

Philosophy of Education

As educators, regardless of subject area, the task looms before us to prepare students for a lifetime of learning and preparing them to be contributing citizens in a global society. In order to accomplish this, we as teachers must realize and capitalize on the impact that we have in our students' lives. I am reminded of the poem by Marianne Williamson that begins with the line "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure." Keeping in mind that power that we as teachers have to shape, mold, and develop our students into contributing members of our society, we must know our own strengths. I feel that my greatest assets that have allowed me to become an effective teacher are my ability to connect with all students, a strong emphasis on character development, and a focus on 21st Century Skills.

What an immense and challenging occupation we have, and at the heart of this monumental job is our ability to connect and develop relationships with our students. This is the crux of why I became a teacher to begin with. The ease with which I can connect with young students is certainly what has allowed me to become the teacher that I am today. Parents and students often tell me that their favorite subject is PE. I try to humbly state that it is only because I am the only teacher that actually *lets* them run, but that line often falls on deaf ears as they insist it is because I am a caring, joyful, and relational teacher.

In my gym, it is no secret that I put less emphasis on the students learning the physical skills that may allow them to participate in a given activity, and more emphasis is placed on cultivating better character traits in my students. The result

of a good lesson to me would stand out more not in the number of compliments and constructive feedback given by the students to their peers rather than the number of overhead volleyball serves that made it over the net. In the economy of all we have to teach, the gold standard is preparing our students to meet *any* challenge that may face them. My students are better served in learning the universal skills to be people of good character than in learning a skill that is only applicable in one arena.

The recent focus on the 21st Century skills has really allowed me to develop this aspect of my curricula and lessons. I firmly believe that PE affords a unique and wonderful opportunity to teach these skills, especially collaboration, invention, self-direction, and critical thinking and reasoning. The interactions that students have with each other in the gym are unparalleled in their dependence upon these skills. Much of my lesson planning involves a conscious and intentional effort to include the 21st century skills, as they will equip students to be better learners in my classroom, the school, the community, and the future.

If you were to ask me what I teach, the short answer would be PE. However, in the larger scheme, the focus is much more on who I teach, rather than what I teach. I strive to create a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment in which to learn, and to teach beyond the proverbial nuts and bolts and teach what will best equip the students for their futures. I firmly believe that my greatest contribution to the students that I serve is in teaching them skills and character traits that will allow them to reach their fullest potential and to become, in the words of Ms. Williamson, “powerful beyond measure”.