

Benchmark Educational Philosophy in Practice Assignment

Annalise Shaffer

Department of Counselor Education & Family Studies, Liberty University

Author Note

Annalise B. Shaffer

I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Annalise B. Giordano

Email: agiordano2@liberty.edu

Abstract

Education should not only build academic knowledge but also nurture students' moral, social, and emotional growth, preparing them to become reflective, responsible, and engaged members of society through progressive and humanistic approaches. These ideas are expanded upon through examining the philosophy of schools and applying progressivism and humanistic philosophies. Next, instructional practices that foster student growth and cultivate personal experience, exploration, and meaningful content engagement are reviewed in depth. After that, the roles and relationships between the school counselor, students, and school staff are examined. Issues of student diversity in learning are assessed, as well. The final paragraph explores the author's personal calling as a professional school counselor (PSC) and applies a biblical worldview.

Keywords: educational philosophy, progressivism philosophy, humanistic philosophy, professional school counseling

Introduction

The purpose of education is a unique debate that has been ongoing for decades, as it examines the “why” of education. Often, the focus is on how education is delivered or by whom. The why of education is important to address and understand, though, as it directly impacts the methods of delivery and instructional practices (how and by whom). The alignment of education with philosophy influences curriculum development, community economics, and social support. The overall consensus is that there is no one correct “why” of education (Murray, 2023), making it imperative to understand personal reasoning and understanding as a working educational professional. Education should not only build academic knowledge but also nurture students’ moral, social, and emotional growth, preparing them to become reflective, responsible, and engaged members of society through progressive and humanistic approaches.

Philosophy of Schools & Learning

The purpose of education is twofold. At its core, education enhances and develops students’ academic knowledge. Beyond academics, though, education nurtures students as individuals and as members of society. Education should foster moral growth, critical thinking, and sound decision-making. Ultimately, the long-term impact of schools and learning is to cultivate productive, thoughtful, and unique members of society. These ideas are supported by both progressive and humanistic philosophies of education, as academic learning and moral development are addressed. The overarching goal of the progressivism philosophy is child-centered learning that goes beyond academic achievement (Ornstein et al., 2016). Progressivism aims to educate students based on their interests and personal needs (Ornstein et al., 2016). Humanistic philosophy promotes the student as an active figure in the learning process through natural motivations and the goal of self-actualization (Arnold & Foncubierta, 2021). From a

broad view perspective, these philosophies focus on integrating student individualization into the academic curriculum.

Instructional Practice

Now that the purpose of education has been established, the methods and educational practices can be examined. Learners can come to know the truth and construct their understanding through blending progressive and humanistic applications in education- experience, exploration, and meaningful content engagement. Learning occurs when knowledge is used as an instrument to accomplish a purpose (Ornstein et al., 2016), which highlights instructional methods and pedagogical practices that apply practical application and meaningful contextualization rather than rote knowledge.

Pedagogical Practices

Progressive strategies that uphold these practices are project-based learning, collaborative/group problem-solving, and hands-on/inquiry-based experiences (Ornstein et al., 2016). Humanistic strategies that can help accomplish these goals are personal reflections, self-assessments, setting personal goals, and the exploration of emotions and personal interests (Arnold & Foncubierto, 2021). By engaging in a combination of strategies, I hope to support lifelong learning, student confidence and autonomy, and practical applications of academic knowledge/curriculum- all of which are geared towards helping students become active contributors to society as a whole.

Epistemology

Closely related to pedagogical practices is the study and analysis of epistemology. Epistemology is the study of knowledge that focuses on what causes learning to occur and why we, as a society, jointly decide what is true (Sol & Heng, 2022). Learning occurs through many

means and experiences. These include the five senses, memory, and testimony, but none can stand alone in making something true (Sol & Heng, 2022). Skepticism- the theory that certain knowledge is impossible to attain- is what fosters an environment suitable for learning (Sol & Heng, 2022). By facilitating educational settings that are conducive to exploration, questioning, genuine wonder, and problem-solving, meaningful learning occurs. It is not that we train students to be doubtful of lesson content or information, but rather foster a mindset that values critical thinking and analysis before drawing conclusions.

