Educational Philosophy

John-Peter S. Ford

It is important that educators understand the impact we have on the students we teach. Not every student will become the next President of the United States, but we should put the same amount of care into every student who passes through our classrooms as if they were destined to be President.

I believe it is important we acknowledge individual students’ considerations when planning the curriculum. Each student will want to get something different from the class, and it is the teacher’s responsibility to help the student find it. Finding ways to have students involved in the curriculum, whether through case studies or other hands-on projects, will give students the chance to be involved in the learning process in ways they might not have been in other courses.

I believe students should be assessed early and assessed often. Educators have many types of assessment at their disposal, thus an effective educator should use a variety of formal and informal assessments in assessing students. Formal assessments can be used in assessing information that is data driven. These types of standardized testing, essays, and written/measured assessments should be used to assess overall achievement and can be used to compare students in various categories. But formal assessments should be used sparingly. Educators should make more use of informal assessments to regularly measure content knowledge and performance/application of material. Using informal assessments allows the instructor to measure an individual’s grasp of the content knowledge and help students who might be lower performing.

Individual students learn differently. Educators should strive to spread content knowledge in as many ways as possible. Four aspects of the learning environment can provide differentiated instruction: content, process, product, and classroom environment. Regarding content and process, moving beyond traditional lectures allows for better learning due to the involvement of multiple learning styles. Not only should we strive to include every possible learning style in classes, but we should also consider that some students need more practice than others. Being able to provide instruction on a standard for both lower *and* higher achieving students will aid in the learning process.

Educators should strive for a classroom environment in which all students feel welcome and safe making mistakes in order to learn. But students should also follow protocols. To create a respectful learning environment, students should not talk when another student or the instructor is talking; if a student wishes to make a comment or ask a question, they should be acknowledged before speaking. Students should participate in all classwork and work diligently to complete the assignments by the due date. If students do not complete an assignment within the allotted amount of time, they should still be able to turn in the assignment for a reduced grade.

Cellular devices are a great tool for communication and learning and can be included in the class. Even though they can provide another distraction for students, these devices can be used for activities, taking notes, and other situations. We should embrace technology in the classroom, utilizing QR codes and other methods to disseminate information. Technology is not going away, so why not recognize its potential and meet students in the modern age?