Educational philosophy

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In my mind, education is a series of consequence of the teacher’s decision making. Teachers are constantly confronted with a range of different options and are required to select from among these options the ones they think are best suited to a particular goal. Therefore, I’d like to compare teaching to another challenging career ---- Wall Street, teachers are dedicate to make strategy investment portfolio, carry it out, modify it to individual need as well as an overall atmosphere, thus to make a difference.

What’s my vision?

Since the day I decide to be a foreign language teacher, I myself started to learn Spanish and Cantonese, for the reason that I want to experience how a student might probably feel helpless or even stupid when learning a foreign language. This on-going experience enlightens me that a foreign language teacher should be “two-faced”, being warm on one hand, while being pushing and persistent on the other hand. That is because teacher should provide a mild and safe environment thus to encourage students to maintain positive attitude towards making mistakes; however, sometimes, teacher should be tough, and stick to certain rules to urgent students keeping move forward.

What philosophy do I subscribe to?

I support the progressive teaching philosophy, and put emphases on the three things below:

- Functional Learning
- Backward Design
- Differentiate Instruction

- Functional Learning:
  I think to learn a language successfully means one can make sense of it in
the interpersonal communication, interpretive communication, and presentational communication; also know the language function and culture function at different levels. Therefore, my lesson plan design always begins with the thinking of “what function should it embedded?”

- Backward Design:

  Backward design means showing students what they can do by the end of the unit, and then measure their performance in a process oriented way. It is a way to provide teaching scaffolding, as well as to motivate students in a realistic tone.

- Differentiate Instruction:

  In the American melting pot, seldom teacher can have the luxury of a classroom full of same level students. Therefore, differentiating the teaching material, instruction, requirement, speed, etc are extremely necessary in the classroom. I student taught a Chinese as a foreign language course with three levels (beginning, intermediate and advanced). In that class, I use different textbook, different approach, assignment different DO NOW and H.W. and it’s such a challenging time management thing for teacher to do. Later on, I taught in an international school, in the Chinese as a native language class, there are Taiwanese, Cantonese, Malaysian, and Mainland China students, though judging by nationality, they are all Chinese, they speak different dialect, write different characters and receive different literature course in their home countries. I learn a lot culture issue from teaching that course, thus to further realize the importance of differentiate instruction.

How do I work with parents? Students? Colleagues?

  I reach my students by learning their languages, dialect and culture. As mentioned above, I’m learning Spanish and Cantonese, because there’s huge Hispanic and Cantonese population now learning Mandarin. By studying their language, I give students a feeling that we are on the same boat. I’m passing down
one piece of information ---- all languages are open to everybody, if I can learn Cantonese, why you, a Cantonese kid can not learn Mandarin? What’s more, I feel my language learning is also helpful in terms of classroom management. When I arrange group work, some Hispanic kids naturally begin to talk in Spanish together, notice this, I go to them and say “Ni Espanol, por favor” (No Spanish please.) The result is students look up me with a surprising face and soon begin to use their broken Mandarin to communicate.

I listen to parents feedback, dedicate to a community based learning. Ever since I began the observation in New York’s secondary school, I volunteer to help parent-teacher-conference. Now as a teacher in an international school, most of my students’ parents are out side U.S., and then I actively communicate to them through sales office in students’ home country, I talk to parents via email, skype and telephone. It is a time consuming thing, however I fell happy to see the change of students afterwards.

About working with colleagues, I support the idea that some schools require their teachers to observe each other’s class. I’d love to exchange idea with other teacher from time to time, view the observation between colleagues as a mirror, see what’s deserve borrowing and embedding in my own classroom. Also, in my current boarding school, I live as a family with other teachers and house-parents. We exchange resource, talk about students, design interdisciplinary course, etc.

All in all, though newly begin the career; I have accumulated the educational philosophy everyday. The everyday interaction with students shows that my beliefs are correct and valuable. I love being a teacher, and love thinking while teaching.