

My Philosophy of Learning

When I think about teaching, learning, or education, it reminds me of a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson. “Life is a journey, not a destination”. I believe the process is more important than the end. With that in mind, my learning philosophy and teaching philosophy overlap. My philosophy is unique to me and has changed over the last 13 years.

I believe it is important to create an exciting, encouraging, and positive learning environment at all times for all my students of various backgrounds. I want to make the educational experience, school, a fun adventure for my students so they will enjoy learning and enjoy attending school each day.

Each school year, I create a caring, loving, safe, friendly, and secure surrounding for my class with language rich activities. I set realistic expectations, boundaries, and teach students to respect other people. Building a solid foundation is an essential part of their learning process. I believe in fostering independent thinkers at all ages. When students are having fun while learning, they absorb more knowledge, become more comfortable, and are willing to test their own personal preconceived boundaries and expectations. Every child learns differently and has a unique personality as well as their own personal and individual likes and preferences. Meeting the needs of every child is a challenge as well as a blessing. Having differences is a wonderful way to learn about others.

I want each child to feel comfortable when expressing themselves, ideas, thoughts, and their feelings. Building their self-confidence and their self-esteem are as important as their academics. When students are relaxed and feel at ease they will be more productive, eager to participate, and learning will come to them naturally. It builds their confidence and forms strong

relationships with their peers. I encourage and motivate them to become better at every challenge they face now and in the future.

I believe all children can learn regardless of their backgrounds, situations, cultures, or experiences. When my ESL students lack the pre-existing knowledge, I provide them with real-life experiences by using hands-on activities. We have completed lessons such as building classroom reading chairs out of PVC pipe, cooking during Dr. Seuss week, and science experiments that use flour and baby oil to make “Magic Moon Sand”.

During a read aloud of “Great Day for Up” by Dr. Seuss, we encountered a new vocabulary word. The word was “elevator”. A few of the students were unfamiliar with this word. I described it and other students willingly tried to help explain it from their points of view. I saw confused looks on a few faces. I decided to show them and let them experience the elevator in our school and then we applied it to real life. The environment they were in allowed them to learn. We all went for a ride on the elevator and explored the second floor of our school building. Their facial expressions were full of delight. I could see the light bulbs starting to turn on and they were developing their own background knowledge. Whenever the word “elevator” is mentioned they make the connection to the day we rode a real elevator.

When teaching and working with ESL students with diverse backgrounds, the interactions between students are meaningful and the students are able to learn from each other’s personal experiences. Using creativity, imagination, and pretend play are all ways students can interact with each other and learn from one another. Students are able to share their cultural backgrounds, experiences, and traditions with the class.

As Dr. Seuss said, “From there to here, here to there, funny things are everywhere.”

This is a great way to describe my classroom. I love to interact with the class and get to know each of the students on a personal level. The rapport is an important part of connecting with the students. My class is one big happy family, which allows for a warm welcoming environment for each child who walks through the door. We greet each other every morning with a smile and end the day the same way. I believe the class should bond together, look out for each other, as well as understand why each person is who they are, and have acceptance and compassion for their classmates. We explore, learn, and achieve goals together and celebrate everyone’s milestones.

By assessing the individual students’ needs, wants, and desires at the beginning of each school year, I am able to guide the lessons that incorporate the district’s curriculum and the TEKS. Each class is vastly different, so it is important to learn about each student quickly to help fulfill their educational needs. I provide students with activities and lessons that incorporate themes and topics that are of their interest. By getting their attention and having their interest, I am able to incorporate all the necessary curriculum.

I want to positively influence as many lives as possible. My mind is always thinking, creating, and developing new and improved ways to teach and reach each student. Keeping an open mind about different teaching strategies, techniques, and methods are also something I believe is important in ESL education.

As a lifelong learner myself, I continuously seek out knowledge by attending conferences, workshops, and educational classes to help develop my skills as an educator. I am

enthusiastic and open minded to learning new things. I consider the students to be little teachers in their own way. They have taught me how to be a better teacher, coach, and mentor.

Being an ESL teacher, educator, mentor, coach, and guide of education is what I do and who I am in mind, body, and soul. I knew at the young age of six I wanted to be a teacher. I inspire students to come to school every day, be lifelong learners, and strive to reach their personal goals. Sharing my knowledge, participating in the education process and journey with others is my life's calling.

