

III. Professional Biography

When asked why I became a teacher, the answer was quite clear. I want to inspire students to love learning science in a way that no one has ever done before. My goal is that students learn science and have fun while doing it. Many circumstances influenced my decision to become an educator. Most importantly, I desired a job that wasn't considered work but a daily fulfillment of my passion. Another contributing factor in becoming a teacher was previous science teachers. While in high school, I experienced science classes that were filled with book work, vocabulary, and endless worksheets. Before entering college, I did not know students did hands-on engaging lab work. My only experience in science class was rote memorization of information to make an 'A' on the test. I have always loved science, but it was not until I began my college career that I learned I enjoyed helping others appreciate science in a new way. I tutored many members of the college football team in chemistry and biology to help them not only to pass the course but to see the excitement of science. I also worked at the NASA center on campus allowing students to participate in hands-on science activities. During school visits to the NASA center, I was able to teach various engaging hands-on lessons to elementary aged students. It was then I knew that I was destined to teach my passion. I wanted most to change the misconception about science classes in the new generation of students. My goal was to create a desire in students to rediscover their love of learning, not just in science but in all areas. Knowing that you have an impact on what students do with the rest of their lives is powerful. I want my students to look back and say they enjoyed learning science because they were able to *do* science.

Having only been in the teaching profession for 6 years, I am still learning how to improve my teaching strategies and activities. I spend most of my summer months reflecting on

the past school year and what I can do differently next year to better teach the concepts and stimulate students to ignite curiosity and excitement for learning science. I believe my most significant contribution to education is my unique teaching style and personality. My students know I love teaching and I specifically love teaching science. On a typical day in my classroom, my students are singing about biology, acting out concepts, and doing many labs. A student told me this year that I could take any song and make it about Biology. I accepted the challenge and did just that. I took the song, *Do you want to build a snowman* from Frozen and recreated it to be, Do you want to build a protein? Come on let's go translate. I absolutely love using unique ways to help my students enjoy while learning biology at the same time. Due to my unique and quirky nature in the classroom, I have come to be respected by my colleagues. This year, many teachers have come to observe how I teach in my classroom. I welcome the opportunity to be observed and critiqued as I constantly want to improve my teaching skills. Having seasoned teachers watching me meant a lot as many complemented me on my teaching style and wanted further information on how they could incorporate some of my strategies into their own classrooms. I feel that I connect well with my students and they trust me. Education is certainly a partnership between the teacher and student. I believe that success is fully achieved when the teacher and the student work together to learn.

Instilling a love of science learning in my students is one of my main goals. I want my students to know they are loved, respected, and will receive a once in a lifetime learning experience in my classroom. At the end of the day, I need to be able to say that I did everything in my power to educate each child in a fun and exciting way.

IV. Community Involvement

Serving as the National Honor Society Advisor, I get many opportunities to work with the members of our community. Each year I coordinate freshman orientation for our incoming high school students. I am in direct contact with parents during the summer and serve to bridge relationships with administrators and teachers for the upcoming school year. In the 2012-2013 school year, I organized the New Diana Walk for MS. This walk raised money for community members who were currently suffering with MS. In total, we raised \$3,000 that was equally distributed between the four community members. The money went toward medication, medical expenses and equipment, and payment of medical bills. It was quite a rewarding experience for me to see our students interacting with the community in a powerful way. This year I hosted the first annual Eagle Nation Event. This event was strictly community outreach to help the disabled and elderly members of our community. The purpose was to help those who are unable to do tasks around their home while getting to know them. Students and faculty came together on a Saturday morning and went to the homes of community members to help out. Together we raked leaves, mowed yards, cleaned windows, painted, hauled off and picked up limbs, and fixed items around their homes. Community members were able to see that the students and faculty cared about them and I believe this service project really touched every heart. The administration and I have decided this project will now become a tradition at New Diana due to the significant impact it has not only on our community members but on our students and staff as well. My passion is teaching and serving others in any way possible. I am blessed in the fact that I am able to coordinate service events that allow our students and staff to serve the school and community. There is no greater joy than to organize and work an event that is benefiting others.

