

Learning Through Positive Experiences: An Educational Philosophy in Practice

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Abstract

Education should impact both students and society for the better. Education should last a lifetime and individuals should look back on their experience within the education system as beneficial. In my own instructional practices, I will encourage teamwork and collaboration, as well as creative problem solving for students to develop a greater sense of responsibility and self-efficacy.



As school counselors and educators, we all have an idea of what our personal philosophy is on schools and learning. In this paper I am going to discuss my personal philosophy of schools and learning, as well as the implications this has for educational practices. The impact schools should have on learning, individuals, and society will be covered. And to illustrate this, a theory that I believe highlights my personal philosophy and the purpose of education will be discussed. Student should walk away from their education experiences feeling a great sense of pride and a degree of self-confidence that is higher than when they began their education journey. Students should have a sense of self-efficacy developed and be well prepared to handle life on their own. This is all because of the innate desire for individuals to strive, achieve and contribute to society.

Philosophy of Schools & Learning

My personal philosophy of schools and learning agrees well with John Dewey's philosophy of education. In Dewey's philosophy he explains how education in the social context allows for the greatest impact on students. When it comes to today's everchanging political, social, and technological environments it is evident that social context has a great impact on individuals. (Ornstein et al., 2017). Students are directly influenced by culture and the socialization they get from their peers. Individuals learn by example, and this is portrayed in social scenarios all the time. Students get to learn social queues, conversational skills, and new information in social exchanges. The "why" of education lies within the primary need of individuals. All individuals desire to be in community and feel as though they are contributing and that is exactly what school offers. The purpose of school is to give individuals the chance to thrive by sharpening their intuitive skills in social scenarios, elevate their critical thinking skills, and challenge them to push their capacity level. The ultimate outcome for schools and learning should be to develop human beings that are able to function both independently and within a

team. Ensuring that individuals in the education system are learning how to be contributing members in society and people that can problem solve and connect with others is of the utmost importance. These skills and qualities are cultivated in the education setting. These social contexts allow for growth in individuals mentally, emotionally, cognitively, socially, and even spiritually.

Instructional Practice

The “how” of education is just as important as the “why”. To get to the point of achieving students becoming well-rounded individuals, there must be a method that helps to get people there. Instructing students on how to problem solve and encouraging “problematic situations” to test the student’s ability to handle difficulty is one method to develop grit. (Ornstein et al., 2017). Teaching in a way that encourages students to rely on their own abilities and be declarative in their opinions and thoughts will foster self-efficacy within the students. Learners come to know and understand truth by being learners of other people and their environments. What sparks learning to occur is curiosity and a divine desire to understand the purpose of all things. In my counseling practice I intend to implement the use of learning through experience. All individuals learn by their life experiences and those events shape their mindset, self-esteem, and work ethic. Experience functions by providing the individual with motivation to learn from the world around them. (Illeris, 2018). In my future practice the use of collaborative instructional practices is crucial in developing individuals’ ability to work well within a team. To meet the diverse needs of students, I find it is critical to differentiate how materials are presented and how individuals are expected to present their knowledge and progress. Making sure that students are sharpening their personal strengths in all different types of activities and are given opportunities to be creative with how they operate. Utilizing collaboration and differentiating materials to elevate

students' strengths are the ways in which I will promote academic development. As instructional practices within classrooms are moving towards more social-emotional learning, I think that incorporating that material into my individual sessions with students could be quite helpful. As a school counselor, I think it would be mutually beneficial for me to collaborate directly with the teachers on the social-emotional learning curriculum. This way, there is a direct relation to the materials being taught across the school and that information can come from reliable sources. In my practice, I hope to accomplish developing student's sense of self and a belief in their abilities, individuals that are capable of being flexible in various scenarios, and students that are self-sufficient.

Teacher-Learner Relationships

The teacher-student relationship is the foundation by which all these previously stated ideals can be accomplished. Without a solid and trustworthy foundation, any progress can easily fall apart. The teacher-student relationship should have open communication, offer perspective of both parties, and be open to critique. A teacher-student relationship that gives permission for honesty, advocacy and accountability will lead to flourishing. Challenging students and being open to critique should be a natural aspect of the teacher-student relationship. This allows for a growth mindset in both the teacher and the student and allows opportunities for problem solving, question asking, and critical thinking all of which are needed to accomplish set goals. Allowing for redemption as students will fail, is essential in nurturing the self-efficacy of individuals.

