

Teaching Philosophy Christi Wonderley

Socrates said, “Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.” As a future teacher, this quote is at the heart of my educational philosophy. With a focus on inquiry and creative problem solving, I hope to ignite a love of learning and teach students to take charge of their own learning in the art classroom. To that aim, I will encourage creativity, motivate learners, and provide individual feedback to students.

The teachers who inspired me to teach were those who put the responsibility of learning into my hands, encouraged me to ask questions, look for information, and propose solutions. These educators realized the most important motivation for students is intrinsic rather than extrinsic, and they valued and encouraged creativity. As a student, I put much more effort into projects that allowed me creative freedom, and I valued the grades I received on those projects more. Intrinsic motivators were important to me; motivators such as being allowed to choose topics I found interesting, deciding how to execute a project, and receiving meaningful feedback on my work. The teachers who consistently gave individual feedback earned my highest respect, and I worked harder in their classes. It is this combination of creativity, intrinsic motivation, and personalized feedback that I seek to emulate in my own classroom.

As a future art educator, I will encourage creative problem solving in the classroom. I will design assignments that require students to recognize, describe, and create their own problems, and then use the creative process to solve them. In my classroom, students will apply an understanding of art principles, techniques, and history in a creative manner to meet project guidelines.

Teachers, as reflective practitioners, learn by experiencing and reflecting upon the practice of classroom teaching. Students, likewise, learn from engaging, meaningful experiences and the practice of reflection. Classroom discussions after a project, test, or unit are just as valuable as time spent explaining the material before assessment. Critical, constructive feedback must be a part of learning when students are held responsible for problem solving.

The majority of student work in my classroom will be creative individual projects. Group work and group projects will be used to help students begin exploring ideas, and to incorporate play and experimentation into the lesson. Each student will create a portfolio of work, which will receive a final grade. Because students will create the portfolio over the course of the class, they will have the opportunity to revise and improve their work. This portfolio revision is an important part of the creative problem solving process; receiving and applying critical feedback from peers and instructors.

I intend to be an educator who ignites a flame in as many students as I can reach, rather than seeing young minds as something to be filled with knowledge. I cannot be sure that any single fact will stay with a student forever, but I can do my best to teach them to ask questions, seek knowledge, and create solutions using what they have learned; in this way, I will seek to create lifelong learners.