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How should a school run? What should their priorities be when it comes to educating children? Over time, scholars, philosophers, and policymakers have each tried to figure out the best way to approach education, which has led to several different philosophies. Some of the most common are essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, and social reconstructionism. Schools today often pick from one or more of these ideas to use. Personally, I see parts of truth in all four, but I connect most with progressivism. I believe schools are the single most influential place in a person's life, shaping how students see the world and how they will live in it. In this paper, I will look at each of these philosophies and explain how they connect to my own values and beliefs as a future teacher. I argue that progressivism aligns best with my teaching philosophy because it emphasizes personalizing education to the needs of the child and fosters lasting connections to the content taught.

Firstly, essentialism is the idea that schools serve the purpose of promoting a uniform, shared traditional knowledge that was deemed to be academic content (Miller). This idea is often applied to traditional schools that still teach with direct instruction, standardized testing, and lectures. Followers of this idea might follow the Common Core curriculum strictly as well. These philosophers also have a strong focus on testing and how it is used as a benchmark for academic success. Personally, I do believe in this idea to a certain degree. I believe that testing and following a certain curriculum can be beneficial at times and helps provide needed data and

consistency for staff and students. That being said, I do not believe that this should be the main focus within schools and should be used alongside at least one other main idea.

Unlike essentialism, the idea of perennialism is that schools should instill students with an understanding of the great ideas of Western civilization and the large critical thinking problems that have been and need to be solved. (Augsburg). I like this idea, and it rolls very well into history and learning about how far we have come as a society. That being said, I believe that schools should instill problem-solving and critical thinking skills into their students, but it should be focused in a way that gets them thinking on their own and not based upon what the great minds have already accomplished. Students should know and understand who these people are; however, this should not be the direct basis of their analytical thinking.

On the flip side, schools that follow social reconstructionism have an affinity that students should be prepared to face the global and societal problems of the world (Miller). This idea has a lot of potential; however, I believe that kids should be kids. I think that it can be wrong to instill the anxieties about the world and the problems that it has into children at too young an age. I do agree that the generations we teach are our future; however, much like us all, we are human and shouldn't be expected to take on the entire world as a whole.

Finally, progressivism is the idea that schools serve the purpose of instilling social responsibility and curiosity into the students (Miller). The idea behind this philosophy is that students lead the charge in their own interests about what they want to learn. I support this idea the most because it gets students thinking and taking ownership of their education. I have tried out models of this idea as a student and an educator firsthand, and I can say that this idea does have its flaws, such as student pushback and pushing quality vs quantity of knowledge. That

being said, I have seen this idea work well when mixed with other philosophies that give more structure to this idea.

In the end, I do believe in elements from essentialism, perennialism, and social reconstructionism; however, I believe progressivism aligns closest with my educational viewpoint. When it comes down to my own educational philosophy, I believe that keeping an engaging classroom is most important. Students need to be engaged and social to learn and should have real experience with the stuff they are learning (Akomolafe 85). The use of projects, activities, interactive showcases, and reenactments is a powerful tool that can help open up big ideas for students to take ownership of. Students need structure as well, and if given free rein, they might not achieve their potential through self-limitations. I believe that teaching knowledge about how the world works and has functioned in the past and present, with functional showcases, can help a student take a curious approach to their education to foster their own pursuit of education. If done right, these methods can make schools a place to inspire students to do what they are passionate about, rather than a place of measuring academic success.

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