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Course Reflection

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EDUC 6610

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As I reflect back on the teachings and assignments of this first PAVE II course, I see myself further evolving into the educator I have always hoped to become. The *Teacher as Professional* coursework provided a developmental basis on which to formulate personal and professional goals and beliefs in regard to educating students and collaborating with fellow professionals. It required considerable inward reflection and worthwhile self-assessment.

Lee Canter's teaching points out that educators' self-esteem, on average, is at an historical low, exacerbated by a general lack of parental and administrative support, restricted by budget cuts, and plagued by increasing numbers of problem students. In an age fraught with increased demands and accountability, there seems an overall lack of status for teachers as professionals. No wonder teachers succumb to stress, fatigue, frustration, and eventual burnout. In an effort to overcome negative societal challenges, teachers all too often fall prey to the negativity and simply give up on their dream to make a difference in the lives of children. They lose focus, lack direction, and allow their initial dreams and aspirations to wither and die.

Between the several discussions, videos, and readings enjoined during the course, several important clues are provided for avoiding burnout and experiencing success in education. Early on, we were challenged to create a personal mission statement and adopt it as a professional code by which to live. We need to realize that life involves frequent, if not constant, change. Along with change come choices and challenges. We need to constantly refer to our mission statement, focus on priorities, and maintain clear goals with attainable, measurable objectives.

Canter states that the "mission statement is the rudder that steers your ship." So long as we truly believe that mission has power, the power of belief will positively affect our actions and feelings. We need to accept the fact that some things will always be out of our control. The

things within our control can be dealt with accordingly. As professionals, there is much we can do. By focusing on the things within our control, we can affect positive change in the education of the students we teach. Additionally, we might positively influence other professionals with similar views.

I can see myself as a high-performing teacher influencing students to stretch beyond their immediate circumstances encouraging them to reach for their dreams. First of all, I believe that all children can learn. As soon as I can help a student realize this, the sooner he or she can develop a life-changing attitude that will lead them towards eventual success in life. As an educator, I need to focus on student strengths and teach them to work around their perceived weaknesses using proven problem-solving methods and strategies. By associating with positive, optimistic colleagues, I can better affect this type of change in my students, many of whom currently live under poor socio-economic conditions, but still hope for a brighter future.

Time and time again, the high-performing teachers featured in the course work stressed ideals such as “believe you can achieve – you can do it!” Debra Peppers pointed out that “kids don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” I need to build real relationships with my students. Not just an 8 to 3 see-you-in-the-hallway approach, but an honest, from the heart, know-where-you-are-coming-from association. I need to teach the kids I deal with, that challenges provide choices which allow us to rise above the trials and better appreciate problems as opportunities for learning.

Requirements to integrate technology in the classroom provide countless opportunities for helping students reach beyond the meager lifestyle realized now to develop realistic dreams for aspiring towards whatever level of success they might dare to pursue. The classroom computer potentially provides every student a multimedia journey into any field of study they

choose. As an educator, I need to help foster a yearning for learning in my students. I need to challenge them to reach into cyberspace in search of a personal future with meaningful and realistic outcomes.

I realize that I can not be totally effective without the support and advice of positive, like-minded colleagues. I plan to develop a brain-trust among colleagues at work, made up of teachers with similar beliefs and aspirations. By meeting informally on a frequent basis, we should be able to target select students and affect positive change in their academic and social success. First we need to choose to make a difference. We need to define specific goals, and make a collaborative effort towards building our students' self-esteem. Then we need to endeavor to enlist the assistance of their parents in this effort.

Inscribed on my old high school ring is the school mascot with a scroll looped under it that reads "Scio te ipsum." It is a lifelong reminder to "know thyself." In order to make a difference, I first must choose to do so. Then I have to plan proactively to establish specific goals and objectives, build meaningful relationships, and continuously "sharpen the saw."

Reference

Laureate Education, Inc. (Executive Producer). (2004). *Teacher as professional*. EDUC 6610: Lee Canter and Associates. Los Angeles: Author.