

Why Does A School Need to Have a Philosophy of Education

Paper presented by

**Vernon G. Smith, Ed. D.
Professor of Education
Indiana University Northwest**

Why Does A School Need to Have a Philosophy of Education

Why Address Philosophy of Education

The impact of a philosophy of education for a school cannot be overstated. Nolan and Hoover (2008) indicate that authenticity and clarity in espousing a particular educational philosophy are the first important ingredients in effective teaching. Witcher, Sewall, Arnold and Travers (2001) note that there will always be a set of beliefs and values (implicit or explicit) that guide teachers' practice and reflect the teacher's education philosophy in all aspects of the education process. Beswick (2005) points out that a teacher's personal philosophy is a central role in the development of teaching practice. Although stated two decades ago, the words of Kagan (1990) are worthy of our attention and are just as applicable today as when they were first stated. She said "As we learn more about the forms and functions of teacher belief, we are likely to come a great deal closer to understanding how effective teachers are made" (p. 85). Noting that effective instruction depends on school and teacher instructional goals, Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2010) state "Instructional goals, in turn, are ultimately based on beliefs concerning such things as the purpose of education, what should be taught, the nature of the learner, and the learning process. Whether or not we are conscious of it, teachers' and supervisors' educational philosophies have a significant impact on instruction and instructional improvement efforts" (p. 93). Often when we think of philosophies of education we think of an individual's philosophy of education. We forget that a school is the sum total of its parts; so, it is just as important to ask what is a school's philosophy of education. Within the past two decades attention to a school establishing a philosophy of education has faded into the background of educational discussions. In spite of the fact that beliefs play such an important role, they have not received much attention from researchers. Bredo in 2002 suggests that research on teacher beliefs, attitudes and values have been ignored or minimally acknowledged. Kagan in her research on teacher beliefs and their impact on teaching supports this view. Nespor (1987) has remarked that we know very little about how beliefs come into being, how they are supported or weakened, how people are converted to them. He notes:

However, in spite of arguments that people's beliefs are important influences on the ways they conceptualize tasks and learn from experience, relatively little attention has been accorded to the structures and functions of teachers' beliefs about their roles, their students, the subject matter areas they teach, and the schools they work in. (p. 317)

The hot topics today appear to be accountability and student achievement. Legislators and other policy makers in this age of increased accountability and test craziness fail to understand the significance of a school's philosophy of education and how it impacts academic achievement. A healthy, strong philosophy of education enhances the capacity of teachers and students in a variety of setting to

create or transform a school's culture. Therefore, it is illogical to attempt to develop a school of academic excellence without focusing on that school's philosophy of education.

Need for a School Philosophy

A school's philosophy of education blossoms from the belief systems of the stakeholders. Obviously, few would deny that there is a link to what one believes or thinks to how one acts. A philosophy of education reflects one's approach to education. Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2005) state "that many educators view discussions of educational philosophy as overly abstract and irrelevant to the real world of supervisors and teachers" (p. 96). However, every action of supervisors, teachers, paraprofessionals and other staff members are based on beliefs which in turn reflect a broader educational philosophy of the school. As educators we often talk about the affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains, but we fail to understand the connectedness of the three domains. It is what one values (affective) that determines what one believes (cognitive) and ultimately determines one's actions (psychomotor). The connectedness of the three domains is so intertwined that one acts almost spontaneously with little or no forethought. With this in mind, if a school is to be effective, the school's philosophy of education must be explored and given painstaking consideration. A school's philosophy of education is the collection of individual philosophies of education held by internal stakeholders, which becomes the foundation, knowingly or unknowingly, for a school and may become, not only a major factor, but also the key or sole determiner of whether or not a school is successful in becoming effective in the educating of all of its students. While individuality is to be valued and not stifled, it is unsound, unproductive and even dangerous for each teacher and staff member to have an isolated philosophy of education that may not blend together for the good of students. Palmer (1998) notes, "we teach who we are" (p.2). Trigwell and Prosser (1997) add:

The individual and the world are not constituted independently of one another. Individuals and the world are internally related through the individuals' awareness of the world. Mind does not exist

independently of the world around it. The world is an experienced world (p.2).

