**“The harder we question, the harder we hunt. The harder we hunt, the more we learn.” – Patrick Rothfuss**

Humans have been hunters and gathers of knowledge since the beginning of time, all with the innate ability to learn by doing. Learning starts with inquiry. However, the impact of the learning depends on the quality of the question. I believe good questions lead to great questions that spark thinking and ignite deep learning. I believe true learning is built upon the foundation of inquiry. In order for inquiry to be most effective, it must be practiced and expected by both teachers and students.

As a proponent of learning, it is important to create a nurturing, safe environment in which students feel comfortable forming opinions and expressing ideas without fear of judgement. These options are vital to developing positive communities of learners. Positive learning communities are strong when they empower students with the confidence to ask thought provoking content questions, gather relevant information, process the input and apply the output to new situations. While all of these qualities are necessary components for building positive learning environments, I believe no learning environment is complete or significant without a teacher also providing **stability, honesty, loyalty and love.**

By giving students stability, honesty, loyalty and love, I get back more than I could have ever imagined in the way of student engagement. An engaged, high-energy environment removes any classroom management or discipline roadblocks paving the way for an environment that **promotes a culture of learning through meaningful inquiry, fosters collaboration opportunities where students deepen their understanding of subject matter while deepening their understanding of themselves and others, cultivates metacognition by authorizing students to own their learning and builds a community rich in relational capacity with a shared vision of success.**

Maintaining a dynamic atmosphere of learning is easy as long as we continue to learn before we can teach learning to our students. It has been said that the best teachers are those who show students where to look, but don’t tell them what to see. Take a glimpse into my classroom on any given day and you will find me guiding students rather than standing in the spotlight. Regrettably, that scenario was not always the case. When I think back to my first years as a seventh grade Science teacher, I cannot help but feel remorse for the times I robbed students of inquiry opportunities because I was too busy telling them about the accomplishments of others instead of letting them experiment, explore and discover for themselves.

I am thankful now for the regrets that helped to change my philosophies on teaching and learning. I know that becoming the best teacher I can be involves modeling for our students the process of how to ask and respond to higher level questions. One of the biggest influences in reshaping my philosophy on inquiry is Arthur Costa, professor emeritus at California State University in Sacramento. Costa created three levels of questioning that require higher order thinking skills to gather, process and apply information. Using effective questioning techniques allows us to challenge students to purposely consider the information rather than simply recall memorized facts. I get to teach students how to think about their thinking therefore enabling them to take ownership of their learning.

As a champion of inquiry based learning, I strive to serve our students by continually upping the rigor, increasing scaffolding and integrating technology. In doing so, I must remain practical in my beliefs keeping in mind philosopher John Dewey’s theory on human experience. Dewey claims that our past, present and future influences our capacity to learn. I believe we are all shaped by our experiences. We learn by questioning. We learn by doing. We learn by teaching and it is through teaching that we truly learn.

Annotated Bibliography

Bendall, P., Bollhoefer, A., & Koilpillai, V. (2015). *AVID Critical Thinking and Engagement: A*

*Schoolwide Approach*. San Diego: AVID Press.

This book was developed to help teachers’ schoolwide integrate high-engagement college prep strategies into their classes. The tools in this book support teachers as they build relational capacity with and amongst their students. Highlights of this book include chapters on cultivating metacognition, fostering collaboration opportunities and developing the inquiry skills necessary for students to become capable and effective leaders.

Spanella, T. (2003) . *John Dewey on Education: Theory & Philosophy* (Chapter 2) . Retrieved from

http://study.com/academy/lesson/john-dewey-on-education-theory-philosophy-quiz.html#transcriptHeader

This lesson from an online course taught by Professor Theresa Spanella, a college writing teacher for 15 years, spotlights John Dewey as the “Modern Father of Experiential Education” and his forward thinking philosophies that still hugely influence education today. Dewey’s approach to learning by doing is practiced in classrooms around the world and has changed the way educators teach and students learn.