

## **Personal Educational Philosophy: Lee Berlet**

My personal educational philosophy is based on three main ideas. First, an outstanding teacher must truly love learning. Also, curriculum, instruction and student assessment should be designed to fully enhance student understanding. Finally, each student is unique in their learning style and thus instruction should mirror this reality. It is true that “education” can take place without one or all of these principles; however the student may not get a *quality* education if any are missing.

An outstanding teacher must truly love learning. It has been my experience that the best teachers are life long learners. They enjoy continuing to learn about their areas of expertise, as well as learning new concepts, content, ideas, and methods with which they may have limited experience. In addition, quality teachers enjoy people; they enjoy their students as people and have an unquenchable desire to share their love of learning with everyone.

A problem faced by all teachers is that at some point in their life everyone has been a student, and thus they believe that they know what teaching entails. For the professional educator, it is clear that the “craft of education” is something that takes time to develop. The focus of the craft must be on helping the student to develop an enduring understanding of the information and skills that we teach them. To help them develop this enduring understanding the instruction, curriculum, and assessment need to be planned in concert. I have found that the *Understanding by Design* model developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe is a solid approach to achieving this goal. Their process of creating curriculum units backwards (assessment, curriculum, instruction) with the overall focus on enduring understanding is the best method that I have seen for overall design of an educational program.

It is clear that students of the same age or grade level are not all alike when it comes to learning. Thus, I believe that the best approach to handling this issue is through the method of differentiated instruction. As Carol Ann Tomlinson has written in *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, “a differentiated classroom provides different avenues to acquire content, to process or make sense of ideas, and to developing products so that each student can learn effectively.” I have used this method and found that while it does require more of me as an instructor, the learning that takes place is of such quality that for me anything less is just unacceptable.

Throughout my career as a student I had several outstanding teachers who created a learning environment that gave me an opportunity to develop a passion for learning. My goal as an educator is to pass on the gift of learning to my students with the same passion and energy that my mentors shared with me. I truly love learning and believe that with thorough planning and attention to each student’s unique learning style, I will continue to be successful at achieving my goals.