My Professional Teaching Credo:

Lauren Houser

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Introduction to Teaching 111

Mrs. Eastman
Abstract

In 18 years of schooling, with the help and guidance of many patient and encouraging teachers, I have spent much time discovering who I am: both as a student and as an educator. It is this contact with these teachers and the relationships I developed with them years later that have shaped the way I look, feel, and think about teaching. They have influenced both the way I teach and the way I learn, and therefore, the way I view both teaching and learning. I believe that teachers have been given the enormous task of preparing young minds to learn and grow. As a teacher, my goal is to not only give students’ the skills that are necessary to succeed in the classroom, but to prepare them for life as well.
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Mark Van Doren once said, “The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.” Over the last 18 years, with the help and guidance of many patient and encouraging teachers, I have spent much time discovering who I am; both as a student and as an educator. It is in my contact with these teachers, and therefore, my relationships with them years later that have shaped the way I look and feel about teaching. Teaching is defined in the Webster’s dictionary as “to cause to know something.” It is in this “causing to know something” that I have found my calling as a teacher. I believe that teachers have been given the enormous task of preparing young minds to learn and grow. This responsibility is not something I take lightly. As a teacher, my goal is to not only give them the skills that are necessary to succeed in the classroom, but to prepare them for life as well.

I was in the first grade when I realized that I wanted to be a teacher. Mrs. Wilson was my first grade teacher and she instilled in me a love of learning that would sustain me throughout high school and college. It was from her that I first learned how to read, how to add, how to subtract, and how to become the best person I could possibly be. The lessons I learned from Mrs. Wilson carried me far beyond the immediate classroom. She not only prepared us, her students, for the second grade but encouraged us into becoming compassionate, respectful individuals as well.

As a teacher, I will be responsible for auctioning young minds; helping them to learn and grow throughout the year. The teaching-learning process that goes on in the classroom is as much a part of the student as it is for the teacher. I believe that my
students will teach me as much about myself and life itself, as I will teach them throughout my years in the classroom. As an educator, I value student independence, and hope to implement systems and procedures that foster independence yet I believe that a student learns more through student-teacher interactions. Children learn more by sharing their thoughts, opinions, and ideas than by keeping their ideas and opinions to themselves and my hope is to create a classroom environment that fosters that kind of cooperative learning. When examining the learning process I feel that testing and grades, though they may be necessary as a marker of student competence in a certain subject, should not be the basis or foundation for which teaching and learning take place. I believe that if a child can successfully demonstrate mastery of a subject, be it through a project, presentation, or other means of demonstration, then that student has “mastered” that content area or standard. The primary concern of a classroom should not focus on competition and grades, or even on getting the “good” grades so often sought after, but on the learning and knowledge that is being gained throughout the year. The teaching-learning process between an educator and a student is not an easy practice that can be developed overnight. Therefore, I believe that the teaching and learning that goes on between the educator and the student is one of the most important factors in a child’s success, just as it was in mine.

From a philosophical viewpoint, knowledge begs a list of many questions: “What knowledge is true,” or “How does knowing take place?” Knowledge becomes the focal point of Epistemology. As a teacher, I will have to confront and respond to these very questions. For example, I will have to determine what is true about the content I teach and the most appropriate way to convey this knowledge. If I am teaching a lesson on
cause and effect in children’s literature I will rely on the idea of knowledge based on reason and logical analysis. My hope would be that my students could rationally think through the process and steps necessary to come up with a reasonable conclusion. Knowledge does not have to be purely based on one process or analysis either. Knowledge based on authority, be it a sage, poet, expert, textbook, or teacher, can be useful in a classroom setting when trying to convey a certain understanding or concept, such as Albert Einstein and his theory of relativity. I do not want my students to accept what they learn solely because they read it in a textbook or because someone said it was so; rather, my hope for them is to find a balance between knowledge gained from authority, experience, intuition, reason, and logical analysis, and then apply it in their own lives. My hope is that my students continually ask “Why?” And it is in asking of “why” that I hope my students begin to discover the answers that will later become the building blocks for knowledge and learning.

In examining myself as an educator I have come to realize that there is not simply one teaching philosophy that fits me. Rather, it is a culmination of both progressivism and social reconstruction that form who I am as an educator. I believe that the content of the curriculum ought to be derived from students’ interests and that learning is essentially active rather then passive. For me, effective teaching involves the whole child and their interests and needs relative to cognitive and affective areas. I believe that the best way to prepare students for the future is to equip them with the problem solving skills that will allow them to discover meaningful knowledge throughout their life. As an educator, I believe in taking students “where they are” and leading students to see that the subject matter to be learned can enhance their lives. Along with progressivism, I believe in the
philosophical ideals of social reconstruction. Schools have the potential to be, and should be, a catalyst for change. Ideas like tolerance, compassion, truthfulness, and responsibility become more than just hopes for my students. Instead, my hope is to integrate them into the classroom, using the opportunities that present themselves throughout the day to teach and convey the ideas that will help them, not only in the existing social order, but in reconstructing it as well. In my classroom, I hope to provide opportunities for extensive interactions between both student and teacher, and even among the students themselves. I hope to integrate field trips, neighborhood projects, and interactions with people that go beyond the walls of my classroom or school, in order to continue student learning and development.

Of the philosophies and beliefs that teachers hold concerning education, none affects them more than their views of their students. These “psychological orientations” affect one’s view of their students as well as how to approach the teaching practice. For myself, I believe in a constructionist view, that is, I look at the processes of learning rather than the learning behavior. I want my classroom to be a place of active learning, where students are continually involved in making sense out of activities around them. I realize as a teacher students’ learning is influenced by many factors outside of the classroom; previous knowledge, feelings, experiences, and social interactions can all affect student learning. My goal as a teacher is not a teacher-centered curriculum or instruction. Rather, my belief rests in the idea that the student is the answer to learning. My students’ interests and ideas will help guide my curriculum while still keeping in mind the necessary standards and concepts that must be mastered.
I have had many teachers throughout the last 18 years, 57 to be exact, all of whom have influenced me and helped make me the person I am today. They have given me a foundation for learning that will last far beyond my school years. My teachers have shaped me as an educator, giving me the knowledge and skills I need to inspire others. They inspired me to become the best person I could possibly become. They gave me the gift of reading, a joy for writing short stories, and they encouraged me in the joy of discovery. More importantly, they gave me the gift of learning. It is because of the influence of these individuals that I want to become a teacher and inspire a new generation of learners with love and passion for learning.