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Philosophy Statement

Education is not a form of entertainment, but a means of empowering people to take control of their lives.

--Unknown

The development of a true philosophy of teaching is achieved over the course of time, based on what an educator has learned and experienced in the classroom. It is important for all educators to have a philosophy because it will give them a purpose for teaching as well as being able to provide an educator with career long goals, so that they can be constantly finding ways to adapt their philosophy to a variety of dynamics, such as technology integration or diversity within the classroom.

The National Council of Social Studies states the definition of social studies as the integration of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. The definition goes on to state that the primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed decisions for public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. This is a major part of the philosophy. By being able to have a concrete definition and vision for why teaching social studies is important allows teachers to be able to incorporate other components of education into their teaching philosophy. This educator's personal definition of social studies is that the study of social science and humanities and how they interrelate. A personal reason for the teaching social studies is to increase critical literacy. The term critical literacy is the ability to not only read and write but to assess text in order to understand the relationship between power and domination that underlie and inform them. Critical literacy empowers the learner to question what they are learning and allow them to view information from an alternate perspective. As a teacher, I believe that

incorporating critical literacy in the existing definition of social studies, it will better enable teachers to accomplish the goal of helping their students become informed citizens. By having a personal definition and purpose for teaching social studies it ,helps teachers to better focus their teaching in order to achieve one's professional and personal goals.

A major component of any teaching philosophy for any educator is a clear belief system on student learning. In a broad sense this educator's philosophy of student learning is that students can and will learn given the right conditions and circumstances. This is perhaps the most important part of a philosophy of teaching. By believing that all students can and will learn given the right conditions and circumstances, the teacher must find unique ways to incorporate the needs of their students into their teaching. There are several conditions to the broad theme of students can and will learn given the right conditions and circumstances. Students will learn best when the following situations are present:

- When students have a responsibility connected with their learning.
- When they are engaged in asking questions to get to the root of whatever concept they are trying to discover.
- When the students are provided opportunities to work together.
- When they see the reality in what they are learning.
- When they are able to make connections between different areas of learning.
- When they are able to learn from the differences of their peers.

I feel that these learning conditions are possible because I believe that these conditions can exist within a social studies classroom. One must remember that these conditions for learning will not create themselves; they must be formed by the teacher. These conditions of student learning can be incorporated with NCSS definition and purpose of social

studies. In fact, by trying to create these learning conditions there is a possibility to break away from some older tactics that many preserve to be outdated and uninspiring

The role of the teacher within this philosophy is to create these conditions for learning. This is important because by actively creating positive learning environments, teachers can cater to a variety of needs. For example, students with special needs will have to be given careful consideration when a teacher designs a lesson. The important thing for the teacher to remember is that a student's learning disability or social impairment is not an unbeatable obstacle. I feel that by trying to create these constructive learning environments teachers are able to create the conditions for learning as well as connect to their personal philosophy about teaching social studies. I believe that in order to create these conditions that a teacher must:

- ❖ Use the diversity in the classroom to the advantage of all the students
- ❖ Be constantly reflective and searching for new methods that will help their students learn better.
- ❖ Be relentless!
- ❖ Be brave, go against the grain, part of being a teacher is taking risks.
- ❖ Always place the education of students above everything else.

Some may wonder how a teacher can accomplish these things. I believe that it is something that teachers learn overtime. A major part of one's personal teaching philosophy is bringing a part of one's personality. Personally, I know that I want to be able to share the experience of social studies that is uniquely me. In order to do that, I must be reflecting on my teaching and constantly seeking new ways of challenging myself. By empowering myself, I will be able to empower my students.

A well thought out philosophy is an important guide to helping teachers have a plan or vision for why they are teaching and what they want their students to learn. Those are perhaps the two most important questions that face teachers. To summarize all of my philosophy's components, the first part of my teaching philosophy is that social studies is the study of social science and humanities and how they interrelate to one another and how these different disciplines affect people and cultures in today's society. Another intention is to increase critical literacy so that students will be able to empower themselves to learn and to become effective, educated citizens. Teachers need to create the conditions necessary for students to learn, this is the only way to incorporate the first part of the philosophy into the classroom. Education is always changing so it is important that a teacher's philosophy be adaptable and creative. By having a good philosophy, teachers arm themselves with goals and determination to be successful.