(Graham, 2009). I believe that teachers and counselors should work collaboratively with the goal in mind of cultivating academic, career, and social-emotional growth. Both teachers and counselors' roles within the education system is to promote the health and well-being of the student, so working as a team to achieve this will be both effective and conducive the overall

flourishing of the school environment. Ultimately, the goal is to create a dynamic of open communication amongst the teacher and student so that educational practices can have the greatest impact possible. Communication is key if there is to be any progress made with the individual at all. Ensuring that as the educator you are approaching the student with grace and are patient in waiting for the student to trust you and communicate their needs to you. Patience with any individual is important and it is especially necessary when working with children so that they feel as though their thoughts and opinions are valued and considered by the educator.

Diversity

When it comes to diversity, all school counselors are required to treat students with equity and fairness. Some factors of diversity that must be considered by the teacher are the ones that impact their worldview and culture. When it comes to instruction, teachers must be aware of and sensitive to various cultural norms and traditions that are held by the students within their classroom. Teachers can both appreciate and recognize these cultures within the classroom and incorporate these details into their instruction. I believe that are various strategies that can work to help encourage equity and inclusion within the classroom. One of the ways in which teachers can promote equity and inclusion is to celebrate the cultures of the students in their educational environment, while also carefully educating others on those cultures. The more that cultures are identified, praised, and understood the greater the level of equity and overall respect will be a direct result. I think that are children's unique attributes and strengths are both recognized and appreciated, this will foster student's level of self-efficacy. As their self-esteem grows from a positive educational environment, it will be more realistic for teachers to then begin promoting college and career readiness and eventual success. I believe these things come as a natural result of a healthy, positive, and nurturing educational environment that is also equally challenging.

Finding a balance between challenging the student to strive in their academics while also knowing the child's boundaries in their academics is very important. Working collaboratively with the child to game plan the best ways for them to be successful both allows them to take personal ownership of their actions while also being held accountable by the educator.

Fostering a Positive Educational Environment

There are many factors that play into the creation of a positive and supporting educational environment for students. As an individual that is entering into a school counseling career, I believe that my calling as a Christian has a large impact on this choice. I have always felt called to help others and the Holy Spirit has clearly called me to the education system. Since working closely with elementary aged students, especially seeing the lasting effects of the pandemic on them, I know that my calling within the education system is to support children's emotional, mental, and spiritual health. Caring deeply about these things and having a healthy level of concern for the well-being of others, is something that will help to foster a supportive educational environment. Genuine care for other people is something that leads to a positive impact on those individuals. In a study done on dialogue used within a classroom, studies showed that a teacher's word choice directly impacts student outcomes. (Howe et al., 2019). This goes to show that educators can either speak life into students or tear them down. When it comes to the topic of classroom management philosophy, this is something I believe needs to be fueled by building positive relationships with students. I think that to maintain order in the classroom, there must be a foundation of respect and trust. These core values are the pillars that uphold classroom decorum and I believe that mutual respect and trust is built from genuine care from the educator that shows concern for the student and has their best interest in mind. My philosophy on content/subject-areas is that as you get to know your students more personally, you can see what

they are passionate about, the ways in which they learn best, and the cultural values they hold close. As these things are revealed, I believe it is important for educators to incorporate all these attributes into content and materials that are presented in the educational environment. The idea of elevating each student's strengths I think especially comes into play when strategizing how to do assessments. I think that allowing for a differentiation of assessment when it comes to measuring student's knowledge is crucial because each student learns, retains, and displays knowledge differently. So, I believe having various avenues for students to show their level of comprehension on subjects is necessary. I think a current critical issue within the educational environment is that of behavior management. I think that as I stated before when a classroom environment is directly impacted by a positive and trusting teacher-student relationship, there is a ton of potential for growth. I also believe that the parent's role and relationship with the teacher is a tool that can be utilized to add to the positive educational environment. I think that educators and parents have the same goal in mind, to help instruct the individual and hopefully give them the necessary tools to have future success. This shared belief and core value allows for the teacher and the parents to be on the same page and this is a good jumping off point for the collaborative relationship to progress. Having an impact in both the classroom and at home will give the student that much more of a boost in the right direction so that they can best be set up for future success in their academic careers.

Conclusion

The impact schools should have on students must be both positive and long lasting. Students should feel a sense of accomplishment in their academics, social lives, and personal lives. The desired outcome for educators and teachers should be that they worked hard to help shape their students into better versions of themselves. As educators it is important to genuinely

care about your students' development in all aspects of their lives and be the role model in their life that aided them in achieving their goals. I think that at the end of a student's academic career they should feel a greater sense of pride and self-confidence. Individuals learn through experience, and I believe that educators should strive to make that experience the best it can be.

References

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