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EDUC 260

Teaching Philosophy

Schools and the school community provide more resources than most people know about. Building a school community with culturally relevant instruction is a lot of work. Outlined below are the goals and responsibilities of each part of the school community.

Goals of Education

Schools service several purposes. The obvious one is to educate students, but when you look deeper schools can serve the community in other ways. For example, when schools shutdown in March there was a lot of concern because a lot of students receive meals from schools. In Virginia, fifteen percent of children live in poverty (Powell, 2015, p. 264). Since the shutdown some schools have also provided technology to students. This has been helpful as school has moved online and not all families have the technology for their students to succeed. Some schools also hold job fairs that are open to the public to help members of the community meet employers.

Teachers have several roles in the classroom. The one most thought about is to educate their students. As an extension of that teachers also prepare their students to be members of society. Teachers often do this by teaching things that are not in the standards. For example, elementary teachers often have to teach social skills. High school teachers often help prepare students for postsecondary life. My high school had guidance counselors, but no one talked to them unless they needed to change classes. My English teacher helped me research colleges.

Approach to Instruction and Assessment

Ideally, the purpose of standards is to ensure that everyone receives a quality education. There are certain things in every grade that students should learn. The issue with this can be that sometimes politics can have an influence on school standards. Null curriculum is things that are not taught in school. Null curriculum can include things that are considered controversial (Powell, 2015, 120). This is a big problem in history classes. Things that might be uncomfortable for certain students, like slavery, are not in some state standards, or the history that is taught is sugar coated. This does students a real disservice as they have to unlearn what they are taught in school later in life, or they live their lives misinformed.

Powell (2015) mentions four purposes for assessment. The first is monitoring student progress (Powell, 2015). Assessments can tell teachers where students are in the learning process. The next purpose is to inform instructional decisions (Powell, 2015). For example, if most of a class fails a test, then it might be beneficial to reteach the section. The third purpose of assessment is to evaluate student achievement (Powell, 2015). If students are given both diagnostic and formative tests, then a teacher can see how much a student improved. The last purpose of assessment is evaluating programs. If a school adopts a new program, assessments can tell the school if the program is helping student achievement (Powell, 2015).

The best way to teach diverse learners and special populations is to have a culturally relevant curriculum. One of the best ways to do this is to connect with students' culture (Ladson-Billings, 2009). When curriculum is tied to a student's culture it can make the lesson exciting and the students will engage with it more.

Learning Environment

In the class where we discussed classroom management, we talked about how to set up a classroom. A good classroom is set up with decorations and posters on the walls, but not so much that students can get distracted. With nothing added to the classroom it can look steral and uninviting, but a classroom that is distracting takes away from learning Wells (2020). I always enjoyed when teachers put student work on the walls. If a student gets their work on the wall, they have something to proud of. If the student did not get their work on the wall, they have a goal to shoot for. The teacher might need to rotate you is on the wall to make sure that all students have the chance to feel proud.

Discipline should be handled in the classroom whenever possible. When students are sent outside of the classroom it hinders their learning. Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to end up in prison, especially if that student isn't white. This contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline. Behaviors should be viewed as communication. In *Dreamkeepers* by Gloria Ladonson-Billings (2009), the author discusses the case of a kindergarten student who finishes his station work before others. He then gets bord and acts out. Instead of digging deeper into the behavior the teacher repeatably sends him to time out. This labels the student as a "bad kid." This kind of label can have a self-fulfilling prophecy. Everyone sees the child as bad, so he later in life makes choices that make this true. If the teacher had looked at why this student misbehaves every day during centers, she would realize the work is too easy for him. He is not being challenged. She could add work for him and differentiate her instruction. She could also put in a request that he be tested for a gifted and talented program.

Expectations of Students

Too often students in public schools are expected to show up and memorize material for a test. Teacher-centered philosophies really push that students are simply there to absorb material that the teacher presents. As someone who really enjoys progressivism in teaching, I think that a student's main job is to participate. A large part of progressive education is active engagement (Powell, 2015). Students should show up to class ready to take part in the day's activities. Sometimes, this can be difficult, but this is where communication is very important. If something is going on in a student's life so they just need the day off and I was told, I would not call on that student. Everyone needs a break sometimes.

Teacher's Role in the Larger Community

The role of guardians in a student's life is to support their learner. Parents should be aware of their student's progress. The grades that come home on report cards should not be a surprise to parents. Some of this can be difficult. For example, if a parent works a lot it can be hard to get engaged in their students learning. This is where the teacher steps in. The teacher should, where possible, make accommodations for these families. No matter the work schedule, parents and other guardians have a right to be involved in their student's education.

The community is to support schools. Attending school boards and having your opinion heard is one way to do this. Another way is to participate in fundraising. Many schools partner with local fast-food places, or other restaurants and then receive money from the sales that occur. Going out to eat and earning your school money is a great way to participate.

A teacher's main role in the community is to build partnerships. It is their job to forge relationship with their students' families and other community members. This can be done by being present in the community. Shopping, going to local events, or going to a church in the

school community can help build those relationships. A teacher also has to understand the community they teach in. Different parts of the country have different social norms. Following these could show people that you care, especially if you just moved to the area.

References

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