

Statement of teaching philosophy
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Teaching is, to me, more than just a job, and more than just a profession. Teaching is a calling. As a career teacher, I have become convinced of this notion as my career developed from teaching at the elementary school, through the high school, college and university levels.

Firstly, my philosophy of teaching begins with the belief that my goal as a teacher is to create scholars and citizens. In order to accomplish this, my first task is striving to be, and to model the type of scholar and citizen I would like to create. I must therefore strive to model social justice, academic enthusiasm, and caring. My experience of teaching in the inner-city environment, sometimes in physically dangerous contexts, has taught me that I must care enough about the young adults who sit at my feet, to consistently model integrity despite the apparent uncaring nature of the environment. This perspective, I feel, will enable me to reveal to them a role model worth emulating.

Secondly, my philosophy of teaching embraces the notion that rather than dispense knowledge, I must motivate young learners to discover knowledge for themselves. I must structure the learning experience so that students leave not only with the feeling that they own the experience of learning, having become learned by much of their own effort, but also with a love for the discipline, my discipline, Sociology. I believe that this process involves showing students that the knowledge to which I expose them has grounding in my own research. I feel that research informs pedagogy, therefore as a professor I must also be a researcher. Moreover, I must find within myself, absent the promise of extrinsic rewards, a love for research merely because it makes me more complete as a teacher.

Thirdly, I must relate the knowledge to which I expose my students, to life. This is a skill, which I believe cannot be taught. I believe that a teacher who has this ability exists in a "life-space" that is saturated with the discipline that he/she teaches. He/she sees it in the everyday, the mundane, and the normal activities of life, and is able to make his or her discipline relevant for students through his or her own experience of relating knowledge to the task of living. I believe that a teacher who can do this will inspire students to strive for a life of usefulness and service to humanity.

Lastly, I believe that the noblest, most challenging, and most valuable contribution I can make to tomorrow's citizens is to teach them to be "thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other people's thoughts" (White, 1903, p. 17). In order to do this I must lead them constantly into a critique of the taken-for-granted. They must be encouraged to challenge the ideas of their thought leaders (religious, political, and scientific), their parents, their teachers, and even their own beliefs, painful though this process can be.

Every day before I enter a classroom, I dedicate one minute, sixty seconds, to reminding myself of my personal philosophy. This ritual has helped

me to maintain my focus. I believe that as it has in the past, it will in the future help me in some small way to do my part in helping to create scholars and citizens. This is my professional philosophy and life perspective, and I cannot but be true to it.

Reference

White, E. (1903, 2012) Education, Pacific Press, CA.