

Luke Swanson

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TE 804

Dear Future Luke A. Swanson,

In order to further prepare you for the teaching profession, I am writing this letter encouraging you reflect on where you come from. Reflection has always been an essential part of your teaching strategy and revisiting your former beliefs will both challenge your current and future teaching in positive ways.

*I believe education is the advancement of thought, knowledge, ideas and ways of thinking within individuals and society. This growth comes from sharing, exploring, and building upon prior knowledge. It may occur through interaction within every day life or through a more structured and conventional education. Whatever the situation, education is forward thinking and a desire to develop as both an individual and a citizen. I believe that education should be taught from a student driven perspective using a constructivist approach. This methodology allows students to construct their own understanding of concepts based on prior knowledge. This idea of education comes from your fundamental belief that a teacher should be a mentor to student growth.* Throughout your internship as a beginning teacher you constantly viewed the curriculum from a student perspective. Basing how you will convey the standards off of how students will best understand concepts. In viewing education from a constructivist approach you include students in the learning process and allow them to “construct” their

own understanding of the curriculum. This is achieved through sharing, exploring, and building upon prior knowledge through texts and media.

*I believe school is a means of structured education. The school is used as a tool for creating model citizens, members of a community, and the world. It is a system geared toward educating people about society. I believe the school should be used as an instrument for exploring the identity of the individual while still tying them to the greater community and nation. The school is a social institution that provides students with a social environment to grow. Through this interaction we not only develop ourselves, but as a collective working toward improvement. Lastly, the school is an institution for developing social, cultural, and human capital within the student body.*

During your internship year you believed that the social studies were a subject geared towards preparing young individuals for citizenship and society. Your political and economic systems class achieved this goal through presenting subjects and concepts from a student perspective. Much of the class became about “discovery of self”. In which students discovered their personal beliefs on economic and political issues.

*I believe that the subject matter of education should be to inspire the youth towards gaining a passion for knowledge. This means in a greater sense that the goals of educating should be to make kids both want to learn and want to succeed at whatever inspires them. I believe that through the education system we can help direct individuals toward pursuing greater goals in life. A teacher should function within this system as a guide to the student both as a mentor. I believe that the subject matter of education is social by nature, and a teacher should use a variety of social media to develop education within the classroom. Finally, the goal of education should not only*

*be to teach students, but to teach them how to teach themselves. By giving students the tools to teach we are preparing them for their future.* Throughout your internship year you slowly began to realize that there is never enough time to teach every student everything they need to know about political and economic systems. So, during this process you began to realize more and more that a teacher's mission should not be just to "give" students knowledge. Rather, teachers should teach students how to teach themselves. By teaching skills such as how to read documents, how to write essays, how to analyze texts, movies, etc. you prepare students to "fill in" the rest of what you cannot teach them.

*I believe that the goal of every educator should be to mentor students, assisting them in educational discovery and construction of knowledge. I believe that this is accomplished through inclusive teaching which incorporates various learning styles and backgrounds. A teacher must diversify how and why they teach subjects in order to include all cultural, social, ideological, and psychological individuals in the learning process. Technology is paramount to the movement. Our goal as educators should also be social progress both for the person and society, this I believe is essential for education. I believe education is student driven as well as teacher driven. A teacher must not only transmit knowledge, but include student in the process allowing for a positive democratic classroom environment. This is accomplished by incorporating student input in unit planning, discipline, lessons, etc. Lastly, I believe a teacher must always be forward thinking and reflective in nature. A teacher has to constantly push themselves toward discovering new and exciting ways to teach. This is achieved through reflecting upon lessons, units, and incorporating collaboration with colleagues*

*and input from students. In reflecting upon our practice we, along with the students, are working towards improving education.* During your internship you worked with a tremendous school district which encouraged a collaborative atmosphere of teachers. Under the guidance of this teaching body you learned the importance of reflection and collaboration to improving your practice. Reflecting from day to day, unit to unit, and year to year, you can continue to improve your practice and work with students. I firmly believe that in the future you will continue to utilize your students, colleagues, and observations to continually work towards a “better” education for all.

*I believe that the goal of Social Studies should be to be a vessel for social progress and betterment of society. By teaching students about their community and the world around them, as it is and was, our goal should be to teach about social progress. I believe that it is important to create “good” citizens in society that are forward thinking and recognize the morality, injustice, and wrong. As participants and leaders in the education of Social Studies we must develop citizens that are active, knowledgeable members of the society at large. As an educator we must strive to embrace the challenges of our current political, social, and economic climate. This is achieved by discussing these problems in a safe inclusive classroom environment. If we are not brave enough to discuss these issues here, then where and when?* One of the biggest reasons you decided to become a teacher was to impact “real” change and awareness within society. During your internship you began to impact social progress through the discussion and presentation of key issues in society. You began to discuss global warming, poverty, social inequality, economic inequality, etc. as it pertains to politics and economics. The goal of discussing these topics will always be to push

students toward social progress and a greater awareness. In the future you must continue to emphasize these issues in your teaching and push toward including more discussion of these problems.

In the future of your teaching always remember your philosophy and how important it is to your identity as a teacher. You must remember to never forget your beliefs about impacting real change through the mentorship of the youth of America.

Respectfully yours,

Luke A. Swanson