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ESS 440

Reflection Paper: Content and Methodology

The content and teaching methods that I have learned for health and physical education are an invaluable resource that will enhance my ability to educate tomorrow's youth throughout my career. I have learned that content, although an intricate part of teaching, is not the foundation of quality education. Rather, it is the techniques and methods used to cultivate our students' knowledge that matters most. Anyone can be an expert in a subject area. It takes a special person, however, to be able to relay that knowledge to others in a way that can be retained and applied.

My views about teaching have changed drastically since becoming involved in education. I used to believe that teachers were simply smart people who were trying to make other people smart as well. While this may be a simplistic version of a teacher's objective, I am now aware of how much deeper the mission truly is. I now realize the degree of flexibility and versatility that is required of teachers today in order to meet the needs of an extreme array of students, from all walks of life and with vastly different styles of learning. The fact that no two children are alike is what makes this such a challenging career. There is no "cookie cutter" recipe for success. What works for one student/class may not work for the next. In order to be an effective teacher, you must be willing to learn alongside the students, and take note of the lessons that they unintentionally provide.

I feel that certain theories of cognitive as well as psychosocial development should have a large impact on the type of teaching practices incorporated into the curriculum. Much of this is due to the age group and maturity level of the students. For example, Erik Erikson's theory of

psychosocial crisis explains that from about twelve to eighteen years of age, adolescents experience an inner conflict called Identity versus Role Confusion. During this stage, adolescents are searching for the skills and talents necessary to be accepted into adult society, while providing them with unique attributes that set them apart and provide an identity. As future educators, it will be important for us to guide students in discovering these skills and developing their talents. According to Erikson, it is imperative that we acknowledge this development in order to help them overcome their internal crisis.

The youth of today are a new breed, faced with different challenges than any previous generation. These challenges should tell us, as educators, the things that we must be teaching our students. State standards provide us with general guidelines, but it will be up to us to determine what areas need concentration. Childhood obesity is a growing epidemic, and diseases resulting from this are showing negative effects at earlier ages. With such a technologically advanced world surrounding us on all sides, more children are being entertained by video games, DVD's, and the internet rather than healthy forms of outdoor physical activities. Because of this, we need to be teaching students the value and importance of regular physical activity. This should be our highest priority as health/physical educators. In order to do this, however, it is important that we give them the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to participate in a wide variety of physical activities which they can embrace and enjoy into adulthood. The more variety we can provide them in activities, the better chance they have of finding something suited to their natural abilities and talents. If they catch that feeling of success, they will be exponentially more likely to participate in that activity later in life.

From a health standpoint, students need to learn the physical, mental, and emotional skills necessary to lead healthy lifestyles as adults. Physical activity is a large part of that. However,

there is much more to it. Students need to know everything from nutrition guidelines to environmental health to personal hygiene. Everything affects them personally in some way, and it is important for them to know these effects so that they may have control over them in the future.

The next generation will require us to take a new look at how we teach children. With attention spans becoming shorter and class periods becoming longer (block scheduling, trimesters, etc.), the old techniques of rolling out the ball or stand and lecture will need to end and be replaced by new innovative practices. As said before, there is no cookie cutter method for teaching children, and there never will be due to the complex variety of personalities that we will encounter daily. Differences in classes and individuals will require us to adapt/alter instruction on a regular basis. Furthermore, varying instruction can be an effective way of keeping the class environment fresh and stimulating. Our cultural needs will require us to implement different forms of technology into the curriculum in order to provide up to date information and instruction. Along with basic information there is a growing need for students to have skills in knowledge synthesis and application in practical settings. This will require the use of more problem-solving teaching strategies. In conclusion, the next generation will need to be taught using a variety of techniques based on student needs. Teachers will only be effective if they are willing to search for these needs and continually alter their methods so that the youth of tomorrow have the opportunity to live healthy lives filled with meaning and purpose.