My Philosophy of Education

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes…and the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.” As Eleanor said, it is hard to put one’s philosophy into words, but I will use what I have learned from my classes at Martin Luther College and from the experiences I have had to explain my philosophy of education. This philosophy is just the starting point of my philosophy of education because it will change and grow as I gain more experiences throughout my many years of teaching. This philosophy will be expressed in the choices I make every day concerning my relationships with my students, students’ parents or guardians, colleagues, congregation, and community. My responsibility is to develop my philosophy while learning more about the educational world. To begin, I will show how a few psychologists have shaped my philosophy. Afterwards, I will describe how my philosophy will influence my relationships with students, parents and guardians, colleagues, congregation, and community.

Numerous psychologists have tried to explain how the human brain develops, and even though their theories vary, they all agree development has varying rates, is orderly, and occurs gradually. The first theorist who influences my philosophy of education is Jean Piaget, who established the Theory of Cognitive Development. This theory states a total of four stages for cognitive development, which include sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. These stages will help me know how to teach students the material they need to master. For example, teaching a student in the sensorimotor stage would involve almost all hands-on learning, while a student in the formal operational stage will have more abstract instruction. Another important psychologist who influences my philosophy is Lev Vygotsky. One aspect of Vygotsky’s theory, which is important for teachers to know and understand, is the
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Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). A child’s ZPD is the area between what a learner already knows and his or her frustration level. The ZPD is where a learner can understand new material with some guidance and where an appropriate amount of a challenge is given to a student. The third psychologist that influences my philosophy is Erik Erikson, who established the Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development. This theory emphasizes an individual’s emotional needs in relation to his or her social environment. The stages later in development depend on how conflicts were resolved in the earlier stages of a human’s life. As a teacher, I have to understand how these stages work and how to treat children so they develop in a desirable fashion. These psychologists have influenced how I will instruct my students throughout my teaching career.

A fundamental need of all students is a safe and positive learning environment. My actions, as a teacher, will help form the environment best suited for student learning. I will make sure the students know school is a safe place for them to be so they can focus on learning and not their safety. I will also make the classroom a positive place by teaching my students that it is okay to make mistakes as long as they learn from them. My students will know they do not need to always have the right answers, but they need to be able to respectfully explain to each other why one answer may be wrong. Students will be taught how to treat each other in a God-pleasing manner and how to be positive learners. Students will also need to have structure throughout their day. This will be done by keeping the schedule relatively the same from day to day. It will also be shown in the way I discipline; every child will be disciplined in a consistent loving manner. Another essential need of learners is the need to understand. As a teacher, I will have to make sure my students fully understand the material I am teaching them. This will be done through a number of formal and informal assessments. My students will see a safe, positive, structured environment every day, but parents may not get to see this aspect of their students
learning. I will have to build a relationship with the parents so I can demonstrate these qualities for them also.

One of the most important relationships to maintain as a teacher is the relationship with the parents. The God given duty of parents is to “bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Because of this responsibility given to parents, they are a great influence on their children. If parents know how their children are being educated, they can continue this education in the home. My job is not only to educate the children, but also to continuously instruct the parents on how to expand their children’s education at home. Parents can expand a child’s education by helping with homework or going more in-depth on topics being studied in school. I have to keep all of my comments to parents as positive as I can, which does not mean I will not tell parents when students do something wrong. When I talk to parents about their child, I will use words that assure the parents I care about their child. Another way to keep the relationship with parents positive is to talk to parents not only about conflicts but also about triumphs. I will call or email parents periodically throughout the year to tell them something their child did really well in school that day.

Another type of relationship that needs to exist in my life as a teacher is the relationship with my colleagues. Many people have to work together to run a school efficiently. This means the people working at the school have to have open communication. Open communication will allow all the teachers to get to know how the students of the school are doing, which enables teachers to know where students tend to succeed or struggle. The relationships between teachers should be an excellent example for students to model their relationships with their peers. Students should be able to see teachers working together to make the school a fun and safe environment for them to learn. Teachers need to communicate about the different standards that
have to be met and how teachers in lower grades could help build a foundation for teachers to meet the standards later in a student’s schooling. The communicative relationship between coworkers in a school can determine the effectiveness of teaching students.

The last relationship that is important to me, as a teacher, is an effective relationship between the congregation, community, and I. First of all, any teacher in a private school needs to be seen by the congregation so they get to know the teacher that is helping train their children. I will attend church and Bible study regularly so the congregation will get to know me as a child of God and not just a teacher. I will also help out the church in any other way I can. For example, VBS, spring cleaning, potluck dinners, and canvassing will show that I am part of the congregation as well as the school. The members of the congregation need to see that I am there to serve them. When the members of the congregation are aware of what is going on in the school, they will be more willing to help me when they can. Just because I may be teaching at a Lutheran School does not mean I do not need to get to know my community. As a representative of the church, I should be in the community letting my light shine. This is a great outreach tool not only for the school, but also for the church. Building positive relationships with people in the community will help them see how God has worked faith in me and how I want to take that joy from my faith and share it with others.

I will use what Piaget, Vygotsky, and Erikson have discovered to guide the choices I make when educating my students. I will do the best I can to establish and maintain God-pleasing and positive relationships with my students, parents and guardians, colleagues, congregation and community. The philosophy articulated in this paper will change and grow throughout the years, but it will be a guide for the decisions I make on a daily basis for the rest of my life.