Pajares (1992) provides a synthesis of the findings on beliefs which he drew from his review of the literature on the topic that supports and underscores Palmer's view that "we teach who we are:

1. Beliefs are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate, persevering even against contradiction caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience.
2. Individuals develop a belief system that houses all the beliefs acquired through the process of cultural transmission.
3. The belief system has an adaptive function in helping individual define and understand the world and themselves.
4. Knowledge and beliefs are inextricably intertwined, but the potent affective, evaluative, and episodic nature of beliefs makes them a filter through which new phenomenon are interpreted.
5. Thought processes may well be precursors to and creators of beliefs, but the filtering effect of belief structures ultimately screens, redefines, distorts, or reshapes subsequent thinking and information processing.
6. Epistemological beliefs play a key role in knowledge interpretation and cognitive monitoring.
7. Beliefs are prioritized according to their connections or relationship to other beliefs or other cognitive and affective structures. Apparent inconsistencies may be explained by exploring the functional connections and centrality of the beliefs.
8. Belief substructures, such as educational beliefs, must be understood in terms of their connections not only to each other but also to other, perhaps more central, beliefs in the system. Psychologists usually refer to these substructures as attitudes and values.
9. By their very nature and origin, some beliefs are more incontrovertible than others.
10. The earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter. Newly acquired beliefs are most vulnerable to change.
11. Belief change during adulthood is a relatively rare phenomenon, the most common cause being a conversion from one authority to another or a gestalt shift. Individuals tend to hold on to beliefs based on incorrect or incomplete knowledge even after scientifically correct explanations are presented to them.
12. Beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding such tasks; hence, they play a critical role in defining behaviour and organizing knowledge and information.
13. Beliefs strongly influence perception, but they can be an unreliable guide to the nature of reality.
14. Individuals' beliefs strongly affect their behavior.
15. Beliefs must be inferred and this inference must take into account the congruence among individuals' belief statements, the intentionality to behave in a predisposed manner, and the behavior related to the belief in question.

16. Beliefs about teaching are well established by the time a student gets to college.
(p.324)

Pajares (1992) provides insight into how beliefs function and how this functioning actually contributes to their resistance to change:

[beliefs] provide personal meaning and assist in defining relevancy. They help individuals to identify with one another and form groups and social systems. On a social and cultural level, they provide elements of structure, order, direction and shared values. From both a personal and socio/cultural perspective, belief systems reduce dissonance and confusion, even when dissonance is logically justified by the inconsistent beliefs one holds. This is one reason why they acquire emotional dimensions and resist change. People grow comfortable with their beliefs, and these beliefs become their "self" so that individuals come to be identified and understood by the very nature of the beliefs, the habits they own.
(p. 317)

Some philosophers believe that individuals are the sum total of their experiences. Truthfully, we know that all of our experiences are not good and may cause us to possess negative views, become biased, closed-minded and subjective. With the above in mind, consider the position that every individual in an organization adds or subtracts from the quality of the organization; and thus, since the school is an organization, each individual adds to or subtracts from the effectiveness of a school. Biased and negative beliefs held by internal stakeholders must be unfrozen and supplanted with more positive views. Even limited educational experience will reveal that among educators there is a dichotomy of thought concerning the education of our young: liberal versus vocational education; education for personal development or education for citizenship; education versus enculturation; teaching versus educating; training versus indoctrination; levels of classroom control; rights of children; rights of parents; etc. There is much to be gained by shedding light upon these issues and in promoting reflection or discussion on them by stakeholders with a goal of creating a consensus of thought that will lead to effective instruction. While diversity is to be valued, too much diversity (negative or positive philosophies) may negatively impact the effectiveness of the school. Sergiovanni and Starrat (1983) stress the need for some firm footing in principle and add that

some have often called unexpressed constellation of principles a platform. They conclude that just as a political party is supposed to base its decisions and actions on a party platform, so too should school personnel have a platform to carry on their work. We know that contractors must lay a foundation in order to build a structure that will not sink. Likewise in education, a school's philosophy of education becomes the base, the foundation for any plan, program, or activity.

