

2009-2010 Project

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

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My project is a reflection and a re-writing of my philosophy of education. In 2008 I wrote a philosophy of education for a graduate course in foreign language teaching methods. Re-visiting that philosophy of education two years later has revealed two complementary yet paradoxical things: As a teacher **I have not changed much** and as a teacher **I have changed a great deal**. An explanation follows.

**I have not changed much.** As I read my philosophy of education from 2008, I see my definition of education has not changed. I still firmly believe that education should serve as a launching point for life-long learning, inspiring passion and motivation. Education should provide tools for students that allow them to create and engage in their own learning. I still believe the student-centered classroom with an open, welcoming and inclusive atmosphere is essential to teaching. Creating community and making meaningful connections in learning to students' lives is of utmost importance. I continually strive to maintain these elements in my teaching and classrooms.

**I have changed a great deal.** Although my philosophy of education has not changed in concept, it has changed in practice and content. The implementation of my philosophy in the classroom has changed significantly. In 2008, I now see I lacked the tools and the experience to truly 'give' the class to my students. I may have feared I wasn't doing my job if I wasn't lecturing or doing something in the classroom. I know now this not to be the case. My experience with CETL, collaboration with peers and students and time in the classroom has helped me develop those tools. In the 2009-2010 academic year, I have found myself serving more as a guide in the classroom. I find myself speaking less and listening more. I have revised teacher-centered activities and methods of instruction. This re-vamping has helped me 'give' my students their class; I provide the skills training and support, they do the learning. I expect this to continue to evolve and grow as I gain experience and learn in my field of teaching. I welcome the changes and look forward to the next reflection.

Philosophy of Education  
Elizabeth Harsma  
April 2008

Education should serve as a launching point for life-long learning; it should foster intrinsic motivation and spark curiosity and passion in students. Education at any level, K-12, undergraduate or graduate and beyond should provide students with tools that allow them to function successfully in, explore and learn about our ever-changing world.

This means that students, rather than teachers are the center of the classroom. Students can then take responsibility and pleasure in their own learning. This can be applied to any area of education, including classroom management. When students are the center of the class they learn to monitor themselves for appropriate behavior and learn that any action they take, whether positive or negative, has consequences; an important social skill. The role of the teacher is to guide students in establishing classroom rules of conduct, to model appropriate behavior and to assess student self-monitoring.

In a student centered classroom, active learning and teaching to the whole student also becomes important. It is necessary to understand that all students have different learning styles and teaching to each of those styles assures that all students are given the opportunity to learn and that the whole student is addressed. A student-centered classroom also appeals to student's interests and works to make meaningful connections to their lives, which fosters intrinsic motivation and curiosity. It is the teacher's role to plan age appropriate, meaningful and varied lessons and activities to address all styles of learning: aural, visual, kinesthetic and reading/writing.

An essential element in the student-centered classroom is a safe, welcoming and comfortable environment for all students. This means that the classroom becomes a community in which all students are equal members. In the diverse classroom, it is paramount to be aware of and receptive to cultural similarities and differences in order to be inclusive of all students. The role of the teacher is to create a community within the classroom that is welcoming, inclusive and safe through modeling of appropriate behavior and respecting and valuing individual students similarities and differences.

Creating a community based, student-centered classroom is vital for an education that produces passionate, curious and motivated students who become life-long learners. As an educator, creating this kind of classroom environment will provide students with valuable skills that allow them to be successful in our increasingly diverse and ever smaller world.

Philosophy of Education  
Elizabeth Harsma  
April 2010

I believe that education should serve as a launching point for life-long learning. Education should inspire passion and motivation. Education should provide tools that allow students to create and engage in their own learning in the classroom and in a diverse and complex world. Enjoyment, not necessarily entertainment, of learning is wonderful by-product. With the right skills training, students feel and are successful in their learning. Then they take responsibility and pleasure in their own learning.

The student-centered classroom with an open, welcoming and inclusive atmosphere is essential to teaching in a diverse world. Creating community and making meaningful connections in learning to students' lives fosters intrinsic motivation and curiosity, necessary for life-long learning.

It is my role as an educator to create this environment; welcoming, community-based, student-centered and meaningful. For me this is education. An education that produces and inspires passionate, curious and motivated students equipped with skills to be successful in an ever smaller and diverse world.