Teaching Philosophy

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My teaching philosophy has developed from many years of teaching experience working with pre-service and in-service teachers, as well as students K-10. As a teacher my mission is threefold:

- to extend and enhance the students’ knowledge and understanding;
- to ignite enthusiasm for learning;
- to build a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

To achieve this, I apply a variety of strategies that are based on educational principles encompassing learning theory, diversity issues, 21st century skills, and instructional planning and assessment.

Learning theory: I employ a number of different learning theories to fit the goals of the lesson and the needs of the students. Cognitive learning principles provide a way to help me think about how students process the information they receive. As I teach, I select tasks and activities that best promote understanding and patterns of association that enable the students to make meaning of the lesson content. These activities are often authentic, practice based tasks, requiring the students to be self-reflective critical thinkers. Behavioral theory also has a number of principles that can benefit learning and classroom management, which I employ as appropriate.

Cultural diversity and learning style: Understanding the learners in my class is a critical aspect of my teaching. I make a point of getting to know the students so I can effectively tailor my instruction around the individual learning styles as well as the cultural diversity of the group. I structure my teaching on the Dunn learning style model for higher education (Dunn & Griggs, 2000), which involves five strands for consideration: environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological, and psychological. For example, the emotional strand makes me think about how I will motivate the students and how structured the lesson should be; for the sociological strand I consider how I will explain particular concepts to support the global or analytical thinking students in the class.

21st Century teaching: Digital technologies are embedded within U.S. culture, and many of those technologies are being used in schools in valuable ways. In my teaching, I model effective use of technology following the Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK; Mishra & Koehler, 2006) framework, which ensures that the three knowledge areas are working together rather than independent of each other. In my classes I often require students to use various technologies throughout the semester to build a good foundation of skills and tools, which they can use to extend the boundaries of traditional pedagogies. In addition, I ensure that a strong connection is forged between theory and practice, so that students connect what they learn in the classroom with the clinical work they conduct in the schools.
Instructional planning and assessment: I employ a variety of instructional approaches which connect with learning theories and styles of the students in the class. I often utilize the constructivist approach to provide students with the opportunity to build a deeper understanding of the concepts. I will do this with inquiry activities, cooperative learning, and discussions using accountable math talk. For each lesson I clearly identify the objective of the lesson, the corresponding activities to meet those objectives, and the method of assessment I will use to determine students’ understanding. As well as differentiating the lesson activities for the students, I also use various methods of assessment and clearly explicate to the students why that approach is being used.

As I teach the students, I am mindful of my position as a role model and I try to exemplify approaches and techniques I would like to see the students use in their own classrooms. I also want the students to see my enthusiasm for lifelong learning, and use that to help them connect and ignite their own passion for learning. I constantly aim to improve my teaching through student feedback, attending teaching seminars, talking with peers, and trying out new approaches. My philosophy has been developed so that my teaching will inspire and change the lives of the students in my class, and through a ripple effect change the lives of their own students.
References