Leaders and Self-Examination

Sergiovanni and Starrat (1983) note the importance of understanding one's own beliefs, especially those of supervisors. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2010) point out that most supervisors [school leaders] are former teachers. They add, "As a result, their views about learning, the nature of the learner, knowledge and the role of the teacher in the classroom influence their view of supervision. After all, supervision is in many respects analogous to teaching. Teachers wish to improve students' behavior, achievement, and attitudes. Supervisors similarly wish to improve teachers' behavior, achievement, and attitudes" (p. 95). Educational leaders should explore their beliefs because often they may be the source of the problem. In addition to analyzing their views about learning, the nature of the learner, knowledge and the role of the teacher, they need to reflect on their knowledge base, their inter-personal skills, and their technical skills. And they need to consider their administrative style – autocratic, laissez-faire, democratic/participative, transactional, transformational—as well as their supervisory style – directive, non-directive or collaborative (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010). "Studies that cover education management have uncovered a relation between the level of effectiveness of schools and the way they are managed. Familiarity of the school administrator with management theories is important for his/her understanding of school employees' situation and factors behind their behavior. If the administrator manages to understand and grasp the factors leading the employees to behave in one way or another, he/she will be capable of better managing them in consideration of those factors. He/she will then be able to guide the employees to behave in line with the goals of the organization" (Tas, 2011, p. 568).

Autocratic leaders make decisions alone with little or no input of others. They provide clear expectations of what needs to be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done. Laissez-faire leaders fail to provide direct supervision and regular feedback to subordinates. They provide little or no guidance to the group and leave decision-making up to group members. Democratic leaders (also known as participative leaders) value input from team members and peers. They forge consensus through participation, but retain the authority to make the final decision. Transactional leaders, who hold power and control, provide incentives for subordinates to do what he/she wants. If an employee does what is desired, a reward will follow; if not, a punishment will follow. Transformational leaders motivate subordinates; they enhance productivity and efficiency through communication and high visibility. They are able to inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to work towards common goals.

Glickman and Tamashiro (1980) define the three supervisory styles as follows:

Directive Supervision is an approach based on belief that teaching consists of technical skill with known standards and competencies for all teachers to be effective. The supervisor's role is to inform, direct, model, assess those competencies.

Collaborative Supervision is based on the belief that teaching is primarily problem solving, whereby two or more persons jointly pose hypotheses to a problem, experiment, and implement those teaching strategies that appear to be most relevant in their own surroundings. The supervisor's role is to guide the problem-solving process, be an active member of the interaction, and keep the teachers focused on their common problems.

Non-directive Supervision has as its premise that learning is primarily a private experience in which individuals must come up with their own solutions to improving the classroom experience for students. The supervisor's role is to listen, be non judgmental, and provide self-awareness and clarification experiences for teachers. (p.76)

A supervisor or school leader who uses directive supervision sees himself or herself as being the expert on instruction and therefore has the major responsibility for decision making. A supervisor or school leader who uses non-directive supervision views the teacher as being capable of instruction improvement and acts a facilitator in the process. Finally, a supervisor or school leader who uses collaborative supervision considers himself or herself as being equal partners in instructional improvement with equal responsibility.

Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2010) note that as school leaders clarify their educational philosophy or supervisory beliefs, they rarely find a pure ideological position, but they will create a synthesized combination that becomes a platform for leadership. They add that a particular platform is neither right nor wrong, rather it is the bits and pieces that have metamorphosed or evolved.

Developing the School's Philosophy of Education

After reflecting on their beliefs, school leaders should lead their faculty and staff members in discussing what they believe. Zmuda, Kuklis, and Kline (2004) notes, "To move from individual autonomy to collective autonomy, stakeholders must engage in collegial conversations about the school, its purpose, its beliefs, and its problems" (p. 62). While many will echo the belief statement that has become popular in educational circles and setting, that is "all children can learn," it would be fair to conclude that some will have some beliefs that they will feel uncomfortable to share. Educators are made up of the people of society and they bring to schools the negative beliefs about people and learning based on gender, race, economics, etc. While we will encounter difficulty changing some of our stakeholders' negative beliefs, we must not let them feel comfortable having them. Educators have a responsibility for what they do in the educational setting of the school and what they do, consciously or unconsciously, is linked to their belief set, their philosophy of education. While leaders cannot literally control adult behavior, healthy discussions of beliefs and consensus building of a school philosophy of education will move us closer to the quest for academic excellence. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2010), in discussing cultural background and philosophy, raise an interesting point. They note "Educators' beliefs about education often are

influenced by cultural assumptions that they may not be aware of because the assumptions are so deeply ingrained and taken for granted” (p. 104). Philosophical discussions will help colleagues develop a sense of common concerns, formulate instructional aims, agree on methodology, and identify mutually acceptable strategies of educating. Needless to say, reconstructing a lost tradition of creating a philosophy of education for schools in an age of reform will yield student performance benefits. School leaders should provide opportunities for philosophical discourse involving stakeholders in open, reflective, intuitive, robust, critical dialogue on questions such as:

