

Philosophy of Education

From a small seed, a mighty trunk may grow. – Aeschylus, Greek playwright

As a theatre educator, I believe it is my duty to help cultivate the small seeds of interest, experiences, or ideas that may be planted in the souls of my students. My idea of an effective teacher is one who is able to take a learner-centered, social constructivist approach that engages the student and the community in the growth of the child. A good teacher also recognizes the need for imparting the most relevant knowledge to students.

To truly unlock students' potential, it is my belief that a teacher must partner with them based on diverse needs and learning styles to discover answers or inspire creativity, giving them the essential natural element of air to cycle through their beings. The field of theatre lends itself to an endless array of challenging circumstances or opportunities for releasing creativity that engage students on a social, emotional, intellectual and physical level, whether it be fostering an environment of teamwork and respect for individual differences or writing/performing an original monologue. Along the way, I believe the teacher should regularly use inquiry as a method for student-centered learning and give students a chance to succeed by providing multiple opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and skills. Students can also be engaged in the assessment of their own work so that the teacher is no longer the only source of a student's growth.

In addition to air, it is also my duty to provide the natural element of water, or love and encouragement to keep students motivated. A teacher should love students for who they are and provide the positive feedback that developing beings need. Love and encouragement can transform an indifferent student into a passionate participant. My experience working with middle and high school students in the classroom has demonstrated the impact of this kind of supportive learning. This also means engaging parents and the community in a student's education. Each drop of love and appreciation for students, whether from caretakers or a teacher, can lead to more engaged participants and help diminish undesirable behaviors in the classroom.

While recognizing diversity in all its forms and providing motivation are necessary to empower students, part of a teacher's role is to expose students to as much sun as is needed for the seeds in them to take root. It still remains my duty to use my knowledge, intuition and life experience to guide students towards success in the world, while using state standards as a framework for developing curriculum. Providing students with life skills and encouraging active citizenship in the community can instill a sense of social responsibility in students. One 21st century life skill, technology, can be used as a tool for learning through demonstration, research or production needs. As a lifelong learner, the teacher also requires sun and should regularly develop knowledge and skills through professional development to better serve students.

My perspective of the classroom is that of a garden that has yet to be grown through delicate nurturing of the seeds within my students via air, water, and sun. Along the way, perhaps my classroom can sprout a student's hidden potential, while exercising the curiosity needed to remain engaged in learning. In my classroom, students are fertile ground for cultivating seeds of excitement for theatre and for life.