

May 2011

## **My Educational Philosophy and Practices**

*By Theodore S. Wills*

I wish to obtain a teaching position at a Houston-area elementary school, ideally in a Title 1 learning environment. As a certified Bilingual Generalist with seven years' teaching experience, I am eager to help newcomer students to unlock their inner potential. I am also certified to teach students in a regular setting. I am open to teaching first grade through fourth grade. I have experience preparing third graders for the TAKS. Since April 2009, I have been a substitute teacher in elementary schools in Galena Park ISD and Pasadena ISD. During this semester, I have been teaching English as a Second Language at the "New Arrival Center" located at North Shore High School Ninth Grade Campus.

Before the school year begins, I will make an inventory of my student's strengths and weaknesses from a variety of sources. From the first day's initial greetings, I will work tirelessly to create a nurturing and productive environment where all students feel safe and motivated. Based on my past teaching experience, Region 4 ACP classes, and student teacher training, I will be implementing firm, fair, and consistent class management. The structure of my management plan is based on clearly defined procedures, expectations, rules, and consequences/rewards such as preferred activity time. At the beginning of the year, I will spend the necessary time teaching, modeling, and practicing expected behavior. I will wield "soft power" that makes use of proximity as a deterrent. Still, my class will be managed rather tightly, or strictly – until such time as I feel confident that mutual trust has been established. My initial positive communications with parents/guardians will include information about classroom management.

In the classroom, my personal goals as a bilingual or English language educator are focused on the welfare of each student. I seek to create and maintain: 1) a welcoming, social environment for student's self-esteem as a unique person, a member of their culture, and a member of the national and global community; 2) a working environment where the standards are fair, firm, and consistent; and 3) a learning environment where students are active, inquiry-based learners. The teacher is a facilitator for student-centered differentiated learning.

My classroom will be arranged for cooperative learning with assigned seating. There will be a variety of centers; depending on the grade level they might include centers for listening, English, Guided Reading, overhead projector, dramatic play, science, and math manipulatives. My classroom will be colorful and inviting, with student work displayed on available wall space.

I intend to use diverse, multi-sensory methods of instruction to reach every type of learning style and intelligence by incorporating art, music, drama, and technology. My teaching strategies will include journal-writing, read-alouds, hands-on activities that get students moving, and role play. All the strategies will teach the TEKS and build higher-order thinking skills. As grade appropriate, I will strongly emphasize critical learning habits.

As for literacy instruction, I intend to use the Balanced Literacy model, starting with a lot of teacher support and working toward a goal of independent reading and writing. I will develop a large classroom library of books and magazines to appeal to my students' prior knowledge and wide variety of interests. Most of the student assessment will be informal (60%). Formal assessment will be clearly explained (40%).

Fortunately, I realize that I will never be able to do everything on my own. I am eager to learn every day. I will communicate as necessary with my mentor, Principal, Assistant Principals, Librarians, School Nurses, fellow Teachers and Custodians whenever I need advice, training, or equipment. I am very aware of the importance of reaching out to parent(s) and/or guardian(s) on a positive, professional and pro-active basis.

Because of my experience periodically living, working, and studying with Mexicans and Hispanics since 1986, I trust that I will be able to make a positive contribution to the lives of newcomer children. As founder and president of the North American Educational Initiatives Foundation ([www.naeif.org](http://www.naeif.org)), I have long sought to challenge U.S. college students to discover the dignity of Mexican culture and its people, especially the poor and indigenous.

We have much to teach our students, yet we also have much to learn from them and the struggles of their families. My compassionate and hard-working wife from Mexico always reminds me of this truth.