

CHRISTOPHER BRANDT

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

As educators, we are bestowed with the awesome responsibility of molding the subsequent generation. This staggering undertaking must be done with great intention and care. First and foremost, students must be made to feel safe, welcome, and free to experiment and expand their knowledge and limitations. It is no small request to nudge someone beyond what they believe their limitations are, and a person will only do so, will only attempt, and take risks, if they know they are safe. This, of course, does not mean that an educator should catch them every time they fall as failure breeds innovation, but rather to allow them to fail in a way that allows them to learn, and encourages them to try again. This type of risk-taking is most prevalent in a professional, trusting, and inclusive environment, built on a shared goal of betterment of all.

Our scope of student development expands well beyond our individual discipline. We must strive to develop the whole individual, to foster not just subject mastery, but rather a way of viewing the world, of questioning, analyzing, being curious, and creating unique solutions to existing challenges. Striving to meet the student at their current level of understanding and building from there, creating incremental gaps, allowing the student the opportunity to creating connections rather than simply being fed information is essential. Students must take ownership of their education, as it is a partnership and agreement entered into by both student and teacher, and an agreement of shared responsibility. While a teacher may present the door to knowledge, and at times even open it, it is the student who must walk through, or breakthrough, that door. Struggle is necessary in learning. The more a student struggles to leap a hurdle or solve a problem, the deeper the anchor of the new connections made will be. One of the most challenging aspects of education is knowing how close or far a student is from that breakthrough, how much help they *need* to get there, and giving them just enough and no more. It can be tempting to walk the path for them, leaving bread crumbs every few feet. We have been there and seen the pitfalls; we know the path for safe passage. However, we must refrain. Every hurdle we leap for them is one less they have leapt in our safe environment, and is one less bit of experience they will have to draw upon once they leave our classroom.

That must be the end goal of education - to prepare our students to face a changing world, and prepare them to fall. The most useful experience we can give our students is that of failing, and using that failure as a springboard to success. Resilience, like any skill, takes time to acquire. Our classrooms should act as a laboratory for trying, failing, and getting back up. Here is where music makes one of its most important, if lesser recognized, contributions to education. Music is hard, it can not simply be read about, understood, and mastered. It must be experienced. And for all (save a

very few), this experience will include failure, but it also includes many small victories and triumphs which help establish self-worth. It establishes a sense of pride and connection with something larger than oneself, both of which helps to lift someone once they have fallen. These skills and attributes, acquired in a controlled environment, prepare our students for the inevitable day when they leave our classroom and must continue their journey on their own.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Brandt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Christopher Brandt
Graceland University, director of bands