



*“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”*

– John Dewey

Education is not something that should be taken for granted as far as I am concerned. Looking at what our country has come from really makes me appreciate what we have today. Regardless of the detriments we believe our system has, it still is wonderful to know that every single child in our country has the right to a free education. Having done a lot of research on controversial educational issues, historically significant philosophers, and the history of how our educational system was developed from scratch in our country, I have found that my philosophy has a lack of turgidity to it. With each new bit of knowledge I glean, it is evident that thoughts and opinions change; it is important to take what I think is in the best interest of my students and implement it.

I am the kind of person who always feels like they need to be doing something. Throughout my time as a high school and college student I have kept myself very busy through athletics, student government, leadership in clubs and organizations, and, of course, school work. As an individual who is frequently busy and on the move, I have found that I am a very kinesthetic learner. I have a difficult time sitting at my desk in a classroom without moving my legs, hands, playing with my pencil, doodling on the side of the paper, or getting up to walk around the room. Any chances I have to get up and move around I feel exponentially more engaged. It is not by coincidence that is how I find myself teaching. During my time at Upward Bound and as a practicum student at Mt. Blue High School I see a common theme in my teaching: students will almost always have the opportunity and ability to move during my lessons. Math is everywhere, so I believe that any way I can get a student outside, moving, throwing something, or doing something that has an underlying mathematical topic they are getting a better experience than

sitting at their desk for direct instruction. These types of lessons also may spark interest in other math related topics not included in the unit—this type of inquisitive nature should not be dismissed.

Socrates' philosophy on education was that the teacher's role was to draw the knowledge of out the student. Furthermore, students innately have the knowledge and questions within them, but just need a facilitator to bring them out. His belief that a teacher's educational freedom to think, question, and teach coincides nicely with my philosophy: students should have the opportunity to research a form a mathematics that interests and is relevant to them, and we as teachers should aid this expedition. Many times students take an interest to a form of mathematics not found in the Common Core and never have the opportunity to dig deeper into it in the classroom. When I teach, students will be exposed to many different types of mathematics that is not necessarily from their textbook. I have found that students get very excited to learn about stuff that interests them, especially when they know they will not get graded on it.

Having looked back on my background statement it appears not much has changed. The background statement captures more of my story rather than my philosophy. However, I have been considering the importance of student self-discovery and expeditionary learning and how beneficial that can be. In my background statement the points I made generally revolved around what I will teach them and how I will teach them with no regard to if they have the drive to learn on their own. After reading Dan Meyer's work he presents fantastic ideas that elicit problem solving behavior from the students and get them asking the questions that the teacher generally would. This makes for a very powerful lesson that essentially students take the lead on—the teacher ends up being a guide.

Ever since my junior year of high school I have been set of being a math teacher. Following two years of Accelerated Math I & II with the same teacher, I took Honors Pre-Calculus and had one of the best years of my life as far as mathematics is concerned. The teacher was younger, a UMF grad, and made work more project based unlike my two years previous. I felt like I was able to demonstrate my knowledge far better and I really took a liking to the subject. I felt more comfortable asking for help, and I really got to know this teacher closely. She was able to build rapport with each and every one of her students and carry out class with great teaching methods, examples, interactive activities, and humor to keep us interested. My experience only got better as I progressed into A.P. Calculus and A.P. Statistics as a senior. I challenged myself and got exceptional grades in both classes. In addition the math teachers that I had in these three classes, and several others, ultimately formed me into what my foundation for philosophy on.

At Erskine Academy I had a wonderful high school experience. I enjoyed a majority of my classes and made fantastic connections with teachers who I still communicate with today. What amazed me the most during my time at Erskine was how kind, caring, and relatable the teachers were. A majority of my teachers made classes enjoyable, and I saw that they were having fun. This was the main reason I decided to become a teacher. I envisioned myself being able to teach classes comfortably in front of students and have a great time. My parents always told me from a very young age that I need to find a job that I enjoyed doing so it didn't seem like work—education was precisely that. After having the opportunity to teach math at Upward Bound I have further cemented my passion for teaching. Being in front of students feels natural and I feel like I have the ability to help them learn in a way that I did that was so enjoyable. Unfortunately many students have a predisposed disliking to mathematics by the time they reach high school, so I will take that upon myself to change.

Mathematics is beautiful, and I will lead my students to feel the same way I do. Unfortunately too many students had bad experiences as they went through the educational system and end up disliking mathematics. Having taken four years of college math classes I have much more appreciation for math than I ever have, and I want to share that appreciation with my students. Being exposed to professors that have an unbelievable depth and wealth of knowledge widened my perspective of math. Many of my professors, unlike the stereotypical majority, had wonderful pedagogy that enhanced my thinking of the concepts and mathematics as a whole. They did a variety of things to make me excel in math, and one of those things was helping to motivate me in wanting to be better.

