

My Philosophy of Education

Krista Weir

"Students learn what they care about, from people they care about and who, they know, care about them . . ."

Barbara Harrell Carson, 1996, *Thirty Years of Stories*

My philosophy of education is of the progressive orientation. It is my belief that while it is important for kids to learn the essential skills that will help them function in the world, the classroom is also a place for individual growth and exploration. I believe that the key to a successful classroom is to get to know your students, work to satisfy their individual needs, and create fun and interactive lessons. Learning should take place in a mutually caring and respectful environment in which students are given plenty of freedom and are able to develop a sense of belonging and self worth. Ultimately, the classroom is a place where children should be challenged and supported as they develop into unique human beings.

It is my belief that learning is ultimately the responsibility of the learner, and a desire to learn is necessary for successful learning. A child cannot be forced to master a task if they have absolutely no desire to do so. It is, however, the responsibility of the teacher to inspire learning through the use of creativity, energy, compassion, and respect. By providing a positive learning environment the teacher enables the child to most fully and efficiently reach their learning potential. In order for this to be accomplished the focus of teaching must be on the child, not the subject knowledge. Each child must be treated as an individual and given support as needed. It is more important to measure individual growth than to rank students in relation to one another. When you respect the needs of each child and give everyone an opportunity for success, they are more likely to enjoy the process of learning. It is most important not to teach the child detailed facts and information, but to think critically and creatively, to solve problems, to find their passion and to develop life long skills. The most important role of a teacher is to spark a curiosity that develops into a lifelong love of learning.

The most important component in fostering a love of learning is creating a high level of engagement and interest. It is difficult for a student to learn if they hate what they are doing. It is unlikely that children will love every subject or topic that you teach. What is important is that they love *something* that you teach. It is the responsibility of the teacher to find out the interests of students and incorporate them into the lessons so that students care about what they are learning. Information should be presented in creative ways that students find interesting and lessons should be adapted to meet the specific interests and needs of the students in a specific class. It is also important that students see purpose in what they are learning. The teacher should let them know why it is important and meaningful and find connections between lessons and everyday life. By teaching

purposeful, engaging lessons, you are feeding the curiosity and spirit of young learners.

My belief is that while children ultimately develop independently, constructing their own knowledge, this development is strongly influenced by interactions with their environment. The actions and attitude of the teacher and the classroom environment therefore are very important. Instead of encouraging students to conform to “the right way” of completing a task, the teacher should accept their individuality by allowing them to express their own thoughts and feelings in their own unique ways. Students should be as involved in their own education as possible. If we only allow them to do things one way– the way that we think is best– then we are not supporting the fact that they are all unique, creative beings. Children should be involved in decision making in the classroom, take part in class meetings, know that their input is valued, and be given plenty of freedom and flexibility. Doing so encourages self worth and independence.

I believe that the best learning stems from being actively engaged with ones environment. Emphasis should be on learning by doing, hands on projects, experiential learning, individual discovery, and construction of knowledge. The best way for children to show what they have learnt is not to simply regurgitate information but to teach or demonstrate learning by doing. Classroom work should include opportunities for both group work and self reflection. The teacher should constantly challenge students to think in new ways and provide scaffolding to enable them to reach their highest learning potential.

Children are more likely to act respectfully and appropriately in the classroom if they have a positive, trusting relationship with their teacher. Their best environment for learning is one in which both the teacher and the students understand and openly discuss the needs of one another. The teacher must also model the appropriate behavior to show students how to treat others with respect. When students care about their teacher and know that they are cared for, they are willing to listen, participate, and value what is said. The teacher should also develop a personal connection with each student so that every child feels appreciated within the classroom.

Education should not be focused on solely academic outcomes but also focus on the development of the whole child and their mental, physical and psychological needs. Human behavior is an effort of every individual to satisfy their need for love, power, freedom, and fun. The classroom should be a place in which students can meet these needs in healthy ways. My philosophy is that through positive, respectful relationships with their teacher and peers, children learn to satisfy their need for love. By being given the opportunity to have input on classroom procedures and events, they learn to satisfy their need for power. By having the opportunity to learn in a way that suits their individual needs, they learn to satisfy their need for freedom. By taking part in engaging and exciting learning opportunities they learn to satisfy their need for fun. These are only a few of the ways in which education can cater to the personal development and individual needs of each and every child.