



## Philosophy of Education

I believe that all children can learn and each child learns in their own unique way. The environment that best nurtures this learning provides concrete, hands-on experiences so the learner can construct their own understandings. In addition, discourse (verbal descriptions) and reflection are integral components to enhance the learning process. Seymour Papert said, “Children learn by doing and by thinking about what they do.” These interactive, manipulative explorations take place in large groups and small groups which can be peer-led or teacher-led. Instructional variety and students actively participating are the key elements. Problem solving methodology in the classroom allows students to confront situations in which they do not immediately know the answer. Using problem solving strategies, such as guess and check or working backwards, help students develop life-long thinking skills. This is the focus of a “thinking curriculum” and part of preparing students for real-life situations in the working world they will be entering.

My beliefs about learning are influenced by a number of scholars, among them are Jean Piaget and his theory of cognitive development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages. Other influences include Benjamin Bloom’s theory of cognitive domain: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. A current curriculum theorist who has affected my thinking is Howard Gardner and his theory of Multiple Intelligences (Nine Learning Capacities): verbal, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, environmental, and existentialist. The most recent impact on my philosophy of teaching is *Understanding by Design* by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, who propose an approach to curriculum in which students “uncover” ideas.

Each new teaching experience, interaction with students and colleagues, along with reading scholarly articles, and engaging in research has an impact on my philosophy of teaching. Many researchers and curriculum theorists, such as Gagne, Hunter, Vygotsky, and Maslow, have contributed to what I believe is critically important. However, I focused on a select few, from a historical perspective, Piaget and Bloom, as well as from contemporary theorists, Gardner and Wiggins and McTighe.

Another compelling influence on my teaching is the use of technology such as the Internet, PowerPoint, iMovie, Webquests, Digital Portfolios, etc. These are essential tools to support learning in today's classrooms. I believe that technology can create new circumstances and opportunities for learning that can be both rich and exciting when integrated effectively. There are four major functions of technology in learning: tutoring systems, a means to explore, a tool to create, and a means to communicate. However, of crucial importance, educational technology is not about technology; ultimately, it is about what teachers and students are doing with technology to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

My beliefs and philosophical orientations are exemplified in my teaching style; they influence every instructional decision, consciously or unconsciously. Daily instruction is the theory into practice. For instance, what would a visitor to my mathematics methods classroom observe?

- ☞ Hands on, concrete models, manipulatives (Piaget)
- ☞ Integrating children's literature, writing process
- ☞ Cooperative learning groups (Gardner)
- ☞ Authentic assessment
- ☞ Technology supporting the learning
- ☞ Student centered environment (Gardner)
- ☞ Learning community (Piaget)
- ☞ Problem solving/inquiry based methodology (Bloom)
- ☞ Higher order thinking (Bloom, Wiggins & McTighe)
- ☞ Knowledge of NCTM/PDE Standards
- ☞ Affective Domain—a positive feeling tone (Glasser)
- ☞ Reflection on engaging experiences
- ☞ Instructional variety—small/large group, individual (Gardner)
- ☞ Mathematical discourse
- ☞ Continuous questioning
- ☞ Active listening
- ☞ Writing process

In a thumbnail sketch, this is my approach to teaching in K-12 classrooms, undergraduate and graduate students, and my own peer group, in-service teachers and professors. In my role as an education professor, guiding beginning professionals in constructing their philosophy of education is the next step.



*Love of the classroom is not an art that teachers acquire—it is their life.*