Courtney’s Personal Philosophy Statement

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Education has many different aspects that allow teachers to be creative in their style of teaching based on a variety of theories developed throughout history. Of all theory alignments I’ve found I identify with mainly Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, social reconstructionism, and progressivism. In this paper I will be outlining the pedagogies I hope to achieve in my teaching career and the things I want to do for my students to be a positive influence in their lives. I will use these theories to outline my ideas that as long as a student’s basic needs are fulfilled along with if they feel safe and included in the classroom learning can be a positive and fun experience.

My first pedagogical belief is that learning happens when students needs are fulfilled, which is best described by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. If a student has their needs filled then learning can be an enthusiastic and positive experience, meaning that if a student is not worrying or bothered by their basic needs they can focus on their learning experience. In Maslow’s words, “The most fortunate are those who have a wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder and even ecstasy” ("quote by Abraham H. Maslow," n.d.). Which means that the basic needs of life can be enjoyed to the utmost when they are provided, and in my interpretation of this it also means that when basic needs are enjoyed it also frees one to enjoy every part of life. To achieve this theory in my future classroom I want to have healthy snacks on hand or feminine products if I have an older class. I also want to allow things like bathroom breaks without students having to ask every time depending on the grade level. Being able to provide an environment that is both stable and organized is also another point on the hierarchy that will be achieved by the external layout of the classroom and providing daily schedules to the class. Creating a safe space for all the students and a place they can feel loved is also very important for me because I believe all students need these things to fully participate in their learning fulfilling the second and third levels of Maslow’s hierarchy. As I fulfill the different levels of the hierarchy, I believe the rest of the levels come naturally to achieve the top level where the student can reach their full potential. When students know they can make mistakes and be who they want to be without fear they are more willing to participate in their learning and take away positives from the day.

This carries into my second pedagogy; learning happens when students feel safe and included, which aligns with the idea of social reconstructionism. I want all students to feel a sense of belonging and safety within my classroom that values the differences that every student brings to the rest of the class. Peaceful coexistence with each other is important if the class is going to be a positive place that encourages learning. Inclusion also means including every student whether they have an exceptionality, are from a different culture, or have sexual and gender identity differences. This aligns with social reconstructionism that aims to change society into a place that has a social conscious which valuing equity and inclusion. This begins with the school system and the youngest of our society who need to be taught these values as well as how to appreciate differences. It is my goal that by the end of their year with me students feel comfortable standing up for each other and have developed their moral compass to see the value in differences. In Paolo Freire’s book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” he writes, “Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only true words, with which men and women transform the world” (Freire, 2018, p. 89). To achieve this belief, I want to begin every year with lessons that celebrate equity and diversity within the classroom to firmly ingrain the idea within my students that everyone has something they can contribute to make the world a better place. I want my students to leave my class feeling like they can change society for the better no matter how small and that everyone’s differences are needed to succeed in this. I also want to enact two lists, one that pushes towards class goals for the month and another list of class rules. Both created with the help of the whole class that enforces these ideas that everyone should be treated equally and with respect. Having a class goal each month ensures this because even if the students struggle with a concept one month every month is a new opportunity to do better and recognize what the class as a whole wants to do better. With this idea I also support the idea that if the whole class participates in creating some class rules they are more likely to feel personally responsible for them and collectively push towards the goals they want to achieve together. Always striving towards a more inclusive and equal classroom also helps to create an environment where student can just enjoy themselves and have fun without worrying about discrimination.

The final pedagogy I feel connected to is the idea that learning happens when students are having fun and can explore the world around them, which aligns with the theory of progressivism. For me the theory of progressivism is deeply entwined with the Indigenous worldview that values engagement with the land complimenting the idea that students learn more when they can interact with the world around them. Students should be able to explore their creativity and curiosity with the option to learn what they are interested in. I would optimally integrate this with the curriculum as there are many ways to be flexible with the curriculum and still achieve the big ideas while allowing students curiosity to flourish. To facilitate the curiosity of my students I will have as many lessons as I can in a variety of different settings with outside in nature being an important asset where students can connect themselves to the world around them. Going outside would also allow me as a teacher to be creative in my lessons to make them more fun and interactive for my students that fosters a love for learning. Finally, to develop the full child socially, mentally, and physically it is important to me that I can differentiate their learning in a variety of fun ways. Having lessons outside also facilitates student needs for differentiation and for the most part allows the lesson to be more fun especially for those who may not learn at their best inside the classroom.

As an educator my goal for the future is to develop students holistically in a way that allows them to fully participate and learn about the world around them. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is the predominant theory that encompasses all other theories in this paper; I believe when a child has their basic needs filled all other theories are achievable and learning can become a positive experience. Having a student’s needs fulfilled allows them to become more tolerant of differences they come across in their learning, so developing a social conscious is a topic that can be received as not putting others above oneself but valuing everyone for their diversity. Students are always growing and propelling forward in our society so it is important to be able to involve the child in their own learning so they can discover what they like and become more enthusiastic about learning as a whole. Once my other theories are achieved having fun and satisfying the students need to explore the world can come naturally which is the beauty of valuing the basic needs and safety of students before focusing on fun. In conclusion, teaching should always be changing as society changes to be a more inclusive, happier place to be protecting students in every way.

# References

Freire, P. (2018). Pedagogy of the oppressed: 50th anniversary edition. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

A quote by Abraham H. Maslow. (n.d.). Goodreads | Meet your next favorite book. https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/5735718-the-most-fortunate-are-those-who-have-a-wonderful-capacity