

Teaching Philosophy – Alan Levy

I believe, as Plutarch did, that “the mind is not a vessel to be filled, but rather a fire to be kindled.” I believe that each and every student possesses unique gifts and talents that need to be identified, valued, nurtured, and rewarded. To support this belief I am committed to educating the whole child in an environment that pursues excellence, nurtures creativity and celebrates individual differences and cultural diversity.

My goal, as a ‘kindler of fires’, is to help students become educated individuals who possess a self-motivated ability to learn, a diverse yet well developed set of interests, and the desire to master academic skills to the best of their ability. I believe an educated person in the twenty-first century is a person who is literate, can understand and function sufficiently in the world, has an overview of the history of mankind in all its diversity, has an understanding of the political processes, has an ability to solve mathematical problems and to think scientifically, and has the values necessary to enhance the world in which he or she lives. The educated person is one who has realized his or her special talents, and makes a life-long goal to use those talents to benefit humanity.

My teaching philosophy most closely follows the foundations of Progressivism. I admire the teachings of John Dewey, and believe his concepts of active learning, problem solving and student-centered activities are essential for success in the twenty-first century workplace. Towards these goals, I utilize Howard Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences to instruct students in a Constructivist framework. I believe that an effective daily lesson is one that requires students to use as many of their different intelligences as possible. I am also extremely

proficient with computers and have developed a number of innovative lesson plans utilizing the latest technologies.

As a result, I am most interested in teaching in a school that encourages thematic and inter-disciplinary lessons. My extensive arts background, combined with my strong Mathematical and Linguistic intelligences, provide me with a strong basis to implement a Multiple Intelligence approach in the classroom. I have a strong background in creating, empowering and motivating teams of people of all ages and from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

I believe that the two most important social concerns in the classroom are equity and self-esteem. The high school classroom is the last best opportunity to develop adolescents' self-esteem by nurturing trust, encouraging self-expression and promoting equity. My classes provide a rigorous, academic environment and promote high levels of student effort and academic achievement, and inspire in students a lifelong love of learning and a desire for self-actualization.

Perhaps my most radical belief is in terms of school governance. I believe that school governance should be modeled after the Sudbury Valley School in Boston, which itself is based on the model of a traditional New England Town Meeting. The daily affairs of the school are administered at bi-weekly School Meetings, at which each student and staff member have one vote. Rules of behavior, use of facilities, expenditures, staff hiring, and all the routines of running an institution are determined by debate vote at the School Meeting. In this way, students share fully the responsibility for effective management of the school, and for the quality of life at school. What better way exists to help develop caring, involved, active citizenship than by granting students control over their very livelihood? At the same time, students would have a

wide range of experiential learning opportunities as they took individual interest in one of the diverse operations of the school community, be it food services, maintenance, technology, health services or instruction.