Philosophy of Education

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EDU 530: Manage Culturally Responsive Classrooms

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School

I believe the mission of a school should go far beyond just academic achievement. Schools should foster a sense of community, promote civic engagement, and instil good values and moral growth in students. They should be places where every student feels safe, supported, and understood, because without that foundation, meaningful learning simply cannot happen. I have been very fortunate in my placement opportunities to see some excellent examples of schools with strong community environments built around accessibility, inclusivity, and student support. I believe all schools should run like that. They should be fully accessible and provide the necessary resources and staff to support students with diverse needs so they can participate and learn alongside their peers. Staff should take a hands-on approach, frequently engaging with students to create a sense of community and help everyone feel like integral parts of the school culture. Schools should prioritize safety, promote inclusivity, and celebrate student achievements. They should plan frequent events such as concerts, plays, fundraisers, and themed days to further cultivate school pride, collaboration, and community.

Likewise, schools should support students after the bell rings. I previously worked for a free after-school program, which showed me the incredible impact of incorporating programs that ensure financial barriers do not prevent students from reaching their potential. As a teacher, I plan to advocate for increased funding and support for initiatives that support underserved students. In general, schools must prioritize equity for all students, particularly those who are marginalized, ELL, or have learning exceptionalities, as they often face frustration, isolation, and even injustice in poorly established school environments (Echevarría et al., 2000). To avoid this, schools must actively remove barriers, provide support, and create inclusive learning spaces, because the way students are treated and supported in school directly affects their future contributions to society (Shahbazi et al.,

2022). Overall, schools influence society by modelling the values we hope students carry into the world. Schools that prioritize equity, community, and student well-being, produce individuals who are compassionate, responsible, and thriving members of society (Maratia et al., 2025). Ultimately, a school must ensure that every student is valued, supported, and challenged to reach their potential academically, socially, civically, and morally.

Curriculum

I believe a curriculum should prioritize well-rounded student development, including subject knowledge, life skills, critical thinking, morality, responsibility, and discipline. Curriculums should rely on active and engaging lessons that lead to meaningful knowledge retention (Dewey, 1938), while incorporating measurable goals, scaffolding, and support for students with diverse needs. Effective curriculums prioritize interactive lessons that encourage students to actively engage in the learning process using gamification, discussions during instruction, and opportunities to practice what they learned. I am also a huge proponent of smaller pre- and post-assessments within lessons to monitor progress and target areas to prioritize during instruction. Curriculum design must also recognize that students learn in different ways by diversifying lessons and assessments in ways that engage every learner (Gardner, 1983).

Personally, as a future business teacher, one area I am particularly passionate about adding into my curriculum is personal finance. This was not a part of my education when I was in high school and continues to be absent from many curriculums in Canada. Learning about budgeting, mortgages, student debts, loans, taxes, investing, and responsible spending is extremely valuable and should be taught to all students (Spielhofer et al., 2009). My secondary teachable, history, was another subject with a flawed curriculum. I learned very little about Canadian history prior to the 1920s, and almost nothing about Indigenous history.

This is becoming more integrated into curriculums but I aspire to advocate for even more inclusion of Indigenous history. There are so many learning opportunities from discussing the various nations and cultures, prominent figures and moments, the injustices they faced, as well as their resilience. Curriculums that focus on being culturally responsive, engaging, and practical will support students to thrive in both their personal and professional lives.

Learning

Four theorists best embody my teaching philosophy: John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, Howard Gardner, and Nel Noddings. Dewey and I both believe that students learn best by doing and reflecting on experiences, rather than passive memorization (Dewey, 1938). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development is the foundation behind scaffolding, which combined with Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, are crucial for supporting diverse learners with varied learning approaches and assessments (Avdiu & Ahmedi, 2024). Noddings argues that teachers should cultivate competent, caring, and lovable people by developing strong relationships with their students (Noddings, 2010). These theorists represent the educator I aspire to be, and their perspectives are particularly valuable as modern education continues evolving towards active learning, technological integration, and real-world application. Several problems remain in schools though, as many assessments still prioritize memorization over critical thinking and creativity (Al-Sabbah et al., 2022), emerging technologies have made cheating easier than ever (Yang et al., 2024), and many marginalized students continue to face barriers (Izard, 2016; Garakani, 2014; Shahbazi et al., 2022). That last issue is crucial for ELL students, who are often left behind simply because the curriculum or assessments are not accessible to them (Echevarría et al., 2000).

Moving forward, schools must prioritize inclusion and differentiation, culturally responsive teaching, thoughtful integration of technology, and stronger assessments. AI is a

new challenge that will require teachers to rethink assessments. Instead of homework or generic assignments that can be completed using AI, schools should integrate more creative assessments, such as group projects, debates, and presentations. Still, I am a firm believer in implementing technology into high school classrooms to improve learning and prepare students for their future (Pourmousa et al., 2025). Students must learn how to use technology responsibly, safely, and creatively. Technology is one of the most powerful marketing tools available, so I want my business students to understand digital branding, the long-term impact of their online presence (future employers will see what they post online), and the value of using these platforms effectively. I am also a strong believer in gamification because it promotes active learning, increases motivation, and improves knowledge retention (Thamarasseri & Chandran, 2025). When used intentionally and with clear expectations, technology can be a valuable learning tool.