V. Philosophy of Teaching

Teaching requires a delicate balance of time management, knowledge of content, and dedication to students. It is much more than a job, it is a passion. There are very few things I enjoy more than coming to work each day knowing I have an opportunity to have an impact on a student's life. My philosophy has always been to love each student as my own and teach them every possible moment they are in my classroom. Teaching is much more than arriving at 7:30am and leaving at 4:00pm. It is after school tutorials, athletic games, band concerts, and graduations. A dedicated teacher strives every day to make a difference and educate students to the best of their ability. This education requires well planned, highly engaging lessons. Lessons that teachers create should be full of investigation, hands-on opportunities, and thought provoking questions. I try to incorporate a variety of strategies into my classroom to meet all the needs of my students. These strategies include student created projects, Science Taboo vocabulary games, teacher created songs, and plays the students perform. I try to make learning Biology challenging yet fun at the same time. I get along well with my students because I let them know at the beginning what my expectations are. I respect my students and take the time to get to know them, what they are involved in, and what their likes and dislikes are. Based on what I know about my students, I can plan engaging lessons that will pique the interest of all students. I set a welcoming classroom environment where all students feel comfortable and all are respected by their peers and me. I can certainly say that I give 110% of my time, heart, and effort to my students. At the end of each day, I feel satisfied knowing my students learned and enjoyed it. Many times my students will remark, "Mrs. Hud, you are crazy." I simply say, "Well someone has to be crazy so you can learn." I do find myself coming up with funny or clever ways to remember concepts. I believe my unique personality and ability to think impromptu makes me such a diverse teacher. I truly have fun with my students and I love my job!

The rewards of teaching are innumerable. I learn so much from my students each day about life, stress, etc. I am able to see a small glimpse of what each child is like and what their struggles are. Many times I counsel my students as they feel comfortable to share their feelings with me. I am truly blessed to serve my students in a variety of ways. I am able to see the impact I have had through seniors in National Honor Society. Each year, seniors give a Golden Apple award to the teacher that has impacted them the most. I have been fortunate enough to receive 3 of these awards in my six years of teaching. I am honored to play a role in a student's life that could change their career choices, relationship outlooks, and build character.

My beliefs are definitely reflected in my teaching style. I truly love my students and I fully believe that is communicated to them through feedback in and outside of class. I try to attend all home games and extra-curricular events to show my students I support them in all areas. I also believe that students should have fun when they learn, so I create highly engaging lessons where students can move, create, and experiment with science. I am a highly kinesthetic/visual learner and so are many of our students today. If I wouldn't enjoy the lesson, I typically will not put my students through that torture either. I also do not believe in worksheets or packets. I want all of the learning in my classroom to be student-centered and teacher facilitated. Students will do the work if you just give them the freedom to be creative with it. There are not many teachers like myself, as I am not afraid to be laughed at for goofy teaching strategies. I want more than anything for my students to learn and at the end of the year say, "I have never had a teacher like Mrs. Hud before. I learned so much in her class and I will certainly miss it." I do feel I am making a difference in my student's lives. I am blessed to teach each and every one of them. I truly believe I am where I was meant to be in life. Just like the quote says, "To teach is to touch lives forever."

VI. Education Issues and Trends

Education today presents many notable issues including funding, equality, and curriculum and instruction. With the ongoing discussion of increasing rigor and comprehension of concepts, the way we teach must encourage students to think on a whole new level. There have been many debates and news stories on instructional materials in the last year. The adoption of various instructional materials that match state standards poses a rather large debate. Many do not agree with the lessons that are being taught in our school systems today. The issue of Common Core versus hand-written instruction to CSCOPE encompasses many of our education systems today. I anticipate this being an issue in education as long as we still have educational systems in place. Many districts force a prescribed set of lessons that all teachers must abide by. While this practice is effective in ensuring all teachers in same grade levels or subjects stay together and teach the same lessons, it squelches the creativity of the teacher in the classroom.

It is no secret that all students learn in different ways. Once a teacher gets to know the students, individualized lessons may be required to ensure all students are given an equal opportunity to learn. While I do agree that teachers must be held accountable for what is taught in the classroom, I do not think it is right to turn a teacher into a robot. Teachers should be free to create engaging and meaningful lessons that fully align to the TEKS and follow the timeline set forth by the district. I know that we do not live in a perfect world, but it would be nice to allow teachers to bring in their own unique ideas and lessons to educate students. It is my understanding that larger school districts usually enforce all teachers following the prescribed timeline and lessons. After speaking to some that work in these districts, they appear unhappy and bored with the lessons and wish to put their own spin on them. Other teachers liked

following the lessons because everything was already spelled out. There appears to be pros and cons to both sides when using instructional materials in this manner.

Other districts require teachers to follow the timeline and teach the TEKS but may incorporate their own unique lessons. Smaller districts seem to enforce this idea of thinking as they set a timeline for the TEKS that will be taught but allow teachers the freedom to plan highly engaging lessons for their students. I am currently working in a district such as this. I enjoy having the structured timeline and I love that I can create exciting lessons for my students that match my personality and cater to student needs. There is a negative side to this approach as some teachers are not planning engaging lessons but rather reverting to book work and worksheet packets.

