

## Philosophy of Education Robert E. Mahoney

My philosophy of education and teaching practices are balanced by the students' quest for knowledge and the role of the teacher in guiding that quest. Accordingly, I view my teaching role as one that assists students in developing their intellect and their intellectual curiosity about the world in which they live. More importantly, I view the role of the teacher as one that teaches students to be life-long learners. As Mortimer Adler discusses, students need to continue to learn once they have completed their formal education. The purpose of any schooling is not necessarily to simply produce people with a wealth of knowledge, but rather to assist students in becoming educated throughout their life. My role in that learning process is to build basic concepts of the world through a process of organized instruction, coupled with hands-on exploration of the presented concepts.

I believe that students learn best in an environment that presents basic concepts, and then permits the students to further explore those concepts. The role of the teacher is to facilitate the students' acquisition of knowledge through instruction, exploration and abstraction. This role is similar to that of a more knowledgeable guide, to determine that which is of value to the untrained intellect. Just as you would not go on a safari without an experienced guide, lest you risk injury, the teacher can be viewed as having an equally critical role for the student as a guide to the unknown.

An effective lesson plan is one that engages *all* of the students, despite their differing skill levels and/or needs. Engaging students in the process of learning brings the unique abilities and background of each individual to the forefront. Through a process of showing students the value of the material, students become engaged in the learning process, which creates a classroom climate that is conducive to learning. The active involvement of students in the educational process in this manner creates a classroom of students eager to learn concepts that might otherwise be considered boring or difficult.

A critical component in teaching mathematics is that the students need to understand how the subject matter is correlated with other curricula. This is best accomplished by working as team with teachers in other disciplines, such as science, to align the curriculum.

One advantage in entering the field of teaching as a second career is that I can provide a unique perspective on the *value* of the students' education, in addition to the informational content of the lessons. In this manner, students can see that the education that they are acquiring is not just a rote memorization of facts; rather it is a *tool* that they will use their whole life.

Given the above outline of my beliefs, my education philosophy involves the acquisition of knowledge for the purpose of expanding ones intellect. This is accomplished by studying information accrued by prior generations, while balancing the need to change the curriculum over time, as society evolves. The best practices in order to accomplish this goal involve a process of guided exploration and inquiry.