The Learner

I hope to work with students ages 12–18 because I have genuinely enjoyed supporting youth in this age range as a coach, tutor, and in my placements. These students are in a critical developmental stage in forming their identity, developing independence, adjusting to new responsibilities, and preparing for life after secondary school (Cherry, 2025). I hope to prepare them as well as I can, while also letting them know that it is okay to not have everything figured out. I really want to have a meaningful impact on my students' lives and I believe that this is the age where they are most in need of teachers that genuinely care and provide guidance. Many face stress, social anxiety, mental-health challenges, and uncertainty about their future (Cherry, 2025), and I want to ease that burden by supporting them socially, academically, and emotionally. At this age, students need teachers who instil confidence, praise individuality, promote strong values, and encourage responsibility, discipline, and self-resilience. That is my mission and why I chose this age range.

A key aspect of that mission is holding students accountable to be responsible and disciplined in their own learning. I want them to engage in class and know that their perspectives are valued by removing barriers and praising active participation and effort. I value student-centred learning, so my lessons will include a lot of interactive activities and group discussions to ensure students play a big role in their own learning process. Ultimately, I hope to help students discover their passions, develop their individuality, and grow into the best versions of themselves.

Assessment

I prefer assessments that are practical and creative, requiring students to demonstrate critical thinking and application rather than just memorization. Reflecting on my time as a student, the assessments that stand out are the ones that challenged me to think critically, conduct independent research, work with others, or present ideas in diverse ways. Despite taking many tests and exams over the years, most of those are just a blur now. In contrast, I vividly remember developing research papers in high school history class, presenting yearly speeches in elementary school, or filming a fake commercial in my business course. Those details remain ingrained in my mind all these years later. These performance assessments required creativity, independence or collaboration, deep thinking, and personal investment which made them more interesting, memorable, and engaging (Popham, 2001). That content has stuck with me and those experiences helped build my confidence, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. As Mertler (2003) notes, performance assessments evaluate students' ability to apply skills in authentic contexts, while traditional tests have limited long-term retention.

Thus, I believe students should be assessed through a variety of performance-based tasks that reflect different strengths, learning preferences, and backgrounds. In a business classroom, this could include presentations, marketing projects, case studies, and debates. In

a history classroom, this could include research papers, primary source evaluations, and presentations on historical events. I also want all students receive the accommodations they need to demonstrate their learning, such as translation support or native language accommodations for ELL learners. Overall, assessments should be diverse, memorable, inspire curiosity and creativity, and reflect genuine understanding and application.

Classroom Management

Classroom management relies on strong leadership, clear expectations and consistency in enforcing them, and relationship-building through trust and respect. If a teacher ensures these qualities are present, their classroom management style will greatly support learning because students are more meaningfully engaged when they feel respected, safe, and supported (Garakani, 2014). My approach would follow these principles. At the start of the year, I would introduce myself, outline classroom expectations and routines, and collaborate with students to develop mutually agreed upon rules. This process would build trust and show students that their voices matter. I will also emphasize that participation is critical and that mistakes are welcome as an important part of learning. My classroom would be organized to support focus and accessibility. I want students to know where they sit, understand the routine, and have easy access to any materials or supports they need. I am willing to extend deadlines, lighten workloads when necessary, and provide additional support, but I will also challenge students to be mature, which includes communicating with me when they need accommodations. I would also intentionally build a classroom culture of respect and empathy, empowering my students to help one another and praising their efforts when they do so. If I set this example, other students will notice and be more likely to emulate it themselves (Bandura, 1977).

From a discipline standpoint, I will rely on the clearly established rules and expectations and be consistent with consequences when students infringe on them. If a student is disrupting others, I would redirect the behaviour calmly and move them to a different spot if needed, always explaining the reason and keeping my approach firm but respectful. Generally, I'd focus on consistency in approach, with firm yet understanding reminders of what they could have done differently. When students disrespect myself or a peer, I see that as an important learning moment. Rather than letting the incident pass, I would step in, explain why the behaviour is unacceptable, and reinforce our classroom expectations and commitments to mutual respect. If issues persist, I would talk to them privately to discuss why their actions are inappropriate but my intention is always to help the student learn from the situation rather than punish them. Punishment should be a last resort if other measures fail. I still have much to learn about classroom management but my even-tempered and encouraging approach has thus far served me well in minimizing conflict and issues. Ultimately, I believe that strong classroom management is about building trust, connecting with students, removing barriers, and creating a community of mutual respect.

The Teacher

In terms of educational background, I believe the current setup for Ontario teachers is a good path to ensure they are prepared. This requires a minimum three-year undergraduate degree and a post-graduate in teacher education, including 150 hours of placement experience in a classroom. Teachers also benefit greatly from any prior experiences working with youth in leadership roles, as these experiences help develop confidence, conflict resolution and communication skills, and relationship-building tactics (Warren, 2021). The best teachers maintain a growth mindset and constant willingness to learn. This is a critical characteristic in any profession, as a strong work ethic and drive for growth leads to lasting improvement. The best teachers instil this mindset into their students too.

There are so many characteristics and personality traits that make-up a great teacher. Some of the most critical include being caring, knowledgeable, supportive, flexible, passionate, consistent, and respected leaders. Great teachers always look for a learning opportunity in moments of poor behaviour. They build trust, connections, and mutual respect with their students. They open the floor for students to ask questions, share ideas, and participate in discussions. They are approachable and make themselves available to address student questions and concerns. They are also proactive about removing barriers and promoting inclusivity and accommodations. Great teachers also set clear expectations for respect and are consistent in enforcing them, never singling out students or less lenient to one student versus the next. They recognize that they can learn a lot from their students, listening to their perspectives and adapting their teaching to meet them where they are. They create positive, supportive environments where students develop confidence, responsibility, and resilience. They give students opportunities to apply what they learn and prepare them to navigate the real world. When I reflect on my own teachers, the ones that stand out were always passionate and engaging, kind and supportive, flexible and accommodating, and genuinely interested in me as a person. That is the kind of teacher I aspire to be.

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