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**Teaching Philosophy**

I support the Constructivist Pedagogy Philosophy in my teaching through Active Discovery Learning. Students are encouraged to develop their own understanding utilizing Project Based Learning, which allows them to learn by doing and incorporating their own experiences into their educational development. This process allows for ownership of their learning as well as encourages engagement through critical and creative thinking skills.

**Educational Opinions on Philosophies and Learning**

Learning is the greatest power we have as human beings. Every moment of our lives there is a potential to learn something. Educators focus learning in directed paths and act as guides on the road to greater knowledge. All experiences are useful whether it be from success or from failure. Each learner is unique and requires to receive an education that best meets their needs if they are to be successful.

As an educator, I have seen a wide range of teaching philosophies. Some were considered the absolute definitive answer to how education should be taught. When it comes to learning there are methods being used that don’t have titles or have yet to be defined. There are educators who are teaching to the best of their ability using methods without knowledge of labels. The theory that is the best may not exist or it may be a combination of several theories.

It is my personal belief that the learning theory that works best for me is the Constructivist theory. “From the perspective of teaching, constructivists believe that learning is the active exploration of the student subject or the learning object so as to construct the process of understanding the object’s meaning. Therefore, teaching pivots on the meaningful construction of students by inspiring them to construct their own knowledge structure” (Xu, Z., & Shi, Y. 2018). This idea is by far the one that meets my needs as an educator and comes the most naturally to me. If I had no idea what it was called, I would still use this method of education. I have primarily taught art and technology classes in my career by using this philosophy. Students learn step by step the basic skills and develop connections to their understanding of the world.

A form of constructivism that I believe in is project-based learning in which students learn by working on projects. This theory is useful in letting the learner develop their skills and connections by learning by doing. The Active Discovery Learning theory also follows this principle and works well with PBL. In the art world, the best way to learn how to paint, draw or make a vase is through the process of being hands-on and making the project over and over until you have mastered it. “Producing an artifact that is of interest since others can use or view it represents a very motivating factor” (Francese, R., et all, 2015). I start most project-based learning by backward planning my instruction. What is it I want these students to learn? By looking at the result I can develop the steps needed to accomplish this goal. I firmly support the scaffolding method of instruction. "In education, a scaffold is a temporary support that is gradually faded when pupils are more and more able to achieve learning goals" Van Uum, Martina S. J, Verhoeff, R. P., & Peeters, M. 2017). The use of these methods all work with each other and provide the education that I feel is most effective for learners.

For example: to draw a portrait of a person I must first teach many skills that will scaffold the final work of art. I teach what the different drawing pencils are so that students can understand their purpose and how to start shading. Students are taught how to properly shade and create value scales of dark to light. I next instruct students how to shade objects so that they look three-dimensional, and have value. Now the student is ready to draw the parts of the face like the eyes or ears. Students must master the proportions of the face and learn to really see their subject matter. Only when all of these scaffold steps have been met do I start my students’ drawing portraits. To draw a face the student must use all of the learned skills through the constructionist method to create their original work of art. The project-based learning is a method that is becoming increasingly popular as learning by doing has shown greater learning skills than only learning the theory or information in the abstract.

When teaching technology, the same methods are used to create or build something. To make a robot move, I first teach my students the basics of coding. Many people think coding is only for games, but it applies to many different technology-related fields. The truth is that once you understand the principles of coding you can create, websites, video games, robots, drones, and so on. This too is known as Computational Thinking, in which we break down problems into their basic parts and examine them in order to understand them. As long as a student remembers that most coding comes down to “If” and “Then”. If I push the arrow key then the robot moves in that direction. By teaching students, the most basic coding skills they can master greater and greater commands with higher levels of intricate design.

At an early stage, a teacher needs to help build the very fundamentals of learning. These building blocks will be used for the rest of a person’s life and a teacher takes on a greater level of importance. As a person grows and learns, they build on knowledge gained. One of Problem-Based Learning’s “fundamental ideas is to make the students aware of their knowledge and, even more importantly, of the gaps in their knowledge” (Dirksen, J., 2015, p.163). Greater levels of knowledge mean learners can take greater control of how they can best learn. With additional time and abilities, educators become more of a guide that directs students on the path of knowledge. All learning is good learning, as it requires understanding, development of the mind, and the ability to create new skills.

The experiences that have constructed the people we are today also lead us in the direction of whom we will become. At any second in our lives, there is the potential to learn something new. Some may be intentional learning like taking a class, but there are also the experiences we gain from living. “Informal or Social Learning: Encompasses pretty much any learning that happens outside a formal learning event such as a classroom or an e-learning Course” (Dirksen, J., 2015, p.244). It is the culmination of this knowledge that influences our very existence which makes us so unique.

Lastly, I would like to discuss an old teaching philosophy of mine, “You don’t need talent, to give effort”. A mentor teacher of mine used this philosophy to teach his art classes. The philosophy was painted in giant letters above his board at the very front of the class so that every student saw it each day. In the world of K-12th grade, this is a very important philosophy. Many students say they can’t do something because they don’t have any talent. As a teacher, I am not looking for talent, and I am not grading based on it. What I am teaching, and what I want to see from students is effort. Students get hung up on what they consider to be amazing and if they cannot do the exact same thing then they believe they are failures. It is through effort they learn. It is through both success and failure they create connections that may be used in the future.

Constructivist Theory is the philosophy that I believe connects the most to how we learn. Other theories can work very well with it and connect to it in a wide range of methods. In the end, it is the best overall explanation of how we learn. There are many other theories that explain parts of learning or can be seen as effective in teaching a specific skill. Ultimately when I think about how we have learned, what we know or how to get the information in the future, we are using the lessons learned and built on from previous learning.

**References**

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