

## **The Purpose of Education**

The purpose of education is twofold; to prepare children for adulthood, and to build confident and capable people. A child's education should include the skills needed to be a successful adult, one who can provide for him/herself. Children should also be educated to be participating and well informed members of their community. But perhaps the most important responsibility of education is to build empowered, problem solving, lifelong learners. In this area, I identify with the existentialists, who encourage children to take personal responsibility for their learning. I also identify with Dewey and other Progressivists who see teachers as supports to children who are building their knowledge and education. If we are to prepare children for all that we cannot possibly foresee, we must fill them with confidence, not just content. Children who build their own knowledge and through those experiences develop confidence in themselves will be better prepared to take on the challenges that the future holds. The best education considers the whole child, not just the academic needs. I must consider the social, emotional, physical, and academic needs of each of my students to most effectively reach them. As a teacher, I will keep both the practical and developmental needs of my students as my highest priorities.

## **Learners**

I view learners as incredible individuals whose potential is limitless. They are unique, and bring their own personalities and backgrounds with them. At the same time, each learner is profoundly malleable and adaptable. This means that the

influence that teachers can have is great, and carries with it great responsibility. My role is to be a guide. I must entice my students with engaging lessons, experiences, and environments that keep them curious and involved. I must also be aware of the needs of my students, through constant observation and assessment. I must seek to understand their backgrounds and funds of knowledge. My desire is also to better understand different disabilities so that I might adapt my teaching to fit the needs of my students.

One of the best ways to encourage learning is to be constantly learning myself. I want to share with my students the things I am interested in and how I am learning about those topics. I want them to know that there are things I don't know, and that this is ok. I want to model for them how to find the answers to their fabulously creative questions, and that we should always keep questioning and learning.

### **What is knowledge?**

Knowledge involves information that is shared, discovered, and taught. Knowledge can be and should be gained in all areas, following Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. The curriculum should be designed with the whole child, all of these areas of intelligence, in mind. While the curriculum is executed by the teacher, it is important that it be developed by a collaboration of teachers and other professionals and organized in a way to allow for consistency across classrooms. However, curriculum should be broad, with major lessons and skills laid out in a way that allow teachers room to follow their student's interests. How the curriculum is adapted to the

classroom lies within the responsibility of the teacher. I must apply the training that I have, and the advice from other teachers and professionals, to best meet the needs of the children within my classroom.

### **Pedagogy**

Curriculum should be applied with a main goal in mind. That goal must be to help children internalize all that is taught. I must take into consideration all of the contexts that the child brings with him/her. From what I have learned, children learn best when they construct their own knowledge and apply it to their lives. In this way, I want to follow the interests of my students, and build on those interests by incorporating them into our lessons. I want to help my students apply what they are learning into their lives in a way that allows them to develop a deeper understanding of what is being taught.

### **Equitable Education**

It is impossible and perhaps even unwise to make education the same for every child, especially considering that all children are unique and learn in different ways. As I consider how to make a great education available to all students, I am concerned more with confidence than with content. While there should be consistency in what is taught to all children so that every child is on the same playing field, what really matters is that all children develop the skills to be creative problem solvers and lifelong learners. Whether or not a child remembers the names of the major rivers in the world or Einstein's theory of relativity is much less important than if that child has had

experiences that have developed a strong self-confidence in his/her ability to learn new things and to solve problems. My greatest goal as a teacher is to help build confident and competent lifelong learners.