

Running head: PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Philosophy of Education

Hollee Saville

Concordia University, St. Paul

EDUC 576, MA 621

## Philosophy of Education

God has blessed every individual with unique gifts. Teachers are entrusted to help children discover their gifts and reach their full potential. My gift is the love and ability to work with and for children.

Every child needs and deserves love from adults who believe they can learn and who want to learn alongside them. Education is not something you do *to* children; it is something to be experienced *with* them. Teachers should foster children's innate love for learning by modeling joy, curiosity, adventure, creativity, exploration, and inquisitiveness. Teachers should prepare children to become lifelong learners by teaching them *how* to think instead of *what* to think. Ideal teaching/learning environments allow children relevant opportunities to problem-solve, learn life skills, make mistakes, and learn from them.

Teachers should not conform to traditional pedagogy, which places stigmas on students based on their race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or other characteristics that make people so wonderfully unique. Children are more than the sum of their files and certainly more than a label. Teachers should help children feel a sense of belonging; every child should be viewed as an individual who is an important part of the group. Teachers need to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the unique needs and different learning styles of the children in their care. Considering Gardner's theories of Multiple Intelligences can help teachers employ methods that will most effectively reach every style of learner. Teachers should look at the whole child, striving to enhance their physical, social, emotional, language, and cognitive development.

It is my joy and responsibility as a teacher to defend children's need for play so that they can reach their full potential. Elkind and Piaget advocated for children's play as essential to their health and happiness. Play allows children to express their creativity, imagination, curiosity,

emotions, and beliefs, and learn about other's experiences through role-playing. Children become confident, independent learners through active exploration, sensory interaction, and relationships with others. Children need open-ended experiences, materials, and activities that afford them the freedom to discover, problem-solve, and play on their own. Adults also need to have fun and play because children follow our lead. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of mature dramatic play, which hones children's executive function skills like self-regulation, language, conflict resolution, and other social/emotional skills. Play is not a luxury but a fundamental part of learning and far better preparation for school than "academics." Unfortunately, society is robbing children of their childhood by expecting too much of them at an earlier age and replacing play with push-down academics.

In addition to large blocks of uninterrupted free play, teachers should plan small and large group activities that reflect and support the children's current interests, tailored to their individual needs. Children need daily opportunities to develop their language and literacy skills. A positive environment will include reading aloud to children every day, labels around the room, natural writing and reading opportunities, and encouragement of meaningful conversations.

When teachers encourage children to explore tasks that interest them, make sense, build upon and connect with other knowledge and experiences, and are just plain fun, they form a basis for learning concepts that are more advanced. According to Vygotsky, scaffolding—not segmenting—learning, allows for a connected experience. Teachers take part in shared experiences by being an active participant in learning and by promoting, planning, and creating opportunities. The teacher presents activities that a child can complete with or without help (scaffolding) until he/she can do it independently. The teacher gradually removes the scaffolding until the child is fully independent in that activity. Scaffolding challenges children to do more,

but not to the point of frustration. The development between the existing skill and the emerging skill is the Zone of Proximal Development.

Teachers should carefully listen, observe, and document children's work to promote learning. By incorporating assessments into curriculum and shared activities, teachers can tailor their activities and environment to meet the needs and improve the learning of all children. Authentic assessments and curriculum-embedded assessments more accurately reflect children's abilities than standardized tests since they occur more naturally. Teachers should utilize multiple types of assessments throughout the day to allow children to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities rather than in just a snapshot of time. This allows teachers to create responsive curriculum to meet the individual and group needs of the children in their care. Children also need to be involved in their assessments so they know that their work is valued, can celebrate what they have achieved, and be aware of what they have to learn. Children should have individual portfolios to document their growth and development. They should include artwork, writing samples, observations, pictures, and any other documentation so the teacher can see how children are progressing towards developmental goals and early childhood standards. Documentation also gives teachers the opportunity to determine how effective their own strategies are with children through self-reflection. It helps teachers plan and assess their teaching/learning strategies and helps families understand their child's development.

