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My Philosophy of Teaching

All students, regardless of race, gender, socio-economic status, learning ability, or criminal history, are entitled to quality education. This education should be affordable, if not free. It should also be tailored to meet the individual needs of each student. Every student deserves the opportunity to improve upon his/her current status and to work toward a brighter future. It is the duty of a teacher to guide each and every student toward that future.

All students can reach the highest levels of mathematical studies. There is not a person who walks through life without mathematical need. Reasoning skills and problem-solving abilities are the backbone to every successful individual. Every student should be encouraged to grow as a problem-solver, as a mathematician. Teachers of mathematics must challenge every student to develop reasoning skills and to solve meaningful problems. All students are mathematically capable.

To properly teach problem-solving and reasoning skills, students must learn about both practical and theoretical mathematics. Often the practical use will lead to theoretical understanding. Students must be given opportunities to apply mathematics to solve real-world problems. Mathematics instruction must be a mixture of hands-on projects, Socratic inquiry, practice, and assessment. Students must be given many and varied opportunities to learn and to show understanding of mathematical concepts. To this end, teachers must be knowledgeable of both the theory and practical applications of the topics they present to students.

Mathematics does not exist in a bubble. Although mathematics educators may not be preparing every student for a career in pure mathematics, every student will use mathematics. Students are consumers, societal observers, and scientists. For mathematics to be relevant to students, educators must give students opportunities to apply real mathematics.

In every lesson, students must know that they are mathematically capable. Every student brings a unique set of skills and abilities to the classroom. Students must be allowed to use these abilities to collaborate with their peers and to develop new understandings. Teachers must communicate, verbally and in their actions, that each day is a chance to grow, to develop new skills. Educators must foster a growth mindset.

Giving students a quality education should be the goal of all educators, but an educator must understand that receiving is just as important as giving. In order to successfully impart knowledge, one must also be open to feedback, training, and

professional growth. An educator must be open to learn and discover with her students. An educator must foster an environment where education is valued. Teachers must be life-long learners.

A successful educator must understand how students learn. She must use data to inform her instruction, at the universal level and at the individual student level. An educator must be current with best-teaching practices. She must understand how to design lessons that are age-appropriate and aligned with brain development. The educator must be aware of state and national standards for each of the subjects she teaches and of how to employ these standards to create a comprehensive and organized curriculum. When implementing the curriculum, an educator must use formal and informal student assessments to determine whether or not the instruction is effective. She must use this information to ascertain the next steps in her lessons. Understanding how students learn, universally and as individuals, is essential to effective teaching.

A curriculum is only as good as its delivery and assessments. Just as educators can learn from student assessment, students should also be given the opportunity to grow from one assessment to the next. To hold students accountable to the goals of the curriculum, educators must encourage students to correct and learn from mistakes. Educators must ensure, through delivery and assessment, that all students are competent in each area of the curriculum. In order for students to be successful in future mathematics, course completion must be based on student competency.

A successful educator must understand when to be consistent and when to be flexible. Teachers should be consistent with their classroom norms, grading methods, and procedures. Students should have clear behavior expectations that are communicated consistently. Teachers must communicate the expectations for student competency in any given assignment. While every classroom needs structure, an educator must be able to be flexible as well. An educator needs to be able to recognize when it is appropriate to change a lesson, to explore a worthwhile tangential learning moment. An educator must be comfortable in the unpredictable moments of a lesson.

Every educator should encourage students to be proficient with technology. Students come to the classroom with many and varied skills in using technology. Because so much can be done with technology, the skill of memorization is becoming less and less desirable. More and more, the job force is looking for students who can solve new problems, often using technology. Technology will continue to play a vital role in students' lives. Educators must be able to incorporate technology and help students use technology as a tool to solve problems.

Lastly, and possibly, most importantly, educators have a societal obligation to be good role models for students. On any given school day, many students spent more time with their teachers than with their parents. Good educators use their actions to teach students respect, determination, and compassion. Every student deserves a good educator.