

Philosophy of Education

Throughout my educational experiences, I have witnessed a wide array of teachers and teaching styles. I have been in classes that have largely impacted my life, and others that have left a mere dent of influence. I have come to be able to differentiate between the characteristics that comprise a good teacher, and those that do quite the opposite. I understand that a powerful teacher is one that can teach lessons both inside and outside of the classroom, one that can establish a personal connection with his/her students, and one that former students remember well into their adult lives. Through examining traits of former teachers in my life, my personal strengths, and my own opinions on teaching, I have gathered components as to what characteristics define an exceptional educator.

There are three educators that I have encountered within my time as a student who have dramatically impacted my life, and whose images I picture when I think of what characteristics define an exceptional teacher. Two of these teachers I encountered at the high school level, while the third I met during my second semester at Grand Valley. The first teacher was my high school art teacher, who entered into our school district my senior year. The traits that I truly admired about her teachings were her ability to connect with students, her persistence in pushing her students; especially those who she thought weren't reaching their full potentials, and her willingness to have students branch out of the typical classroom setting and embark in activities that may lead to positive repercussions for their futures. The second teacher was one that I had three out of my four years at the high school level, and one that does not fall into the realm of what categorizes a typical teacher. He taught engineering and technologically geared courses

that do not fall into the typical general education curriculum. One might say he was a rebel to the system, yet he gave his students a certain freedom that prepared them for public relations and future careers. He treated his students like adults and expected them to act professionally. He had a gift for getting to know each of his students' personalities and teaching them in a way that merged their personalities and learning styles, which led to optimal learning opportunities. The third teacher was my drawing teacher here at Grand Valley. This teacher not only taught his trade in a perfect manner, but he challenged his students to view the world in a different light and expand their horizons away from the norm. He would share experiences and random occurrences that made his students contemplate aspects of life that they may have not previously given a second thought. All three of these teachers have unique characteristics; characteristics that I hope to merge into my educational agenda when I become a teacher.

Anyone who has ever met me can vouch for the notion that I am an extremely driven person who is not content unless full effort has been put into any goal or obstacle I encounter. I think that I have a knack for working with others and discovering areas within situations where improvements may work toward the benefit of the whole. I am not afraid to express my opinion when I have thought out both positive and negative ramifications. I tend to think of myself as a fairly rounded person who incorporates different ways of thinking into tasks I tackle, and when I become a teacher I will integrate this trait into the teachings of my students. Above everything, I think I would be a strong asset to any school district because of the immense sense of accomplishment that takes over me when I see others learning and integrating the things they learn into numerous

aspects of life. Knowing that I can change someone's life is one of the most fulfilling emotions, and one that compels me to teach.

It is evident that anyone who is looking to enter into the profession of teaching must have passion for others, for their discipline, and for the cause of impacting society. As an educator, it is extremely important to be able to operate as a team with co-workers, students, parents, and the community alike because all of these components will shape the framework for the learning that takes place within the classroom. A teacher must also get to know each and every one of his/her students on a level apart from their performance on the course curriculum. Knowing a student's personality, likes and dislikes, and past history can allow a teacher to assess which teaching style may be appropriate for his/her learning. This can also allow a teacher to address problems in the appropriate manner, should they arise. An exceptional educator must constantly be asking the question "What can I do to improve my teaching styles and what can be done to provide optimal learning for my students." Often times when teachers enter into a pre-existing curriculum, steps that have been neglected over the years, must be taken in order to improve the program. These steps may range anywhere from fundraising, all the way to revamping the whole of the curriculum. A teacher must be driven to provide the best education he/she can for his/her students no matter the extent of work this may take. Overall, an educator must be propelled toward excellence. When this image is projected, it is then relayed to the students and the possibilities of what can be accomplished within the realm of a classroom become infinite.