The Merriam-Webster Dictionary’s definition of school is, “an organization that provides instruction as an institution for the teaching of children.” Although I agree that a school is a place that provides instruction to teach children, I also believe that a school is so much more than that. I believe that a school is a place where a child can feel comfortable enough to grow intellectually, morally, and socially, and find themselves along the way. In order to create this type of learning environment, I have based my personal philosophy of education on progressivism and essentialism.

Progressivism is all about helping students learn how to figure things out on their own and develop problem-solving skills. In order to do this, the students must do a great deal of their work in small groups; there is not a teacher there to guide them every step of the way. If someone were to walk into my classroom, they would know right away that it I have been heavily influenced by the progressive philosophy. I refuse to have students’ desk lined up in neat, boring rows. Instead, my students’ desks will be set up in groups, because I will utilize group work often. When I am setting up my desks I will also do my best to leave big spaces on the ground so that the students are able to work on the floor if they need to. If my school allows it, I will have a section of the classroom set up for computer work. I will also have a center with dictionaries, maps, and encyclopedias. With different centers, it will be easier for different groups to provide the rest of the class with different information. On the walls of my classroom I will have maps, charts, tables, and various pictures. I will periodically change out the pictures to keep the students interested. At the beginning of the year, I will have some blank space on the walls so that I have room to hang up the students’ work throughout the year. My only hope for my classroom is that nobody will ever walk in and be able to honestly say they are bored. I believe that progressivism is the best way for children to become socially developed. With the large amount of time spent working in groups, students will be better prepared to enter into a democratic society when they are done with school.

Although I believe group work is beneficial to students, I also believe that the teacher should hold the authority in the classroom. In my opinion, in order to be a good citizen in a democratic society, one must also be disciplined. It is easiest for someone to learn discipline at a young age, so, like in essentialism, it is the teacher’s job to install discipline and order into a classroom. Like other essentialists, I believe that children should learn the traditional, basic subjects in school. Students should be taught the things that are essential for them to be successful in their world. Obviously, reading, writing, and mathematics are essential to one’s life; however, I believe that science, history, and computer skills are also essential for a developing mind to learn. If a student is interested in these areas, I think he or she should also be allowed to study art, music, foreign languages, etc. . . Even though essentialism is based on the traditional subjects, it is still possible for a student to become well-rounded in an essentialist classroom.

With the right combination of progressivism and essentialism, I feel that I will be a successful teacher. My students will know how to function on their own, but also understand how to be disciplined enough to take orders; this will be useful when they have jobs and must take orders from their bosses. Under my philosophy of teaching, students will be able to become mature, well-rounded young adults as they develop intellectually, morally, and socially.