

Educational Philosophy and Practice

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My core educational beliefs and practices are structured around the following areas.

[Personalized Learning and Inquiry](#)
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[Standards-Based, Authentic Assessment](#)
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Personalized Learning and Inquiry

Each student has dignity, worth, and a desire to learn. Students learn best when they are understood as individuals. When a teacher understands the diverse needs, interests, abilities, and motivation for students, the proper experiences and opportunities can be provided. All students deserve and can achieve success in school, and in life.

Personalization and inquiry can help achieve these goals. Learners should have a role in deciding what they learn, how they learn it, and how they reflect upon and report their learning. Inquiry must play a crucial role in the 21st Century classroom. Teaching students how to question and providing them with the opportunity for directed, shared, and independent investigation into content is essential in our information-rich and technologically driven society. College, career, and civic readiness demands the skills that are taught in an inquiry-driven classroom.

Historical Literacy

The teaching of history provides direction to students. It orients them to where, we, as a human society have been, where we are now, and where we are going in the future. It deepens perspectives about life, core American values, and current events. It is the history teacher's job to open up the world to students in America. Content from the ancient civilizations to contemporary events should be presented. Students also must seek global perspectives on issues.

The ways that students work with primary source material and analyze and interpret historical events are unique to the discipline, are grounded in the Common Core State Standards, and contribute greatly to career, college, and civic readiness for students. Contextualization and sourcing are absolutely essential skills for reading primary sources and for analysis in the 21st century as we constantly filter through a stream of perspectives and opinions. Carefully reading and analyzing sources and comparing them together drives historical analysis and will help students succeed beyond high school. Likewise, the ways that historians write and engage in debates about interpretations are unique to the discipline of history and should be reflected in the way that work is structured in the classroom.

Cooperative Learning

A classroom is a community of learners. We learn together and improve together so that we can successfully achieve independently. Cooperative Learning, when properly structured, has been shown to increase efforts to achieve, social competence, and positive relationships. Group work does not necessarily maximize the potential and productivity of the individuals and is in contrast to Cooperative Learning. Cooperative Learning, as a philosophy of instruction and not just a teaching technique, must be structured around positive interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, social skill instruction, and face-to-face interaction.

Standards-Based, Authentic Assessment

Assessment must be used to contribute to the learning process. It has to occur in real-time, while learning is happening through formative techniques so that summative experiences represent the best work and achievement of students. Standards are the guideposts around which content and skills are taught and assessments are designed. Reporting progress on standards transforms the grading, assessment, and learning process because it focuses on learning as a process of growth. It encourages students to always strive to improve their knowledge and skills.

Authentic assessment is meaningful, relevant, and worthwhile for students. It represents real work in the discipline and it allows for work that can impact the world around us. It demands a real audience so that it can contribute to debates in the field and receive constructive criticism to contribute to growth and understanding.

Technology

Communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity are the essence of 21st century skills and must be at the center of technology use as we modify and redefine teaching and learning in 1:1 classroom environments. The Social Sciences are more important than ever in the lives of 21st Century learners--including both content and skills. We need to empower our learners with the ability to solve very real problems and create a fair and just world in the future. We can set the stage for the next generation's civic leadership through redefining classroom outcomes that provide authentic and engaging tasks that involve high-level academic skills.

Technology use cannot be an isolated event, separate from the daily teaching and learning in the classroom. Technology also cannot be simply used for fun and interesting lessons as a break from regular learning. Technology needs to be ingrained into the day-to-day functioning of the classroom as teachers continue to work with students who have technology infused into their lives more and more deeply. Technology has the potential to bring even more rigor to instruction as students grapple with complex issues and texts and find an immediate need for literacy and critical thinking skills.