Families are children's first teachers and central in every child's life. Teachers should act as partners with families in their children's education and form positive relationships through open and two-way communication, asking questions, and actively listening. Teachers should also be familiar with community resources to provide information to families, if needed. Teachers must have meaningful conversations with families about their program's philosophies, activities,

and the purposes behind them, as well as the families' beliefs about child development and their hopes for their children. Then, teachers can modify their programs to meet each child's needs. Children should not be forced to leave their culture—nor their home language—at the door. Thus, it is imperative for teachers to learn about each family's culture. Teachers should not assume that all families with a common identifier are the same because people's values, beliefs, and experiences influence their attitudes and actions. Teachers should incorporate aspects of each child's family life naturally in their daily routines as much as possible. When teachers are genuine in their efforts to get to know each family and show that they truly love their children, families are more likely to feel valued and supported and participate in activities.

In order to help children grow in their relationships with others and their communities, teachers need to promote multicultural and anti-bias education. One goal of anti-bias education is to help build children's positive social identities, family pride, and self-understanding. Children grow in these areas when they view themselves through the lens of other cultures. Teachers should incorporate examples, perspectives, and content from a variety of cultural groups. Children need to learn about our differences and celebrate them while understanding our shared humanity; this helps them build connections with others. Teachers should be open and honest about differences, welcome children to ask questions, and encourage them to talk with each other about differences. We also need to be responsive and treat everyone with dignity because our relationships serve as models for their relationships for others. Community service-learning projects are wonderful ways to teach children about compassion, kindness, poverty, loss, unfairness, and that they can make a positive difference in the world.

Children become responsible for their actions and grow in respect for the feelings of others through effective behavior guidance, such as encouragement and positive reinforcement.

When children receive positive, nonviolent, and understanding interactions from others, they develop good self-respect, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline. Teachers should encourage children, model appropriate behavior, set clear and appropriate limits and boundaries, and provide natural and logical consequences. Solutions to mistaken behaviors should include prevention, positive redirection, modeling, and problem solving in an age-appropriate way. Children learn through mistakes as long as teachers provide guidance in those “teachable moments.”

As a teacher, I will never stop learning because I am charged with the wonderful task of preparing our present and our future; I cannot remain rooted in the past without new knowledge and expect my children to grow. I will accept criticism humbly, knowing that there is always room for improvement. I will continue my professional development through trainings, research, and experiences to ensure my students receive the best possible education. I also hold myself accountable to share my learning with other educators—informally or through workshops—so that we can collaboratively ensure quality early childhood experiences for all children.

### References

- Banks, J. (2014). *An introduction to multicultural education* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Bodrova, E. & Leong, D. (2007). *Tools of the Mind* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Derman-Sparks, L. & Edwards, J. (2010). *Anti-bias education for young children and ourselves*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Dewey, J. (1975). *Moral principles in education*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press
- Elkind, D. (2001). Thinking about children's play. *Child Care Information Exchange*, 5, 1-27.  
Retrieved from <http://www.issa.nl/members/articles/pdf/5013927.pdf>
- Elkind, D. (2005). The changing world of toys and toy play. *Exchange*, 166, 11-12. Retrieved from <http://www.issa.nl/members/articles/pdf/5016611.pdf>
- Elkind, D. (2007). *The power of play: How spontaneous, imaginative activities lead to happier, healthier children*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Lifelong.
- Elkind, D. (2008). Can we play? Retrieved from [http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can\\_we\\_play](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_we_play)
- Erwin, C., Duffy, R., & Nelsen, J. (2007). *Positive discipline for preschoolers: For their early years--Raising children who are responsible, respectful, and resourceful* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Feeney, S., & Freeman, N. (2012). *Ethics and the early childhood educator: Using the NAEYC Code* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

- Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st Century*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gartrell, D. (2004). *The power of guidance: Teaching social-emotional skills in early childhood classrooms*. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Learning.
- Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2008). *Diversity in early care and education: Honoring differences* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education.
- Hanson, M., & Lynch, E. (2011). *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with children and their families* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Helm, H., Beneke, S., & Steinheimer, S. (2007). *Windows on learning: Documenting young children's work* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Jardine, D., Clifford, P., & Friesen, S. (Eds.). (2008). *Back to the basics of teaching and learning: Thinking the world together* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge.
- McAfee, O. & Leong, D. (2011). *Assessing and guiding young children's development and learning* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Needham Heights, MN: Allyn and Bacon.
- Nash, R. (2002). *Real world ethics: Frameworks for educators and human service professionals* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2009). Where we stand on early learning standards (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE). Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/earlyLearningStandards.pdf>