- What is the purpose of education?
- What are the aims of this educational enterprise?
- What role do we play in educating our students?
- What is the role of the student in education?
- What role do parents and the community play in educating our students?
- What are the best ways to teach our students?
- What are your beliefs on how children learn?
- How do we best address the needs of our student?
- How do we balance addressing the diverse needs of students while meeting the needs of the entire class?
- How can we produce effective teaching and learning?

Figure 1.1 is a philosophy template which was developed by the University of Minnesota for individual use that has been modified for school use:

Figure 1.1

Teaching Philosophy Template

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Areas to address in our Teaching Philosophy:</p> | |
| <p>Our aspirations/goals/objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as a teacher: (i.e., encourage mastery, competency, transformational learning, life-long learning, general skill transference of skills, meaningful learning, critical thinking, etc.) • for our students: (See examples above) <p style="text-align: center;"><i>*Describe and give example(s)</i></p> | |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>What methods will we consider to reach these goals/objectives? (i.e., our beliefs regarding learning theory and specific strategies we would use...such as case studies, group work, simulations, interactive lectures, learning/reading circles, etc. Include any new ideas/strategies we have used or want to try.</p> <p><i>*Describe and give example(s) of strategies/practices that we prefer).</i></p> | |
| <p>How will we assess student understanding? (What are our beliefs about grading...norm-referenced or criterion-referenced? What different types of assessment will you use...traditional tests? Alternative assessments such as projects, papers, panels, presentation, etc.?)</p> <p><i>*Describe and give example(s)</i></p> | |
| <p>How will we improve our teaching? (i.e., How will we use our student evaluations to improve our teaching? How might we learn new skills? How do we know when we have taught effectively?)</p> <p>Any examples you can share?</p> | |
| <p>Additional Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is teaching important to us? • How do we collaborate with others? • What beliefs, theories, and/or methods mark our successful teaching? • How do we maintain positive relationships with our students? With colleagues? | |

Hoover (2013) offers another example of a philosophy template which has been adapted that schools leaders might use in leading internal stakeholders in developing their school’s philosophy of education (Figure 1.2).

(need to get permission to use the two charts)

Figure 1.2 **Philosophy Template**

| Our aspirations, goals, and objectives as teachers and our goals for our students are: | Methods we will consider to reach these goals and objectives include: | How will we assess student understanding? | How will we improve our teaching? | Are there any additional considerations we want to call attention to? |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| How will we encourage mastery, competency, life-long learning, meaningful learning, critical thinking, etc? | What are our beliefs about learning theory and how will we apply specific educational strategies in our classrooms? Do we plan to use case studies, group work, simulations, interactive lectures, projects, or other instructional methods/tools? | What do we believe about grading? What types of assessment do we use? Traditional tests? Papers, projects, presentations? | How can we use student evaluations to improve my teaching? How can we learn new skills and improve my teaching methods? How will we know if our teaching is effective? | Why is teaching important to us? How will we collaborate with our colleagues? How will we manage our classrooms and discipline? What else do we want to point out about ourselves? |

To be most productive in developing a philosophy of education for a school the school leaders must understand the importance of giving credit to others, respecting others' views including those with whom one disagrees in the philosophical conversation, and ensuring that other's perspectives are heard and valued. It is not just important, but it is vital in building human relationships. When we don't respect others' beliefs, one may interpret that you are not just disrespecting my views, but you are disrespecting me. Every opinion is not valid and sound and could be harmful; so unsound opinions need to be challenged. As leaders as we challenged others' opinions and views, we must not leave others feeling morally crushed. Rhetoric, discussion and persuasion including facts should

be used as the means to challenge faulty opinions and views. Use of derogatory language and behavior will not lead to the creation of a collegial faculty and staff. We must aim to treat everyone with the same level of respect. Regardless of how obscure others' beliefs are, they deserve the same opportunity to present those beliefs as others. We must be advocates of tolerance and demonstrators of patience. Doing so builds trust and a climate for change.

