

## **PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

Major: Communication Arts and Literature

The world has changed. Though the flying cars and teleporters of Hollywood have not yet altered physical travel, people are, as the cliché goes, more connected than ever before. Through search engines students can retrieve information on any topic, and through live chat converse with experts in the field. Without leaving their bedrooms they can study what interests them most at any time, day or night.

So where does this leave teachers and the teaching profession?

The concept of the teacher as all-knowing sage was replaced some time ago by the idea that teachers are more akin to guides; however, that comparison, too, fails to encompass what contemporary discourse would suggest a good teacher should be. The role of a good teacher in today's American culture should be that of a facilitator. The distinction between guide and facilitator is minimal and, no doubt, a debate in semantics, but important. Whereas a guide leads others, a facilitator points in the right direction and says "Go." In a classroom setting, a facilitative teacher will strive to make as many activities student-centered as possible. This is not to say that teacher-centered approaches are wholly without merit. Many times mini-lessons, for example, could be taught effectively through lecture. Monologic teaching is especially appealing when time is limited. However, much like rote learning, lecture, especially prolonged lecture, has a tendency to disengage students rather than engage them.

To engage students, the content of lessons must be relevant, or made relevant, to their lives when possible. When students can relate to the curriculum it causes metacognition to occur, which, in turn instills intrinsic motivation—a necessity for the ultimate goal of impassioning each student to be a self-reliant, life-long learner. In addition, scaffolding activities will instill confidence in students as they compare what they are learning to what they already know.

Because of the frequency with which students visit social media sites and utilize text messaging, their world is interconnected on a level unfathomable to previous generations. This, understandably, offers teachers new challenges as well as new strategies with which to combat them. Though there are more channels for communication today than existed even a decade ago, making multi-literacy a priority, communication has become increasingly written rather than oral in form. A good teacher in today's classroom will, among other things, need to prove that language is still powerful, and that convenience in communication does not equate to better understanding. That said, a good teacher will be able to teach when and where written and spoken communication in various forms will be most appropriate. Appropriate use of language, whether written or spoken, is a discussion topic that needs, now more than ever, to be addressed.

English language learners are becoming a large portion of contemporary classrooms, as such, a good teacher will realize that the increased diversity necessitates multiple approaches and strategies heretofore seldom employed in the predominantly ethnocentric and, equally, Eurocentric populations of the past. For example, with an increase in diverse learners, the literary canon, which is predominantly authored by Western, male writers, should be taught, but more sparingly, while more heterogeneous texts should be included more readily in curriculums to keep reading relevant to all students. Differences are a resource that a good teacher will strive to utilize.