Teaching Philosophy

Why this profession?

Of all the professions there are available for one to choose from, I feel that teaching is one of the most influential and demanding careers a person could choose to dedicate their life to doing. I intend to be one of those individuals. Ever since my freshmen year of high school, I have wanted to be an educator. I went from desiring a career in architectural engineering to desiring a much lower paying occupation such as teaching, but felt the benefits would far outweigh the cost. In my heart and in my mind, teaching is more than a profession… it is a calling!

My number one purpose in life is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore I wish to have a part in helping to impact the world for his name. I want to help change the world one life at a time; because I feel that there are numerous children out there who need a strong moral example to guide them to the right path. Some of my fondest memories of high school come from male role models that I had the opportunity to observe and imitate. Thankfully, I have an exceptionally strong family upbringing, yet many children are not so fortunate. I want to make a difference in the lives of those who have no hope, purpose, or positive influence in their lives. I plan to do this by the way I live and the way I teach. There is no more effective means of preaching “change” than through simply living it out! Living contagiously is the best way to impact those around one’s self.

Goals in Teaching:

I not only want to teach students a particular subject area, but I want to teach them the broader scope about life and train them for life. As William Butler Yeats said, “education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” Education, as he saw it, was a lifelong learning
process, and the responsibility of teachers was to cultivate and facilitate that zest for learning within their students. Teachers must not only teach students the standard knowledge and skills of their content area, but they must teach the students to be “lovers of learning.” For only through lifelong learning will their lives be filled with inspiration, creativity, freshness, happiness, and success. Robert Hutchins agrees that “the object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives.”

How to Achieve My Goals:

Methods:

I intend to use many different forms and methods throughout my career in teaching. I want to use whatever means will most effectively yield true learning among my students. The level of mastery depends upon the level of understanding and the standards I set for acceptable work ethics for which I will hold my students accountable. It is my goal that I can accurately and effectively master my subject area in a manner that will be productive for teaching, as well as to stay informed of the latest research-proven methodologies. I want to combine life skills along with my content in order to prepare students for life in college and their community. By incorporating study, writing, and effective communication skills, I will drastically improve my students’ chances of being prepared for college and future careers out in the workforce. I plan to utilize technology with the purpose being that my students are able to prepare, present, and communicate ideas effectively through up-to-date equipment for the purpose of both teaching and learning.

I intend to use both individual and group work situations. Once students get out into the workforce and community, they will realize that most work is done through teamwork and col-
laboration. Therefore, high school is a good place to practice teamwork and leadership skills. I see significant value in guided and independent practice. I intend to use hands-on activities as much as possible, along with question and answer methods, discussion, and different forms of visual presentation and lecture. I find it very important that teachers attempt to vary instruction along with meeting as many of Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences and Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomies as possible in each lesson. Since every student learns through different means, meeting every student’s learning style is critical to challenging them to grow and think critically and independently.

Preventative Instruction

Limiting disruptions will also increase learning potential. Keeping students on task is a major preventative measure toward removing things that cause misbehavior in the classroom. Not only will removing distractions limit problems, but “time on task” from bell to bell will often keep the students from acting out negatively. This will help things to run more smoothly and effectively; however, this will not be possible if the teacher does not make sure that he is over-prepared.

Assessment

In my experience as a student, I find it absolutely crucial to let the students know how they will be assessed. Not only should assessment tools vary, but students should know what they will be tested upon before they are taught the first ounce of that lesson. This can be achieved through many means. Preview guides can be used to introduce students to each chapter section before an ounce of the lesson is even taught. More effectively perhaps, along with the preview guide, are practice tests that test students’ prior knowledge of the material and will reduce test anxiety on the unit assessment. This could be taken as a “completion” grade and would
allow the students to get a glimpse of what their final assessment will be like. Some suggest that practice tests should be identical to the final chapter test. Although that is up for debate and discretion of the teacher, I find that it could be quite effective. I personally like using: practice tests, preview work-guides, teaching the material (activities/lecture/discussion), study guide, review game, chapter/unit exam, and then a “re-test”. This way the students will have been introduced to the material five times before the assessment, as well as the daily review of each previous day’s class. I also find it helpful to make the students aware of what essays will be on their exam and to have them prepare a practice essay along with their study guide. Also by providing the opportunity for a “re-take” the morning after the test will ensure the students one last way to show mastery of the material, which by far is more important than the letter grade they receive.

