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Philosophy of Teaching

By choosing to be a secondary educator in the social studies I have made a commitment to improving students' understanding of history, government, economics, and geography. It is essential to place the necessary importance on these subjects so students can begin to understand the world they live in and the historical factors that shape our global society. If we can improve student understanding in the subjects of history, government, economics, and geography then we can begin the process of creating more informed and active citizens at an earlier age.

A high school classroom is a diverse setting that contains students with different backgrounds and experiences. Therefore, the techniques one employs must also be varied. Students must feel like they are being included in the learning process and since each student learns differently this must be taken into consideration.

Through the implementation of differentiated instruction each student is likely to find a portion of a lesson or unit that they can relate to and make a personal connection. The creation of a personal connection between the material and the student through the use of diverse techniques allows the material to extend beyond the classroom and facilitates the student carrying that knowledge throughout the rest of their education.

The process begins at the start of each unit by creating an introductory lecture that gives the students the basics they will need to understand the material being presented to them through the use of maps, graphs, and pictures that are relevant to the topic of interest. As the unit progresses the students should take on a more active role with the material. This includes having them read primary sources and respond to guiding questions that can be included and clarified in class discussions. If the material includes dramatic elements such as the struggle for basic human rights, governmental change through reform, or aspects of large scale wars the students should participate in simulations, role playing, and controlled debates. These methods allow the students to get personally involved and relate to the material in a way that lecture cannot always achieve. After the information has been presented through these various methods the students should be placed in groups and given portions of the material to break down in their own words. Once this is completed they are expected to report this information back to the class to show that they have grasped the material and are able to explain it to their peers in a way they can understand.

Though the classroom itself has an extremely varied format, this method should not also be applied to the rules of the class. Rules and regulations must be understood and accepted by all in the classroom to create the type of environment discussed above. The first step in this process is for the students to acknowledge that the school code of conduct will be enforced as it is stated in the school manual. Secondly, the teacher must codify the rules on absent work, late work, and classroom expectations of behavior in a way that is clear and concise. Students should be involved in this process and have their concerns heard, however the final decision on classroom norms should lie with the teacher. The final step of this process is making sure parents are aware of the classroom policies and expectations and know how to contact the teacher if any problems should arise. The best way for this to happen is to display your school sanctioned e-mail, voicemail number, and course website to all parents and keep open lines of communication through regular contact if necessary.

However, a teenager's education does not stop once they leave the classroom. It is important to also stress involvement in the school community. Once a student has been educated in the classroom they must take that knowledge and apply it in the world around them. Students should stay active by joining clubs, volunteering their time, or participating in after school activities like student government, band, or athletics. Educators must facilitate these experiences for their students by volunteering their own time and expertise to make sure these opportunities exist and are administered properly.

A student's education must be a well-rounded experience for it to be effective and make a difference in their life. An educator can create this experience through diverse teaching practices in the classroom and dedication to extracurricular activities outside the classroom.