**Philosophy of Education**

**Standing in front of the classroom, seeing all of the eyes (hopefully) focused on you, it is easy to feel like, as the teacher, you are the center of the room. You develop the curriculum and create the exercises, guiding and shaping what happens within your classroom. Although it is tempting to fall into this pattern of arranging the class around yourself, my teaching experience has taught me that the most successful teaching is centered around the students.**

**The first way that I apply this golden rule of education is by looking to the educational philosopher, John Dewey. One of his major focuses in developing his philosophy was emphasizing the importance of applicability. He asserted that all concepts taught in the classroom should be clearly** pertinent to life outside of it, aiding the students in becoming efficient members of society after finishing school.

One way that I do this in my teaching is by giving the students ideas on how they can transfer the skills that they learn in my classes to the classes related to their own field. For example, when teaching research skills I remind my students frequently that they will be required to so research in any field that they choose. In addition, when analyzing pieces of literature I focus on developing critical reading skills that will benefit them in any situation.

Another important aspect of creating a student-centered classroom is being flexible enough to teach concepts in different ways to make sure that all of the students are benefiting from the information. For example, when teaching any grammar concept I use a scaffolding technique that provides multiple methods of practice. I start by showing them a sentence with a problem, fixing it myself. Then I have them fix a few with my guidance. Then, I have them work together to fix a few on their own. Finally, I have them look through their own work to find errors. Grammar is difficult to teach in creative ways, so it is important to give multiple levels of instruction.

Finally, the most important way of teaching in a student-centered way is by encouraging individuality in writing. For students to truly appreciate what they are learning, they need to work with a topic and a method that matches their own interests and skills. When generating topics for writing, I give the students multiple chances to explore what they want to write. For an analytical essay, I start by asking the students to list broad topics that interest them. After that, they list questions that they have regarding that topic.

In addition, the method of writing is important for creating an effective piece of writing. I tell my students that there are many different ways that they can create a good piece. One way that I help to demonstrate this is by showing them professionally pieces that use a variety of methods. One piece that I have used is “Why Don’t We Complain” by William F. Buckley. This essay uses narrations, examples, persuasion, and many other good writing techniques. When students see professional writers using these methods, they are eager to try them themselves.

In a class that is based more on literature than on writing, focusing on the students is a bit more difficult. In this case, there are certain pieces of writing that the class focuses on, making it more difficult to foster an atmosphere of freedom and creativity. The most important thing to keep in mind in a literature-based class is that there are still ways to apply other areas of interest to the study of literature. For example, student who was interested in going into business would feel very disconnected if he/she had to analyze Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*. However, as the teacher it is my job to point out ways that this student can use his/her knowledge to work with this subject, such as performing a Marxist criticism of the text.

Overall, I know that I am teaching effectively when the students feel connected to what they are working with. If they leave my class feeling like they have learned something beneficial, appealing, and motivating, it has been a successful venture.