Differentiation Strategies

Blending progressive and humanistic philosophies sustains the idea that classroom differentiation is imperative to meet diverse student needs through assorted methodologies. Differentiation is the process of adapting lesson content, instruction, and evaluation to address students' wide-ranging strengths and learning styles (Goyibova et al., 2025).

Lesson plans can be differentiated and adapted through educators being understanding of student needs, experiences, and changes in academic performance (Goyibova et al., 2025). This means that teachers and staff go further than recycling and regurgitating the required curriculum. Based on the students in the classroom, what examples apply to their lives? What will they relate to? How can this be made personable? This could be as simple as including popular lexicons and pop culture references. This will change solely based on the student audience.

Classroom instruction can be modified by creating learning experiences that appeal to various types of learning. This could look like writing assignments for linguistic learners, creating charts and diagrams for visual-spatial learners, providing hands-on activities for kinesthetic learners, and composing rhythms that relate to content for musical learners

(Goyibova et al., 2025). Essentially, this is a continuation of intentional lesson planning to maintain student interest and motivation.

Differentiated classroom management strategies include (1) basic, yet explicit instructions/signage that utilizes different languages, (2) consistent routines and classroom procedures, (3) and development of student social-emotional skills (Tigert et al., 2022). These classroom management strategies address various parts of the “whole student” to make them feel included in the everyday classroom activities. These strategies emphasize meeting students at their current level and are attentive to their academic proficiencies and emotional needs (Tigert et al., 2022).

School Counselor-Learner Relationships

The Role of the Student

Learning directly influences student behavior (Graham, 2023). In my philosophy of education, the student’s role is central, though the teacher remains a facilitator, supporter, and designer of learning experiences. Students take ownership of their learning by setting goals, pursuing interests, and cultivating curiosity and intrinsic motivation beyond classroom assignments. Teachers create safe spaces where students encounter “positive tension,” challenging them to solve problems creatively and grow as thinkers and moral individuals (Graham, 2023). Students are responsible for identifying solutions that work for them, reflecting on their progress, and gradually developing self-awareness and responsibility as learners. By engaging in reflection, goal-setting, and meaningful decision-making, students strengthen not only their academic skills but also their social, emotional, and moral capacities, ultimately developing their whole selves as thoughtful, capable, and independent individuals.

The Role of the Professional School Counselor (PSC)

Historically, the role of the professional school counselor (PSC) has been ambiguous. Since the 1900s, PSC's role has shifted focus numerous times, often reflecting political climates and societal legislation (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Throughout the decades, PSCs have handled vocational guidance, emotional well-being, administrative assistance, and academic and social success (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). It should also be noted that PSCs differ from clinical mental health professionals in that they cannot diagnose individuals with disorders listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR).

According to the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) (2019), the role of the school counselor is to uphold and address student academic success, social-emotional well-being, and college/career planning. This is also reflected in ASCA ethics code A.1.f, which describes how school counselors are not there for the purpose of diagnosing, but are responsible for students' access to and achievement of academic, postsecondary, and social/emotional success.

Collaboration & Data-Driven Practices

To uphold their duty of fostering academic, career, and social-emotional development for students, PSCs must collaborate with other educational professionals. This may look like collaborating with teachers to explore student needs, plan relevant classroom psychoeducational lessons, vet group members, and gather/analyze data through grades, progress reports, functional behavior assessments, etc. PSCs may need to collaborate with administration to update school improvement and/or crisis plans, provide support in student conflicts, and resolve student scheduling conflicts. PSCs may also need to partner with school resource officers and the nurse if they need to report suspicion of child abuse or handle other sensitive information.

PSCs must also take student needs into consideration and collaborate with them as relevant stakeholders. The student body is the main population and focus of a PSC, thus making their input important to improve student outcomes. This could look like collecting needs assessment surveys to see where students would like/need more support. The same data could also be collected from student parents and families as well.

