

Megan McNinch - Philosophy of Education

K-5 Leader, Teacher, and Learner

The purpose of education is to teach all learners how to make both academic and moral decisions for themselves. I believe that the educators, whether parents, trained teachers or experts in their field, should create situations which allow the learner to create his or her own learning. This is not to say that there is no content being delivered, it is, however, the process by which it is delivered so when the educator is removed, the learner still knows how to build one's own knowledge. The teacher serves as an academic and moral guide by first creating the environment and then by providing questions, discussions, and modeling to support the learning.

Classrooms should mimic society to ensure that in both places all people are welcome. This is regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic needs, English proficiency, learning strengths or weaknesses, or citizenship. In a student-centered classroom, teachers must not ignore these differences but embrace them and use them as a guide for instruction. Teachers should get to know their students and use their points of view as the basis for lesson planning. Student differences should not be seen as another thing that teachers must address but a value added to the lessons and conversations. This has been made even clearer through my international teaching experiences in China and Guatemala. When people bring together their differences instead of standing apart their knowledge is strengthened. The lessons taught to children through true inclusion will serve them well throughout life.

Students only have one chance at an education. The reward in teaching is knowing this and being proud that you were a part of their journey. To honestly say that I did everything I could to help them learn a concept and be a good person is worth the world. When you see a student take a project and soar with it or even take a project, struggle with it, and persevere

through the process, that is the reward in teaching. The relationships I build with students and their families, especially working with them throughout elementary school cannot be bought. Teachers are an extension of the family structure, and the families are often an extension of mine as well. Since I don't have children of my own, my friends are often confused when I talk of "my kids." My time spent in the school working with teachers and students is my passion and they are my family. I tell the students that my job is before and after school hours when I'm planning lessons.

Depending on the time of the day and time of year that you walk into my classroom you will see something different. Sometimes students are all working with the same materials such as laptops, iPads, robots, or Lego bricks. Other times you might see every child working on something different like my most recent fifth-grade unit focused on the United Nations Global Goals for 2030. This project has been an example of true student choice and engagement as students chose the most important goal to them, researched it, designed a presentation, and are now creating a way to make a difference in the world related to the goal. If you want to see diverse learners shine, provide them choice and hands-on opportunities. Whether it is a kindergartener designing and creating a way to keep Humpty Dumpty safe or a second grader building and programming a robot, you will see students' confidence and active participation.

In the 21st century where one can Google facts instantaneously, it is most important for education to teach students how to think, evaluate the environment, make meaning, and find knowledge and truth. While being carefully guided, students should grow up to be contributing members of society to bring about a future community of love, compassion, and knowledge.