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Statement of Educational Philosophy

I often speak about the need to *break the mold* in education. When most people hear the words *education* or *school*, they immediately picture a classroom with students at desks and a teacher in front of the room providing instruction. One of the things I am referring to is breaking the habit of this being the picture that comes to mind when we think about education. Although learning in a classroom is an essential aspect of a child's education, it shouldn't always *look* how we traditionally picture it. Education doesn't always have to happen solely within the walls of our classrooms, and we must recognize that there is so much more that plays a role in a child's development as they move through their K-12 education. As an educational leader, I understand the importance of continuous improvement focused on growing the individuals within the organization and developing an organizational culture that will foster the environment needed to meet the mission and beliefs of the District and benefit all students.

A child's K-12 education provides a foundation for their future. This foundation must develop the child's knowledge, skills, disposition, and experiences. As an educational leader, I am keenly aware that a child gets one shot at their K-12 education. Therefore, I am passionate about ensuring all students receive an education that builds agency, teaches empathy and compassion, and provides the necessary experiences to build the skills needed to navigate the world beyond high school with confidence.

Developing student agency must be at the core of instruction and learning. The *student* must be at the center of the classroom experience to build student agency, not the teacher. The role of the teacher is to create curiosity and the motivation to learn. Students must be doing the work in the classroom. Students should be asking questions, working collaboratively, engaging in discussion, and working toward solutions to problems. In addition to developing critical skills such as communication, collaboration, and agency, research has shown that students achieve academic success most when motivated and engaged (Skinner et al., 1990). In a classroom where a student is developing agency, they are motivated and engaged because of the voice and choice provided in their learning experience.

Students have instant access to a global world today during a student's K-12 education and certainly after. For success in a global world and to exercise agency successfully, K-12 education must help students develop empathy and compassion. Research has shown that higher levels of empathy correlate with increased productivity in cooperative situations and academic success (Brackett & Rivers, 2011). Additionally, social and emotional intelligence is often pointed to as a necessary skill for the future world of work. To develop empathy and compassion, we must expose students to the world by learning about different cultures, perspectives, and experiences. This is accomplished through a diverse literary canon representing multiple voices and perspectives, engaging students in difficult conversations, learning how to disagree respectfully, and providing opportunities to connect with the world beyond the classroom. I believe in the importance of listening to and understanding others. Empathy and compassion develop when we

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understand and appreciate the *why* behind another person's perspective and how they feel. This doesn't mean agreement with someone else's perspective. Instead, it is about feeling valued and expressing how you value, appreciate, and understand others.

Since we are preparing students for a global world, it is essential that the learning they experience has connections to the real world. Education cannot occur only through a text or come solely from the teacher. Students must engage in authentic learning experiences that explore real-world problems. This approach to teaching and learning helps students see the relevance of what they are learning and helps develop the belief that they can change the world around them. Research shows that engaging in authentic learning is one of the most effective ways for students to learn and helps to develop perseverance (Lombardi, 2007). Partnerships are critical to providing authentic learning experiences. We must leverage partnerships with outside organizations, industry professionals, and experts by tapping into community resources and resources beyond our immediate community. Students who see connections between their learning and the world maintain curiosity, motivation, and purpose while increasing achievement and success.

Equally crucial to the learning environment we create for students is creating an organizational culture that promotes a sense of belonging and purpose. If the ultimate goal is to provide an education that gives maximum benefit to all students, attention must be given to maximizing the growth of every individual in an organization. Therefore, it is equally essential to provide individuals in the organization with voice and choice, authentic learning experiences, and opportunities that build empathy. We must equip our educators to model the behaviors we want our students to aspire to. A healthy organization is one in which every individual feels valued, recognized, heard, and respected. As an educational leader, these are my core beliefs and provide the foundation of my leadership.

References

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