Following a full discussion on focus questions, school leaders should work to build a consensus of thought, a broad accepted view, not an individual perspective of a philosophy of education. Consensus building in developing a school's philosophy is important because schools are composed of diverse groups of people with different interests. Like society, today's schools are experiencing many problems. As society addresses its problems individuals and groups come to rely on each other; they become interdependent. Building a consensus on the philosophy for a school not only builds interdependence, but also ownership. Of course, there will be resisters. A discussion of the need for school success should prelude the beginning of any consensus-building process. While these resisters should not be allowed to be blockers, every effort should be made to meet the interests of the resisters in an effort to unify the combined talents of all in the quest for academic excellence. Consensus building offers a way for individuals and groups to collaborate on solving complex problems in ways that are acceptable to all. The result in this stage of creating an A+ school is the schools philosophy of education, the foundation for the vision.

Philosophical, educational discussions cannot be a one-time experience; they must be held strategically. Bringing about positive educational changes is hard work, but it's doable. It takes commitment by the entire school body to succeed. It requires the maintaining of a focus on instructional excellence. Principals and other school leaders must be in the forefront of all improvement efforts. The agreed upon philosophy must get into the educational souls of the internal stakeholders. Leaders of the school are responsible to make sure this happens.

Additionally, the perspective of stakeholders with negative mind-sets are broaden by discussions on topics such as trust and respect, caring and motivating,

bringing life into a curriculum, stimulating critical thinking, and the purposes of education, among others. The results become the common threads that are the foundation for achieving the vision and setting the course for the mission of the school. Needless to say, the lack of a unified philosophy of education lessens the chance of a school achieving its vision.

Philosophical Thought for Consideration

In 1961, the Educational Policies Commission took the position that the central purpose of American education was to create thinking individuals. It did not imply this purposeful objective should be the school's sole objective, or that it should be the most important objective in all cases, but that it was worthy of being the highest priority of the school. While the approaches of states vary, most states are requiring standardized testing and the cry for excellence has transformed state standardized testing into high stakes testing (Center for Public Education, 2006). Thinking skills today are measured via many state mandated tests (Hummel & Huitt, 1994). Students are not held responsible for just the correct answer; they must defend and justify their answers. It seems that states are in agreement that the central purpose of education is to create thinking individuals who have mastered critical thinking skills.

Schools can be effective (Edmonds, 1979) in creating thinking individuals and environments where all children can and will learn. The key to making this become a reality is the people to whom we delegate the educational task. People make organizations, like schools, effective, but people also destroy organizations. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2005) in their research on characteristics of improving schools list among other factors, sources of leadership, including teacher leadership, teacher collaboration and ongoing professional development of faculty and staff. In addressing functional roles of persons in a professional group, they also point out another set of roles and behaviors, called dysfunctional, which distract a group from its task(s). Those employed to cultivate our greatest natural resource, our young, must set high expectations (Edmonds, 1979; Levine & Lezotte, 1990) for them and accept nothing less than their best. The belief that all children can learn, according to Edmonds, must be manifested in the teacher's behavior.

Education is often seen as a means of personal development. Plato viewed education as a process that elicits the knowledge with which people were born. Froebel believed that there are dormant seeds of knowledge within each child that can be awakened with time and space (McNergney & Herbert, 1995). Whether we conclude that the central purpose of American education is to create a thinking individual, or we believe in effective schools research, or we believe education is tapping what is within or developing what people are born with, an effective plan for improving instruction in order to improve student achievement must be founded on what we, as educators, believe. The focus should be on helping the internal stakeholders to be more aware of their own philosophical beliefs and understand how their own beliefs guide the instructional process. Research supports that certain philosophical beliefs are related to desirable student performance. Those beliefs must be identified, accepted and incorporated into a school's philosophy of education in the quest of academic excellence.

Sample school Philosophy of Education Statement

A model of a school's philosophy of education statement is the one created by Chapnick (2009).

