

Philosophy of Education

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As both a teacher and a student, I have five personal beliefs about learning and education; each of these is influenced by the others, and all of them work together to form a cohesive philosophy of education that I follow both inside and outside of the classroom. First and foremost, I believe that education – and the ability to learn – is one of the most important parts of life. It is necessary to be successful, to accomplish goals, and to enrich oneself, regardless of what path one follows in life. Along with that, I believe that there is little that cannot be learned with the right amount and type of instruction and practice. However, everyone does learn differently, so as a teacher, I am responsible for knowing my students' learning styles and multiple intelligences; I also believe that not all subjects and topics are for everyone. However, teachers are also responsible for demonstrating the type of positive and encouraging attitude that can change a student's opinion about education and make him or her realize that learning is indeed an important aspect of life.

My connecting ideas of education fit with several of the defined educational philosophies; because students learn in all different capacities, I believe that as a teacher, I should be flexible and open to various educational ideals. I am largely a progressivist teacher, but I understand and implement tenets of other philosophies. Overall, I believe in a student-centered classroom where students are individuals who need to be prepared for life now and in the future.

As a progressivist teacher, I maintain three roles in the classroom: I am a facilitator and guide for student learning, I demonstrate the importance of being a lifelong learner, and I have a responsibility to know students on an individual level. These traits are important in developing a progressivist classroom, where students are actively involved in hands-on, discovery learning experiences that are relevant to their interests. I believe that allowing students to be active participants and leaders in the classroom strengthens their problem solving and critical thinking abilities, which helps to prepare them for their future endeavors inside and outside of the classroom.

In the classroom, students should be given the opportunity for three things: discovery of truths and principles of the world, social interaction to increase learning, and authentic experiences that relate to real-world situations. These opportunities can be fostered in any subject area. In mathematics, I prefer to guide students through inquiry activities about new topics so that they discover theories on their own, leading to a more in-depth understanding of mathematical concepts instead of rote memorization that has little basis in authentic situations. Social interaction can occur in any subject area through the use of partner work and cooperative learning; this strengthens communication and teamwork skills. Authentic, hands-on experiences and assessments are vital for students to see meaning and purpose in their educational endeavors.

Though I have these strong progressivist beliefs, other educational philosophies have important merits that find their way into my teaching. I believe in helping students construct their own knowledge, and this constructivist thought enables me to place great importance on gauging student knowledge so that I can help them build new knowledge based on what they already know. Because I have high academic expectations for all students, I also believe in some of the aspects of essentialism. The abilities to read, write, speak, and compute are greatly important for success in achieving goals throughout life; these skills are used in nearly every situation students will encounter, and should be taught and emphasized accordingly. Some perennialism beliefs are also present in my teachings, as I do believe that there are several universal truths that all students need to come to understand. Education is such an all-encompassing and valuable experience that it is impossible to effectively teach all aspects of life without touching upon several educational philosophies.

Through all of these beliefs and instructional practices, students in my classroom will be encouraged to become independent thinkers and problem solvers who can work well with others to achieve success both now and in the future. These skills translate to any opportunity and experience that students will face, and it is a teacher's responsibility to prepare each and every student to be the best that he or she can be.