

## Philosophy of Teaching

In elementary school I decided that I wanted to be a teacher. By middle school I had learned that teachers are not rich and even still I was determined to be a teacher. In high school I learned that teachers were largely controlled by current government policy. I didn't want to be a teacher after this lesson; I wanted to be a counselor. This would allow me to pursue my passion as a teacher in a different venue. In college I learned that as a professor my aspirations could be fully realized in service as a teacher and scientist practitioner.

As a student of psychology questions regarding meaning guide much of my thinking and teaching. When I consider the meaning of learning the terms understanding, application and change come to mind. In my classroom learning has occurred when there is a positive change in the way students think, act and feel in relationship to the subject matter. Building upon their initial understanding of the concepts presented, challenging them to engage in the process of metacognition, and prompting them to take action by integrating the concepts into daily life encourages this kind of learning.

In order to promote learning I take on the role of nurturer and facilitator. As a nurturer I recognize the importance of understanding the unique learning styles and different ability levels present for each student. By acknowledging the developmental stage of each learner I am able to allow for hierarchical independent learning while offering guidance and direction as needed. I respond to these variations without reducing my expectations for excellence. The objectives in my classroom set challenging and attainable goals for learning. The support,

encouragement and constructive criticism that I provide enhance student self-efficacy and self-confidence. This promotes a climate of trust and respect in my classroom.

Understanding, application and change are markers for learning in my classroom. These goals influence the methodology I employ daily. Student participation through small and large group discussion is a critical device for learning in each of my classes. In my role as facilitator during group discussion I challenge students to question the content and concepts that the text presents. Moreover, writing assignments focus on the process of metacognition, pushing them to think critically about their understanding. This process promotes both self-awareness and social awareness. Personal growth and community action projects allow students to demonstrate this understanding by the application of course concepts through change processes that improve their own lives and their community. The student response to these projects has been rewarding for me as a teacher. Across the board their evaluations were reflective of awe at the impact the projects had on them and their community.

While in the service of students it is important that we acknowledge that we too are students. This encourages humility, and allows us to share our passion and curiosity with students. I knew that I was successful in demonstrating these facets while teaching when a student shared "It is really evident that you are passionate about what you are teaching ...that you love what you are doing." The work I do as a teacher is a gift in my life. The preservation of this gift will involve continued pursuit of expertise in my field and innovations in teaching methodology.