Teaching combines knowledge, skill, passion, and compassion. [We] believe:

1. Students are people. They are proud, confident, eager to learn, but also insecure. They respond to people who make them feel listened to and respected; people who challenge them and inspire them to question; people who reward their successes and encourage them to improve.
2. Teachers are role models both in the classroom and in the community. Students look up to teachers whom they respect, and good teachers take pride in learning from their students.
3. Preparation and enthusiasm are cornerstones of effective teaching. They are contagious and inspire success. Successful teachers are committed and dedicated to improving themselves and their students.
4. Good teachers always try to be fair. They do not ask from their students that which they would not ask from themselves. They communicate high, yet realistic and achievable expectations, and then encourage students to overachieve. They recognize that students learn in different ways and respond differently to a variety of forms of instruction and assessment. They develop lessons and evaluate student progress with the diversity of student learning styles and backgrounds in mind.

5. Students learn best when they are aware of not only what is required of them, but also what is fair to require from their teachers. Just as students must meet strict analytical and temporal expectations, teachers should mark thoroughly and return assignments promptly. Feedback should be detailed, and means of improvement should be outlined specifically. Students should be congratulated for their achievements, and shown how to learn from their mistakes.
6. Effective teaching requires flexibility. Teachers must try to make themselves available to meet with students and explore their concerns both inside and outside of the classroom. Students are more likely to require assistance when assignments are due, and teachers should endeavor as best they can to schedule academic and personal commitments accordingly.
7. Teaching can always be improved. Professional development—remaining abreast of pedagogical advancements in the field, taking advantage of changes in academic technology, promoting the importance of teaching in the community, and maintaining a research program which expands the depth and breadth of knowledge of the teaching subject matter – is crucial to an instructor’s long term effectiveness. Academic colleagues, teaching assistants, and student evaluations are all invaluable sources of assistance. (p.8)

We offer below another sample of a school philosophy statement created for Beveridge School in Gary, Indiana.

Beveridge Elementary School faculty and staff care about, love, and cherish our students. We believe if we show our students we care about them, we create a positive, supportive relationship that helps us build a climate where learning can flourish. We aim to be intentionally inviting with our students, modeling the behavior we want our students to learn and emulate. We want students to know that we are approachable. We believe that teachers impart more by way of example than precept and that students are perceptive and know when teachers are genuine. We believe in the power of a loving touch, a warm smile, a sincere compliment, an encouraging word, a listening ear, and all other acts of caring. We will take the time to connect with our students, to get to know our students, and to address all of their needs. We care about the whole child and want all of our students to be successful. We believe that every effort we make to show we care will be manifested in greater student achievement.

We believe that each child is a unique individual who needs a secure and stimulating atmosphere in which to study, grow, and mature emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially. With this in mind, we believe it is our responsibility to create an environment that is supervised and safe, orderly but not controlling. We aim to motivate

and stimulate all of our students so that they, not only want to, but are eager to come to school. We want our students to be intrinsically motivated. We will treat our students like they are our own children, providing the best, treating them all fairly and giving them the highest level of respect. We want our students to be shining examples for students at other schools.

We believe that children learn, not for school, but for life. Therefore, we will do our utter best to lay a strong foundation so our students are college and career ready. We want our students to be critical thinkers so we will stimulate thinking and provide meaningful, relevant learning experiences. Students will be encouraged to think in rational ways, so that they can apply their knowledge and skills in real-life and unfamiliar situations. We will focus on thought patterns (trends and patterns), instead of emphasizing rote memorization of facts. We will infuse rigor, relevance, and relationship into our classroom instruction. We will make sure that students master the basics, but we will not stifle creativity; students will have freedom that allows for expression and creativity. In fact, we will celebrate creativity. We will challenge our students and watch them grow academically to their fullest potential.

We believe preparation and delivery are fundamental to effective teaching. As teachers, we will always arrive in the classroom prepared for the teacher act, aiming to giving a presentation worthy of an Academy Award. Instruction and the curriculum will be molded to address each student's learning style. We believe that the teacher's role is to guide, providing access to information rather than acting as the primary source of information. Therefore, we believe in discovery learning, hands-on activities, and group instruction. We believe in and will seek ways to motivate and capture the attention of our students. As teachers we will be flexible and adapt instruction to the teachable moment. We will take time to evaluate and assess so that we meet their needs. We will work to better ourselves as instructors of young minds; so we will seek and use best practices. We believe in professional development and will insist that all in servicing is meaningful, data driven, and directed at improving instruction to increase student learning.

