

## VIEWS ON EDUCATION AS A PROFESSION AND CHILDREN AND LEARNING

Remembering my junior year of high school, I decided teaching would be a great profession. I wanted to major in Astronomy, but getting off work at two-thirty for only nine months seemed like a great gig at the time. My natural inclination was science education because that was my favorite subject, and starred one of my favorite teachers. At the time, my science teacher tried to talk me out of education, which I thought rather odd and maybe a tad hypocritical. Now I understand what he was trying to tell me.

I don't know from what point you can trace the apparent monumental decline in education, but it probably started at the same time as mandatory bussing in the sixties which was one major intervention of government into education. No matter how noble those goals were, the community school was fractured and that eroded the community. When asked about my views on education as a profession, positions that are constantly amended, I am coming from the position that teacher and school reputation has been downgraded in recent years. My views are:

- ❖ Schools form the backbone of a community;
- ❖ Teachers are the primary representatives of the school;
- ❖ Teachers are secondary role model to students second only to parents;
- ❖ Teaching is innate; not a learned trait - it can only be refined
- ❖ Teaching is more than academics; coaching and extra curricular may play a larger role to some students.

These correlate with my views on children and their learning:

- ❖ All children can learn the same things, but not at the same rate;
- ❖ Intellectual development occurs between the ages of 15-22 in most children;
- ❖ Most children need a practical education that allows them to succeed in the job market;

- ❖ The core academic subjects have no place being taught to the majority of students;
- ❖ Learning requires doing and making mistakes.

Those ten positions do not represent a complete picture, nor is it possible for said picture to emerge. As values change, so do the series of beliefs. I teach a core subject, that has a set of seldom changing postulates, but I believe the manner in which these are taught and the emphasis I give topics has to be in constant flux to meet the standards of the student. Every year, I add and amend as a natural part of each course. I think these ideals lay firmly in the domain of a progressive educator, although a qualitative analysis shows my philosophies spread nearly equally across the spectrum.

#### PHILOSOPHY OF EMPLOYER

When interviewing the Superintendent of our schools, it became quit clear what truly drives a school: state legislation. So who is my employer, the district or the state? I'll talk about each, but my argument is that the state is my true employer.

I can exemplify the philosophy of our district from quotes I've heard from our Superintendent at two separate events, "The state wants to destroy public education." That's probably not an exact quote but the direct meaning remains the same. Ohio is hampering professionals from teaching to the best of their ability. A short list of the beliefs of our superintendent:

- ❖ Education is the foundation of the population;
- ❖ Education's goal is to mold strong, solid, citizens;
- ❖ Not all kids learn at the same rate;
- ❖ The top and bottom kids are ignored - the middle is targeted;
- ❖ Each building needs constant improvement - "you don't have to be sick to get better."
- ❖ Each child should be driven to reach 100% of their ability;
- ❖ Academics is a small part of the school experience;
- ❖ Wasting time teaching core subjects to the lowest students at expense of highest and middle;

- ❖ Special Education law is the primary driving force of public education.

The majority of these beliefs are not data driven, but rather instinct driven. Our district believes that statistics may play a role in seeing certain trends, overall the implementation of these lies on the human side which is "gut" driven.

Unfortunately, our organization is not able to fully realize these ideals because of the requirements placed on it from the State of Ohio. The State indicates that all students learn at the same rate, can learn the same things, and will go on to college. Personally, and as a district, we are at odds with the State.

So that brings up the question about my true employer. Although local taxes pay my salary, the State clearly sets the standards for my training and accreditation. I will examine the strategic plan located on the Ohio Department of Education website and highlight a few of their beliefs:

- ❖ Set high expectations for what all students should know and be able to do;
- ❖ Align what we expect from our students with what we teach and assess;
- ❖ Promote a safe and orderly learning environment;
- ❖ Help every generation learn, enhance, and practice the character traits that are valued by their communities;
- ❖ Advocate for adequate resources to achieve high expectations.

#### SYNTHESIS

These are five the statements listed on the ODE website under their strategic plan. The only statement that I personally disagree with is the first; as already stated not all students can learn at the same pace. Of the remaining four, I am in agreement; however, I do not see Ohio truly implementing any of them with competence.

Aligning assessment with teaching seems so obvious it is almost farcical that it has to be on a strategic plan. However, at least at the secondary level, the benchmarks Ohio has given as so poorly worded teachers do not understand what is expected to be taught. The week of March 17<sup>th</sup> I will administer a practice OGT science test to my Biology class. That will be the first time I actually see a test. In the sample question packets created by

BUCKLE DOWN OHIO, some benchmarks are things I learned in 200 and 300 level Biology classes at Wright State University.

Helping every generation learn their community values sounds very nice, but will Ohio create a set of standards for West Milton and Germantown and every other district? Will there be 700 different OGT tests for each of them? Considering I have not seen one science test yet, I would highly doubt that. With open enrollment, Ohio is clearly not promoting an orderly environment. Open enrollment is ruining a lot of good rural schools; everyone hears they do a good job, they send their kids there, not realizing it was the COMMUNITY that created the good schools, not the schools themselves. Considering the cutbacks to public education, and the unprecedented number of local levy issues this past spring Ohio cannot claim to be supplying adequate resources to schools. In reality, the impact on my teaching is pretty low. I will continue to teach science, as best I can, and continue to innovate what and how I do.

#### SUMMARY

What I had not realized prior to this assignment is that I really work of the State of Ohio. Local boards of education are essentially vestigial now. In order to correct the problems being faced, a brand new, revolutionary model needs developed. What that entails I don't know, but I doubt the founding fathers clearly understood what was needed to form a country. It is lucid now that what educators value, and what the politicians value are polar opposites, at least in how philosophies are applied.

As a local education association officer, I think it is imperative that the associations unite in opposition to the levels at which the state, and now the federal governments are increasing their spheres of influence. No Child Left Behind may have some redeeming qualities, but they need enacted locally instead of broadly.