

My Educational Philosophy

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As a child, people told me I was very smart. I scored high on tests, performed well in school, and it seemed like I was capable of learning anything. As a high school student, I discovered my love for visual arts. As I began to spend time creating and studying art, I was met with much resistance and little understanding from my family. What I wish they could understand, and what I hope to prove to them by becoming a respected and successful art educator, is that the arts are a venture of intelligence and mindfulness. My arts education, along with my education on the whole, has shaped me into a smart, well-rounded, culturally literate individual, which I believe is the responsibility of the educational system.

I believe education is a human right. Like access to clean water, shelter, and safety, we all have a right to be educated by a government-supported system. I believe that education at the elementary and secondary levels should be concerned with fairness and equality, to ensure that all children have the same educational opportunity. For this reason, I support some initiatives of standardization at local and national levels. I also view education as a path to self-discovery. Through study, we all have the chance to explore our individual strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, even our greatest dreams and fears.

Schools should support their students in every way that is within their control. For one thing, school should feel safe. A child should not need to be concerned with their safety while at school as it will distract them from taking full advantage of the learning

opportunities in front of them. I believe that the responsibility to create a safe school environment falls on the shoulders of the school. That may require finding additional resources for security staff, or implementing unique security and protection rules and protocol. While students may not understand it, I believe they will certainly benefit from it. Schools should also respect and support the individuality of their students. Students should have opportunities to pursue their unique interests and abilities while being supported by their teachers and peers. Schools should also contribute to shaping children into responsible, cooperative, culturally literate citizens of the world. Students should have respect for other people and understand and tolerate their varied backgrounds and histories.

I draw many of my own ideas about educational philosophy from one of my favorite art philosophers and educators, Elliot Eisner. He believes the inclusion of the arts (visual arts, dance, and music) in education is necessary to allow children to establish critical thinking skills and support the development of their young minds. Furthermore, he believes that the aim of education should be to prepare individuals to function as artists in whatever field they happen to work in, meaning that the school should function as a studio where beautiful things are made in all classrooms and subjects of study by employing artistic processes and habits of thinking. I have found that many of Eisner's ideas about the purpose of education and the necessity of incorporating the arts align closely with my own educational beliefs and experiences. In addition to the inclusion of the arts, I also believe that schools should be responsible for supporting a 100% literacy rate. Reading and writing are so vital to human development

within today's society. Schools that allow students to skate by, while non-mastery of reading is an issue that is avoided, should be held accountable. In addition to reading and the arts, I believe schools have a responsibility to teach natural sciences. Students gain so much perspective on the world around them and how things work by pursuing coursework in biology, chemistry, environmental sciences, and other scientific areas.

Educational philosopher John Dewey believed that students thrive in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with the curriculum. Meaning, teachers should not exercise indiscriminate authority in the classroom; rather students should be encouraged to question and contribute ideas. John Dewey believed that all students should have the opportunity to take part in their own learning. His view of teaching and learning was as such: "the teacher becomes a partner in the learning process, guiding students to independently discover meaning within the subject area" (Dewey, 1916). I agree with Dewey's assertion here, and also believe that it is the responsibility of the teacher to create a classroom environment that supports thoughtful inquiry and conversation. Another educator who agreed with me on this point was the revered art philosopher Elliot Eisner. Eisner (1976) stated:

I believe teaching in classrooms is ideographic in character, that is, because I believe the features of classroom life are not likely to be explained or controlled by behavioral laws. I conceive the major contribution of evaluation to be a heightened awareness of the qualities of that life so that teachers and students can become more intelligent within it. (p. 140)

I would like my classroom to feel like a studio filled with great thinkers where ideas are freely exchanged and unflinchingly carried into a creational stage.

As someone who is looking to work as an art educator, I am obviously concerned with the wavering lack of commitment to art education of many schools and districts over the years. I share concern with Eisner (2004) that, to our detriment, “we are creating an industrial culture in our schools, one whose values are brittle and whose conception of what’s important narrow...achievement has triumphed over inquiry” (p. 3). Students are pushed to become masters of subject matter in order to pass a test, rather than to think innovatively. That is why I chose to become an educator of art, rather than some other discipline – I think it is important to develop students as thoughtful and inquisitive lifelong learners by building them up as artists. As Eisner (1974) mentions in his writings on curriculum, “no one operating in a complex social structure can be effective in that culture by merely attempting to assimilate facts” (p. 42).

As someone who plans to teach in public schools, I know that I will be challenged at times by the state of education on the whole at the public level. I believe that the first thing that the American educational system needs to be concerned with is providing equal and fair access to educational resources for all students. I am in favor of funding education with tax payer monies and therefore holding teachers accountable to national and state standards of success.

I am thrilled to begin my career as an educator and will use the insights of philosophers like John Dewey and Elliot Eisner to challenge me to a very high standard of teaching. I look forward to fostering an environment where autonomous, confident, thoughtful students actively participate in a self-motivated pursuit of learning, with me as

their guide. I hope to work for a school and administration that recognizes its responsibilities to its students, parents, and community to provide equal and fair access to education and encourage all students along their educational paths.

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