What Teaching Means to Me

 Educating all members of our country is one of the main reasons we are such a successful nation. With our public education being free and equal to all members of our society it allows for opportunities for all of our members to contribute effectively to the growth and development of Canada. Our school system also allows for a central place for young people to get together and socialize. This teaches the young people how to work properly with others, get along with others and develop ones’ own self. If public education did not exist our young people and future generation would grow up without an equal chance for success. Only the rich would get to go to school, get good jobs and make critical political decisions. Racism would flourish because your social status would be determined at birth. Women would never have been given the right to vote because without education they would not have realized their worth in our society. Canada is a much better country because of public education and I only hope to continue making it better.

 My personal approach to teaching takes on three main orientations. My most prominent orientation would be behaviorism. I believe in structure and order is the best way to run an effective classroom. Students work best when they know what is expected from them. This is true in when it comes to assessment and behaviors within a classroom. During my student teaching, I would always begin the class by giving a written and verbal agenda which gave students the direction for the class. Students also knew that during lecture and note taking parts of the class they must be quiet unless they had a question, at which point they would raise their hand and wait to be called upon. During experiments they would be put into groups and given a handout of a procedure, than we would read through it together, highlighting each person’s responsibilities. After this we could proceed with the experiment. This method allowed every student to be involved and for the class to move in an organized fashion. No student got lost in the assignment.

 I also have a lot of progressivist in me. It is essential in teaching to listen to your students and draw on their interest when developing a lesson. If you don’t do this you will struggle with classroom management because the students are bored. Students can be interested in all areas of study; they just need to be given the right stimulus to spark their curiosity. In my placement I noticed that the grade 9 students responded well to short video clips that were humorous. When I developed my lesson I found some YouTube videos that highlighted key learning objectives and when I could I found ones that were slightly trivial and would cause the students to laugh. These worked very well, the students grasped the concepts and the short humorous films imprinted better on their memory then my speaking. This would not have worked with the grade 12’s that I taught. They did not like trivial films and wanted to be treated more like adults. They enjoyed having their independence and doing hands-on activities. To accomplish this I gave them labs that they would have to perform. These labs would get them to understand the key concepts they were required to learn. This individualist approach to each class allowed me to cultivate an interest in the information in all the students.

 This leads me to my third orientation, I am an essentialist. The curriculum is what the government requires the students to know and so this is what I must teach. By teaching the students something that is not in the curriculum you are not allocating the appropriate time to the outcomes that are required. This will put the student behind and be putting added stress on the following teacher to teach your outcome along with theirs, and time does not always allow for this. While I was out student teaching I made extra effort to ensure that what I was teaching was what the curriculum required by constantly checking it. I would look for the vocabulary the students had to learn, the key concept they had to comprehend and the skills they were required to master. Staying within the curriculum allows the educational system to function in an effective method which is essential to both the success of the students and teachers.

 Another way for the school system to function effectively is through having successful schools. Successful schools are ones that have a strong sense of community both within their walls and externally with the public. This comes from having a strong leadership within the school. A principal is the primary source of authority that most people think of when they think of school leadership, but I think student lead initiatives are more effective. Having a strong student council or philanthropy group within your school can be more effective at spreading a positive sense of community throughout the school and community then one lead solely from the principal. This isn’t to say that these strong student lead groups just appear within the school. These groups are formed because teachers havegood management skills. Getting students to acquire these leadership skills come from putting high expectation to the students both within their academics and behaviors at the school. By making the students perform at their best they develop confidence and learn to take accountability for their action. This will help them become great leaders. Building a successful school takes time but the outcome is worth it.

 One of the struggles of putting high expectations on students is the parents. In today’s world there are some parents that can cause issues within the school. These parents fall into two categories. One of these categories is that they believe their child is perfect and is not accountable for their actions. If their child acted inappropriately there is always some excuse for why the child acted that way. The excuse usually lies on something the school has failed to do. The second category is that the parent doesn’t care what the child does and that any sort of discipline is the responsibility of the school. If their child is failing a subject the parents feel it would not be their responsibility, but the schools, to find a way to make their child successful. Both these types of parents pose a real problem when it comes to teaching. They can make a teacher feel very alone and powerless when it comes to disciplining or motivating the students. This can also bring a lot of frustration to a teacher as they could feel that they are being isolated. In either case, keeping lines of communication open between the parent, student and yourself is extremely important. You must always do what is best for the child. Remembering that as a teacher you are responsible for the education and safety of that child and as long as you communicate that to the parent you are likely to get more cooperation.

 Keeping students’ safe and preventing injury is extremely important when it comes to the school’s responsibilities. This involves teacher liability. It can be hard to accept responsibility for all of the students in our care at one time, but it is our professional obligation. As a teacher we must develop risk management plans to deal with possibly hazardous situations in our class or on field trips. Within these we should make sure that we minimize the possible hazards and then teach the students how to act appropriately to effectively eliminate the rest of the hazards. Constant supervision, planning and instruction on appropriate behavior are the most effective ways to manage liability in the case of an accident. It is important to understand that accidents do happen, but eliminating the seriousness and frequency of accidents are all part of our obligations we have to students to keep them safe.

 Remembering that, as teachers, we have rights is important as well. We do not have to put up with threats or sexual abuse in any manner. Certain rights like freedom of expression and the rights to privacy and lifestyle are not without exception. If one of our lifestyle choices jeopardize public confidence in our ability to teach or causes considerable disturbance within the community we can be removed from our position. Some teachers have an issue with this but I agree to these exceptions. We, as teachers, are put in a position where we have a huge influence on students. I believe we have to be extra careful how we act, as students are not yet developed enough to rationalize what behaviors are deemed inappropriate for them but acceptable for an adult. We are playing a role in raising effective members of our society, so we should be held accountable for our actions.

 In conclusion, I feel that teaching and inspiring the leaders of tomorrow is a real privilege, and something not to be taken for granted. It is essential to the success of our communities and will affect the path that our country will take in the future. Keeping education public keeps it equal and allows everyone the opportunity to be part of this path which will make Canada stronger and the world a better place.

 By: Anna Hueging