Teachers: Mentors, Guidance Counselors, & Role Models

Abstract

Teaching is more than lecturing knowledge or giving assignments. They are considered role models, counsellors, and mentors for their students. People interpret what a teacher and school should look like in many different ways. This paper will discuss a couple of philosophies and the way a classroom and school should be designed. It should be inviting, but also structured in a way that it is a safe and consistent environment for the students to grow.

There are many philosophes of Education and there is no agreement on what is the best or worst for students' success. Schools and teachers alike have different methods and philosophies they integrate every day in the classrooms. Teachers are now considered mentors, guidance counsellors, and role models for their students. Teaching is more than lecturing about a subject, it is building a relationship and a space for our students to feel safe. Without that, students will not learn or care about their grades or even future. The guidance of teachers is now the main thing that drives the students to do better and succeed. Education should be based on the student's emotional needs and wants, which will allow them to enthusiastically learn the material needed later in life.

Philosophy of Schools & Learning

School systems focus more on the student's number on a standardized test than they do on the individual student and their growth. The main focus of a school and teacher should be the growth of a student and that they achieved what was expected from them. They can do that within the classroom, but now, standardized tests determine their growth and how much they achieved, without considering their classroom growth. Teachers are expected to teach to the curriculum provided by the state and as long as they do that without straying too far, they can incorporate other stuff as well. Teachers should have many goals for their students, not just what the state says. These young minds should not only be enriched with knowledge of the core subjects, but also prepared for life after school and becoming citizens of society.

The survey declared that I mainly used Progressivism and Essentialism approaches in my teachings. Although, all philosophies were very similar and close in number, those two were tied for the highest. I can agree with the survey and my results. Essentialism focuses on the core subjects and preparing students for life after school (Acquah, Adjei, & Mensah, 2017). This common core knowledge should be transmitted to students to help them have an understanding of the world and the core knowledge to get them through life Acquah, Adjei, & Mensah, 2017). Essentialists focus on the four core subjects, while also incorporating lessons to help students transition into adulthood. Progressivism is less structured than Essentialism. Progressivism allows the student to choose what they want to learn and the curriculum is chosen based on students' interests (Knight, 2006). Progressivism lacks discipline and can allow students to not gain knowledge of core subjects. Both Progressivism and Essentialism value the student and their needs and the environment in which the student learns, but Essentialism is more structured. The blend of both philosophies could make a great classroom learning environment that is also structured but focuses on the individual needs and growth of a student while

preparing them for adulthood.

Instructional Practice

The classroom environment should be structured, but inviting. Teachers should not leave their students intimidated, but also not so relaxed to where they do what they want at any given moment. Rules and expectations should be discussed from the beginning and held consistent throughout the year. Turri says that truth comes from our own beliefs and everyone has their own version of truth (Turri, 2016). I believe truth comes from the word of the Bible and that is how I run my classroom. I am in a public school system, so there are limitations on how to incorporate the Bible into my teachings. I do not teach straight from the Bible or quote it, but I do my best to teach my students in the way Jesus would have taught them. Students learn from someone they trust, and they can trust teachers. We become their mentors and role models and in some cases they come to us for advice and counselling. I use this as my motivation. My classroom is inviting, but also structured. There are rules to follow and expectations to uphold, but I still allow wiggle room for the students to have a say. I teach them the curriculum, but I also assign fun projects and we watch videos to enhance learning and retention. If I allowed my students to choose what they learned, it would be a disaster and they would have no knowledge or experience to help them in adulthood. I want my students to leave my class at the end of the year with passing scores to the standardized test, a vast knowledge of World History that they can apply to further classes and colleges, and skills to use in adulthood like identifying primary sources and writing correctly.

Teacher-Learner Relationships

This paper has been structured around the perceived role of a teacher. A teacher does not just simply teach the students, rather, she is a role model, counsellor, and mentor for all the students. Teacher-student relationships are crucial to build to maximize student learning and the learning environment. If a student feels safe within a classroom, they are more motivated to learn the content. Teacher’s number one goal should be student grown and enrichment; they should want their students to learn from them. On the other hand, if a teacher is too harsh, it is difficult to build a relationship with their students and will ultimately guide them to failure. It is the teacher’s responsibility to build a relationship with her students and make sure that she is a person they are comfortable with and willing to learn from.

