

Curriculum Paper

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EDUC 551

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Curriculum and Philosophy

My educational philosophy guides how I develop and evaluate curriculum. It provides a starting point, framework, direction, and purpose for curriculum development. It highlights topics of value and influences methods of assessment and how assessment results are used. I agree with John Goodland that philosophy is the beginning point for all decisions made in regards to curriculum (as cited in Ornstein, 2011). Philosophical beliefs become the standard in governing values, the process and method for teaching and learning, and principles of knowledge to be learned (Ornstein, 2011). A personal philosophy should continue to grow throughout life and change as the combination of past and future experiences shape one's evolving worldview.

Philosophical beliefs are influenced by factors such as life experiences, common sense, social and economic background, education, and worldview. As our student populations become more diverse, it is imperative that we as teachers and curriculum developers broaden our experiences and knowledge of a variety of cultures in an attempt to understand other people's values and situations from outside our own perspectives (Ornstein, 2011). We must understand others in order to create an inclusive curriculum, which promotes what we can gain from sharing our unique differences. I assign personal heritage research projects for students to share with the class so we can all learn more about one another and different cultures.

Allan C. Ornstein (2011) in *Contemporary Issues in Curriculum*, put forth four major educational philosophies which have greatly influenced curriculum in the United States. The traditional philosophies are Perennialism and Essentialism and the contemporary philosophies

are Progressivism and Reconstructionism. I best fit into the philosophy of Progressivism because I believe that knowledge leads to growth, that the teacher is a guide, that the curriculum should be made relevant, and that subject matter should be interdisciplinary. However, in order for knowledge to lead to growth, I believe that there needs to be a working relationship between the use of traditional and contemporary philosophy. I use traditional philosophy when I present art history, past civilizations, and cultural heritage to build a knowledge base. Historical information creates a platform of knowledge and information. As we begin to discuss why historical events may have happened as they did and what role art serves in preserving our history and how it presents a reflection of society, I then use contemporary philosophy to present our current society and look to the future. We discuss contemporary artists and how their work exists as social commentary, how it draws from the past, relays the present, and what it could mean for the future. I relate topics in art to student interests in pop culture and assign problem solving projects that engage and help to develop higher order thinking skills.

I believe that the philosophies of Perennialism and Essentialism provide a base knowledge of historical events and cultural heritage to build upon. The philosophy of Progressivism then helps students recall and relate historical information to the present for examination. Lastly, the philosophy of Reconstructionism helps students to take the historical information linked with contemporary culture and society in order to take action.

To build a base of knowledge in art class, I start with the Elements and Principles of Design. As a class we learn about, identify, and use the Elements and Principles of Design when examining historical and contemporary art work, exploring the world around us in nature or pop culture materialism, collecting samples, creating art work, and when participating in critiques. As

students develop a platform of knowledge, they can then begin to make connections between design elements and content. I then provide students with a choice of contemporary social issues from around the world that relate to them so they can begin processing social issues in relation to visual messaging using the Elements and Principles of Design. Students then begin to consider the social implications of events world-wide, how it affects themselves and others, and consider what action they can take.

I follow contemporary philosophy believing that a student should receive a well-rounded education, gaining from all subject areas. I use art as my medium to teach students how to learn and like John Dewey, I view myself as a facilitator of learning. I engage my students in dialog, open-ended questioning, and critical thinking.

I believe that the education system does need to provide students with the opportunities to build restraint, endurance, and discipline so that they can become productive members of society and respect their freedoms within our society. I also believe that without a healthy balance of democracy and choice within the education system, students will not be fully prepared to become active participants in our democratic society. Students should strive for excellence in all areas as opportunities should be presented equally, but students' will not respond with equal skill.

Curriculum Teaching

In *Teaching Styles/Learning Styles: An Educational Monograph for Community-based Teachers*, I found that my teaching style is most closely aligned with the collaborative and facilitative methods. While I do provide students with information, instructions, and offer suggestions or alternatives, my goal is to make the content in my courses relevant to my students and encourage them to research and explore their own inspired ideas. The collaborative and

facilitative methods allow for the students to apply the information they have previously learned to research, problem solving, and product development.

Runyan (1997), in *Teaching and Learning Styles*, presents four teaching and learning styles: concrete sequential, abstract sequential, abstract random, and concrete random. My teaching style is most similarly related to concrete random. However, I use all four styles when teaching, but in a particular order. I begin with abstract sequential when presenting information such as art history or the *Elements and Principles of Design*. Students are provided with information, guidelines, and rubrics. While learning about historical art, we learn about historical cultures and I have the students reconstruct historical events. I then enlist the concrete sequential teaching style to help students organize the information. The abstract random style is used when I have students explore and collect materials and conduct research to draw connections. I use the concrete random teaching style to reach the ultimate goal of students applying the information they have learned to a project by brainstorming, experimenting, finding alternative solutions, exploring, and problem solving. Projects are open-ended with multiple solutions. Students receive constructive criticism throughout the process in the form of student and teacher feedback and class critiques.

