

I endeavor, as an educator, to create a learning environment that offers every child an opportunity to gain an appreciation of both human and natural communities and develop a deeper understanding of global multiculturalism and social justice, grounded in the following philosophical foundations, teaching paradigms to inspire stewardship, management and discipline models, and curriculum and assessment strategies:

1. Philosophical Foundations

A learning environment must be fun and safe before any knowledge can occur, and should include concrete hands-on learning of ecological, geological, and sociological concepts of local natural habitats. Intellectual integrity is necessary to explore healthier relationships between human communities and the natural world. It is impossible to separate education from the environment or intellectual advancement from the tangible and intangible landscapes that surround and shape experiences.

In all learning, the educator is responsible for a knowledge of individuals and subject-matter that enables activities which communicate increased understandings of social organization. Knowledge of individuals suggests identification of prior learning, intended learning outcomes, and methods to achieve mastery. Furthermore, a learning environment that allows multiple intelligences to excel shows compassion, enthusiasm, and endeavor.

2. Paradigms in a Multicultural Context and Inspiring Stewardship

Education is most effective when it relates to the real life experiences in the home, school, and neighborhood communities of the learner. Inspired environmental and community stewardship linked by science, technology, and the arts in a natural setting with hands-on learning experiences provide such an opportunity. The combination of an increasing social efficiency model — endeavoring education to compete in a global world — and a rising environmental education movement intuitively work against each other. It is increasingly imperative that deep connections made with the natural world continue to shape students' minds.

In addition, the theory of multiple intelligences allows both the teacher and learner to contribute as both instructor and pupil; children serve as our teachers in that they often see things in new, different and insightful ways. Each child expresses myriad combinations of intelligences. In turn, each child opens an intellectual window to an experience that benefits everyone.

An important facet of the educational process is to help students find a balance between their individuality and their responsibility as a member of a learning community. Education is most successful when teachers are sensitive to cultural, ethnic, intellectual, socioeconomic, religious, and gender diversity and create classrooms that honor that diversity.

3. Classroom Management and Discipline

In a classroom, outdoors, or any educational environment, I always aspire to model respect, patience, courtesy, common sense, and provide an emotionally secure space. In this way, I aim to create and model a positive learning milieu where everyone feels welcome, everyone is involved (at all levels, perhaps even external to the group), and that is meaningful to everyone. Additionally, I endeavor to establish a learning situation that is challenging to both learner and teacher alike. When all these criteria are met, everyone involved should be inspired to test and generate ideas that model stewardship, and together develop more sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, intellectual, socioeconomic, religious, and gender diversity.

The personal baggage and previous experiences that each child brings to the group provide a challenge for group management and discipline; an educator knows only what the child shares or can read by body language. I endeavor to discover the causes for the recalcitrant attitudes without allowing the unruly and non-participating pupils to stand permanently in the way of the educative activities of others.

4. Curriculum and Assessment

An integrated curriculum that combines knowledge from social sciences, environmental studies, science, technology, and the arts allows individuals with a variety of learning styles and intelligences to succeed in an experiential educational setting. It is important to provide a learning environment that enables the achievement of all six facets of understanding (explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, self-knowledge) throughout the learning process with clear intention of desired goals and standards. The fundamental component of education is understanding, but, above all, understanding the means to learn is more important in the end than the facts needed to simply pass an exam.