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Teaching Philosophy

In any situation involving students, the teacher's role should be that of a facilitator. This facilitation must be not only of ideas, but also of experience and meaning. The focus should be to comprehend ideas and objects from a multitude of perspectives and in a variety of contexts. While it is important to provide facts and allow students to understand those facts specifically, a teacher's position is to give those facts perspective. The objective should be to present ideas in such a manner as to give the students a way of providing meaning and content from their own perspectives.

This approach to teaching is dependent both on the environment and the instructor-student relationship. Careful attention must be made to provide an environment where each student can own his or her ideas and voice. This is an environment of activity and not passivity. Students must actively involve themselves in what is taking place. It is only through committed involvement in learning that a student gains anything of worth. From a practical sense, the teacher must engage the students in projects that not only the teacher deems worthwhile, but the students also see as having value.

The relationship that grows between a student and the teacher must be based on mutual respect and trust. While the student must be able to rely on the teacher's experience, it is the teacher that must be open to new ideas expressed by the students. Students must be approached with the understanding that what they say is important and can have an impact on the classroom. Building these relationships gives the entire classroom a role in making an experience meaningful.

While giving each student the authority to have a voice in the classroom, the teacher must also balance that experience with criticism. A teacher must be able to guide the students through the work being neither too heavy-handed nor too easy. Criticism must function as a way of allowing students to understand the depth of their ability. The student must reflectively step back from the work, allowing for time to understand and acknowledge what has been accomplished.

In the end, the work that the students complete must have personal meaning. Students have to learn to understand what influences them, how it impacts their lives, and how it can affect their work. What we are trying to achieve is an understanding not only of the work but also of who they are. We accomplish that through being open to new experiences and influences.