Using data to identify and evaluate interventions is a key part of a comprehensive school counseling program. Data allows you to see reported student requests/concerns (needs assessment) and gaps in outcome data (achievement, attendance, and discipline). Disaggregated data also allows for further analysis and helps find patterns that could potentially be hidden in broad, whole-group data. By relying on data, PSCs can see where programs and interventions are actually making a difference and closing achievement gaps. This way, time, energy, and resources are not wasted in irrelevant areas.

Diversity

As previously discussed, ensuring that education addresses the whole child is a large part of my philosophy of education. This means that student diversity- such as age, gender, physical ability, neurodiversity, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, morals, culture, values, etc.- needs to be considered. PSCs are responsible for affirming student identity and practicing multicultural competence in schools. This relates to ASCA ethics codes A.1.b, A.1.d., A.1.e, A.1.h, and A.10.b. All of these codes relate to supporting and affirming student identity, respecting a student's culture, and practicing with cultural competence.

Factors of student diversity impact instruction because they relate to feelings of belonging. Multicultural counseling and teaching support schools and staff eliminate bias, prejudice, and stereotyping- whether spoken or unspoken. Students who feel connected to a

meaningful community are less likely to engage in substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, violence, and experience emotional distress (Young et al., 2024). Connected students have been found to have improved test scores, graduation rates, and better attendance (Young et al., 2024). Strategies to promote equity and inclusion within academic achievement, college readiness, and other postsecondary opportunities include clubs, classroom guidance lessons around topics such as inclusion and empathy, special events (like a multicultural fair), utilizing relevant content in the classroom (books, articles, etc.), and including group projects that require critical thinking and pairing of uncommon students (Young et al., 2024).

My Calling

God revealed my path of becoming a school counselor through having me walk through my own trials of clinical anxiety and losing a loved one to suicide. God strengthened my faith during these challenging times, and I have learned that I am called to lift others during their personal challenges as well. I have worked with children throughout my life, and I find that school settings are the best place to continue on this path. Typically, children who are loved in their homes attend school to learn. Children who lack love in their home environment attend school to be loved. It is my goal to show God's unwavering love to the students I serve, because He loved me first (see 1 John 4:19). 1 Peter 3:8 (ESV) states, "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." This verse captures my intended professional posture perfectly and aligns with my values.

Conclusion

The purpose of education extends far beyond academics. It is about shaping the whole person, so that students are prepared to thrive as reflective and responsible members of society. Grounded in progressive and humanistic philosophies, this belief advocates for instructional

practices that prioritize curiosity, self-awareness, and meaningful engagement, as well as school counselor relationships that affirm student and staff identity and promote a sense of belonging. Addressing diversity, collaborating with stakeholders, and using data-driven strategies further ensure that every student is seen, supported, and challenged to grow. My personal calling, shaped by both faith and life experience, strengthens this commitment to serve students with compassion, empathy, and unwavering love. In this way, education becomes not only a means of academic growth but also a transformative process that nurtures the whole person and strengthens the communities they will one day lead. Students are the face of the future, so the development of the whole self is imperative.

References

- American School Counselor Association. (2019). *The ASCA national model* (4th ed.).
<https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/978-1-929289-61-5>
- American School Counselor Association. (2022). *Ethical standards for school counselors*.
Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Arnold, J., & Foncubierto, J. M. (2021). The humanistic approach. In T. Gregersen & S. Mercer
(Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of the psychology of language learning and teaching*
(pp. 36–48). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429321498-5>
- Goyibova, N., Muslimov, N., Sabirova, G., Kadirova, N., & Samatova, B. (2025). Differentiation
approach in education: Tailoring instruction for diverse learner needs. *MethodsX*, 14,
103163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2025.103163>
- Graham, D. L. (2023). *Teaching redemptively* (3rd ed.). Association of Christian Schools
International.
- Lambie, G. W., & Williamson, L. L. (2004). The challenge to change from guidance counseling
to professional school counseling: A historical proposition. *Professional School
Counseling*, 8(2), 124-131.
<https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/challenge-change-guidance-counseling-professional/docview/213332594/se-2>
- Murray, J. (2023). What is the purpose of education? A context for early childhood education.
International Journal of Early Years Education, 31(3), 571–578.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2023.2238399>
- Ornstein, A. C., Levine, D. U., Gutek, G., & Vocke, D. E. (2016). *Foundations of education*
(13th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Sol, K., & Heng, K. (2022). Understanding epistemology and its key approaches in research.

