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EDUC 2103

Social philosophy of education paper

Throughout the semester, this class has given me a new outlook on social issues dealing with education as well as enhanced some of my previous views. The emphasis on race, class and gender within schools has not only prepared me to become a better qualified teacher, but also a more understanding and empathetic person toward people who are different than me. I now have a more detailed idea of the obstacles that others must face specifically in education on the basis of race, class, and gender and I hope that this will allow me to form close relationships with my students and promote their successes.

As a future educator, it's important to understand that your students will come from diverse backgrounds, different financial and family situations, and look differently from one another. As a member of society, it's always important to be mindful of the fact that everyone has issues in their lives, however when you are the person that young people are looking up to, it makes knowing this fact, and being tolerant of it, that much more crucial. If I promote bigotry in my classroom, this behavior will be learned. If I disregard my students' issues, they won't feel encouraged. If I only pay attention to certain students based on how they look or their social status, this will not go unnoticed.

A big factor that affects students as well as our society as a whole is the opportunity gap and how it affects the achievement gap between white and minority students and rich and poor students. The opportunity gap can largely be attributed to students' life outside of school and social constructs, however as educators, I believe that it is our job to help lessen the effects that the opportunity gap has on our students. I will encourage my students to work hard, even if that means being frustrated when someone else is simply handed something that they are not. In the article entitled *The Achievement Gap: Closing the Achievement gap requires more than Just improving schools*, author Richard Rothstein speaks about the importance of recognizing the

opportunity gap and the deficiencies that it causes in students of all ages. Rothstein says that the opportunity gap can spark in a child's life as early as infancy. A quote from the article says, "On average, professional parents spoke more than 2,000 words per hour to their children, working-class parents spoke about 1,300, and welfare mothers spoke about 600". This means that from birth, children of lower income, often in minority households, are already at a disadvantage. I believe that our education system should not allow this fact to go unnoticed, but rather we should be accommodating to these kids and strive to make up for what they may not have gotten the chance to learn due to their parents' level of education. The book *Closing the Opportunity Gap: What America Must Do to Give Every Child an Even Chance* also sheds light on how the opportunity gap is formed directly from factors inside and outside of schools. For example, children who do not have access to healthcare and dental care can suffer in school because they don't have their physical necessities met. As a teacher, I want to be aware of this and understand that a student might be struggling, not because he or she is not trying, but because they may have a health issue that isn't being treated.

The book also discusses how poor and minority students are often treated with low expectations as a sign of bigotry. This attitude immediately limits the students' success. I want to implement a more encouraging environment in my classroom so that my students always know that they have at least one person to support their goals. In *Multiplication is for White People* by Lisa Delpit, she says, "When we educators look out at a classroom of black faces, we must understand that we are looking at children at least as brilliant as those from any well-to-do white community. If we do not recognize the brilliance before us, we cannot help but carry on the stereotypic societal views that these children are somehow damaged goods and that they cannot be expected to succeed". I find this compelling because she is saying that the achievement of the students is very much based on whether or not the teacher believes they have potential or thinks that they are simply doomed for failure based on the life they were dealt and the color of their skin. Many teachers fall short in this aspect because they do not see much

hope in a society that is so flawed, however I believe that my attitude towards my students' education can make every bit of difference in their lives and in our society as a whole. The phrase used in this article, "warm demanders" is the epitome of my philosophy of education. I believe that it is extremely important to demand the best from your students while also understanding that some aspects of their lives will restrict them from accomplishing some tasks.

Another issue that I hope to tackle in my classroom is sexism and how it affects the academic success of students, usually girls. *Boys and Girls Together... But Mostly Apart* by Barrie Thorne discusses how schools can affect the relationship between male and female students and what they think about their own genders. A study on one class found that the girls had one side and the boys had the other and instead of integrating boys and girls together, the teacher, Miss Bailey, "framed the overall gender separation as a matter of student choice and as a privilege she had granted them, but she also built on and ratified the gender divide by pitting the girls against the boys in classroom spelling and math contests". Although I do not want to teach with gender blindness, I certainly do not want to hold my classroom in the style that Miss Bailey did. Competition in school is a great motive for students to strive to do their best, however I do not want to make gender the basis of this competition. Rather, a student in a spelling or math contest should see all competitors as equally able to do well. I want to create a fair classroom where the girls are not spoken over, called on less than boys or discouraged from taking harder classes. This type of education only fosters insecurity and discouragement in young girls.

Tying the issues of race and sex in schools together, black girls are faced with both of these issues. In *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls*, Monique W. Morris points out how girls, especially black girls, are viewed as too outspoken and too aggressive. She says that "When relationships between students and teachers are poor, Black girls may exhibit any number of behaviors that openly signal their dissatisfaction, including yelling at or using

profanity with the teacher". I understand it is very easy to grow impatient when you are being disrespected, however I think that letting these young women know that you understand their frustration and predisposed biases when they walk into a class and see a white woman as their teacher expecting all of these things from them. Again, this does not mean that I think it is acceptable to be just a friend of these girls. At the same time that I am trying to understand their frustration and personal issues, I will demand nothing but their best efforts. In my personal school experience, I always felt most connected to the teachers that checked in on me and made sure I had my priorities intact. I want to be this type of teacher to all of my students, and especially the ones that are often misunderstood like my black, female students.

All of these issues lead me to discuss the type of relationships I hope to create with my students. By understanding the struggles that a lot of my students will face based on their race, sex, family income, and home issues, I can form close relationships with them. Many students that are struggling with issues might be hesitant to trust me with talking about their struggles but I feel that an open relationship with my students can only help them to succeed in their schoolwork. I can get a better understanding of what specifically is going on at home without allowing them to slack off and be limited to succeeding only so far in school and life. As a future teacher, I want to always be mindful of this and make sure that any student that becomes engulfed in the opportunity gap feels like they always have me to go to for extra help and support so that they do not lag behind any further and so that I can be apart of making education so much more than just a place for compulsory knowledge.

In conclusion, I think that the best philosophy to have as an educator is to understand that the success of your students is not always based on their interest in school. There are a plethora of factors that affect a student's activity in school including their race, financial status, and gender. My philosophy of education involves building relationships with my students so that I can encourage them to understand that their pre-determined situations based on these three factors does not have to affect what lives they choose to lead.

Works Cited

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