

Core Beliefs Essay

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Abstract

This essay explores my core beliefs about being an effective teacher. It analyzes the roles teacher care and empathy can play in student motivation and engagement. It also explores the importance of teacher and student curiosity and its impacts on learning.

Throughout my educational landscape I have had many amazing teachers and a few horrible teachers. The difference was palpable and at times stifling. The teachers who left a profound impact on me, motivated me to perform, and even spiked enough interest for me to delve into subject matter much deeper than expected; they cared not just about me, but also about my understanding of content. I believe being a caring, empathetic, and demanding teacher is essential to student motivation and performance. Outside of student performance, the support garnered from another healthy adult relationship is essential to student success in life.

I prefer to view the student as a holistic being, who has many complex abilities, skills, emotions, responsibilities and desires in life. I believe by creating a supportive, empathetic and trusting relationship to students we, as teachers, will inspire greater student motivation and engagement. “Good teachers join self, subject, and students in the fabric of life because they teach from an integral and undivided self; they manifest in their own lives, and evoke in their students, a capacity for connectedness.” (Palmer, 1997 p.2) When a student feels he is cared for emotionally his work and his participation are valued and an important part of the classroom function, greater engagement and motivation can and will occur.

How do you, as teacher, convey your care for students? My belief is; you actually have to care. You as a teacher have to have some deep place within yourself where you care about the evolution, outcome and learning of your students. For me that deep place comes out of a perpetual curiosity about the world and its inhabitants. The world is full of seemingly endless miracles and I never find myself without wonder or curiosity to uncover some new place, literature, food, culture or language. I believe being an educator that is filled with passion and curiosity can convey that feeling. Students, in turn, can be inhabited by curiosity and inspiration

as well. My objective as a teacher is to inspire students to find the joy in exploration, and excitement in learning, to understand the value of a strong community, to feel the power of self-initiative, creativity and independence, and to approach the world and peers in a caring, empathetic way.

Curiosity comes with some risk. The solid support system, of which a teacher plays an important role, can help students find their own interests, voice and passions. Not only through inspiration, but through enthusiasm in student's discoveries can teachers convey their encouragement for student motivation, outside of what is assigned in class. "Specifically, perceived support from a teachers is a significant predictor of young adolescents' motivation and academic achievement. (Wentzel, 1997 p.412) The problem of course with inspiration, curiosity, drive and engagement to learn new things is they are not easily measurable or testable. Leaving us with the essential question: what is the ultimate goal of the educational system? A graduated, high GPA student, that is college bound, or a well rounded holistic, empathetic, engaged human ready to enter the world and survive on his own?

These questions and concepts really resonate with me. Approaching the whole human rather than the tested human. How do you ascertain students are learning what they must without standardized test? How do you care for the whole student? I believe holistic instruction and strategic assessments can assist us in covering the vast expanse of subject matter in Core Standards. I believe in firmly grounded relationships, understanding the body-mind connection and that the entire life of a student can weigh heavy in what may seem like a few interminable hours of school. I believe exploring my authentic teaching self, and teaching from an honest place within it. I care deeply for other humans and hope to share the joy of humanity with my students. "When we care, we want to do our very best for the objects of our care. To have as our

educational goal the production of caring, competent, loving, and lovable people is not anti-intellectual. Rather, it demonstrates respect for the full range of human talents.” (Noddings, 2007 p. 2) I truly believe being cared for in the classroom, honestly and authentically, will raise test scores and inspire student motivation.

I aspire to inspire. I believe that building a solid foundation of care and empathy are necessary to being a supportive and effective teacher. A community of trust and encouragement is the platform that allows students to develop self-initiative and independence. My goal is to create a classroom environment that builds a trusting community; a community where students feel cared for and safe enough to be inspired to pursue their passions and surpass their comfort zone.

### Resources

Noddings, N. 2007. *Teaching Themes of Care*. Character. Vol. XIV, No.2. Boston, MA: Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character; School of Education, Boston University.

Palmer, P. 1997. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Wentzel, K. R, 1997. *Student Motivation in Middle School: The Role of Perceived Pedagogical Caring*. Journal of Educational Psychology. Vol 89, No. 3, 411-419.