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Assignment: Philosophy of Education

“Children have to be educated, but they have also to be left to educate themselves.”

(Dimmet, 1928 orig pub date)

My philosophy of education stems from my experience as a student in several different fields of study, as well as being a teacher in many different realms. I have studied everything from writing to graphic design and 3D animation to massage therapy and life coaching. As I learned through the different programs, I discovered things that worked for me and things that did not. I found different studying skills and things that, surprisingly after the fact, helped me to remember everything that I was learning. These skills, tools and methods will all be incorporated into my philosophy.

Aside from my life coaching training, in each of these study programs, the educational format was very similar although the content was vastly different. It was through the life coaching training that I gained knowledge about the power of moving the body while learning. In this training, I was *encouraged* to move my body while learning the new concepts and the retention was enormous.

While in massage school, I acquired another skill that I will encourage for my students – the way of studying through art. In one of my most difficult classes – pathology – I took up a pen and began doodling. This art form was seriously frowned upon when I was in school and teachers would severely reprimand any students they caught in the process of doodling. When I started doing it in massage school, the professor walked by after the third day and stopped to

watch me for a minute while she lectured. I didn't realize she was there and when I did, I had an instantaneous gut reaction of, "Oh dear! I am in *so* much trouble!" She smiled and said, "Excellent mnemonic device you're using there." She was right. I had never judged myself to be an artist but, by the end of that term, I had several incredible pieces of art and had retained everything she had taught.

In my opinion, the way the public education system is currently set up, it is no longer serving our children and I seek to change that. Incorporating whole-child learning, body movement, art and music activates more parts of the brain which literally opens more possibilities for learning. These activities spark energy in both sides of the brain and activates both creative and logical thinking to complete. As Henry David Thoreau once said, "Methinks that the moment my legs begin to move, my thoughts begin to flow."

In my classroom, movement will be encouraged. While in my life coaching training, most of us sat on Pilates balls, rather than in chairs. Balancing on these balls activated our core muscles which activated more of our brain cells and, therefore, there were more opportunities for learning. In today's fast-paced world, our children are moving ever faster but are required to "sit down and sit still" which just doesn't work for some children. I've practiced the art of being able to ascertain what works and what doesn't work for my students and will call on that skill in my classroom so that my students are accommodated in ways that serve *them* best. The policy of student-centered teaching that John Dewey established in 1896 (Kauchak & Eggen, 2008, pp. 199-200) sings to my heart and will be a formula I will implement in my classroom.

Student motivation, I believe, comes *first* through my organization and following a structure wherein they are informed every single day of what will be happening in the classroom that day, as well as having information beforehand, a "heads up" sort of thing, regarding big

changes that will be happening. I also believe that student motivation is heightened when I treat my students as if they *already know* what I'm talking about. In other words, if I communicate with them in a way that lets them know I *believe* they understand.

I've experienced this theory in raising my daughter. I began speaking to her in complete sentences before she was born. I avoided "baby babble" when I spoke to her, although I would speak back to her in her language whenever she initiated "conversation." She taught me to understand her language at one month old and by twelve months old, she was able to speak in my language. When I spoke to her, I would approach it as though she was an individual who had the ability to understand the concept I was presenting and, even at a very early age, she displayed mannerisms that indicated she *did* understand me. When she began to be able to speak, around 8 months old, she was making decisions and taking part in very advanced communication simply because I believed she could. I will employ this same tactic in my classroom.

In addition to movement and believing in my students, I will also incorporate a philosophy that is seemingly unrelated, but is highly important: *Water*. Each student will have clear water in a sports bottle at their desk and be encouraged to drink it throughout the day. Our body is 70-90% water and water is required for every function the human body does. According to www.kangenwaterusa.com "In order to function properly, water must be consumed in set quantities in consistent intervals (average of 2.5 liters per day). When not enough water is consumed, people can begin to develop certain illnesses and even accelerate their aging processes." While this may seem unrelated to learning, it's important to note that the brain is the priority organ on the water distribution scheme. When the brain is in the process of learning, it is highly active and draws on water from every source, taking from other organs to satisfy its need for fuel. This can cause "fuzzy-headedness" and confusion and exhaustion. I believe that many

of the distracted students in our classrooms today are actually exhausted from dehydration and frustrated from having to “be still.”

Student involvement in classroom decision is paramount for success. Allowing them to participate in all the decisions they can will not only provide training in responsible decision-making and natural consequences, but also give them a sense of importance. I will let them have a say in how their classroom is set up, what “chores” they will do each week and how they can contribute to the overall classroom operation.

I will include meditation and guided imagery. Based on studies by Kellogg in 2007 and Murray in the same year, creating mental images is a way of enhancing memory. (Santrock, 2008, pp. 254-255) Most successful athletes use meditation and imagery to create a sense of winning their competition from the inside out, imagining the entire process of the race or the match and seeing themselves winning. This model has proven successful time and time again.

Instruction will be multi-layered, accessing as many of the senses for learning a concept as we possibly can. Students will have the opportunity to learn kinesthetically, visually, audibly and through any other means I can drum up because I adhere to the same belief as Marvin Minsky, “You don't understand anything until you learn it more than one way.” We will access multi-media for as many aspects as possible on each concept taught, as well as incorporating multi-media projects for the students as assignments.

Clay P. Bedford once said, “You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.” I believe that children should be allowed to be children for as long as possible. I believe that they should be encouraged to stay curious, youthful and active. I believe in learning through play and activities and that their lives should have a well-balanced schedule of learning time and

play time. In light of that, my classroom will be a space where learning takes place and result in very limited homework.

Henry L. Doherty said, “Get over the idea that only children should spend their time in study. Be a student so long as you still have something to learn, and this will mean all your life.” I agree with that because I know that I learn through teaching. My commitment to my position as a teacher is to provide an educational experience that is fun for everyone, including me. When my body is moving, my brain is active and my creative forces are lit up, I learn quicker and with long-lasting effects. I am passionate about teaching and know that when that passion fades it will be time to move on. My commitment to myself is that I lead my life through passion and connect to those around me through love. My classroom, like my healing office, will be a space dedicated to love, learning and sanctuary.

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