

MY ORIENTATION TO TEACHING

I believe that each child is a unique individual who needs a secure, caring and stimulating atmosphere to grow emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially (Vardin, 2003). As an educator, I am committed to help students meet their full potential by providing a safe environment, supporting risk taking, and encouraging cross-fertilisation of ideas in the classroom. As an educational psychologist, I believe that teaching and research can and must inform each other, and I draw on a variety of theoretical perspective and data analysis to develop my teaching practices.

Flexibility in my theoretical positions allows the use of a number of methods, ranging from explicit instruction to activities that emphasise student control and interactivity, in order to cater for the diversity of learners and the kind of information and skills they need in my class. I endorse the importance of peer learning, and I create opportunities for the students to construct their knowledge socially, whilst acknowledging the need to work at their own pace and the varying degrees of assistance I must provide.

Students in my class access hands-on activities and ICT, and are granted adequate time and space to use materials that reinforce the lesson being studied. In each lesson, I support the development of the General Capabilities, especially literacy and numeracy, as identified by the National Curriculum.

According to leading research, developing a curriculum around students' interests fosters intrinsic motivation (Bowen, 2007). I see classroom meetings and mini surveys as great opportunities for each student's voice to be heard. When given the opportunity for input, students generate amazing ideas and a rich supply of learning activities.

I exploit the value of positive self- fulfilling prophecies and set high expectations for my students, for both academic achievements and behavior (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). I help my students to set subject-specific goals that are measurable and achievable, so we both know what we are working towards, and I consistently give formal and informal feedback.

I adopt a sensible approach to discipline. I am persuaded that students have greater respect for their teacher, their peers and the lessons presented when they feel safe and know what is expected of them. In setting fair and consistent rules and stating the importance of each activity, students are shown respect for their presence and time. They become, in turn, responsible members of the classroom community.

As a professional, I advocate the importance of belonging to a teaching network and to the broader community; for this reason, I am an active member of the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Queensland (MLTAQ). The MLTAQ allows me to be part of a community of teachers and share ideas and resources, and to be up-to-date with the implementation of the national curriculum for languages. The MLTAQ also organises professional development opportunities for language teachers, as well as speaking and writing competitions for students. We cooperate with foreign governments and local cultural associations to keep the study of languages

interesting and linked to the global learning community.

I appreciate the importance of creating and maintaining positive relationships with parents/carers and the need to work together with the students' wellbeing in mind. I include parents/carers in class communications about classwork and assessment requirements, to keep them informed on my program and eventual adjustments. I contact parents/carers in regards to the students' progress, dispositions to learning and behaviour, focusing on strengths and positive features. I also like to use OneSchool to report positive behaviour rather than issues.

In my opinion, teaching is an opportunity for continual learning and growth. It stimulates the learning from pedagogical strategies and research, learning from the parents and the community, learning from colleagues, and especially learning from and learning with the students. I hope to inspire a life-long love of learning in my students, and I am aiming to be compassionate, enthusiastic, and committed to reflective practice.

References

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- Vardin, P. A. (2003). Montessori and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. *Montessori Life*, 15(1), 40-43.