

My Teaching Philosophy

by Candy Cutter

I believe that it is the teacher's responsibility to create lessons that help all students learn in their own zone of proximal development. In this zone, students are challenged just enough to encourage growth, while not overwhelming and frustrating them beyond what they can comprehend. Teachers are able to help students learn in this zone by creating lessons that touch on each individual student's learning style. Whether the student is a kinesthetic, visual, or auditory learner they must have daily opportunities to construct meaning through the way in which they best learn.

I believe that students must taste success in order to continually grow. The student who constantly is behind their peers will become frustrated by their lack of understanding. Often times this student is likely to give up and come to the conclusion that they are "just not smart." After all, who likes doing something they are not good at? It is vital that teachers do not allow a student to feel this way. If a struggling student has the opportunity to taste success it will help the student to feel adequate in their learning ability and encourage them to work harder.

I believe that it is the teacher's role to build a relationship with every student. This relationship must be substantial enough to understand how they learn and background factors that affect their ability to learn, while still drawing a professional barrier between the student and teacher. Understanding students' backgrounds and home lives allow the teacher to understand why students may have weaknesses in certain areas and enable them to create instruction that helps students excel despite their weaknesses. However, it is important for teachers to not cross the line into a personal relationship with students. Students who view their teacher as more of a friend than a role-model are likely to have little professional respect for the teacher. This can often cause discipline issues and a litany of other difficulties for the teacher.

A supportive home life is vital to any student's educational success. I believe that teachers are able to encourage this support by staying in contact with their students' families. Teachers should not only contact parents when students are misbehaving, but also when they are doing well in class. This contact will make parents feel as though the teacher is keeping the student's best interest in mind and notices not only when they misbehave, but when they do things right as well. I believe that a classroom foundation is built at home and having involved parents can greatly affect the classroom environment.

I believe that the classroom environment greatly affects how students learn. The classroom should be a welcoming and safe place for students. When students fear the teacher or other peers in the class, they are likely to be distracted and not focus on the daily instruction. Students who struggle must also not fear being embarrassed in front of their peers. Students will focus on this fear and their learning opportunity will be hindered. The classroom environment is also hindered when the teacher has poor management skills and they are unorganized/not prepared or have little control of their students. I believe that all of these stipulations must be met in order to have a positive classroom environment.

I believe that technology plays a vital role in students' development. We are now living in a generation of "digital natives," and if we do not allow students to utilize the tools of the future they will fall behind their peers. With numerous careers joining the technological race we must prepare students for the types of technology they will face in the future. I believe teachers should do this by not only demonstrating their own use of technological tools, but by creating interactive lessons that allow students to utilize the technological tools themselves.