Comprehension teaching encompasses a lot of my teaching goals. It is focused on student centered learning and seeks to encourage self-monitoring, self-teaching, and to foster independence (Walberg, 2011). I begin by modeling for my students process, research, and art making. I then provide students with guided practice as I monitor their progress and provide feedback during the process. Students are also encouraged to seek feedback from peers, consider the feedback, and decide what action to take. Lastly, students make their own conclusions about

their research and make art work which portrays their thoughts and concept. Students then present their own work during class critiques.

Edward Pajak, Elaine Stotko, and Frank Masci (2011) present four styles of teaching in chapter ten of *Contemporary Issues of Curriculum*: inventing, knowing, caring, and inspiring. Again, I see myself incorporating all of these teaching styles into my teaching. I begin as the knowing teacher and my students learn factual content and subject matter. I then become the caring teacher by providing opportunities for student growth and building a classroom community as students work together to collect data and research. The inventing teacher provides opportunities for students to solve problems and apply knowledge. The inventing style is most closely related to my dominant teaching style as my goal is to help students apply learned knowledge to solve problems. Lastly, I take on the role of the inspiring teacher as I help students see opportunities to shape the future and help them to make independent decisions.

This last phase in my lesson units is important because it is my goal to produce caring and competent people. Care demonstrates respect, concern for others, and concern for the environment. I want my students to realize that they can make positive contributions to the world so I model this and have them practice being active people (Noddings, 2011).

Curriculum and Learning

Curriculum is developed with the purpose and goal of learning to occur. Curriculum must incorporate the needs and learning styles of the students, consider abilities and disabilities, and also consider culture, language, and experiences of students.

It is important for students to grapple with difficult questions in order for them to develop skills to cope with life's difficult situations and decisions. Students must learn to think and

process information rather than just naturally pursuing what comes easiest. As students dissect, internalize, and figure out how to respond in difficult situations they prompt higher order thinking skills and view problems from multiple perspectives. In a society that is centered on the individual, it is important that we help students develop civil behaviors to show restraint, have a sense of empathy, be willing and able to listen, have responsibility for someone else, and to have appropriate social interactions (Sizer & Sizer, 2011). These characteristics help students to become caring members of communities and advocates of social justice (Kohn, 2011). I have my students discuss moral choices and actions and allow them responsibility, ownership, and leadership in their actions. Students are thoroughly engaged in the character learning process and think critically rather than passively when being told what to do (Kohn, 2011).

I agree with Kohn (2011) that it is imperative that we help to actively foster intrinsic motivation in our students. Forcefully using extrinsic motivation to ensure students behave as desired is a short-term solution because students are acting out of fear rather than deciding how to act based on their own beliefs of appropriate behavior and performance. If students develop a sense of entitlement for extrinsic motivators, they will expect a tangible motivator every time they must perform a task or behavior. They will also demand a prize for having completed the task. Extrinsic motivation will erode intrinsic motivation. I help my students find their intrinsic motivators by getting to know them and what their goals and interests are. I then help them to learn how to make the content of courses relevant to their goals and interests.

Curriculum and Instruction

In the classrooms of the United States we see diversity growing the several directions. Students' learning styles, socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural heritage, race, and language can

all differ within one classroom. I use instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction and multicultural education to reach out to all of my students.

Differentiated instruction is recognizing that the expectations and standards for all students are the same, but the way in which the content is presented, learned, and assessed can differ based on the needs of the student (Gregory & Chapman, 2007). I use a tool called the Differentiator when planning for lessons. The Differentiator is an on-line web tool which can be found at <http://www.byrdseed.com/differentiator> and used by educators in creating differentiated lesson plans. The Differentiator helps teachers develop various ways to present content, provides several methods for process, and lists many options for varied products.

I also use The Unit Planner Template (Garderen & Whittaker, 2006). The Unit Planner combines the major components of multicultural education and differentiated instruction into an organized, one page, unit plan in a structured format. Educators can collaborate to determine essential questions and concepts for lesson units. “Teachers found the Unit Planner to be helpful in designing differentiated and culturally inclusive lesson units because it places the characteristics of individual students, and the class as a whole, at the center of their planning” (Garderen & Whittaker, pg. 20, 2006). The combination of multicultural education and differentiated instruction results in a structured framework for unit planning which implements a standards-based curriculum for inclusive education for varied learning levels and varied student background (Garderen & Whittaker, 2006).

Multicultural education promotes knowledge, caring, and action towards a more compassionate and just world and it begins with ‘self’ as students perceive and experience the world differently based on personal background. Multicultural education starts with self and

expands into the concept of others as students become able to engage in larger issues beyond self. Clemons (2005) points out that the key to multicultural education is to first understand personal heritage and to gain self-awareness.

