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Philosophy of Education

My philosophy of education has developed as a result of my career as a theatrical artist, student, and teacher. I have been blessed to have been mentored by top-flight teachers whose methods have been based on experience and pedagogy. I have sought to adapt those methods to fit my own style to become a more effective teacher, designer, artist, mentor, and communicator.

Theatrical Design, Production and Education are all driven by process. It is a process based on introducing and exploring new ideas that expand our knowledge and understanding of the world around us. It can be a scary prospect to explore new ways of thinking, but it is essential to our common humanity that we do so. With that in mind, I have based my teaching philosophy on the following ideals:

- 1. Positivity.** As a teacher it is my goal to provide students with a safe and vibrant environment in which to explore the theatre arts and how the arts allow us to grow and reflect through shared experiences. This is best achieved by fostering a classroom that emphasizes a positive outlook. Allowing students to make mistakes and using those mistakes as a learning opportunity instead of a consequence. The energy and attitude I bring to a classroom, meeting, or rehearsal will serve my students as an avenue to further learning.
- 2. Respect.** I believe that respect is not earned and that it must be given by all, to all. It is a basic human desire to feel valued. I believe that we must treat each other with respect as a matter of course because all exchange of ideas must begin with the respect of the other person's basic human dignity. Students in any classroom should be free of destructive comments about their personality, beliefs, ideas, and work.
- 3. Process.** By taking a step by step approach to learning and engagement, we develop skills that are more than the sum of their parts. When we learn the foundation of a process, we are able to more easily adapt when presented with unexpected challenges. I believe when we learn a process, we can expand our knowledge because the process helps us to see how each step affects the next, allowing us to predict outcomes and adapt. Once

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fundamentals in a process are learned and practiced, we can transfer those skills to efficiencies that are grounded in our craft.

4. **Accountability.** I believe in clearly stated goals, expectations, and accountability for my students and myself. I owe this to my students and my colleagues. If students and colleagues do not know what the expectations are then the chances of meeting those expectations are diminished and the possibility of exceeding them virtually disappears. This is especially important in terms of student evaluation. I let my students know how and when they will be graded and by what standards.
5. **Challenge.** I believe in challenging my students to work outside of their previous experiences to develop not only as an artist but also as a person. Theatre requires that we examine ideas from another person's point of view. To do that, we must challenge our students to accept that there are world-views beyond their experience and knowledge and guide them on their way to exploring those new ideas.
6. **Adaptability and Flexibility.** I believe that every theatre student should be able to demonstrate a working knowledge of performance, analysis, history, production, and backstage techniques. To be an artist is to be able to understand and appreciate all aspects of your art. Actors should direct. Directors should design. Designers should perform. Flexibility and adaptability are the most important skills we can teach developing artists. Likewise, to be an effective teacher, one must use all the tools and skills available to impart knowledge. Therefore, I use a variety of teaching methods including class discussions, hands-on projects, cooperative learning techniques, lectures, and techniques specifically tailored to individual students and topics; and I am prepared to quickly change tactics when I see students struggling to grasp a concept. Start with what the students know. Start with what they are good at. Find out what makes them tick, and then lead them into new discoveries.
7. **Evaluation and Lifelong Learning.** Every teacher is a student and every student is a teacher. As a teacher I accept that I do not know everything and I do not have all the answers. I accept that my students have much to offer me. Each one brings a different set of experiences and beliefs into the room. If I am unwilling or unable to learn from them, then how can I expect them to be willing to learn from me? Therefore, I believe in continuing to evaluate my

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work as a teacher. I believe in being open to new methods and ideas.

Expanding my own knowledge benefits my students as well as me.

- 8. Creativity.** Creativity is a skill we all have at a young age. Creativity is why I started theatre. In some situations that creativity has been blocked by a simple comment made in passing. “You can’t sing,” “You can’t draw,” “This is boring,” etc... I choose my words carefully when working with others to encourage them to explore and grow even when it is challenging. I am excited by finding solutions that are new and different and then using the process and skills that I already have to develop a creative impulse that seems challenging or even impossible.
- 9. Collaboration.** I believe collaboration is imperative to our theatrical art. When we create in a vacuum the reflection on the process and end result are limited by our own experiences. Collaboration is the key to not only the creative process, but also to relationships within an environment. When others feel heard and valued the end result is something we choose to engage in and build our collective knowledge and experience, resulting in...art.