As a learner myself, I like to have examples and models. I like to learn by watching others doing things. Although when I was younger, the focus was on grades. My mom instilled great study habits and priorities in me. The focus was on grades because good grades were important. Good grades meant you were smart. I wanted to be smart. I am not sure I really knew what that meant, but I knew that was important to my mom and made her proud. At that time, learning meant memorizing. In first grade we played a game called "Around the World". It was so much fun and inspired us to study because we wanted to "beat the smart kids". When my mom found out, she wanted me to be "one of the smart kids". I remember that she made flashcards for the math facts we were doing in class. We went over and over them. She also had this record that called out math problems and I had to write down the answers to the problems. I did it so many times, I started to memorize the answers in order. My mom was too smart, she figured me out and then made her own tape of math problems. We would go over spelling words all week long. She wanted me to make 100 on the test we took on Thursdays so I could have "free time" on Fridays. Her philosophy was, "Just do it right the first time!"

This way of learning was the Behaviorist Learning Theory. J. B. Watson, I. Pavlov, and B. F. Skinner were part of this learning theory. According to the Learning Theory website, “Basic idea: Stimulus-response. All behavior caused by external stimuli (operant conditioning). All behavior can be explained without the need to consider internal mental states or consciousness.”

Learning is part of your everyday life. Each day you learning something even if you don’t realize it. I believe we are all learning from the time we get up until we go to bed, from the time we arrive on Earth until we leave. I truly believe that you can “teach an old dog new tricks” as my grandma used to say. For example, I proved this theory when I taught my 88 year old daddy to use a tablet. He already knew how to play solitaire on the computer and then learned how to play on the tablet. I also taught him a few other fun games which he enjoyed and would ask to play. He was pretty impressed with himself because at that age he wasn’t even sure he wanted to learn new things. When he received his service dog, they learned new things together. They were both teachers and students. My daddy learned he did still have a soft spot for dogs and the dog learned that my daddy was a “big old softy”.

My innovation project is to have students at a young age use ePortfolios. At age four, the students are just learning about school, about making friends, and how rules work. They are curious about everything and seem to be fearless. According to the Use a Learning Theory video, “learning is more meaningful to students when they are able to interact the problem or concept.”

By using an ePortfolio at an early age, they will see what they learned over time along with how their learning styles will change. They can learn from their own learning. The

students will take ownership of what they are doing and how they are doing it. When they are more involved in what they are learning, it will mean more to them. Students are more than a test score. In the real world, the test score will not help them. They need to be able to actually complete a task, learn from their mistakes, and have problem-solving skills.

According to the Learning Theory website, “People actively construct or create their own subjective representations of objective reality. New information is linked to prior knowledge, thus mental representations are subjective.” I feel that I am leaning more toward Constructivism.

I agree with the following statement. “Learning is an active process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge” (Tan & Hung, 2003, p.49). In order for a student to learn they must take part in the process. Students need to be challenged and collaborate with others along with having people skills to communicate with their peers. In order for students to really learn something, they have to realize they need to actively participate in the activity in order to gain knowledge. I like the quote, “the responsibility and ownership for learning must be on the learner” (Tan & Hung, 2003, p. 50). This fits into the ePortfolio way of thinking. When students take responsibility for their own learning they are in the “driver’s seat” of their own education. They are able to fully immerse themselves in their environment and absorb all they possibly can for a certain situation.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BlueSofaMedia. (2012, December 30). Use a Learning Theory: Constructivism. Retrieved September 17, 2017, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xa59prZC5gA>

This video gives examples and definitions of the constructivism theory. It breaks it down in terms which are easily applied in the classroom for a teacher wanting to engage students in meaning school experiences.

Learning Theories. (2016). Social learning theory (Bandura). Learning Theories. Retrieved from <https://www.learning-theories.com/paradigms>

This resource various theories along with the famous theorists. It has details and explanations in short, easy to understand explanations.

Seuss Quote. Pinterest. Retrieved from <https://www.asdagoodliving.co.uk/family/things-to-do/dr-seuss-quotes>

Ratna, S. & Tron, B. (2017). *Learning theories: Implications in teacher education*. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/6730061/Learning_Theories_Implications_in_Teacher_Edu

This resource provides information on different learning theories with an emphasis on constructivist being the approach to the 21st century classrooms.

Tan, S. C., & Hung, D. (2003). Beyond information pumping: Creating a constructivist e-learning environment. *Educational Technology*, 42(5), 48-54.

This resource shares the significance and important advantages of the constructivist learning and the environment in which students need to learn. It gives details about the e-learning, constructivist models, and learning environments. It shares comparisons of other famous theorists.