

Statement of Teaching Philosophy  
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In education, there are two primary goals, the first of which is for the individual receiving the education and society in which they live to **survive**. The second is that the individual and society would be empowered to **thrive**.

If an education fails its primary objective of survival, then it is bad news for both the individual and the society, as neither will be around for long. Interestingly, survival skills change over time. Two centuries ago, individual survival may have required skills such as hunting, gardening, food preservation, and navigating without the benefit of well-developed roads. A century ago, these skills may have included reading, writing, and balancing a checkbook. Today they include communicating through social media, navigating the internet and other electronic systems, and distinguishing between the real and the fraudulent. It is critical that students be taught survival skills, and that those skills be appropriate for the age in which they live.

One of the great challenges of education is that, we as educators must prepare students for a world which does not yet exist. It requires that we be dreamers who can anticipate the future and not only teach students to solve specific problems, but we must also teach them to think critically and to make good decisions so that they can solve the problems not yet imagined.

While survival is a notable goal, it is never enough for more than short periods of time. The second goal of an education is to insure that individuals and the societies in which they live, while surviving, also **thrive**. If there is no room for individual and societal growth, even survival itself will soon seem pointless. This is where the arts and humanities excel. They nourish the soul. They feed the imaginations of creative individuals. We change the world by delivering a complete education which includes beautiful music, songs of love and inspiration, stories of determination and perseverance, the ability to discriminate between good and evil, and the inspiration to act in the appropriate moment. A thriving society requires that generations of noble dreamers are regularly unleashed. When these skills are found in the population in good measure, individuals and the society in which they live will prosper and enjoy a meaningful life.

Every few years, there is a "Back to the Basics" movement which helps our nation identify today's survival skills. "STEM" education with its focus on **S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, and **M**ath, is one such contemporary example. As essential as these movements are, it is critical that the skills that we choose to teach, include the skills for personal and societal enrichment. A popular revision of the "STEM" movement today is the "STEAM" movement, including the "A" for the **A**rts. As our country moves forward, there will be an ongoing need to assess and evaluate our goals and objectives. May we always keep in mind the need to produce students who will enter our society enabled, empowered, and inspired to both **survive** and **thrive**.

Benjamin Franklin once said (loose paraphrase), it would be good to teach all things useful (for survival), and all things enriching (making survival worthwhile), but art is long and time is short. It is proposed, therefore, that we teach those things that are most useful and those things that are most enriching.

Winston Churchill once said, "The arts are essential to any complete national life. The State owes it to itself to sustain and encourage them. . . . Ill fares the race which fails to salute the arts with the reverence and delight which are their due."

If we choose well how we educate our children, we can produce a generation with ideas that can change the world for the better, and with the inspiration to do so. Let us as educators give careful attention to this responsibility.