We believe that we cannot successfully educate our students without the assistance of parents and the community. Parents and others are welcomed in this school. They will be a part of school planning and every effort will be made to keep parents and others informed of academic program and school activities. We encourage parents and community members to be active in the delivery of instructional services. Training will be offered so that their involvement is most

productive. We will provide opportunities to empower parents so they can aid the school in ensuring that our students are ready for future challenges. We believe that together we can successfully, not school, but educate our students.

As we close this chapter, we bring to your attention the words of Zmuda, Kuklis & Kline (2004) who note that incompetency or competency of a [school] depends on how the system is understood by key stakeholders. In competent systems administrators and teachers discern what “can be” by bringing to the surface the school’s underlying purpose and the stakeholders’ deeply held beliefs. They add, “Once educators, through collegial conversations, see the school as a complex living system with purpose, they can then understand their work, both individual and collective, as contributing to the continuous improvement of the school....” (p. 30). A school’s philosophy gives collective purpose to the system. Educational leaders must lead the articulation and consensus building of a school’s philosophy and then must consistently remind key stakeholders of those deeply held, defining beliefs that give purpose to educators work and lead the stakeholders towards a common purpose. “For a school to be more than a loose confederation of independent learning environments, all stakeholders must be clear on the beliefs that give collective and concrete purpose to their individual efforts” (p. 40). Unified, collective core beliefs become the foundation for a shared vision and enable a school improvement plan to become purposeful and systemic.

References

- Beswick, K. (2005). The beliefs/practice connection in broadly defined contexts. *Mathematics Education Research Journal*, 17 (2), 39-68.
- Bredo, E. (2002). How can philosophy of education be both viable and good? *Educational Theory*, 52(3) 263-271.
- Center for Public Education (2006). *Q and A: Standardized tests and their impact on schooling*. Retrieved March 20, 2006, from <http://www.nsba.org/site.view.asp>
- Chapnick, A. Faculty Focus Special Report. Philosophy of teaching statements: Examples and tips on how to write a teaching philosophy statement. Retrived May, 2009 from http://moodle.technion.ac.il/file.php/1298/yanai/report_16.pdf
- Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership*, 37 (1), 15-24.
- Glickman, C. D., Gordon, S. P., & Ross-Gordon, J. M. (2005). *The basic guide to supervision and instructional leadership*. Boston: Pearson.
- Glickman, C. D., Gordon, S. P., & Ross-Gordon, J. M. (2010). *Supervision and instructional leadership: A developmental approach*. Boston: Pearson.
- Glickman, C.D. & Tamashiro, R. T. (1980). Determining one’s beliefs regarding teacher supervision. *Bulletin*, 64(440), 74-81.

- Hoover, N. Educational philosophy of teaching statement template and samples. Taken October 12, 2013 from . <http://hubpages.com/hub/Philosophy-of-Teaching-Statement-Template-and-Samples>
- Hummel, J. H., & Huitt, W. (1994, February). What you measure is what you get. *ASCD Reporter*, 10-11.
- Kagan, D.M. (1992). Implications of research on teacher beliefs. *Educational Psychologist*, 27(1), 65-90.
- Levine, D.V., & Lezotte, W. (1990). *Unusually effective schools: A review and analysis of research practices*. Madison, WI: National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development.
- McNergney, R., & Herbert, J. M. (1995). *Foundations of education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 19(4),317-328.
- Nolan, J. & Hoover, L. (2008). *Teacher supervision and evaluation: Theory into practice*. Hoboken, NJ:John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pajares, F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3),307-332.
- Sergiovanni, T. J., & Starrat, R.J. (1983). *Supervision: Human perspectives* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Tas, S. (2011). Management philosophies of primary school principals. *Education*, 131(3), 565-579.
- Trigwell, K. & Prosser, M. (1997). Towards an understanding of individual acts of teaching and learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 16(2), 241-252.
- University of Minnesota. *Teaching Philosophy Template*.
www1.umn.edu/ohr/prod/groups/ohr/@pub/@ohr/documents/asset/ohr...
- Witcher, A., Sewall, A., Arnold, L., & Travers, P. (2001). Teaching, leading, learning: It's all about philosophy. *The Clearing House*, 75(5), 277-279.
- Zmuda, A., Kuklis, R., & Kline, E. (2004). *Transforming schools: Creating a culture of continuous improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.