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Philosophy Statement

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Education: Experiences through Exploring Interests

The field of education is forever changing. With new technology, new standards and new needs for discipline, being a teacher is easily becoming a harder and harder job. As a future elementary school teacher, I see the elementary years as being a foundation for the future. Education, to me, can be compared to a tour through a museum. The teacher guides the tour for some of the time, but also allows the students to go away from the group and explore what they are interested in. Afterwards, the students come back and share what they found. Elementary education should allow students to explore subjects and gain experiences. The role of the teacher is to be a guide: to answer any questions and make the students feel comfortable while they learn. With everyone knowing what is expected of them, successful learning can take place.

To teach my discipline, I feel it is important to address student interests and address all subject areas. While addressing all subject areas is important to meet the core standards, it also keeps the students interested in what we are learning. Teaching a variety of subjects in different ways (like guided practice, independent practice, and group work) will keep the students engaged. I plan on using technology (such as iPads, SmartBoards, etc.) with my students, because this generation has a huge interest in it. I also plan on incorporating a lot of classroom activities and group work to get the students up and moving instead of just sitting in their desks. This is key to learning because students at the elementary level quickly lose focus. I plan to have my classroom function as a team in terms of communicating. By getting up and interacting with peers, students are learning not only to communicate, but also to communicate their opinions,

which is important for their future. To share opinions with peers and teachers is a very important skill to acquire. Students today have a variety of opinions, which are a response to their home environment.

Students today are a lot different than previous generations. They come from extremely different home lives, including blended families, separated parents, and many more. It is very important that the teacher understands these situations and does their best to be nurturing to these students. When teaching, I plan on doing quite a bit of hands-on activity, in which I will then have time to get to know my students. By doing this, my students will automatically find me more approachable and understand that I truly care. Many students also struggle with understanding the material being taught because they easily become bored, unengaged, and frustrated with what they don't understand. As a teacher, it is important to understand these differences and attempt to correct them. Students also struggle with just sitting all day learning things that they believe they will never use. Due to this, I plan on not only basing my class upon student interest, but also showing the students how they can use all the subjects that we are learning. This is key to getting students involved in the classroom.

As a student at Alma College, a liberal arts education is a very important piece of my schooling. I feel the same can be applied to elementary school. A student should be able to explore all the different subjects. While the students are somewhat forced to learn all the subjects, they begin to figure out what their interests are. These interests can quickly begin to build throughout schooling, which will eventually lead them to a career field. Due to the fact that a lot of different subjects flow into others, all subjects should be treated as equal. One is not more important than the other. It is important that all children gain a balanced education because it is the foundation for the learning to come.

As I said previously, I feel that learning through experiences is the best way to learn. Whether that means students go outside to look at plants in science or students correct each other's mistakes in English, everyone is learning from experiences. I also think we learn best when we can communicate about the task at hand. When we talk about it, we brainstorm ideas and start to draw solutions. With this in mind, I plan on promoting a lot of group conversation. Students in my classroom will often times be doing a lot of teacher guided exploration. If they are working in groups, the teacher should still be actively involved. When a new subject arises, the teacher should introduce the topic, but also let the students do some individual practice with it. This way, students are constantly engaged, which creates a very active and upbeat classroom.

When someone walks into my classroom, I want him or her to feel invited and comfortable. I want the room to be organized and clean, so we can work productively individually and as a class. I also think promoting positivity is a huge part of success not only in learning, but also in communicating. If a student does not feel comfortable in the classroom, they quickly will fall behind, act out, or shut down entirely. Therefore, it is important to have open communication between the students and the teacher. They should feel comfortable with one another. As far as classroom setup, I plan on having several nooks for different subjects, all to promote exploration of interests. There will be the reading area, the science area, the math area, etc., all on the outskirts of the students' desks. This way, we are constantly promoting exploration of the subjects, which gets kids thinking of the future and where they can use these subjects.

Schools, in general, are preparing students for the future. In elementary school, it is important that students get a strong foundation of all the subject areas that will be built upon in higher learning. The interests that the students gained in elementary school may change during

higher learning. This makes the foundation of having all the subjects much more important.

Schools have to realize that the students are the future and the students must be educated well to function in society.

Imagine a teacher guiding his or her class through a museum that contains all the subjects. The guided tour requires learning certain subjects, but at times students are allowed to roam the museum in groups or individually to educate and explore on their own. The teacher is still there to help them if they need, but they also get the thrill of learning something they are interested in. This museum represents my philosophy for teaching: guided learning, exploration, and open communication between everyone.