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Teaching Platform

My best friend's brother Matthew has autism. I am five years older than Matthew, and growing up I always looked out for him. As the years went on we gained a very special bond. It became clear to me that my future career should involve something to do with special education. I had always wanted to be a teacher ever since I was little, but special education would clearly be harder to teach because of the challenges I may face with the students. In high school I decided to help coach a special education basketball team. Through this process I learned it takes a certain type of person to work with people who are special needs. Special education students want is to be treated normally, to be seen more than their "disability." They deserve a chance just like anyone else in this world. They need to be shown that they have a purpose and it's what makes them different that is exactly what this world needs. I saw a need in the school system for more passionate special education teachers. I believe God used Matthew to show me my purpose in life. He has called me to work with special education and it's for that reason I know I will be a great teacher. Quality teachers are critical for our future generation. The five essentials of being a good teacher I believe include: Self knowledge, understanding of students, creativity, organization, and reflection/problem solving.

Teachers choose this profession because they are passionate about not only the subject they teach, but passionate about teaching their students and helping them grow as individuals. Not only do they know a lot about the subject they are teaching on, they understand it in a more complex and deeper meaning. Self knowledge is very a important quality for a teacher to have because I believe you have to understand what you know and your knowledge of things before you can teach students, guide students, and to have a better understanding of the curriculum. The more self knowledge a teacher has the better chance that they know the limit of the material being given. This way they will not “over teach” a lesson. Most college students take a course multiple times in order to improve their previous grades. This is for them to have a better understanding of the material being taught to better help them in their future career. This will help them better understand the material and be able to break it down, which makes it easier to teach. Just because you may know a lot about a subject or specific education field does not necessarily mean they should be a teaching that subject. For example, if you have a English teacher teaching you about Shakespeare, but the teacher is doing so in a complete monotone voice and keeps commenting what he/she does not like about their job. This example is of a person who should not be teaching an English class, because this is going to cause students to not want to attend this certain class. If they are not familiar with a certain topic they will be teaching it is in their best interest to learn as much as they can about the topic. This article I found talks about how Self-awareness associates with positive relationships and mental and physical health. “Enhancing

self-knowledge is not only an academic pursuit, but also a means for optimizing functional adaptation in the world (Lewine).” The article goes on to talk about how we need to recognize our self knowledge. To develop a self knowledge/awareness, you need to be paying attention, like enforcing positive behavior in the classroom. “Teachers often inadvertently neglect to recognize and build on students’ positive behaviors and strengths (Richardson 9).” If teachers are using strategies to reduce a “burnout” and to nurture their own mental health. Most teachers are not taught to be aware of their ownself knowledge and how knowing about your self-knowledge can really help you in the long run of teaching. When teachers present their presentation to students it usually is new to those students, but sometimes to the teacher it is “old news.” But, the teacher can incorporate new information to teach because, most of the time teachers do not teach the same topic year after year. So sometimes when they teach on a new topic not only is it different for the students, it is also new for the teacher. Teachers need to grasp the idea that there is always new material that can be learned, and there are many different ways to present that material. Another key aspect of having self knowledge is self confidence. If you present a lesson plan nervously, or fumbling around with no confidence the students will pick up on it and may think you have no idea what you are doing. This is also important because if you begin to show students your weaknesses they will only use them against you. Knowing your need as a teacher is probably one of the most critical things about self knowledge. Do you notice the things you’re supposed to? You must know when you step in to help an student especially if they are emotionally unstable. That could be

their home life, or bullying in the school. Teachers also need to develop strategies to handle their own stress (Richardson 10). This is very important for special education teachers. “Teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders is one of the most perplexing and challenging roles in education” (Richardson 10). Along with being self-aware, teachers also need to be able to understand that there are different ways to teach for each student's needs because, not all students are on the same learning level academically.

Being able to understand your students helps create a better bond. It allows you to gain a sense of compassion for your students. To me this means being trustworthy. Be a teacher a student can trust, whether it is for the confidentiality of not telling their friends they are coming in to get extra help with the material they struggle with or, just to be there for them to talk to about anything they may need to get off their chest. You can not be trustworthy if you are not easily approachable for a student to talk to. This also means not judging the student for whatever his/her needs. “Showing students you care about them helps create a positive, supportive relationship and helps build an environment where learning can flourish. And you're modeling behavior that you want students to learn and emulate” (National Education Association). This is important because teachers must be able to meet the needs of their students no matter their level of academic ability. Some students are “above” average, who can work on their own without need of much explanation or direction on what to do. Teachers may also have the average students who just need a little guidance on what to do but for the most part can work on their own with no

problem. Teachers will also have their “below” average, these students will need a little more assistance than the two other types. These “below” average students may need you by their side until they finish the work assigned. Regardless the ranking of the student you still have to be able to accommodate for every student in your classroom and help them with their academic needs. You have to be careful because there may also be students who fit none of those rankings and the teacher will have to work with them individually, and try to place them in a group in which they fit best. Because of these different rankings these students may have different ways of learning and retaining information. This is important for the teacher to understand about the students because they may have to adjust their lesson plan in order to fit the different needs of the students. Some students may need hands-on help, by having someone show them visually what needs to be done. Some students may be more of a listener and do better when things are described verbally on the task they need to get done. Others may need a teacher, or someone next to them giving step-by-step instructions. There is one big difficulty with all of these different learning styles in students. As a teacher it is going to be hard trying to meet the needs of every single student in your classroom. As an educator your main job is to teach and instruct students to learn new information each year. If you have struggling students you may have to reach out and offer one-on-one tutoring sessions to help that student succeed. This also shows the student that you care for them and their success individually.

