My Philosophy on Early Childhood Education

As a future professional in Early Childhood Education, I realize that I have the potential to influence and shape the values and motivations the young children in my care will develop towards multiple aspects of their lives. To reach these multiple aspects I realize there are three practices that I believe are important ways to positively influence young children. First, I believe that it is important to understand young children and help them in various ways, including school subjects, as well as with social interactions and problems that the children may have. I as a teacher need to know how the children in my care learn and adapt my teaching style and methods so that children reach their ultimate potential. I know that children are capable of so much and I want to help them gain the information to be a productive citizen of society. Second, I believe it is important to maintain a collaborative relationship with both families and other professionals. Families are the people who know the child, inside and out. They are the experts on their child from whom I need to learn. Finally, it is important to be flexible when working with children. Lesson plans are not always going to go as planned and I have to be flexible to the children’s varying needs and ideas (Batshaw, 2007). Content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, professional dispositions, and human relations are very important in relation to Early Childhood Education.

Content and pedagogical knowledge are essential in the field of early education. When it comes to planning and implementing lessons and activities it is imperative to understand how children grow and develop (Sandall & Schwartz, 2002; Santrock 2001). I enjoy working with students who are successful with multiple teaching methods. I, being an auditory and visual learner, believe it is important for a teacher to present different methods. It is moving to see children thrive in an environment that is modified to their specific needs or talents. In order to
understand the varying learning styles presented in the classroom I need to know background knowledge about the children. From drawing the knowledge I am able to know how best to assist the children and provide meaningful learning experiences that incorporates each child’s preferences and scaffold on previous occasions (Mindes, 2003). Having written multiple lesson plans I know how important it is to accommodate for all learning styles: auditory, visual and kinesthetic. When I was in my preschool placement I wrote multiple lesson plans that I thought would work perfectly the way they were. Once I started to acquaint myself with the children in my class I realized that presenting my lesson in one way such as visually may not allow another child who may be an auditory learner to learn the material as well. In this placement I realized that I had to present a balance of child and teacher initiated activities. This allows me to learn about each individual child’s learning styles while also allowing the children to build their own knowledge base. Children determine their own learning when they explore and discover materials, topics and concepts they are interested in (Sandall & Schwartz, 2002). Integrating content areas, I believe, is the best way to show the children connections between the concepts taught in the classroom and their everyday life.

My professional dispositions are based upon my ability to gain and maintain collaborative relationships with families and other professionals. It is important to remain current with different educational practices and policies to help make experiences in the classroom more successful. Linking assessment to instruction guarantees a supportive and strong curriculum. It is also vital that I support children’s independence and provide them with positive reinforcement and guidance (Marion, 2003). In order to maintain collaborative relationships with others I need to have awareness about others cultures (Gonzalez-Mena, 2002). When I was in my Head-Start placement I had a diverse group of children. There were some children in my
class that were English Language Learners and I had to be aware of their language as being a part of their culture. Having an awareness of their language I can then learn more about their culture by learning their language. Without this awareness I would be naive to what the families may struggle with, what they celebrate, or what appropriately coincides with their culture. It is also important for me to look deep within myself and identify any possible biases, assumptions or stereotypes. Already I have begun to look at any possible assumptions I may have of people who are different from me by doing a self-interview. Through a service learning project, in which I went to a homeless shelter, I have begun to change any stereotypes I may have had. By discovering my own stereotypes and reflecting upon them I have the ability to connect with and interact with people, which goes along with human relations.

Human relations are an elaborate part of education. I have to be able to interact and communicate with children, families, and other professionals in order to develop positive healthy relationships with them. My use of appropriate language, eye contact and confidentiality allow me to build an encouraging relationship with families. The environment I make available to the children must be a welcoming environment that allows for open and honest communication with fellow classmates as well as with the teacher. In my Kindergarten placement I saw a perfect example of a welcoming environment. My cooperating teacher would welcome the children each day and be around for children to talk to. Each day the children would come in and talk about what they did last night, what problems they may be having, or talk about something completely random. Presenting an inclusive learning environment is crucial when working with children and families who are from diverse backgrounds and who each have specific values and priorities (Gonzalez-Mena, 2002). Inclusive learning environments allow children to work together and learn from one another. In my current placement I have a student who went and
recently visited Mexico. He is Mexican and came back and taught his fellow classmates about his culture and talked about all the places he saw. He was able to communicate what he did and what makes up parts of his culture effectively. Effective communication inside and outside of the classroom is vital. Effective communication is especially important when working with children whose families speak English as a second language (Kuder, 2008). When it comes to effective communication it is important to be clear and concise. I don’t want anyone to be left with questions after I have gone through an explanation. I also don’t want anyone to get a completely different message then what I am trying to send them. By thoroughly explaining myself and expectations I can help families identify strengths and areas of concern. Since families have a wealth of knowledge about their own child; open communication allows me to adapt instruction to help with areas of concern or build upon the child’s strengths (Wittmer, 2010). Open communication, or having a relationship where families and children can come to talk about anything, is crucial to learning about the child and their family. It is important to develop a supportive relationship when working with children and their families. Supportive relationships are obtained through positive interactions where the message is sent clearly and concise. After creating and implementing multiple lessons I know that not all lessons are going to go as I have them planned. There are going to be children who struggle with the idea and there are going to be others who have no problem understanding. I know there are going to be children who are going to go off and talk about something else and I have to know how to tailor the lessons and ideas to what the children’s interests are. In my preschool placement I had a child who wanted to only talk about a certain animal when I was doing a Winter Themed unit. I brought him back to the discussion by telling him, for example, “penguins make their own
distinct footprint. Let’s find out what footprints all the winter animals make”. By mentioning penguins he was excited to see if they were mentioned in the story I was going to read.

In order to be successful in the education field I must depend upon my understanding of young children, maintaining collaborative relationships, and being flexible to children’s needs. Through effective communication, learning about the children in my care, and understanding of how children learn I will be able to meet the needs of all my students. In learning about my own biases I have realized how important it is to learn all about the children. About their families, their cultures, as well as their wants and needs. It is easy to assume things about people, such as a child lives with their parents, when really they may live with grandparents or aunts and uncles. To the caregivers of the children in my classroom these students are their entire world and I need to help meet their children’s needs with the maximum amount of care and sensitivity that I can provide.
References


