

Angie Millgate  
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**Final Paper**

“Children have to be educated, but they have also to be left to educate themselves.” (Dimnet, 1928 orig pub date)

That quote states one of the main tenets of education that is forgotten these days – leaving the child to their own devices, at times. I used that same opening quote for my paper regarding my Philosophy of Education for my EDU 1010 Introduction to Education class last semester. I revisited that document to see if my philosophy has changed and, if it has, in what ways. This paper will be an extensive revision of that document, based on my further development and in relation to inclusive teaching and differentiated instruction, specifically.

Differentiated instruction, by definition, is “instruction and learning activities that are uniquely and predominantly suited to the attributes, capacities, motivations and interests of gifted students.” (Hardman, Drew, & Egan, 2011) While this is speaking directly to gifted children, I believe differentiated instruction is applicable to all children of all abilities and exceptionalities. Where IDEA supports the *individual* student and is focused on providing education on an individual level, differentiated instruction is an approach that provides subject matters in different manners focused toward *clusters* of students. (Differentiated Instruction Strategies, 1996-2010)

In my classroom, I will incorporate as many levels of differentiated instruction as possible. Some that currently appeal to me are mentioned at [teach-nology.com](http://teach-nology.com): Direct instruction where I present information in a lecture form which is good for covering vast amounts of information in a short amount of time; inquiry-based learning where the student conducts investigative work independent of the teacher; cooperative learning where the students work together in teams to garner

an understanding of the topic at hand; and information processing strategies where students work to gather information, organize it, store it and retrieve it. (Differentiated Instruction Strategies, 1996-2010)

In light of incorporating differentiated instruction in my classroom, I have discovered that my philosophy is still quite similar to what it was last semester. In addition, I now have further understanding about how inclusive classrooms work and I believe that my approach to education is even more needed in the inclusive classroom *because* of the unique structure it provides.

The construct I propose fits perfectly with differentiated instruction and inclusive teaching *because* it naturally plays to the unique needs of each child. Because I am a body-centered instructor that incorporates movement and full-body experiential learning, I believe that facet of my philosophy will reach out to those students who may struggle within the strictly-structured atmosphere of traditional general education classrooms.

My philosophy stems from my experience as a student in several different fields of study, as well as being a teacher of different subjects and in many realms. It was through my life coach training that I gained knowledge about the power of moving my body while learning. 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 this training, I was *encouraged* to move my body while learning the new concepts and the retention was enormous.

In today's fast-paced world, our children are moving ever-faster but are required to "sit down and sit still" which just does not work for some children. This old belief frustrates those children who move better while standing, moving or drumming their hands against the tabletop. While working with several children currently who I call my "Human Beat Boxes" I have noticed that their attention increases when they are drumming. It was driving me mad so I started thinking creatively about how to best support them. Within moments, I had an idea. I invited them to drum on their thighs instead. It

worked. They were able to drum, the sound was muted and I was able to focus on what I was saying without being distracted by the rhythms.

Through being a body-centered life coach and energy worker, I have practiced the art of being able to ascertain what works and what does not work for my clients. I 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.

While in massage school, I acquired another skill that I will encourage for my students – the way of studying through art, doodling and stream-of-consciousness writing. 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.”

Student motivation, I believe, comes *first* through my organization and following a structured schedule. It is important that the students are informed every single day of what will be happening in the classroom that day, as well being informed in advanced regarding any big changes that will be happening. This is imperative in supporting children who have been diagnosed with any Autism Spectrum Disorders or Emotional/Behavioral Disorders. I also believe that student motivation is heightened when I treat my students as if they *already know* what I am talking about. In other words, if I communicate with them in a way that lets them know I *believe* they understand.

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. According to [www.kangenwaterusa.com](http://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.” The brain is the first organ on the order of water delivery within the human body. 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,” 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.”

I will include meditation, guided imagery and conscious breathing techniques. 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. I have already seen the success in the classes I have taught wherein I have incorporated these skills. I have also seen the long-lasting, positive effects of these tools in the lives of the students with whom I am currently working.

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. Children with exceptionalities that require assistive technology will have access to as much of that as financially possible in my classroom.

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. They should be encouraged to stay curious, youthful and active. I will promote learning through play and activities and adhere to the policy that their lives should have a well-balanced schedule of learning time and play time. In

light of that, my classroom will be where the bulk of their schoolwork takes place and will result in 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. In that condition, I learn quicker and with long-lasting effects. 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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