Philosophy of Education – A Pursuit of Passion

By Cassie Miller

I believe in Dr. B. Jean Mandernach’s philosophy, that in order to achieve effective learning, a teacher should “foster critical thinking so that students may become effective consumers of psychological information.” In order to accomplish this goal, getting to know my students is a top priority of mine. My classroom functions as a team which requires many different players to implement their individual skill sets towards the success of the entire group. Building relationships with my students empowers me to discover each player’s unique skills, and use their strengths while improving their weaknesses to benefit the team. Grouping students based on their academic and social skill sets allows one student’s strength to support another student’s weakness, which instills a sense of importance and self-worth in children, creating a well-rounded team of individuals. This team-mentality also helps students to build relationships with each other and promotes acceptance and celebration of diversity in the classroom. Consistent communication and interaction amongst classmates helps students to expand their views outside of the world that they know, and bring global awareness into the classroom.

It is incredibly important to me that my students accept and embrace each other’s differences to create a safe learning environment. Without a sense of compassion and security in the classroom, my students cannot learn as effectively. My students make their discoveries through fearless inquiry, which allows them to integrate a variety of interests and subject matter through a self-driven learning process. No one in my classroom should ever be afraid to say, “I don’t know,” but this should be used as an opportunity for creative exploration, in which students will derive their own answers through the use of provided resources and class discussion. My students will be active participants in their learning process, with enough freedom to make and correct their own mistakes. The enthusiasm and curiosity sparked within my students will push them to venture into places where failure and the unknown are prevalent. But I will provide my students with useful resources and technology, and will be there for support and guidance if those amenities ever fall short.

As head coach of my team, my job is to help my students learn and embrace their own strengths, while encouraging and supporting them to develop whatever new skill sets they desire. This requires building relationships, which is invaluable when it comes to classroom management, teaching effectively, and creating a healthy environment for students to learn and grow. In order to accomplish this, it is important to create and utilize small group time and one-on-one interactions through structured work time and stations. Once I know each student and understand how their mind operates, lessons are adapted to best suit each student’s needs. I believe that using students’ learning styles and interests is key in order for them to connect the information gained inside of the classroom with the outside world. When knowledge developed inside the classroom becomes applicable elsewhere, learning becomes much more meaningful. These ideas reflect those of David Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory, which describes a cycle of translating concrete experiences into active experimentation and learning.
To encompass all types of learners and skill sets, there must be a healthy balance between routine and variation of activities. Therefore, students should understand the expectations and structure of my classroom so that learning can still take place when the teacher is not leading it. However, within routine activities, my role is to be aware of when students are ready to move on from a certain task or concept into either a new way of learning it or an entirely new concept. There is no one-size-fits-all educational style, so the one thing that all teaching styles should have in common is flexibility and the ability to evolve to benefit the needs of each student and situation. Teachers should never stop adjusting and improving. Every group of students is unique and should be treated as such accordingly. However, my teaching style for all groups of students will emphasize maintaining a balance between embracing my students for who they are, and pushing them within their limits to become a better version of themselves. I make a point to familiarize myself with the current pop culture and indulge myself in the interests of my students outside of the classroom. Maintaining exposure to new activities and ideas as well as keeping an open mind helps me to continuously improve as an educator and keep in touch with current trends. Teaching is a never-ending job, requiring active membership as a role model in the community through involvement with extracurricular activities, which also contributes to building relationships in the classroom. I expect my students to give me the same amount of respect and effort that I give them, knowing that they can always expect one hundred percent from me. I have found that people have a natural tendency to treat others with the same amount of respect that they receive. This idea is incorporated into my classroom through the Golden Rule and helps my students and myself to constantly hold each other to a high standard.

Throughout my teaching career, I believe that my number one quality is my passion for education. Passion sparks enthusiasm, enthusiasm sparks curiosity, and curiosity sparks learning. I believe that enthusiasm is contagious, and my role is to use my own passion for learning to infect students with this same enthusiasm to keep them constantly engaged in their learning. My hope is that once students are excited enough about a particular topic, they will develop the dire urge to acquire more knowledge about it, and most importantly, become lifelong learners.