There will always be issues and debates in education as long as politics are involved. A delicate balance of teacher created lessons while being held accountable for the TEKS is important in providing a meaningful education. Each district will continue to make decisions that they feel will best benefit the students they are serving. As long as we are teaching the TEKS on an appropriate timeline and in an engaging way, we are fulfilling a piece of our role as a teacher.

VII. The Teaching Profession

The teaching profession is one of great importance and requires a great deal of dedication and hard work on behalf of the educational team. In order to educate every student, teachers must work as a team to teach cross-curricular content to strengthen student minds. As science department head I try to stay on top of current issues in education, new state mandates and legislation, advances in educational technology, and best practices for the 21st century learner. I lead curriculum meetings, serve on a vast array of committees in the district, and attend many educational conferences. I am certainly a lifelong learner as I want to be current on the newest strategies and ideals education has to offer. I love attending conferences including the Texas ASCD conference, the Conference for the Advancement of Science Teaching, and other professional development workshops. In December, I graduated with my Masters of Arts in Teaching from SFA. My coursework was quite beneficial in helping me not only in my own classroom but it helped me teach others new strategies and ways to reach students. I have also led many workshops at the high school on engaging strategies, incorporation of technology into everyday lessons, and the flipped classroom. A key ingredient to a good teacher is never stop learning. As long as we continue to learn, we can help others learn.

Accountability for a teacher has always been a touchy subject. I believe accountability comes from teaching the TEKS, incorporating technology, allowing student-centered learning, and providing a fun learning environment. Often times, teachers put on the “dog and pony” show for their formal observation. This is not an accurate description of the level of quality teaching that is taking place on a daily basis. Teachers need informal observations often so administrators can see what is actually taking place at random times during the school year. When I first began teaching I did not have any walkthrough evaluations. My performance was

based only on my formal observation and state test scores. I felt as if this practice was unfair because I was being judge on my teaching ability in 45 minutes. Using the PDAS system for accountability I feel I am being evaluated at a more fair level. This year I have had 5 informal walkthroughs in which my principal was able to see a wide variety of lessons and provide constructive feedback. When the formal observation was conducted I did not know what class period or day she would be observing. I liked this much better as it was not a scripted lesson like many teachers like to plan for. I also believe that individual STAAR EOC scores are a piece of accountability. Being that I work in a small district where one teacher is responsible for their own subject, it truly shows the teachers that are teaching the content in a fun and exciting way. In the past, with TAKS, all science teachers were responsible for the learning and thus it did not fall on one teacher when scores were inadequate. With the new implementation, however, each teacher is evaluated individually and I personally like that.

Accountability systems will continue to change as legislation changes. Teachers should be teaching every day and bell to bell. Any moment we are not teaching we are doing an injustice to our students. We are charged to give students a quality education, and I want to end each day knowing I did just that. Students need to be authentically engaged and owning their learning. Teachers are the vessel in which students will learn and succeed. We must do our jobs and to the very best of our ability. If we are not, then why are we in the business of educating and changing lives?

VIII. State Teacher of the Year

If given the honor of being selected State Teacher of the Year, I would remind teachers why we do what we do. I believe many educators become lost in the state requirements, paperwork, and meetings and sadly lose sight of why they entered the profession. I would aim to reignite that passion for teaching students and remind others that we have a chance to make a difference in every student's life. Teachers should never forget the impact they have on young minds not only in learning specific content, but in learning valuable life lessons. To the general public, I would convey the message of teacher dedication and hard work and the benefits each has on molding our future generations. To fellow teachers in the profession, I would encourage to push through the mounds of paperwork, state mandates, and meetings to educate our students in a fun and engaging way. As teachers, we have a unique role in creating trust, honesty, and respect in our students. A teacher might be the only smile a student sees all day and we should go out of our way to speak to each student when they enter our classrooms. I fully believe that teachers need to be the light during times of despair and need to show students we truly care about their success and wellbeing. This is a wonderful recipe for students to not only work hard but to feel loved and cared for during the process. The impact a teacher can have on a student is immeasurable. At the end of each day, we should be able to say that we taught with passion, educated *every* child no matter the need, and loved them like our own. I have learned in my few years of education that a student who knows that you truly believe in them will far exceed any expectation that you set. I have seen students this year who said on the first day that they did not like science and they would be bad at it. As we close out the school year, students are saying they really enjoyed learning science this year and they *were* good at it. We must never forget why we are here, to love and educate every student pushing them to heights they never dreamed they would reach.