

My Personal Philosophy of Education

Teaching is a profession that is more about building everlasting relationships than it is about collecting a salary. My name is Robert Cawson and I am a fifth grade teacher at Glencairn Elementary for East Lansing Public Schools. I have held typical teaching responsibilities on top of seeking outside professional development, leading a school's Safety Patrol Program, studied Public Administration, and represented districts as an ELA Leader. I hold a positive leadership role within the building because I feel responsible for maintaining and encouraging constant positive communication amongst colleagues, students and the community. Some of my essential and specific responsibilities include planning, evaluating student growth, and communicating professional development experiences. I continue to work hard to increase my knowledge on how to improve student learning and growth and will continue to communicate my knowledge to others to improve the learning community of Glencairn Elementary and East Lansing Public Schools.

Prior to my current employment, I taught for four years in the Swartz Creek Community School District. I spent two years of my career in a first grade classroom and the following two years in a fourth grade classroom. Even before that, I served as a lead Child Care Assistant for Fenton Public Schools. I remained within the Fenton School district for over 5 years. During this time, I worked within the district's summer camp program promoting literacy and science to the students. I worked diligently within the districts after school care program at Tomek Eastern Elementary during the actual school year. It was here when I became the lead assistant as I was recognized as a leader amongst the staff for promoting such passion for student growth and learning. I acknowledge that if it was not for my time spent within the Fenton Public School system, I would not be where I am today.

I earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education degree from the University of Michigan-Flint in Flint, Michigan with minor concentrations in social studies, language arts and integrated science. I have also recently completed my Masters in Public Administration there.

I believe education should focus on the whole child, rather than just the content, or the teacher. Learning is active, not always passive. Therefore, students should test ideas through active experimentation. Students should be encouraged to problem solve and critically think by making meaning through his or her individual experiences. Essentially, I want my students to learn by "doing". It will be my duty to provide them with the classroom experiences that encourage critical thinking and problem solving. Stemming from that, I will guide my lessons based on student interests and questions to encourage student learning and growth. This student first mindset will give my students ownership within the curriculum. This means teaching should be student-centered, not teacher-centered. By emphasizing student-centered learning, we will better maximize all of our students' potential and further their academic achievement.

Teachers should not only teach students the basic academics, but teach them how to be leaders and respected citizens of our future. Teachers can promote this through shared decision making, planning with students, as well as teaching student-selected topics. More accountability can also be placed on the students' shoulders for their academic learning and behavior. I will promote the idea of graphing student progress, both academically and socially. By emphasizing the idea of leadership, we will be leading our students to becoming responsible, productive and participating members of society.

It is my desire as an educator to help students meet their fullest potential by providing an environment that is safe, supports risk-taking, and invites sharing of ideas. I will strive to build strong relationships by getting to know each of them personally, while allowing them to do the same with each other. I will be sure to encourage all students to express themselves within class meetings and other means. I believe children have greater respect for their teachers, their peers, and the lessons presented when they feel safe and sure of what is expected of them. I will also figure out what type of learners my students are, so my teaching can be tailored towards their needs. I will be sure to tweak my teaching to fit around their interests and emphasize topics that are relevant to their own life. Thus, my students will not dread coming to my class, but instead will look forward to what they may experience. I will always work to inspire and motivate my students through means of active learning. Active learning will keep my students involved in the learning process, helping them to feel apart of the classroom experience and build a culture of learning.

My role will be to guide student learning by providing access to means of information and not simply acting as the primary source. This will promote the idea of discovery. Through discovery, students learn to find answers to their own questions. This will help students construct knowledge by learning within authentic situations. Providing students access to hands-on activities and allowing adequate time and space to use materials that reinforce the lesson being studied, creates an opportunity for individual discovery and construction of knowledge to occur.

I also believe it is critical that I take part as an active leader, both within the classroom and the community. By doing so, I will display the willingness to take initiative and solve problems when I encounter them. I will not shy away from any situation, but rather address the situation with good judgment. I will seek to find an answer, even when there doesn't seem to be any. Essentially, it is important to realize that there is never a situation too big or too small to take care of. I want my students to recognize my part in the classroom and be able to approach me whenever in need. The same is true for the stakeholders in the community. It is my duty to help them in any way morally possible.

Overall, I want my students to leave my class in better shape than what they entered. I want to share my passion for continued learning and personal growth and instill a love of learning within them. I would do anything in order to help my students succeed as citizens of tomorrow. Finally, I will remain a compassionate and dedicated individual who is excited to work with children everyday. I will always be sensitive to my students needs and strive to be the best teacher that I can be.