Philosophy of Education

Whitney Barkes

Arkansas State University

Around the center of my decision to be an educator revolve three of my major passions: being involved with shaping today’s youth, helping people learn, and learning new things myself. I believe that each of these passions will find a perfect outlet in teaching, and that they will also help to better inform the decisions I make once I finally become a teacher.

As anyone who has had experience being a child would likely say, growing up can often be an awkward, frustrating, and confusing time. And with the wrong teachers involved, the stress and responsibilities of public school could potentially make this time worse for any child going through it. I want to teach, specifically children, because it would put me in one of the most crucial leadership roles a child may rely on during their formative years. Though teaching academics are, as stated, highly important to me, I would like to use my teaching position to help children in any way I can beyond textbooks and lessons as well (within my limits, of course). Several teachers I’ve had were literally and strictly by the book, which is perfectly acceptable. But I am of the mindset that both scholarly and personal guidance can be expected of teachers by students, and by going into teaching myself, I will ensure that my students are able to find that guidance.

In terms of “reading, writing, and arithmetic”, my main standard will be that every one of my kids has a fair opportunity to learn the most essential knowledge necessary to succeed in their future schooling and eventual careers. This means leaving the restructuring of academia to those whose jobs it is do such things, instead focusing on the main task I will have at hand: instructing and informing students about more immediately tangible subjects. Fortunately, I wouldn’t have to pull what these subjects are out of the air, due to the universal guidelines the Common Core program puts into place. I believe that, even with its flaws, Common Core is a useful tool for educators who wish for their students to get the most out of the *current* education system, such as myself, and need to know how to go about achieving this goal. My love of helping others learn lies in essentialist teaching.

So often in my educational career I have had the misfortune of having teachers who—if they weren’t also sticklers and/or educational deconstructionists—were just simply not interested in their jobs. I always found this to be almost hypocritical; if the teacher isn’t interested in teaching the subject at hand, then the students shouldn’t be expected to be interested in learning about it. I plan for my approach to be somewhat overcompensating in its solving of this issue. Not only am I going to be interested in what I teach, but I will remain interested in *learning* as well. The ability to love learning is what separates the sighing, uncaring algebra teachers of the world from their superior colleagues. This distinguishing passion should even be relatively easy to put into practice, since I’ll have classrooms full of able young minds ready to help teach their teacher a new thing or two every day; this, to say nothing of any new outside expertise I’m certain to accumulate. As a student and an educator, I’m confident that my desire to extend my pursuit of knowledge basically indefinitely has been and will continue to be one of my most prevailing driving forces.

After learning why it is that I want to teach, how it is I plan to teach, and that I have an idea of how I will set myself apart from other educators in terms of what will inform the way I teach, it should be simple for one to understand my decision to choose teaching as my career. As a fitting afterthought, it is well-known that educators aren’t necessarily at the top of the income totem pole. This doesn’t deter me. No matter how much money I may or may not make, I consider learning while helping others to learn my dream job.