In chapter two of *“Becoming a Teacher”* by Forrest Parkay, he discusses how teachers not only teach through what they say and do in the classroom, but they teach through who they are as people. Teachers have such a powerful influence on their students. The way they influence their students now will not only affect them today but it will impact them in their future as well. Because of this it is very important to be a positive influence on students, or have positive relationships with them. I believe one of the ways you can start to create a bond with your students is just simply listening to them and hearing them out, allowing them express who they are and who they want to be. Another way in building a bond with a student is to work with their parents and to show concern and interest with their child. Another step that can help increase the understanding of your students is by improving your teaching skills and trying new things, this includes asking your students for feedback on your teaching. Most teachers care about the academic side of a student's understanding. But the best teachers are the ones who go a little further than that. They care about the relational aspect of teaching. They take the time to create a relationship with their students, to find out their interests, talents, and needs.

Another aspect of teaching that I believe goes along well with the understanding of students has to do with creativity. Back in high school I remember dreading school only because it was the same thing every day. School never “sparked my interest,” it was dull and boring. Being creative as a teacher to me means to make lesson plans more interactive. That could just be simply asking questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” response. Or, use projects instead of testing, or exams; this causes the

students to do research on their own that can make it more interesting for them to learn. They could use powerpoints, poster boards, videos. This also goes along with making learning fun! What I mean by making it fun is simply creating an interactive, unusual learning experience. Don't just talk about what they read without relating it to the real world, and giving them more of a visual of what you are trying to teach. Kristen Hicks has an article that discuss that creativity in teaching has never been more important than right now. "Giving assignments that require more creativity will likely result in more engaging work for your students, and a more entertaining grading process for you (Hicks)." Hicks gives a few steps on how to make learning more creative and specific to the student. One of the ways you can do this is after you give them a subject to cover, do not limit it to one specific format. Some students may get more out of the lesson by creating a video, or drawing a comic strip, rather than just writing a paper. Using more technology is another way to introduce creativity into the classroom. This can give the students a sense of ownership of their work. Making students debate or use an open discussion on the lesson being taught can often engage them more with the topic being discussed. To be able to communicate your idea clearly to your students will benefit them in all areas of their life. Most students when they hear something they do not care about, they'll ask themselves, "when will I ever need to use this in the real world?" By making lessons more relatable to the real world will also show students the importance of the lesson you are trying to teach them and will better prepare them for the life they face ahead.

Organization is very also important for being a teacher, it helps you feel not as overwhelmed. Being organized means to me that you keep your classroom organized. This means assigned seating, having specific bins that are labeled for different assignments. Things like, turn in bins, one for homework, worksheets, tests, and quizzes. Also in high school one of my teachers had a little section of the room with bins of worksheets that she had previously handed out in class. This was helpful because if a student missed a class they became responsible for going and getting the correct worksheet out of the correct bin. Another key aspect to being organized is having your lesson plans prepared before giving your lesson so it is clear on what exactly you are teaching. To prevent conflict it is also important to organize your classroom rules and expectations for the students. You can do this by posting signs on the walls or up on the board. This way when a rule is broken there will be no confusion on whether it was really a rule or not. This is also a good system for having a tardy policy. Melissa Kelly says that you may have students who constantly show up to class late because of a ineffective tardy policy. The more organized and effective the classroom is the better outcome of better classroom discipline.

Organization and routine are important for students because it is not often that in a school setting they are taught important life habits. Kelly also talks about how organization is the framework for student learning. For example, pencil sharpening allowed in the classroom? This sounds kind of silly but some teachers can not stand the sound of the pencil sharpener; it also can be a distraction for teachers and cause them to go off track, or forget their train of thought. Organization is great for bathroom policies as well. If a

teacher has organization steps in place they can spend their days focusing on teaching the lesson plan, and not answering questions having to deal with whether a student can use the restroom, or sharpen their pencil at that moment in her lesson.

Some of the main aspects to problem solving/reflection for a teacher include, evaluate lesson plans and try to resolve any problems you have had with teaching it. This way the next time you teach that specific lesson it will be taught more smoothly. The next aspect is student misbehavior, it is wise for a teacher to prepare for almost any kind of disobedience in the classroom. When problems occur with students it is important that the teacher is clear and consistent with every situation. If the teacher is not consistent with the punishment or how to solve the problem of student misbehavior, this will cause the students to test the teachers limits to see how he/she will treat different situations. This also goes along with being a good communicator with the students and their parents. If all you do is notify a parent when their child is doing poorly in a class or misbehaving this may cause them to think that you do not see the good work their child is actually doing. It would be a good idea to give the parents an email every so often when their child did something good in the class, or have done some sort of act of kindness. If you create a good relationship with the parents the less you will be dreading those awkwardly uncomfortable parent teacher conferences.

Teaching is not something you do because you want to make a lot of money. People who pursue teaching as a career care more about the success of other over themselves. They are willing to not make a great

amount of money. Because for them, it is worth it. They do it because they care about the future generation, they realize that the future of America, and even the world sits before them in their classroom. Teachers have passion, they're compassionate, they are even some students heros. One of my favorite quotes I will conclude with is a great quote to put in perspective on just how important teaching is. "Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world." (Malala Yousafzai).