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Teaching Philosophy

Inherent in diverse experiences are the seeds for personal and academic growth. These seeds are the foundation for genuine education. I espouse Dewey's philosophical beliefs that whereas genuine education is conducted through experience, not all experiences are genuinely educative. Teachers must provide meaningful experiences that generate learner interest which ultimately results in student ownership of learned knowledge. I believe that once students accept responsibility for their education, they are more apt to retain information and excel in the academics.

I also embrace cooperative learning that is based on teacher and student partnerships (Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2001). I believe cooperative problem solving through cooperative education enhances higher-level thinking skills. Cooperative learning happens in a group where specific knowledge and perception construction form in reference to a certain concept. Essential to this social learning are two ideas: Lev Semenovich Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, where students' cognitive processes are enhanced if others provide them with experiences and activities that challenge their problem-solving skills, and mediated learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999), which uses probing reflection questions and incremental addition of information to help students to progress to a more sophisticated understanding of the content.

Finally, I am a firm believer of Jerome Bruner's narrative-centered cognitive-interactionist theory that states that our behaviors stem from our past experiences and our culture. We are neutral-interactive beings who are molded through our culture and our society. Our perceptions, experiences, analyzations, and appropriate responses are simultaneous, not linear. Rather than learning from one experience and moving on to the next without consideration of the previous experience, we are constantly learning, reflecting, and reshaping our ideas, so that our epistemological and philosophical constructs evolves and revolves in a sphere-like fashion.

In my classroom, I attempt to infuse my teaching philosophy through my actions and curriculum. For example, to incorporate Dewey, I provide essential basic information that covers each objective and then engage students in exercises helping them to extrapolate personal meaning from this knowledge. To integrate cooperative learning, students are often paired or placed in groups for in-class assignments or presentations. Often, I will pair higher and lower performing students together so that the situation is ripe for mediated learning. Careful consideration of Bruner's cognitive-interactionist theory has led me to include reflection as part of our classroom assignment. Ten to fifteen minutes prior to the end of class, students will reflect on the day's topic and journal to an assigned question. These questions typically focus on the material

covered, its relevance to their lives, and how it is related to the larger picture within art education.

In addition to the above, I utilize a combination of lectures, multi-media presentations, group and individual presentations, and technology to address various learning styles. I believe that it is also important for my students to hear from different voices, therefore, I include local and out-of-state guest speakers, faculty members, and multiple articles with different authors in my curriculum.