Cambodian Journal of Educational Research, 2(2), 80–99.

<https://doi.org/10.62037/cjer.2022.02.02.05>

Tigert, J. M., Peercy, M. M., Fredricks, D., & Kidwell, T. (2022). Humanizing classroom management as a core practice for teachers of multilingual students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 56(4), 1087–1111. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3093>

Young, E., Demissie, Z., Szucs, L. E., Brener, N. D., Waheed, F., & Jasani, S. (2024). Trends in diversity-related learning among secondary schools in 35 US states, 2014-2018. *Health Education Journal*, 83(1), 52–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00178969231221000>

BENCHMARK SCHOOL SIMS: FINAL ASSIGNMENT TEMPLATE *Simulations 5, 6, & 7: Complete the template below and upload it into Canvas.*

NARRATIVE: Write into the template **one 250-word statement** reflecting on a main idea from Simulations 5, 6, or 7. Within your narrative, please address the following:

- Provide a brief overview of the main idea
- Identify a standard from the Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) that corresponds with the main the idea you selected
- Explain why this main idea and/or standard resonated with you
- Discuss a Bible verse that aligns with this main idea and/or standard

Be sure to follow current APA format.

Note: Your assignment will be checked for originality via the Turnitin plagiarism tool.

Please remember to also upload/attach your .pdf Feedback Report for Simulations 5, 6, & 7 to the School Sims Final Assignment.

NARRATIVE:

Final Reflection: Simulation 7

Main Idea

The simulation in Module 7, titled Student in Crisis, is about being a school leader and the process navigating of the school climate and environment after the loss of a student to suicide. In this module, there are a number of tradeoffs considered. This includes being accurate and sensitive in information dissemination while also balancing keeping staff and students informed in a timely manner to avoid chaos and the formation of the rumor mill. Other issues that arose were considering who to involve in meetings and how to communicate in an effective way while considering staff feelings and reactions. Overall, this module facilitates critical thinking to learn how to balance heightened emotional states, empathy overload, and keeping the school environment focused on learning.

Model Code of Ethics for Educators Application

Two Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) ethics codes apply to this simulation. The first is from the section Principle III: Responsibility to Students. Code B3 states that professional educators are responsible for “Establishing and maintaining an environment that promotes the emotional, intellectual,

physical and sexual safety of all students” (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 2023, p. 4). The second code that applies is from Principle IV: Responsibility to the School Community. Code C1 states that professionals are responsible for, “Maintaining the highest professional standards of accuracy, honesty and appropriate disclosure of information when representing the school or district within the community and in public communications” (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 2023, p. 5)

Biblical Integration

Bible verses that apply to this simulation are Psalm 30:5 and John 14:27. Psalm 30:5 (ESV) states, “Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.” This verse highlights the vulnerability and grief that can occur during the human lifetime. What sticks out to me is the highlight of encouragement that joy will come to us again. Even if we lose faith, Jesus never leaves us. John 14:27 (ESV) reads, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” Suicide is typically something that rocks communities and instills fear. In times of severe stress and grief, the Lord will provide peace.

Personal Impact

This main idea and related standards resonate with me because of the degree of sensitivity to the issue. I have lost someone close to me to suicide, so I understand the gravity of appropriate action and reaction. It can be difficult to find what is “right” in situations like this because nothing feels like enough. I really liked that I was able to balance emotional consideration and timely responses in this simulation. Mental health is an ever-present issue with all ages, and I think it’s important to learn how to navigate these situations while the stakes are lower.

References

English Standard Version Bible. (2001). ESV Online. <https://esv.literalword.com/>

National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC). (2023, July). *Model Code of Ethics for Educators* (2nd ed., print version) [PDF].

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.nasdtec.net/resource/resmgr/mcee/mcee_2nd_edition_print_versi.pdf