Human Development and Learning Theory

Development is the change that takes place in all humans over time from conception. I believe all humans have the ability to learn and it is the relationships we develop with and amongst our students through social interaction, regardless of race, gender, ability or disability, that will help foster learning. Constructivists, including Vygotsky, also believed that learning should involve social participation, collaboration and interaction.

I also believe the relationships teachers develop with the students will allow them to get to know the learners to be able to meet them where they are at in their learning and to provide just enough and just in time support. My belief can be seen in the theories of both Vygotsky and Piaget. Vygotsky believed learning happens in the ZPD and defined it as the distance between what you can do on your own and what you can do with help from an adult. And according to Piaget learning happens at different ages and stages, and children must be developmentally ready to learn.

For a lot of students, school is a constant, a place they can depend on. For this reason teachers should consider the importance of modelling positive behaviours for the students. Behaviourists believe that learning is observable and is a process through which experience causes a change in behaviour. As teachers we can help to create these positive learning experiences.

Most importantly, I believe all learners have strengths. If we want to bring out the best in our students we need to start with strengths. When students see themselves as competent and capable they are more motivated for learning and more willing to try challenging tasks. Learners need to have a genuine interest in learning for motivation to exist. Teachers should consider creating curiosity, using variety, and relating learning to student needs.