



PRINCIPAL'S DESK (17/8/09)

The techniques of teaching: Theory verses practice at our school.

This school is a designated teacher training school and receives trainee teachers from the University Canterbury College of Education.

Teaching trainee teachers "how to teach" is a significant role that all our teachers have responsibility for. The prerequisites to be able to teach can be described as a set of teaching skills supported by experience and wisdom that affect a learner's growth.

Theories abound on methodology and pedagogy. Much time is spent analysing the different approaches and discussing potential outcomes. Decisions are made at international, national and local levels on curriculum delivery and what are acceptable teaching standards. But the practical 'art of teaching' exists in the relationship between the teacher and pupil.

Teaching with intent is a fundamental requirement. It requires the teacher to possess a set of skills that will ensure the relevancy of the teaching, understand the readiness level of the pupil, enable the teacher to 'reach the mind' of the pupil and recognise the level of knowledge and development that has been achieved. It requires the teacher to always have an objective, to have full knowledge of their subject and to be able to break the learning into manageable chunks that will enable the learner to achieve the objective within planned timeframes. It requires the teacher to have close proximity to the learning moments to be able to recognise the 'potential' and 'acquired' knowledge learning points, and develop these further.

Teaching with innovation and creativity is also fundamentally important. Children all have different starting points and readiness levels to acquire knowledge and skills that relate to their own individuality. The intrinsic (what's not seen) forces, that trigger the learner to learn, along with the habits of mind (what's ingrained in the mind), are the greatest challenges to the dimensions of teaching. Understanding how a particular child learns, understanding the barriers faced, understanding the emotional state of the child, and matching all this to the learning tasks and instruction specifically to cater for that particular child, necessitates being able to bring out an array of practical, innovative and creative skills that will meet the challenge.

Not to be underestimated are the personality traits and interpersonal skills within the trainee teacher that will often ignite the spark in a child's learning. These special traits require one key ingredient and that is having a *genuine desire to teach!*

In coaching our own teachers we centre on capturing the creativity and natural talent within each child. To do this well requires 'inspiration' within the teacher's presentation

of the learning, coupled with skillfully crafted programme designs and delivery strategies. Teachers are encouraged to *take control of their own teaching and learning programmes* and to create their own innovative approaches about the way they “teach”. This is where the practical craft of teaching becomes the most important factor in the *teacher-training model* that this school is promoting. Our model centres on the reality of teaching a child to learn and requires a clever use of, and refinement of, learning tools that stimulate and produce actual learning growth. Practical strategies include learning to: “know” the learner, hear the child’s voice, have close proximity to the learning moment, create learning conversations, question to discover learning gaps, clarify learning intentions, differentiate the instruction, maintain on-task behaviours, track progress growth, learn from mistakes, modify learning behaviours, celebrate success and plan next steps.

Yes the teachers’ knowledge of pedagogy (the way we think about learning), curriculum content (curriculum framework) and the methodology (the way we teach) are all vital pre-requisite fundamentals involved in teaching. However, it’s the crafting of the child’s learning processes that adds the greatest value to learner growth.

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Principal