Unfamiliarity with different cultures can cause anxieties, hostilities, prejudices, and racist behaviors among those who do not understand one another's beliefs or actions. It is important that school curriculum incorporates multicultural education in the lessons (Gay, 2011). Students should gain worldly knowledge to understand that morals and beliefs are socially constructed. I plan to assign cultural heritage projects in which students learn about various historical and contemporary cultures through the research of cultural art projects. These projects are personally connected to the students' background and interests as they learn about their own and their peers' cultural heritage.

Clemons (2005) discusses a multicultural design project that was assigned to interior design students. This project required students to research their family history and culture by exploring cultural patterns, symbolism, and color in order to create a rug inspired by their cultural heritage. Students were surprised to find that their cultures shaped their values and that there was such diversity found in one class. They developed an appreciation for each other's differences (Clemons, 2005). The project "enhanced understanding of peers and use of multicultural information in subsequent studio design projects. A long-term impact involved the growth of their personal identity" (Clemons, p. 294, 2005).

As the world becomes more globalized and America's classrooms continue to diversify, "It is obvious that educators must help students move beyond awareness of multicultural differences to application of knowledge with diverse groups" (Clemons p. 296, 2005). It is

important that we teach our students to not only be tolerant of other cultures, but to instill a desire to understand, respect, and learn from our differences. A major theme in my classroom is that we all have various skills and abilities. When we combine our strengths, we can accomplish more together than we ever could have on our own merits.

Once students have gained knowledge and understanding of their cultural heritage and their peers' cultural backgrounds and beliefs, they can begin to examine what influence various cultures have around the world today. Students can begin to make meaning out of content and use higher level thinking skills to analyze or evaluate difficult questions. I will be providing my students with difficult social issues to ponder such as, the death penalty, pollution, child soldiers, war, or capitalism.

Curriculum and Supervision

Supervision comes in the form of administrators, curriculum specialists, parents, and the community. Supervisors should have the big picture in mind of curriculum, assessments, training, and standards while teachers may be narrowly focused on their individual classrooms. Supervisors need to understand the school's comprehensive curriculum plan to ensure that students are learning content in a proper sequence that builds upon platforms of established base knowledge and recalls previously learned information. The goals and objectives of the school curriculum should align with the school's mission and goals and meet the state and national standards.

Supervisors should serve as the teachers' advocates by supporting teachers in meeting the goals of the curriculum. Supervisors need to ensure that teachers have essential supplies and also observe teachers in the classroom pointing out what areas of instruction need growth, provide

ideas, and then followup. Supervisors should be current on new educational information and trends by attending professional development sessions and by reading scholarly journals. This information needs to be adapted to fit and implemented into the school's curriculum plan and also presented to the teachers in way that is accessible and useable for the classroom.

Supervisors need to ensure that new teachers are getting the mentoring and training needed to develop skills to become effective teachers. New teachers need highly structured and rigorous professional development programs which are closely monitored. New teachers need to observe others, be observed, and receive feedback. It is also important that teacher training programs foster collaborative work and collegial interchange amongst new teachers and colleagues to develop a sense of group identity (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2011).

Supervisors should also be a leader, a team builder, and encourage life-long learning. Supervisors should ensure that teachers are continually learning and growing throughout their careers. Professional growth, collaboration, and networking are essential in establishing the commitment to teacher improvement and student achievement. (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2011).

Dr. Harriet Gould, former elementary principle and curriculum coordinator for Raymond Central Public Schools, stated in her lecture *The Role of Supervision, Leadership and Administration in the Curriculum Development and Design Process*, that we all share the same goal which is student achievement. Therefore, it is important that we are able to show student achievement and be able to measure it. Gould recited that teachers must be involved in curriculum development because they know the nuts and bolts of implementing the curriculum, teaching it, and assessing it. Together, supervisors and teachers must define what is the level of

proficiency and what is the level of mastery and how students should be assessed (H. Gould, personal communication, April 18, 2012).

Gould continued to discuss the role of supervision in curriculum and proclaimed that students need clear objectives and instructions in order to follow a path to a defined goal. Failure for our students is not an option. It is our job as educators to ensure that students achieve. Teachers must make constant revisions to the curriculum based on the students' and school's needs. Supervisors can help by tracking data throughout the year identifying what worked, what did not work, evaluating, revising, and implementing new ideas (H. Gould, personal communication, April 18, 2012).

Lastly, I think all supervisors should support a well-rounded curriculum. Although budgets may be unevenly allocated to tested subjects, our school leaders need to find inventive ways to support and secure funding for all subjects.

