

MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION

In my judgment, students are the most important part of an institution; I consider myself fortunate to have an opportunity to serve them. My most important business as a teacher is the welfare and advancement of my students. It is my aim to humanize and personalize learning processes that will help them reach their goals.

It is my conviction that I am called to teach, not Principles of Animal Science, but students, and that I have an obligation to mankind to do the best job I am capable of doing.

PURPOSE OF TEACHING

Some purposes of teaching are to prepare students for a meaningful life, a challenging career, to make a contribution to society, to communicate effectively, to get along with people, to serve mankind and to be a good citizen.

A teacher should challenge students to think for themselves. His primary objective should be to develop each student to his maximum ability.

The master teacher should put his students in touch with current problems and thus enable them to relate principles and relevant issues. He provides information to help students make their own decisions. He not only should help students prepare to make a living, but to learn to live a meaningful life. In addition to conveying knowledge, a teacher should give of himself, his personality, and his philosophies, so students may not only know but also grow. The aim of education should be to convert the mind into a living fountain, not a reservoir.

ATTITUDE IS IMPORTANT

Few things influence the success of a teacher more than his attitudes. A teacher should have a genuine concern and love for his students. He should think of each student as an individual who has unique abilities and interests. Mutual respect between teachers and students is important. The teacher should not talk down to his students, but believe in them and make them feel significant. He should care enough about students to know that they are learning, not just attending class and getting a grade at the end of the semester.

OTHER IMPORTANT ATTRIBUTES OF A TEACHER

In addition to having a proper attitude, an effective teacher should be honest with students, fair, firm, compassionate, and open with them. He should let students know what is expected of them and where they stand at all times. A teacher should have genuine, contagious enthusiasm. One who teaches should be interested in stu-

dents and in his subject matter. He should be up to date, practical, and should present pertinent, current information.

A teacher should be personal. With 300 students in one lecture room this may appear to be out of the question. But when any one of the 300 comes in to your office on an individual basis, it is possible, and essential to develop rapport. A teacher should be available and have an open door policy. His influence with students should go beyond the classroom.

A good sense of humor, and knowing when and how to use it is an important attribute. The master teacher is effective in establishing an atmosphere conducive to learning. Proper dress and grooming are also important. Finally one great gift a teacher can bestow on his students is a good example. As Albert Schweitzer so aptly put it "Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing."

PROCEDURES

The first day of class is the most important period of the semester. That is when the stage is set. It is the time for the teacher to let the students know he enjoys teaching and enjoys students, and is pleased to have them in class.

Giving students your background not only lets them know who you are but also builds a bond and opens communication lines. Students should know your office hours and should be encouraged to come in for an early chat.

Also on that first day, course objectives should be discussed along with the course outline and reading assignments. The text should be previewed. Testing procedures, grading standards, attendance requirements, and seating policies should be made clear at the onset. To get to know the students, their backgrounds, and interests, teachers should ask each student to fill out and return an information sheet.

Always allow classroom time for questions and discussion. Sometimes review sessions are good. Some of the most effective teaching often takes place in the first few minutes after the class ends.

VISUALS ENHANCE TEACHING

Visual aids enhance the art of communicating in the classroom. They will help one do better what he is already doing well. The Chinese proverb, "One picture is worth a thousand words" is worth repeating here. Long lasting impressions are made with visuals. I would be lost without an overhead projector in a lecture room. A variety in the visuals used is an effective way to emphasize important points.

TESTING AND GRADING

Good test questions are difficult to pre-

pare and require extreme caution. I feel that information important enough to be in a test in my Principles of Animal Science course, should have been discussed in class. Examinations should be considered as a teaching tool, should be returned the following period, and should be reviewed with the students.

EVALUATION OF TEACHING

Instruction is under closer scrutiny than ever before. Teachers and courses are being evaluated on every hand by students. This can serve an important purpose as one can learn a lot from his students that will help him. However, the blessing of the students is not, and should not be the sole criterion of excellence. Some method must be used that obtains ratings of his peers as well.

Good teaching requires constant question in the value of certain sections or topics in a course, and replacing material that fails to withstand the questioning. An effective teacher continually seeks to learn effects of his teaching on students, and he continually modifies his teaching in response to his findings.

RESULTS OF TEACHING

Teaching is a most rewarding and satisfying profession. I have yet to teach a course that doesn't permit me to learn more than the students. A respected horticulture colleague of mine put it this way. "So long as you know you are green, you grow. When you think you are ripe, you begin to rot."

Each student is a unique individual. I cherish their friendships. We increase the joys of students by sharing the joys, similarly, we diminish their problems by sharing them. Like a pebble pitched in a pond, an art of kindness to students spreads in ever widening circles. I am reminded of the proverb, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

PARTING REMARKS

And finally we should remember that a teacher's influence goes to eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops. The student is our most important resource; the graduate our most important product. When we accept the money and trust of students, parents, and taxpayers, we must not only send our students away with knowledge, but also with wisdom to use it for the betterment of mankind. The future of higher education depends largely upon the ability of teachers to relate to problems of an ever changing environment and to involve their students in solving the problems. Could anyone have a more satisfying job?