Accomodations

Certain accommodations must be made for students with exceptionalities, as stated by Individual Education Plans (IEPs and 504s), as well as students of various socio-economic statuses. Varying assessments throughout the semester will also ensure the students to have more chances of success. Teachers should be willing to tutor students; re-teach or remediate students; along with working to find the best ways to help students prepare for assessments (study sessions before exams, etc).

Student Development and Teacher-Student Relationships

I find it absolutely necessary for teachers to seek to positively influence their students and to focus on student development. Perhaps the most practical and effective means of devel-
opining students exists in developing one’s own self at the same time. The teacher should not be afraid to take time for self-reflection in order to recognize areas of strength as well as areas in need of improvement. A weakness is only a weakness until energy has been poured into improving and growing in that area. Teachers should be willing to be vulnerable, open, honest, fair, and consistent with students while showing a genuine concern for their emotional, physical, and academic well-being. There is nothing wrong with teachers desiring to be liked, as long as it comes second to and never at the cost of respect.

An effective teacher must invest in each student. Teachers must recognize something positive within each student and seek to provide encouragement to every student regardless of personal agreement with that student’s lifestyle or attitude. Teachers should seek to identify each student’s areas of excellence or giftedness and help them to use it to the fullest capacity. Using discernment, a teacher should share about himself with a student as well as to show interest in learning more about the personal passions of that student. The key is to balance the professional and personal relationship, because the level of respect and authority must be maintained through gentle, but firm boundaries in order for a positive role-modeling influence to occur.

My Experiences as a Student:

I have been inspired by many different teachers that I’ve had in the past. Teachers who were excited about teaching made it much more exciting for me to learn. Teachers who were empathetic and understanding made my life much easier. Likewise, teachers who were not as understand showed me the type of teacher that I definitely never wanted to be. I feel that flexibility and patience are just as important as accountability. Teachers must believe in every student’s ability to succeed, and it is the teacher’s responsibility to find out how to meet each student’s
needs. Sometimes that includes removing certain barriers to education, and sometimes that means adapting and varying the manner of assessment and instruction. In either case, the teacher’s belief in their students is the biggest factor in whether or not a student has the opportunity and ability to learn and grow. Motivation often comes out of knowing that someone cares about you and pushes you to reach your fullest potential. I also want to make my classroom fun for my students and something that they will look forward to being a part of as they go throughout their educational years. Learning can be fun, and it should be fun.

My Plan, My Passion:

At this time I plan to teach social studies at the junior high and high school level. I enjoy social studies, but my passion lies within teaching. I have a passion for changing and improving lives, and a genuine love for children. I have sometimes found that I relate best to those students who have no one else; those students whom everyone else has “given up on.” I want to give to others what so many have given to me. My parents, coaches, friends, and teachers have changed my life and guided it in such powerful ways, and I feel that God has gifted me with the ability to do the same in the lives of others.

I know that teaching will be challenging and even difficult at times; however, I feel that I’m up to the task. I’ve worked very hard throughout my life and continue to strive for the end goals I have set for myself. I have faith in the Lord, and the desire to reach my potential personally and influentially. I want to change the world and I intend to do so through the lives of those students I teach. As the president of CASE (Council on the Advancement and Support of Education) said in a speech given that honored James Adams of Manchester College, “we not only touch the lives of those students who we have directly taught, but also the lives of all those stu-
dents who they will teach.” I would add, education is the passing of the torch from generation to generation, and it must not stop here.