

## **Philosophy of Teaching**

My philosophy of teaching is based off of three key concepts that emerged in my theory of learning including provide support, reflect on practices, and ensure relevance. These concepts heavily influence the way that I approach teaching and the learning that occurs in my classroom.

### **Provide Support**

I believe the role of teachers should be that of a facilitator of learning, providing support and guiding student thought and progress. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86, as cited in McLeod, 2019)." Teachers should provide appropriate support and assistance for their students based on their needs. One tool teachers can utilize includes peers who comprehend the content and can serve as an extra support in order to help students reach learning goals. Due to this belief, I provide many opportunities in my class for collaboration in a variety of forms. My classroom setup organizes student desks into groups to provide opportunities for discussion of content, which allows peers to provide support and share thoughts. While completing labs, students work in collaborative groups to provide assistance and discuss ideas throughout the activity.

Feedback is another important aspect of the teacher providing support and should occur regularly. Teachers can provide support by providing feedback during learning experiences in the classroom and also by providing feedback on both formative and summative assessments so students can identify which concepts they comprehend, and which areas they may need

some more time to master. I believe that students should also participate in feedback and self-reflection to assess where they are in the learning process and reaching their goals.

According to Hattie & Timperley (2007) “Students, too often, view feedback as the responsibility of someone else, usually teachers, whose job it is to provide feedback information by deciding for the students how well they are going, what the goals are, and what to do next” (p. 101). As students progress through school they should be taught the skill of self-reflection so that as they continue through life learning and mastering new skills and concepts they are able to identify areas of mastery and areas for improvement on their own.

### **Reflect on Practices**

I believe teachers should be reflective about their practices in the classroom to best serve the needs of their students and demonstrate a commitment to being a lifelong learner. As teachers gain experience, they are able to hone certain skills and continue building on others throughout their career. As educators learn, their beliefs may change when new information is presented and the same should occur for teachers and their beliefs about teaching practices. During my career as a teacher there are certain aspects of my teaching practices that I have changed as my beliefs and understanding about my students and the learning process has changed. “Frequent assessment tasks can help teachers generate cumulative information about students’ levels of understanding and skill, so that they can adapt their teaching accordingly” (Nicol & Macfarlane, 2006). Educators should reflect on their lessons daily to determine what was successful for their students and which areas may need to be revisited or revised for future learning experiences.

Discussions between other professionals involved in the learning experiences of students, such as co-teachers and other educators in the same department, should occur to

provide extra support and ideas in order to ensure student needs are met. By participating in continuous professional development, teachers can demonstrate their commitment to lifelong learning for their students while building a more comprehensive understanding of the processes of teaching and learning.

### **Ensure Relevance**

Learning experiences should be created in a way that allows learners to easily identify their connection to the real-world and the relevance of what they are learning. John Dewey argued that (as stated in Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 2000, p. 77) “school should be less about preparation for life and more like life itself.” This brings to light the fact that school should be structured more like the real world in order to best prepare our students for the future. While educators have standards they are required to cover, teachers should find a way to present the material in a way that students can make that connection. Many teachers have been questioned by students about the relevance of what they are teaching because their students could not make the connection between the information and its relevance and application in the real world.

Part of ensuring relevance is providing opportunities for students to not only learn content, but develop life skills such as collaboration and problem-solving through their learning experiences. My curriculum is set up so that each unit of study relates to a unit challenge, or real-world scenario, and the final assessment for students is to present their solution to the problem based on their learning throughout the unit. By presenting information in this format, students are able to make the connection between concepts that may seem abstract and their relevance to life outside of school.

References:

Bransford, J., Brown, A.L. & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.), *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience and school* (pp. 3-27). Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Retrieved from <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=0309070368>.

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Nicol, D., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 199–218.