

Learning Philosophy

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Assignment 2- Creating Your Learning Philosophy

Introduction

When I think about learning, I don't picture a classroom full of students quietly receiving information. I picture motion! Students exploring, talking, questioning, building, trying, failing, and trying again. After years of teaching in special education, supporting general educators, and working across a diverse campus, I've learned that learning rarely happens in a straight line. It happens in moments of connection, curiosity, challenge, and confidence.

My learning philosophy grows out of what I see every day: students who learn best when they feel safe, valued, and engaged in experiences that matter to them. Learning is active, relational, and personal. Those beliefs shape how I teach, how I lead, and how I design innovative learning environments, such as my district's virtual reality (VR) initiative.

Beliefs About Learning in General

I believe learning is something students do, not something we give them. Real learning happens when students have room to explore ideas, discuss what they think, and make sense of new information in their own ways.

In my classroom, I've seen students who struggled on paper suddenly light up when they could touch, build, or experience something hands-on. I've watched reluctant readers turn into curious scientists when learning became something they could experience, not just listen to.

Because of these experiences, I believe:

- Learning should feel meaningful and connected to real life.
- Students need opportunities to construct understanding, not just memorize it.
- Mistakes are part of the learning process, not interruptions to it.
- Every learner brings experiences and strengths that influence how they grow.

Learning, at its best, is empowering. It helps students discover who they are and what they are capable of becoming.

Beliefs About the Relationship Between Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning are connected, but not in a simple cause-and-effect way. Just because I teach something doesn't mean students learn it. My responsibility is not to deliver content, it is to design environments where learning can happen.

This mindset aligns with Harapnuik's (2018) view that educators should design significant learning environments, not simply deliver lessons. When teachers shift from asking, "What do I need to teach today?" to "What do students need in order to truly learn today?", everything changes (Harapnuik, 2018).

In practice, I see myself as a facilitator who:

- Creates experiences that spark curiosity
- Provides scaffolds when students need support
- Steps back when they are ready to take ownership
- Encourages students to ask questions rather than wait for answers

This approach keeps the focus exactly where it belongs, on the learner.

Beliefs About Myself as a Learner

I am a hands-on, reflective learner. I learn through experimenting, creating, and processing my experiences. I thrive when I understand the "why" behind what I'm learning, and I grow the most when I am allowed to collaborate and make connections to real-life contexts.

Because I know how I learn best, I intentionally create similar conditions for my students: experiential, relevant, and grounded in curiosity.

Learning Philosophy vs. Teaching Philosophy

A teaching philosophy explains how I teach.

A learning philosophy explains why learners learn and what they need to learn well.

A teaching philosophy focuses on instructional methods.

A learning philosophy focuses on the conditions that support deep, meaningful learning.

This assignment pushed me to articulate the beliefs beneath my teaching practice, the foundation for every learning experience I design.

My Learning Theory: Constructivist + Humanistic

My learning philosophy blends Constructivism and Humanism because these theories reflect both the academic and emotional realities I see in classrooms. Constructivism describes *how* students learn, by building knowledge through experience, while Humanism describes *the conditions* needed for that learning to happen safely and meaningfully. Students learn best when they feel both supported as individuals and challenged as thinkers.

Constructivism

Constructivist theorists such as Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bruner emphasize that knowledge is built through interaction, exploration, and discussion, not passive listening. This mirrors what I see daily: students understand concepts more deeply when they can manipulate, investigate, and question them.

Constructivism aligns with:

- Inquiry-based learning
- Small group discussions
- Visuals, manipulatives, and hands-on activities
- Students constructing meaning rather than absorbing it

Humanism

Humanistic theorists such as Maslow and Rogers argue that emotional safety, belonging, and autonomy are essential for learning. Rogers (1969) emphasizes that meaningful learning happens in environments grounded in trust and choice, something especially true for my students receiving special education services.

Humanism shows up in my classroom when I:

- Prioritize relationships
- Give students choices
- Affirm their strengths
- Create safe spaces for risk-taking

Together, these approaches allow me to create learning environments that are academically rich and emotionally supportive.

How My Learning Philosophy Connects to My Innovation Plan (VR)

My Innovation Plan introduces virtual reality as a tool for science exploration and career discovery. The purpose is not to use “cool technology,” but to create learning experiences that reflect my philosophy.

Because I believe learning should be experiential, meaningful, and equitable, VR becomes a powerful tool that:

- Helps students experience concepts they cannot physically access
- Provides sensory-rich experiences that spark curiosity
- Helps students visualize themselves in future career spaces
- Removes opportunity barriers by giving all students access to immersive learning

One example stands out clearly. A student who consistently struggled with reading comprehension participated in a VR lesson on ecosystems. After “walking through” a rainforest and observing plant and animal interactions in 360°, he raised his hand, something he rarely did, and said, “I saw that in the VR forest!” He was able to recall details, connect them to the lesson, and participate confidently. This moment showed how VR can transform engagement and make content accessible for students who often feel left behind.

VR supports both sides of my philosophy:

- **Constructivist**- Students build understanding from immersive experiences.
- **Humanistic**- Students feel confident, included, and motivated.

My Learning Philosophy and My Role as a Change Agent

As a leader and change agent, my philosophy guides how I support teachers and implement new ideas. Change can be uncomfortable, and people rarely adopt a new initiative unless they trust the purpose behind it. Humanistic theorists such as Rogers (1969) emphasize the role of authenticity, empathy, and positive regard, qualities that are essential in leading change.

I aim to:

- Listen to teacher concerns
- Build shared understanding
- Model tools in hands-on ways
- Celebrate small growth steps
- Support teachers as whole people, not just professionals

My philosophy reminds me that adults learn the same way students do, through relevance, connection, and experience. Leading change is not about convincing people; it is about walking with them.

Audience and Purpose

The audience for this philosophy includes teachers, instructional coaches, campus leaders, and district partners who will work with me as we build immersive, student-centered learning environments. This philosophy helps them understand:

- How I think about learning
- Why VR fits our instructional goals
- What guides my decisions
- How I will support them during implementation

When colleagues understand who I am as a learner and leader, trust grows, and trust makes innovation sustainable.

Conclusion

My learning philosophy is grounded in experience, empathy, and a strong belief in students' potential. Learning is not about consuming information; it is about engaging with the world, exploring ideas, and discovering identity and purpose along the way.

By blending constructivist and humanistic ideas, I design environments where students feel safe, seen, challenged, and inspired. My VR innovation work grows directly from these beliefs: when learning becomes accessible and meaningful for all students, they grow not only academically, but in confidence and hope.

References

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