

20 Principles of the Educational Philosophy of

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(paraphrased from A Short Synopsis of educational philosophy advanced by the founder
of the PNEU: parents national education union)

'As soon as the soul spots truth, the soul recognizes it as her first and oldest friend.'
'The repercussions of truth are great. Therefore, we must not neglect to correctly judge what's true, and what's not.' -- Benjamin Whichcote

1. Children are born persons--they are not blank slates or undeveloped beings who only have the potential of becoming persons.
2. Although children are born with a sin nature, they should not be labeled all bad or all good. They remain image bearers of God.
3. The principles of authority and necessary obedience are natural and fundamental for society and for schooling, but...
4. This authority over children and their expected obedience is never a license to abuse them, to play upon their emotions or other desires, denying them an education, or give undue disrespect through fear, love, suggestion, or influence.
5. Therefore, the three primary educational instruments are the atmosphere of the environment, the discipline of habits, and the presentation of living ideas. The motto of the PNEU school was: "Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, and a life."
6. By "education is an atmosphere" we do not mean to place a child in an adapted environment on a childish level, but to take into account his or her natural home atmosphere and let the child live freely in proper authentic conditions.
7. By "education is a discipline" we do not refer to demanding a code of conduct, but to definitely and thoughtfully train the child in habits of mind, body, will, and spirit.
8. By "education is a life" we mean that the mind needs intellectual and moral sustenance just as the body needs healthy food. The mind feeds on ideas, and children should have a broad and varied curriculum and practice.

9. Thus, the child's mind is no mere sack stuffed with other's ideas, but a spiritual organism with an appetite to learn. With the proper diet with which it is prepared to deal, it can digest and assimilate ideas on its own.

10. The prevailing idea that the mind is a receptacle waiting to be filled with information puts responsibility totally on the teacher to prepare and deliver lessons, thinking "what the children learn rests totally on how I teach them." Children then receive much teaching and little learning.

11. Instead, we believe that children's minds are capable of dealing with real knowledge proper to them, needing a full and generous curriculum that takes care to not present facts or concepts without their informing ideas.

12. By "education is the science of relations" we mean that children have natural relations and connections with a vast number of things and thoughts; so we make sure the child has physical exercise, nature study, music, science, history, and art, knows how to make things, and reads many living books. Though we cannot teach children all about anything, we want to excite their personal interests as much as possible.

13. In devising a curriculum for all backgrounds and learning styles of children, we provide a vast amount of ideas to ensure that the mind is stimulated, knowledge about a variety of things to build curiosity, and teaching with high-quality literary language that supplies the child's natural interest in stories.

14. Since one doesn't really 'own' knowledge until it is reproduced, children are required to narrate, or tell back (or write down) after a single reading, all or part of what they are read or heard.

15. A single reading is insisted upon, because most children naturally have the power of attention, and allowing a second reading weakens their ability to pay attention the first time. Teachers summarizing and asking comprehension questions are other ways of unnecessarily giving children a second chance and making the need to focus the first time less urgent. By getting it the first time, less time is wasted on repeated readings, and more time is available during school hours for other learning. A child educated this way learns more than children using

other methods, and this is true for all children regardless of their IQ or background.

16. Children have two guides to help them in their moral and intellectual self-control--'the way of the will,' and 'the way of reason.'

17. Children must learn the difference between 'I want,' and 'I will.' They must learn to divert their thoughts when tempted to do what they want but know is not best. Instead, they think of something else, or do something else interesting enough to occupy their mind. After a short diversion, their mind will be refreshed and able to will with renewed strength. The discipline of failure that children experience when they do what they want, rather than what they will or should, is as valuable as a reward for success.

18. Children must learn not to lean too confidently on their own reasoning and understanding. Reasoning is good for logically demonstrating mathematical truth or the initial logic of an idea, but sometimes unreliable because our reasoning will justify all kinds of erroneous ideas if we really want to believe them.

19. Knowing that reason is not to be trusted as the final authority in forming opinions, children must learn as persons that their greatest responsibility is choosing which ideas to accept or to reject. Teachers and parents must train habits of behavior and heart knowledge that will hopefully provide the discipline and experience to help them do this.

20. We teach children that all truths are God's truths, and that life does not consist of a separate secular life and a spiritual life. Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit is our guide into all truth. He is the ruler over all areas of their interests and is always close to them both as a friend and a king. They are his children and He is their present Helper in all the duties, through the valleys, and joys of life.

--edited by Bobby Scott, March 4, 2019 from the paraphrase of Leslie Noelani, 2008.