

Statement on Educational Philosophy

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My dedication to teaching and education rests on the belief that learning is a transformative, liberating, and beautiful process of both mind and heart that generates individual and collective values that make the world a better place. Four pillars uphold my moral pedagogy: knowledge, imagination, passion, and compassion. In tandem they sustain a life-long culture of learning, critical inquiry, playfulness, emotional investment, and empathetic multiculturalism. The promise is that education will uphold an ethical way of life the purpose of which is to understand the wide spectrum of human diversity, promote respect for all living things, and contribute to social progress. The quest for the ethical life challenges individuals and communities to search for social justice and the common good.

Knowledge and Skills

The starting point of all education is the acquisition of knowledge and the skills required for learning. In this sense I am a traditionalist. Students must learn how to learn, something that is impossible without basic skills that establish the foundation for further learning. Such endeavor requires time, effort, and motivation from both students and teachers. The basic challenge for any teacher is how to incentivize learning by connecting to the student as an individual—meeting the child where she or he is intellectually, socially, and emotionally and adjusting to his or her specific learning styles, proclivities, and interests. This approach is the best path to facilitate student success.

Imagination

Education must be infused with a creative spirit that encourages students to explore, question, create, and imagine. In other words, education is a serious affair that requires playfulness. Because learning is a process of construction and deconstruction of received knowledge, both discipline and indiscipline are necessary for creative thinking. While supplying the building blocks and skills to construct the basis of an education, education also entails reexamining and dismantling assumptions, presumptions, and foundations. One useful way to infuse the creative spirit at all levels of schooling is to approach topics as questions to answer or puzzles to put together. By asking questions one opens doors for students to engage, explore, and innovate. This is only possible if a level of freedom is encouraged in and outside the classroom and students are allowed the possibility to fail and try again. One of my maxims is “Don’t be afraid to explore.”

Passion

As a teacher I love learning, the transformative power of education, and my students. This is the passion that I want to transmit as an educator. Such passion is contagious, effective, and life changing. Without an emotional connection to learning, deep knowledge (not to mention wisdom) is hardly possible. By guiding students to find what is meaningful to them, the teacher helps them discover their

voice, purpose, and identity. Nothing is as empowering and liberating as finding oneself within a collective and identifying one's sense of purpose. Passion is meaningful and purposeful. For those of us who believe in fostering an ethical culture in the context of progressive education our purpose—our passion-- is to contribute to building a better society for all.

Compassion

For education to contribute to better human beings and a better world, it must teach empathy, compassion, and the values of an ethical life. This is a humanistic perspective that has the individual in community at its center and education at the service of humanity. Such a perspective, framed by multiculturalism, renders the educational enterprise a deeply ethical one that concerns itself with personal and collective truth, justice, and wellbeing. The transformative power of education rests on its ability to provide a realm of freedom of inquiry and expression, the possibility to wrestle with critical issues, the will to address the spiritual and aesthetic needs of students, the understanding of differences and commonalities across cultures, and the application of knowledge to critical human needs. In this manner, education is necessary for a life well lived from the local to the global. Education empowers, liberates, and builds character while improving quality of life. Schools are the privileged space—not the only one-- where this must happen. As academic leaders our role is to ensure that this is so, that together we provide an education that fuses knowledge and skills with imagination, passion, and compassion. The ideal education integrates the mind and the heart and transform both, and the world, in the process.