

# Philosophy of Education

~Varda Khurshid~

High school is a place where students learn more about themselves and how they want to interact with their environment. It all starts with education. In order to step out into the world and discover their purpose, students need to know how they learn and how their education is going to be meaningful to them. This paper is a philosophical statement describing my ideas about meaningful teaching. My teaching philosophy is centered around building rapport, engaging in critical thinking, and implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies— three things that I believe are necessary to help students better understand themselves and others.

Building relationships with students is my first goal whenever I enter a new classroom. My wish is that students feel comfortable with my presence and we have a certain level of trust before we dive into student-centered learning. Not only will students better understand and act upon classroom expectations, but they will also show respect to me and their fellow classmates. Student-teacher relationships can lessen the load on classroom management once there is mutual respect, however, my primary goal is to understand the students and help to provide a safe environment for them to learn. My belief is that when students are less anxious in my classroom from knowing that they are in a safe place, students are more willing to take risks in their learning and push just past their comfort zone. Student-centered learning craves creativity and critical thinking, both of which are important for students to apply what they've learned to new situations. Students have the chance to emerge as leaders. It begins with creating a safe environment for them to learn and grow.

Along with different perspectives and ideas that students may perceive, there is also the threat of misinformation. By being able to practice critical thinking within the classroom, a safe environment where students can make mistakes and not be fearful of judgements, students can develop the skills necessary to solve problems and discuss ideas in academic discourse backed up by evidence. With the digital age growing so rapidly, I believe it is important that students learn how to take information in, process it, and think critically about it. One way to engage students in the classroom for practice is by providing them the opportunity to take a stand on controversial issues. Along with developing the skill, students can also find meaning and relevancy in their learning by diving into topics that interest them.

Although I love science, I love the arts as well. More specifically: animation. It's an art form that is very visual – and quite memorable for me. Just like us teachers, students also have their own ways of learning and how they wish to demonstrate that learning. I believe that granting students a choice for the way they wish to demonstrate their understanding of concepts makes learning more engaging for them. There are many traditional methods for students to choose from, but with the rapid growth in technology, there are now many online options as well. This aspect of UDL that I wish to practice more is to provide multiple means of expression, where students can demonstrate their learning using media of their choice. This strategy can develop confidence within students and connect them to their learning.

Education is important, but to make it relevant and meaningful to students, we need to make connections. We can begin creating these connections by building relationships, engaging in critical thinking, and providing multiple means of expression. Using these strategies, students will also have the opportunity to learn about their connections to the world. ■