Curriculum and Policy

The intent of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is to close the achievement gap, but narrowly focusing on high-stakes testing does not provide a measurement which aids educators in closing the gap. Test results do not take into consideration circumstances outside of the teacher's control and how those circumstances affect test scores. The United States has fallen further behind on international assessments since NCLB was passed in 2001 (Darling-Hammond & McCloskey, 2011). As schools become classified as "failing," they are given the summer to develop a new plan and one school year to improve assessment scores. This is a replication of the business world in which changes occur quickly and positive results are expected in a small

timeframe (Beveridge, 2010). We must ask ourselves, “What type of people do we want our education system to prepare for society”?

Our education system in the United States follows in the footsteps of our society and our society is business. There is a push for the privatization of the school system marketed with the message that it will provide an equal education for all. However, a free market system does not allow equal access. The public education system is the only establishment in which students may access the arts without a fee. A privatized education model presents a system in which only the most affluent students have access to a well-rounded education. This system aids in widening the achievement gap, not in closing it (Beveridge, 2010).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 has hindered how non-tested subjects are being funded, assessed, scheduled, and how the curriculum for these courses is developed. As school budgets decrease, funding for non-tested subjects are the first to be cut because funding is designated for core courses which are tested. Reading and math are tested and the results yield the amount of funding a school will retain, gain, or lose. Therefore there is no incentive for schools to properly fund or test in fine art courses because the results will not affect funding received by the school (Beveridge, 2010).

Scheduling has become a concern because students are being pulled from their elective classes to attend supplemental math or reading courses in order to improve test scores. Although this tactic may cost the least amount of money, it is sending the wrong message to students and the community. The effects of NCLB on art curriculum has left us with the negative message that the arts do not require skill, knowledge, commitment, effort, or quality work and that the effort students put into learning non-tested subjects is not valuable (Beveridge, 2010). While

administrators may support a well-rounded curriculum, they are pressured by potential cuts in funding. “This reality forces administrators, regardless of their personal philosophies about arts education, to prioritize scheduling around those subjects that are tested” (Beveridge, 2010, p. 5).

As administrators become more pressured to effectively spread dollars, fine art teachers are being required to integrate tested subjects into their curriculum. This could potentially become a detriment to the arts because they will no longer be studied for their own distinct subject matter and skill set (Beveridge, 2010).

Although I do not agree with what subject matter and content NCLB is assessing and how, I realize that art teachers must respond to the effects of NCLB on art curriculum. My art curriculum does include the content and skills used in tested courses, but it is because it helps students build connections between subject areas and helps them to transfer learning skills between subject areas. This method does not jeopardize the distinct subject matter of the arts, rather it’s supplemental and helps art hold an important role in the education system. I recognize that funding in the arts will be tight and I plan to apply for grants to help fund art supplies, projects, field trips, and professional development training sessions. I will also develop community projects to gain the support of the community. It is important that students receive a well-rounded education, regardless of the funding threats, and the arts play an integral role in providing that education.

In a attempt to lessen the educational gaps and provide more access to higher education, Finland and Sweden shifted from external testing to various forms of assessment at the local level. They discontinued tracking students by test scores and offered a common-core curriculum to all students. Finland and Sweden are also using portfolio assessments which emphasis project-

based, inquiry-oriented learning which has led to more projects, scientific investigations, development of products, and reports. These assessments are incorporated into the examination scores and help administrators and teachers plan day-to-day learning by incorporating the development of higher-order thinking skills and use of knowledge to solve problems (Darling-Hammond & McCloskey, 2011).

Developing local assessments to evaluate national standards allows for decisions to be made about when and how to teach content at the classroom level. Lessons are taught when appropriate for the students' learning process and teachers can provide feedback as needed, which traditional standardized tests cannot provide. Teachers become more knowledgeable about the standards, how to teach them, and the students' needs. Shifting to a localized system of assessment allows schools to decide what and how to teach (Darling-Hammond & McCloskey, 2011).

Finland not only has a more inclusive assessment system for their students, but also invests much more in the preparation and training of their teachers. Finland requires that teachers have a master's degree in both education and their subject area, which is funded by the state. Training is focused on teaching for diverse learners, including special needs, for deeper learning (Darling-Hammond & McCloskey, 2011).

Like Finland and other small high achieving countries, I plan to assess my students on a more inclusive scale using showcase portfolios and rubrics. Art class encourages the process of research which includes the ability to find and organize information to solve problems, frame and conduct investigations, analyze and synthesis data, apply learning to new situations, self-monitoring for improved learning and performance, communication in multiple forms, working

in teams, and working independently (Darling-Hammond & McCloskey, 2011). This type of complex information processing is difficult to assess on a multiple choice exam. Students are unable to display the full extent of their learning. Multiple choice exams evaluate and limit students to one answer. These tests do not allow students to think and apply knowledge; they are a simply an evaluation of just knowledge. It is more important to know what the student is able to do with the knowledge.

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