**Anneke Meinhardt**

**Philosophy of Teaching**

Life is an adventure that you learn from--as is learning itself. I have a lot left to learn, but throughout my years of escapades as a learner thus far, there are many key lessons I have learned and feel strongly about. Several of them include beliefs about successful learning environments and role of an excellent teacher.

**Learning Environment**

I believe a learning environment is not just a room in a building, but an atmosphere created by a group of people. As a teacher, I would like to affect an air of excitement and enthusiasm for learning. Motivation is an important tool; however, many students take classes merely because they are required to (i.e., English is a required language in Japan), and may never put forth effort no matter how a teacher may attempt to persuade them to. In response to this dilemma, I desire to instill in students an appetite for knowledge, a curiosity for the unknown that will serve them beyond the walls of the classroom. A place each of us learns from is from one another. I believe relationships, both student-to-student and student-to-teacher, are great tools to support and encourage one another toward both personal goals and academic goals. I believe the learning environment should grow this mentality by fostering care and respect for one another. This can be promoted even through simple things such as circular seating arrangements, inspirational posters, or learning activities through which students get to know one another better. When such a foundation is established, students will feel safe enough to take risks and adventure further into learning.

Additionally, I believe a classroom should be student-centered. At the age of a teenager especially, students begin to experience a journey of self-discovery that lasts one's entire life. Schools play an influential role in this development; I would like my impact on students to be a positive one. I believe strongly in focusing on one's strengths, and believe I can help students discover their own strengths and uniqueness through introduction of and activities (or self-quizzes) involving topics such as multiple intelligences, learning styles, or even reading assignments on the beauty that is diversity through challenging of stereotypes and cultivating appreciation of multiculturalism. For instance, a multiple intelligences test administered at the beginning of the school year can serve to both help students become aware of individual strengths as well as become interested in their own uniqueness.

**An Excellent Teacher**

I believe an excellent teacher is for her students. To be such, I would see their success as my own success, and strives to help them reach their destination. I would believe in the unique strengths of each individual and encourage them. I believe that in order to convince and inspire students toward their potential, I must first establish good rapport and earn students’ trust. I would like to show students I genuinely care about their needs and about themselves as individuals, and seek to demonstrate this even in the smallest of ways. For example, I would arrive on time because I believe students’ time is valuable; I would learn their names and interests and knows what makes them laugh and what frustrates them.

However, as a student myself I am aware that while a teacher may care about me and my learning, it does not follow that I will actually learn. I have had several teachers who desired my success but from whom I learned little. I find that in those cases, the teaching style expected little work from students, did not engage them intellectually, and did not challenge them on either an academic or personal level. I would like to do the opposite and set standards which are high but achievable with proper instruction while remaining sensitive to students' needs by medium of student feedback forms or periodically conducting a critical needs analysis (i.e., data analysis of pre- and post- instructional tests).

An excellent teacher is himself a learner. I want to be the best teacher I can be in order to best facilitate learning and help my students toward their goals. To do so, I believe that I myself must continue to learn in several ways. Firstly, I will learn from both my successes and my mistakes in the classroom. There is no such thing as a perfect teacher, so I will view my mistakes and struggles as opportunity for growth and development of excellence as a teacher. I hope that my students would learn to do the same from my example. Secondly, I desire to continually further my knowledge of English. I believe strongly that there are great advantages to being a non-native English-speaking teacher; in particular, a conscious and technical understanding of the language. I believe this explicit knowledge of the workings of English can be a powerful tool in teaching it, and I desire to "re-learn" English as a non-native speaker might in order to be able to explain to my students *why* English is the way it is--this might involve taking courses such as English phonology or grammar, or researching elements as need be for my own clarification. Similarly, I want to continue to learn of new resources, trends, and research in my field which may assist me in my profession; I believe this takes places such as through discourse with co-workers in the field/the workplace, and through the marvelous database of the internet.