship with a parent has been established, working to help their child be successful becomes a much easier task. It's developing the initial relationship that can be trying.

I think it's important to remember all of the idealistic lessons and strategies that you planned while you were in school because you thought they were great ideas for student learning. If you believe it's exciting, so will your students. If you don't believe wholeheartedly in an activity (or at least act like you do), your students will know. It's like they're psychic or something!!!

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