My Professional Teaching Philosophy:

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Introduction to Teaching

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Abstract:

I believe that the most important part of my future teaching career is establishing an environment that students feel comfortable expressing their own ideas in. As a teacher, I hope to be able to meet my students in the middle, and be able to teach them the content while also making them think more deeply into themselves and decide their own opinions. I think it is important to have an actively involved class through discussion, activities, and projects that provides thought-provoking reflection as well as freedom to interpret what one larger topic means to each student.
Becoming a teacher requires extensive knowledge; knowledge of subject matter, but most importantly knowledge of oneself and a well thought-out approach to teaching. The most important part about being a teacher is being able to reach out to the students and make them think academically about a topic. I believe that school is about the student. The most interesting part of teaching to me is finding out the opinions of the students, and getting them actively involved in the classroom. In order to do this, I think that having a welcoming and comfortable classroom is essential. I also think it will be important for me to have an understanding of my own beliefs in order to be able to stick to them throughout my teaching profession. My philosophy as a teacher is derived from existentialism, progressivism, and perennialism. However, I plan to use only some aspects of these ideas to form my own philosophy as an educator.

I strongly believe that students should have some freedom in the classroom to think on their own, come up with their own ideas, experiment, and draw their own conclusions about all material taught in the classroom. By actively involving my students, I feel that what I am teaching them has a better chance of entering their long-term memory and sticking with them. Much like the philosophical idea of existentialism, I believe that students should be free to find their own meaning in what is being taught to them. The best way I know that helps the students think on their own is an open-discussion classroom. I find it interesting to know what others think about a particular subject, and I think it is important for myself as an educator to be able to assess where my students are in their learning at all times. Most of my assignments
will require my students to think and come up with their own arguments, which I have learned is the best way to teach, because when a student feels connected with a topic they have a much better chance of remembering it. From my past experience as a student, I have always felt much more at ease in a classroom where my voice counts. I never enjoyed strict lecture classes because it has always helped me immensely to get involved and brainstorm my own ideas. I always felt more connected with the teachers that I felt comfortable asking questions to, and as a teacher I will do whatever I can to get my students to think critically enough to ask questions themselves.

I think it is necessary to focus on the individual students more than strictly content or teacher-based lessons, much like the idea of progressivism. I definitely believe that student/teacher relationships are give-and-take relationships. I think as a teacher I will try to assess where each of my students are in their learning process and meet them half-way. Also like progressivism, I believe that learning should be active instead of passive. Students are much more engaged in a topic when they feel like they are a part of the conversation, and I would like my students to feel comfortable to share their thoughts with the class. I will be their teacher, but most of the time I would like to serve as a guide to help them through their ideas, instead of presenting the universal ideas to my students and making them memorize it. I want my students to know the second they walk into my classroom everyday that they will have to use their brains and think about the topic I plan to discuss. However, I want them to each feel comfortable doing this, so I plan to use projects and activities that help them get involved and better understand the material so they will be able to argue how they feel about it.
As far as the content I would like to teach in my classroom, my views side with perennialism. During my time at school, I have learned that many of the basic ideas in today's society have stemmed from past thinking, and I think it is very important to teach that to my students. I believe that students should learn the classics. Human knowledge would not be what it is today if it were not for the great thinkers of the past, and in order for students to be well-rounded, I believe they should have extensive knowledge about how ideas have evolved through time. Unlike perennialism, however, I like the idea of learning about the past and relating it to the future, so I would like to have somewhat of a mix between early literature and modern-day literature in my curriculum.

In order to be a successful teacher, I must learn to stick to my beliefs regardless of what is thrown at me throughout my career. I believe that a student-oriented, thought-provoking classroom is the best environment for me to teach in, because I feel that when students participate more, they learn more about what I will be trying to teach them. My philosophical orientations center around existentialism, progressivism, and perennialism; which are very different views of how to teach, but I will use bits and pieces of each of these and come up with my own strategy that will work for my students. I realize that teaching is not an easy profession, but I understand how important it is for students to learn how to think critically and argue their own beliefs so they can be active members in society, which is my main goal as an educator.