Motivating students can be a tricky task if it is to be done the right way. Ideally, students will understand the value of education and take full advantage of it; however, that is not always the case. Another option is to present variety to students in hopes that they find something that they are interested in. We expect that students will find something that relates to their life or something that interests them and they will take off running with it. Unfortunately, some students struggle with the motivation component. While they may not do their work or get involved in the material for the grade, I would at the very least like to have them do it because they want to, and because it is what I expect of them. As a teacher, I want to have high expectations for every student and push them to learn as much as possible. It is a necessity to get to know students personally and understand who they are. Whether this is through an interest inventory, one-on-one conversations, or attending an event that they are participating in, any way to get to know the student will ultimately help fuel their motivation in the class.

Every teacher's classroom looks different, and has a different feel to it. While I will not try to recreate the experience I had as a high school student, I will certainly take key components that made

me successful and incorporate them into my classroom. My philosophy on classroom organization is that the class should look fun, inviting, and safe. The desks might be arranged in a particular way one class and different the next depending on what we are learning and how collaborative or active the students need to be. I think it is very important to have vast array of materials on the walls (particularly mathematics based) to show students that there are so many ways to get interested in math. I want to make sure my room stays clean and organized as far as resources, and that there are places for students to drop of any papers that they need to hand into me. Keeping an organized room will hopefully provoke students to do the same with their belongings.

My philosophy on teaching content area is simple—I want there to be flexibility with what I'm teaching. If a student discovers something math related that they want to dive deeper into, I would like to be able to help them succeed in researching that. As far as a textbook for teaching content is concerned, I don't always believe it is appropriate to stick to the order of the book. If something feels like it should be taught earlier or later I will make the adjustment for the bettering of the unit.

Assessment in the classroom is a topic that is done extremely differently by many teachers. I believe in having frequent formative assessment, project based evaluations of students, and minimal graded tests. Especially now that we are moving more towards proficiency based learning in our schools, it will be important to get as many formative assessments about the students' knowledge as possible. This may come in the form of an entrance/exit ticket, quick writes, quick draws, etc... The more information I can get about my students' level the better I can adapt to their needs. Having an entrance ticket nearly every class will also force the students to recall information they have learned in previous classes. It allows them to frequently be exposed to material they might have otherwise forgotten.

Classroom climate is arguably one of the most important things in the classroom. If a student doesn't feel comfortable in the class there is a pretty good chance they will not learn as much as they should. My goal is to have a 100% positive 100% of the time attitude in my class. Hopefully it might carry into the rest of the school if students buy into it. I am one to have a lot of fun in the classroom and goof around while still learning, because that is what made my experience so successful and meaningful. I often find that I go on tangents and talk about things that are unrelated to the content—but are still mathematics based. This type of exposure to topics outside of the textbook can be beneficial to students' learning if used appropriately.

The learning focus should be on the student. I will not be a lecturer, although certainly I will provide direct instruction when it is appropriate. Activities are something that are too often underused in mathematics classrooms. If there is any sort of activity that can be done that will get students out of the textbook or out of their seats the better my lessons will be received. With the direction that proficiency-based learning is headed, it will be even more important to be aware of all my students' levels so I can accommodate them when needed. Stratification regarding current learning levels in the classroom is typical and should be dealt with according to what the student is in the most need of. Some students may be ready for independent expeditionary learning and unguided inquiry, while others may still need direct instruction to completely grasp a specific topic.

My philosophy on technology integration is that is very important in this day and age with our students. However, I do believe that it can be forced at times, and too often the beauty of mathematics can be pushed to the side for a calculator or online cheat. There is a lot of value to the use of animations, digital graphics, videos, and online explorations that make learning concepts more

attainable. Due to the amount of technology that most of our students come in contact with on an everyday basis, depriving that from them would be to take away a tool that they feel comfortable using. While it can be a distraction at times, being able to harness its capability has high rewards that can outweigh the risks.

In the classroom my teacher and leadership style revolves around the fact that I am there to assist the students learn to the best of their ability. I do not see myself as an authoritative figure in the classroom. While many teachers prefer a prefix to their name such as Mr., Mrs., or Miss., I prefer my first name because I believe it reduces that gap between teacher and learner and builds more trust. With differentiated instruction and varied lesson plans such as expeditionary learning and direct instruction, I see myself as a guide to help students reach their full mathematical potential and most importantly feel confident in their work. As a teacher I am going to expect a lot out of my students but also be there to assist them when they need it. I view communication as one of the most important skills a student can develop. If they are having difficulty in class being able to communicate effectively will make their experience far better. This goes back to having an environment that is conducive to student interaction, participation, and questioning. Hosting that type of atmosphere in the classroom depends on what type of philosophy each teacher has. Many teachers have different methods they implement in their classroom, which directly relate to either one of or a mixture of the four educational philosophies.