Every student should come to school willing to learn and put forth effort. The teacher can provide everything needed to enrich their minds and help them succeed, but they have to put forth their part of the effort too. A teacher cannot hold a pencil for a student and force them to write. Some students may come in with learning disabilities, behavioural issues, and home problems, the teacher must realize this and help them through their difficulties. Zee, de Jong, and Koomen say that students externalize their behaviours when they feel uncomfortable and will feed off the teacher’s mood (Zee, de Jong, & Koomen, 2017). This is especially true with the unique circumstances of some students. Even though the student is there and willing to learn, they have these problems that the teacher must address and help them overcome for the student and the teacher to be successful at their jobs at school.

Diversity

Diversity concerns are happening all over the world. This can happen within a workplace, on the street, and within the homes of friends. It is especially important to address these concerns within the educational system to make sure the needs of all students are met. Many different students can come into a classroom. We have English Learners, students from Africa or the Caribbean that are English as a second language students, and we have cultural differences with religion and ethical backgrounds. Educators must consider the views of every student and their experience. Things may have to be translated in some cases or visually represented so that students that do not speak English can understand. Teachers should always plan to have students with diverse backgrounds to be in their classrooms (Turner, Sweet, & Fornaro, 2019).

We have a very diverse community in my high school. It ranged from English learners, person's that speak other languages, cultural differences, and financial differences. Our poverty rate is really high. I have to consider all the needs of my students, especially the ones that do not speak English very well. Luckily most of them stay together and help each other out. They often fall behind, but with extra help after school and during study hall's, I get them caught up the best I can. We require research projects utilizing the internet and computers, we build in plenty of time for students to get this done in school because many of the students to not have access to the internet and technology at home. I have to be careful to make sure that no one is singled out, while also making sure every student is getting what they need.

My Calling

Ever since I was a teenager, I realized that I had been called by God to teach young minds, more specifically the young minds of Students with Disabilities. I volunteered in high school and later became a caregiver and now a LD teacher at my local high school. I distinctly remember having teachers I loved and having teachers I hated. I had teachers that I felt I learned so well from and I enjoyed going to their class and then there were other teachers in which I felt I did not learn at all. I feel that I have been called to become a teacher, role model, counsellor, and mentor for my students. I not only am responsible for enriching the knowledge of my students, but also being someone they can rely on.

Conclusion

Teaching and education is more than just lecturing out knowledge to students and hoping they learn it. It takes planning, change, and ambition. Not everything will go as planned within a classroom. There will be disabilities, diversity, and emotional disturbances happening daily. A teacher must be equipped to handle it. A school should focus on the child and their needs, but also teach them a baseline of knowledge in the core subjects. We must prepare them for their future, adulthood, and productive citizens of society. The environment of a classroom should be inviting, but structured. Rules should be evident from the beginning and consistent throughout the year. That students should feel safe and happy to be there to learn.

Even though in public schools, teachers are limited on how much they can speak of the Bible and God. I use God in all of my lessons by having faith and praying that my students will do well. They have to know God to find ultimate truth, but they can learn with the abilities that God has given them. Without Him none of this information and technological advances would be possible. My favorite Bible verse to quote when thinking about teaching young minds is "train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6

ESV).” We teach these children what they need to know for adulthood and how to be successful, if we do it right, they will not forget it.

References

1. Acquah, A., Adjei, A., & Mensh, J.K. (2017). School of thoughts of the essentialist philosophers on the aims of education, role of education and the focus of education: Implications for curriculum development and practice in ghana. Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion, 32(1), 1-6. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1148840.pdf
2. Knight, G. (2006). Philosophy & Education, 4th Edition. Berrien Springs, NJ: Andrews University Press.
3. Turner, K. M., Sweet, E. L., & Fornaro, E. (2019). From ferguson to charleston and beyond: Talking about race and diversity in the classroom. Communication Teacher, 33(1), 38-44. doi:10.1080/17404622.2017.1400672
4. Turri, J. (2016). The radicalism of Truth?insensitive epistemology: Truth's profound effect on the evaluation of belief. Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 93(2), 348-367. doi:10.1111/phpr.12218
5. Zee, M., de Jong, P. F., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2017). From externalizing student behavior to student-specific teacher self-efficacy: The role of teacher-perceived conflict and closeness in the student–teacher relationship. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 51, 37-50. doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2017.06.009