

Teaching Philosophy Statement

The incorporation of a variety of theories and practices into a classroom is the most comprehensive way to reach all students served within. The professional educator must have a philosophical basis for his or her daily and ongoing teaching practices. Throughout my education, from my first memories of kindergarten and continuing through my personal experiences as a classroom teacher, I have developed a belief system regarding education. There have been many influences on my personal beliefs, ranging from such historical figures in education as Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and B. F. Skinner, to such personal influences as my favorite childhood teachers and inspirational colleagues and administrators. Each of my personal, educational, and work experiences to date have shaped the type of teacher I have become and allowed me to begin to develop my own personal philosophy of education.

Development of the Writer's Personal Philosophy of Education

The college of education that I attended for my undergraduate training embraced the constructivist theories and philosophies of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky and the tenets of Skinner's behaviorism. As a result, I was highly trained in the beliefs and ideals of constructivism while also learning to embrace the positive aspects of the behaviorist approach. Although I am still a proponent of constructivism and truly believes that the behaviorist approach can be effective, I have learned through personal experience that an eclectic mixture of theories and philosophies is the most effective approach. My own graduate and post-graduate educational experiences combined with my experiences teaching in the high school and higher education classrooms have provided me with an even more comprehensive understanding of educational philosophy, working with students from early childhood through adulthood in a variety of settings.

Personal Philosophy of Education

Education is a life-long adventure in learning, a never-ending voyage through knowledge and experience along which a person's self develops and matures. A true education begins before birth, as the child rests in the mother's womb, and ends only after death, possibly continuing throughout eternity. Every person, from birth through adulthood, is capable of thought and learning, although the level of ability in each is different. The purpose of education is to help individuals become successful, well-rounded adults who are capable of intelligent thought and action, able to succeed in whatever field they may choose, becoming parents and teachers and mentors to children who will ultimately follow in their footsteps.

There are two primary educators in a student's life, parents and teachers. A child begins to learn before entering this world and is taught, initially, by his or her mother and father or family members, generally through observation and behavior modification, until reaching an age at which the child may enter school, in daycare, preschool, or kindergarten. At that time, the child's teacher and parents become a cooperative unit, working towards the common goal of helping the child succeed and learn. Ideally, at some point in either middle or high school, the student's parents may take a step back and leave the child's education solely in the hands of the teachers, but they still play a vital role in the student's ultimate

success even through the teen years. Education is the joint responsibility of the student along with his or her parents and teachers, from the first day of preschool or kindergarten, continuing through graduation, and into the higher education classroom as well as the workforce beyond.

The effective teacher addresses the needs of each student. Children in the early childhood classroom must have a variety of hands-on learning experiences and be given many opportunities to experiment with their surroundings and participate in a cooperative learning environment. As the students get older, activities must be more individualized and tailored to their specific interests and abilities. By the time a child reaches adolescence, the educational experiences must reflect his or her ability to engage in logical reasoning and abstract thought. During each stage of development, the teacher must provide appropriate learning activities while challenging the student to do more than what is required. A true educator understands that students must be given many chances to fail as well as succeed, for only through experiencing failure will one be able to experience and appreciate success.

One of my strongest beliefs about a student's education is the importance placed on respect. For the teacher, the students should be viewed as the most important people in the world, the leaders of tomorrow and beyond. Therefore, their thoughts, beliefs, and speech should receive the same amount of respect as that given to colleagues and peers. Students should be treated as if they are capable of thought and should be held responsible for themselves. Through this responsibility comes respect, for themselves and for others. Additionally, I believe that one learns through 'doing' and must participate in actively acquiring knowledge through meaningful, hands-on, interactive experiences. A student cannot learn if simply given information but must act upon concrete objects and materials, allowing for the manipulation of learning in order to gain full understanding of the information and concepts presented in the classroom. Edgar Dale, Ph.D., has stated:

WE REMEMBER

10% of what we read

20% of what we hear

30% of what we see

50% of what we see and hear

70% of what we discuss with others

80% of what we personally experience

95% [of] what we teach others (University of Houston, n.d.).

Applying this belief in the classroom and reflecting the same in my teaching practices has allowed and will continue to allow me to become a better teacher while also facilitating and supporting the ongoing development of my personal philosophy of education.

Conclusion

While the foundation of my educational philosophy will remain the same, different aspects of my beliefs may continue to change over time as my teaching experiences, classroom learning experiences, and personal experiences are constantly changing. Consequently, my philosophy is ever-changing and evolving just as I, myself, am ever-changing and evolving. Each day, I continue to develop my understanding of the manner in which both children and adults learn and grow and while my own understanding of both the historical philosophical foundations of education as well as emerging discoveries in brain research and best practices continues to develop. Through it all, I will strive to foster the growth and expansion of my own best practices and personal teaching skills as my personal philosophy of education continues to grow and develop as well.