

# Teaching Philosophy

Throughout my 10+ years of teaching and multiple subject areas taught, my educational philosophy has both evolved and grown. The pedagogy I learned when I first earned my teaching certificate a decade ago has come face to face with the realities of teaching in the 21st century. Today's learners demand a different approach to education and my classroom has adapted to fit their needs. If boiled down to a bumper sticker, it would read, "Learner Driven Education." I believe that the heaviest lift in the classroom should come from the students themselves. The classroom is no longer a place for strictly academia; hands on and functional application of content knowledge is essential. The classroom should serve as a launchpad for students to develop real life experiences and skills as they transition into their field of study. This can be achieved through a variety of ways, first and foremost I believe in project-based learning. This type of learning not only lends itself to the values and skills I've already discussed but inquiry as well. This modern approach is process driven as opposed to product centered. It's more important for my students to be able to do something than to merely regurgitate information. When teaching this way, demonstrating mastery of content becomes essential, and there should be multiple pathways for learners to do so. Ideally major projects should culminate in a public product on some level, thus transforming the abstract into the tangible. It's not enough for students to learn about a topic, they should experience it. With these functional projects and community involvement, I believe we can move the entire field of education forward to better serve our students.

As an educator, to teach in this manner, you must take an active role. The biggest burden is front-loading the project or course before it even starts. Using backwards design thinking, start with your ideal end goal and then define the steps and skills needed to achieve it. Your job as the facilitator is to either allow the freedom of form or content, but not both. This gives students firm guideless as well as freedom, and allows you to objectively assess their work. Perhaps the most difficult thing I try to cultivate as an educator is opportunities for struggle in the classroom. Knowing when to take a hands-off approach can be difficult, but ultimately students are better off when they are allowed to make mistakes. Again, the classroom of today has evolved into a microcosm of the fields they are representing. It's better to allow for the development of growth and grit in your classroom than to expect students to learn it on their own in the real world.

Ultimately, these are all just tools to best serve the students in front of me. No two classrooms or learners have the same needs and therefore there is no ideal answer about what the perfect education should be. However, by putting learners first and stressing the process over the product, I hope to give my students not the just knowledge and the skills, but the mindset they need to be successful in the today's environment. As we continue to grow and change as a society, our classrooms, curriculum, and even teaching philosophies should follow suit. This is what a modern education looks like, and this is what 21st century learning is all about.

**FRANK CADEMARTORI**  
**FCADEMARTORI@YAHOO.COM**  
**ASOUNDMIND.EDUBLOGS.ORG**  
**708.337.1145**