

Statement of Beliefs

As a secondary math, science, and French teacher I have a lot to offer students in terms of content, but the determination to bring my identity into the classroom is what makes me an excellent teacher. By being true to my own identity, teaching has become something I absolutely love. My many interests, dynamic personality, relentless curiosity, and compassion all have a place in my humanistic, constructivist, experiential, and ultimately engaged pedagogy (Hooks, 1994, p. 13).

Individuals bring their own personal experiences to school. I want learning to reflect who they are. As a nanny, I realized how much children know at very young ages. To ignore their past experiences is to disrespect the learning they have already done. I adjust my teaching to the needs of my students and respond to their unique cultures and experiences (Nova Scotia Department of Education & Early Childhood Education [NSDEECE], 2018). I believe that the learner's identity should determine how the content is taught. Learners should be able to draw on concrete examples and problems from their own lives to understand a new concept. I believe learning should take place in a collaborative environment, but the final resting place of new knowledge is in each student's unique self (NSDEECE, 2013).

I want each student's individual questions to drive their learning forward. As a marine biologist I learned the importance of inquiry based learning. Inquiry can form the scaffolding for many interests, passions, and opportunities. We learn best when we ask questions because then we are actively listening for the answer. Grant Wiggins explains that education is the enterprise of making people more thoughtful (2012). Thoughtful people think of their own questions, challenge existing ideas, and consider the perspectives and experiences of others (Wiggins, 2012). In order to make students more thoughtful we need to validate and celebrate their questions. We need to seek out and encourage thoughtful behaviors in our students. As a teacher I will create a classroom where questioning is invited and supported-and students actively construct their own knowledge.

At the heart of my pedagogy is my love for experiential learning. As a canoe guide, rock climber, and surfer I know the importance of being in the present moment. I think experiential learning is how students can have self-actualizing moments and see the true expanse of their potential. I was fortunate in high school; I paddled white water and hiked through the woods for physical education class. Not all schools are situated so that wilderness is at their door step but students can still be challenged and pushed out of their comfort zone. When we encourage students to overcome personal challenges they are more prepared for the many challenges to come. Challenges also apply to the individual. For some students a challenge might be showing up to school and for others it might be winter camping. Whatever the challenge, I will create the opportunity for students to overcome their challenges in a supportive, safe environment.

As a teacher I believe in being myself. I believe in students being themselves. I believe this creates respect, empathy, and positive relationships (Hooks, 1994). Once I know the students I will follow their interests and move them closer to their goals - whatever they may be. I think good teaching doesn't help students grow in just one subject area, good teaching is integral and

whole (NSDEECE, 2013). “Pedagogy is a fascination in the growth of the other” (Van Manen, 1991, p. 13) and that growth is not unidirectional. I will present students with opportunities for growth in any direction they choose.

References

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