

## **James Hammer** **Philosophy of Education**

In 1950, during the supreme court case *Dennis v. United States*, Supreme court justice Felix Frankfurter said, “It was a wise man who said that there is no greater inequality than the equal treatment of unequals.”[3] This is a great beginning for the discussion of equality v. equity. Every student is different; however, I believe that every student is capable of learning. It is the instructor’s responsibility to help each individual find their own motivation. I believe that education can change the world. Colleges and universities are the great equalizer, attempting to put all graduates on the same playing field. In supplying ample motivation; keeping high, yet attainable expectations for students; and treating each individual differently according to their personality, it is my belief that students will not only attain the goals set for them, but will also become self-motivated to become the best person they can be.

**Instructor’s Responsibilities.** Instructors have many different responsibilities inside and outside of the classroom. One of the most important roles of the instructor is to be a motivator. If the instructor can motivate and encourage a student, the subject material becomes much easier to teach, regardless of student’s background. In teaching the student that they can do anything as long as they put their mind to it, the student will be more eager to learn and in turn put forth more effort.

Finding what motivates students puts everyone on the same playing field. In order to motivate students, I believe that an instructor needs to be staunchly anti-ist (e.g. anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti any other discriminatory classes). Dr. David Kung, who lead my Project NExT cohort, has found that “Interaction helps close achievement gaps.”[2]

In addition to this, an instructor must be a lifelong learner and model their enthusiasm for the students. As an instructor, one must always be willing to learn from their classrooms, and adapt to the class’s needs. No one has said it better than John Dewey when he said, “Education is a social process; education is growth; education is not a preparation for life, but it is life itself.”[1]

One final, but equally important role as a teacher is to be a positive role model. Students need good role models today more than ever; therefore, it is the educator’s responsibility to give them this hero.

**Students’ Responsibilities.** In turn, each student’s responsibility is to do the best they can, and live up to the expectations set for the class. Students at this level are innately interested in learning; it is the teacher’s responsibility to bring this interest to light. Students have a responsibility to themselves and their classmates to get involved with the class. Participation on the student’s part is mandatory; good learners are interactive, not passive. In turn, this interaction helps bring equity to the classroom. Everyone needs to know that they have a seat at the table. This world also needs more problem solvers and group thinkers; therefore, students are expected to learn from one another as well as from the teacher. If the student does not get something, it is their responsibility to find help wherever they can.

**Curriculum.** The curriculum should be challenging to the student – however, not discouraging. In the standard-driven world, it is imperative that the learners grasp the concepts expected of them within a given class. Mathematics is unfortunately a subject that has become ‘cool to hate;’ yet, it does not have to be. In showing one’s own enthusiasm for the subject, I have found that the students will inevitably follow. Allowing the students to go about solving problems different ways, expressing their thought on the subject, and interacting with the class, increases the students’ interest in the subject matter.

**Impact.** Colleges and universities can make a difference in society. Horace Mann put it best when he stated, “Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery.”[4] Education should be the great equalizer, giving everyone the opportunity to become anything they want to become. Ensuring to produce well rounded citizens, it is the school’s responsibility to give each student a diverse education in order for the scholar to attain their highest potential.

In supplying ample motivation; keeping high, yet attainable expectations for students; and treating each individual differently according to their personalities and skill sets, it is my belief that students will not only attain the goals set for them, but will also become self-motivated to become the best person they can be. It is my opinion that students all have the ability to learn, and they all want to learn. They also will try their best not to let down someone who they trust (i.e. the instructor). It is the responsibility of the instructor to construct an environment as conducive to learning as possible for each student. Also, the instructor must show the students that they values each student’s viewpoint. Students will still have to live up to the standards; however, through motivation and positive reinforcement, I believe this will be an attainable goal for each student. I will conclude with a quote from Horace Mann that I think sums this up very nicely: “A teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn is hammering on cold iron.”[5]

#### REFERENCES

1. J. Dewey, *Experience and education*, Free Press, 2007.
2. David Kung, *Empowering who? the challenge of diversifying the mathematical community*, 2015.
3. T. Lyons and N. Lyons, *The quotable lawyer*, Skyhorse Pub., 2010.
4. H. Mann and M.T.P. Mann, *Life and works of horace mann*, Life and Works of Horace Mann, no. v. 3, Walker, Fuller and Company, 1868.
5. Harry Houdini Collection (Library of Congress) and John Davis Batchelder Collection (Library of Congress), *The eclectic magazine of foreign literature, science, and art*, no. v. 7, Leavitt, Trow, & Company, 1868.