There are four different educational philosophies that are broken down into eight more in depth understandings. The two overarching philosophies that I relate the most to are pragmatism and realism. When it comes to the focus of the learning I wholeheartedly stand by the idea that the student comes first. The pragmatist believes meaning is derived from experience, and teachers model experimental knowledge. Teamwork is very important for the pragmatist and learning by doing and interacting is



crucial. Moreover, I believe that the teacher is not necessarily the authority figure in the classroom, that the learners' needs come first, and that the learning of the whole child including their emotional quotient rather than the intelligence quotient is important. Having worked at Upward Bound, it has become much more important for me to focus on the students' feelings rather than driving content into their heads. In the words of my peer, Brittany Courtot, "Students are not just receptacles of knowledge, apparently they have feelings too." This is something that should be common sense, although all too often teachers get caught up in the idea that the learning comes first. However, it is important to understand that there could be an underlying issue that is keeping the student from learning that we have no idea about. This all revolves around the central idea that if I can keep a safe classroom where students will be willing to take risks they will be more open and willing to learn. The one component I am not categorized under for the pragmatist is the concept that nothing is solidified—meanings, truths, and values are always changing. This is where I reside with the realist philosophy that rationality, observation, proof, and the scientific method are important. As far as mathematics is concerned, this plays a major role.

The two sub philosophies that I side with are progressivism and humanism—both are student centered rather than teacher centered. Progressivism suggests that teachers should give students freedoms. Furthermore, it suggests that we should consider how to teach over what to teach, and that taking a hands on approach and 'doing' in the classroom is important. Progressivism hones in on the idea that discovery is the most effective method of learning. Humanism focuses on the multiple intelligences and that everyone learns differently. Individual growth is very important in this philosophy and there is a strong relationship between the student and the teacher to promote deeper learning. Certainly this philosophy is very important in teaching, so I side with this one as well. Having a strong relationship with students makes them more driven which, again, builds trust. These two philosophies

fit nicely into the model of proficiency based learning which we seem to be gravitating towards as an educational system.

Proficiency-based learning, if implemented perfectly, can be an educational utopia. If an atmosphere can be created where students are not solely focused on receiving a good grade they will have other intrinsic motivation to want to learn. In the world of proficiency-based learning, it is possible to create a place where students want to learn and are not focused on the amount of time they are in school. Rather, they are successful in completing the standards necessary to progress onto new material. With our state and nation slowly moving towards proficiency-based learning, it is a good idea to become familiar and comfortable with it. This model fits nicely into the idea of educational freedom that Socrates based his philosophy. The learning comes first and it is the job of the teacher to draw the knowledge out of the students—this meshes nicely with proficiency-based learning.

When I become a teacher I want to be in a school district that allows freedom with that I teach and how I teach. I do not want to be in a district that has predetermined worksheets, tests, and assessments to provide to the students. As a creative educator, I enjoy spending time making up unique formative assessments and assignments that I feel best fit the group of students I am teaching. Individualized education is such a crucial component of this day and age and to not be able to make class materials individualized for students would be to deprive them of a chance to succeed. After working at Upward Bound, I appreciate the importance of creativity in the classroom after having to make up my own materials and lessons for every class.

Whichever school district and school I become a part of I will put the entirety of my time and effort into it. I believe that making personal connections with students is incredibly important so any

chance I have to attend athletic events, plays, concerts, etc... will be at the top of my priority. This type of commitment and trust building between teacher and student truly makes a positive impact on how they perform in class. I will also put my time into the betterment of the mathematics program all the way up through the system. If there is a common theme of misconceptions about specific mathematical topics as students come up through the system it is the job of teachers to collaborate and find a fix. Collaboration is imperative in furthering students' mathematical knowledge. Therefore, teachers of all grade levels should work together to find out what is in the best interest of the students.

As a teacher, I believe that it will be my duty to help students succeed. Some will need more guidance than others; however, I am confident that with the way I treat students and make them feel welcome in my class they will be successful in whatever they choose to do. In my four years at the University of Maine at Farmington I know my philosophy on education has changed drastically. Learning about different learning models and others' philosophies has broadened mine. The concept of a philosophy should be free flowing as well as able and open to change. As new research comes out for students and how to better educate them, it is necessary to adapt to what is best for them. Many teachers who have been in the business for years do not change their teaching strategies or methods from year to year, yet students can change on the drop of a dime in a month. I will continue to mold my philosophy throughout the entirety of my career in hopes to make a difference for my students.