

## Philosophy of Pedagogy

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Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* has much to teach readers about life today. Miller depicts the danger of accepting someone's word without question, without any thought or hesitation. If everyone would heed Miller's warning—to think for oneself and think critically—other such atrocities could be prevented. My philosophy of pedagogy has much to do with lessons learned from *The Crucible*.

Education is not memorization; rather, it is thought and inquiry. I believe that the ultimate purpose of education is to create “thinkers,” students who know *how* to think, rather than *what* to think. This way, they are empowered to make good decisions in and outside the classroom.

My philosophy of pedagogy can be summed up by the following statement: all students can learn and improve. I believe that education in the classroom must be student-centered, meaning that the educational benefit of my students is always the primary goal. In order to teach student-centered lessons, a teacher must understand both the nature and needs of the students he/she is teaching, yet even with a basic understanding of the general characteristics of each developmental stage of students, a teacher must always differentiate instruction. Students come from different backgrounds and have individual experiences, abilities, and prior knowledge. Each lesson taught must include a variety of activities, which makes learning conducive for even the most diverse students. A teacher must be flexible with his/her plans, always ready and able to adjust lessons to better facilitate a successful learning experience.

In addition to differentiating instruction, I believe that a teacher must create an environment that fosters learning and active participation from all students. Passive learning alone is often not enough to develop adolescents' abilities and improve their levels of skill. Students must be encouraged to ask questions, give their opinions, and compare findings with their peers.

My philosophy of education extends beyond general education into the specific content area of English Language Arts. The focus of ELA courses is literacy, and just as education is a lifelong process in which all students can and should take part, so too is literacy. A person can always read more and improve his/her skills of interpretation, and one can ever develop his/her writing capabilities. Even

though literacy skills are usually focused on much more in English classrooms, English class should not be the only class in which literacy skills are encouraged, practiced, and developed. Teachers of content areas other than English, even math, can include literacy instruction and practice in their classes. A great way to accomplish this is for teachers in different content areas to work together to create multi-subject projects for their students. Literacy is an interdisciplinary tool. I believe that the purpose of literacy learning is to gain understanding, a goal that is accomplished by teachers in all content areas using curricula that builds upon previous learning and emphasizes hands-on problem solving. When students take their literacy into their own hands, then they are already accomplishing the goal of literacy learning, which is independence.

Although the focus of education is on the students, the role of the teacher is all-important to pedagogy. A teacher must not limit his/her role to that of an instructor. Rather, a teacher must be a facilitator, a mediator, an overseer, and a guide. A teacher must work with students to create an interactive learning enterprise. I believe that teachers, in addition to parents, serve as guides for students in their journey of self-discovery. Teachers have the power to assist students in reaching their full potential. Learning is a lifelong process; therefore, the most indispensable thing a student can learn in school is how to learn continuously. It is the teacher's job to show each of his/her students how to accomplish this.