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## **Personal Learning Theory**

### **Introduction**

As an educator for the past four years, I have learned through my experiences that teaching has a great influence on the student's lives that I touch. I have a strong belief that as an educator we need to improve our teaching style in order to provide our students with the best opportunities to succeed in the real-world. As we grew as an educator we change our philosophy of teaching and the way instruction is presented to students. As an educator we try our best to adapt our methodology of teaching to the type of students we have each year. It's important to remember that not every student learns the same, and we need to change our method of teaching so we could support and foster our students learning.

Teaching and learning are not something that comes easy; there will always be obstacles that educators and students will have to overcome. Teaching is an arrangement and manipulation of a situation in which there are gaps and obstructions which an individual will seek to overcome and from which he will learn in the course of doing so (Brubacher, 1939).

The purpose of this paper is to explore my personal learning theory, through my personal experiences and practices that have helped me to become the educator I am today.

### **Personal Experience as a Student**

At a very young age I remember my teachers always pushing the students to do our very best. The school had a positive setting, teachers were not focus on drill and kill method of teaching. My mother was always there for me, I had here guidance and support throughout my public school years. According to Aluto (2006), guidance can be defined as assistance given to the learner by the instructor in order to facilitate his achievement in the learning process. I feel that here guidance was played an important role in the type of teacher I am today, she was there to help and meet my educational needs. Whenever I had a difficult project my mother was there to support me and guide me in the right direction. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs were physiological needs that I felt when I was younger, I felt a level of safety and belongingness from my home and school setting, this allowed me to met my basic needs. These needs include such things as establishing a sense of consistency and security within our families, homes and communities (Maslow, 1970).

Middle school and high school years, I found out the person who I was, I didn't have any identity crisis, and I had a great support group of friends, family, and teachers. I remember two teachers who supported my choices and challenge my learning in the classroom, Mr. Gentz eighth grade teacher and Mr. Peterson my twelfth grade teachers. According to Driscoll (2005) suggests that interactions with the educator should lead to cognitive conflicts and stimulate disequilibrium, making learners aware of inconsistencies in their thinking. They help shape my personal thinking skills; they provided me with an effective learning environment, through U.I.L. competitions. I believe without their support and guidance I wouldn't be where I am today. These teachers provided me with a structured environment where every student was in task

and no one misbehaved. They provided a very strict environment, where each student respected one another.

### **Personal Experience as an Educator**

I believe the purpose of teaching is not to teach students how to memorize facts, drill and kill method; I feel the purpose of teaching is to help students understand the concepts being presented in a meaningful manner. According to Gredler (2009), information provided must be varied in concrete examples and providing students with the opportunities for interacting in different ways. I believe as an educator we need to provide students with many real-world situations so they can have a concrete understanding, or use their background knowledge to understand the information that is being presented to them. I am a 5<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher, and I work in a district where I teach many disadvantaged students. In order for me to make a connection to them, I need to relate the content being presented to them to their background knowledge. According to Gredler (2009), states that prior knowledge minimizes the potential confusion among similar types of information. Using the student's prior knowledge has great implications on what they can learn. According to Piaget (1973), emphasized the importance of peer interactions in the context of self-directed experimentation. I agree with Piaget, that peer interaction provides students the ability to communicate ideas and view different perspectives of other students.

In order to provide my students with the best opportunity to learn, one must be effectively knowledgeable in the content they are teaching. As a teacher we cannot just rely on textbooks, and worksheet handouts to teach students. We need to provide differentiated instruction, educators must provide information through different mediums (visual-aids, hands-

on, audio), these sources will not just help your students but it will also enhance your teaching strategy.

According to Gredler (2009) referring to Vygotskys theory, "Learning in the classroom requires teacher modeling, explaining, and asking the student for explanations because these verbalization by the teacher are the basis for the student's self-questioning and explaining of concepts when studying". I believe that the teacher needs to provide the students the appropriate model of questioning, throughout the lesson at hand, in order to make student self-aware of the concepts so they can challenge their self-thinking and question their ideas. I like to have students collaborate with each other, so they can make sense on the concept that is being presented to them. I emphasize cooperative learning through activities and projects, this requires the students to construct their own learning through self reflection, debating with their partners, and communicating their ideas. This is based on the Project-based learning, is a comprehensive instructional approach to engage students in sustained, cooperative investigation (Bransford & Stein, 1993).

The Novelty theory encourages recess as part of the school day. This theory emphasizes how classroom work gets less interesting and students need playtime to make coursework interesting again. I believe that recess provides students with break from school work and helps them to concentrate better once they are back in the classroom. According to Garner, Murray & Ramstetter (2010), following recess, children are more attentive and better able to perform cognitively. A characteristic of recess is that children receive a break from the day's routine, "Young children comprehend material more thoroughly and quickly when material is presented with short breaks show that recess increases the amount of work completed and improved

classroom behavior by reducing fidgeting and listlessness” (Dills, Morgan & Rotthoff, 2011).

“Listening, sitting and working on assigned tasks for prolonged periods are inappropriate for young children—they need to be actively engaged with materials, and integrated types of learning should take place” (Holmes, Pellegrini & Schmidt, 2006).

A study from the Chomitz, Slining, McGowan, Mitchell, Dawson, & Hacker (2009) suggested that the more physical activity tests students can pass, the more likely they will perform well on academic tests. This suggests that students may improve test scores and their learning in the classroom after conducting physical activity outside. A study conducted by Tegano & Burdette (1991) demonstrated that preschool children progress through exploration and engage in extra constructive play when given a play period of at least 30 minutes with time for free choice.

## **Conclusion**

After reflecting on my own experiences of teaching I believe it’s important to continue to make instructional and learning changes as one grows and changes their philosophy of teaching. I believe that as educators it’s our responsibility to mold and shape our students to become self-efficient and proper citizens of the community. Every student deserves the chance to learn in positive environment, and it’s the educator’s responsibility to provide that environment in the classroom. I believe students can help each other and explore concepts on their own and construct their own learning. This will help students to bring new information to the content being presented; they could raise their own questions and bring different perspectives. I believe recess allows students to release energy and a different atmosphere of a mental change, this allows students to facilitate their attention to more academic task and

minimize disruptive behavior in the classroom. Recess becomes an important element of classroom management and behavior guidance (Bogden & Vera-Matos, 2000).

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