



Solomon Masala | Educational and Teaching Philosophy

Three Pillars of Classroom Learning

Every learner possesses genius.

The educator and school must nurture a context where that genius flowers and flourishes - where imagination and concrete skills unite.

- The teacher must keenly observe students to recognize inherent gifts.
- The teacher must provide learning opportunities to strengthen those gifts in tandem with areas of development.
- The teacher must acknowledge these gifts as part of all assessments.
- The teacher must recognize the dynamic nature of development, noting that inherent genius can evolve and change along with the learner's natural development.

Teaching processes must span the full spectrum of intelligences.

Howard Gardener's Theory of Multiple Intelligences identifies eight inherent 'intelligences.' I liken each intelligence to a channel, a mode of learning, or a point of entry for new information. Since each learner's multiple intelligence profile is unique, the more channels an educator can access and address, the richer the learning environment, and the more the learner can ignite their focus and engagement.

- The teacher must keenly observe students in order to map their learning channels (intelligences), and structure learning to address as many intelligences as possible in each lesson
- A classroom in which the learning is creative, kinesthetic, cooperative, and social in addition to didactic, enhances the brain's access to new information.
- In an 'intelligence rich' learning environment, learners will be internally motivated to seek new information.

Teachers and schools must embody, model, and inspire emotional intelligence.

The ability to engage compassionate collaborative action, rooted in self-reflection and deep respect for all life, is core to learning success. When the art of listening and a commitment to resolution are foundational and practiced daily, true community can emerge, which inspires deep, lifelong learning. Authenticity and relationships leveled by our shared humanity are the basis for enriching learning interactions.

- The teacher must engage and model personal practices for developing and expanding emotional intelligence.
- The teacher must continually build capacity to manage and resolve conflict, demonstrating deep respect in the conflict resolution process.
- The teacher must value the power of ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, and model the ability to foster dialogue, understanding, and relationship building, while honoring personal beliefs.

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Three Pillars of School Behavior Management

Behavior is a literacy; and for most people, a choice.

To learn and master mathematics and science (or *any* academic subject), students must build literacy within the subject - from foundational to advanced skills. Behavior is similar: all young people build behavioral literacy skills from toddler through adulthood. Though this initiates and is sustained by parents and guardians, schools are perfectly positioned to serve and support behavioral literacy development, and help learners recognize the power of choice with respect to behavior. For most people, behavior *is* a choice. In the spirit of partnership with students and parents:

- The school and teachers must set clearly defined expectations (natural boundaries/community agreements), appropriate to students' social/emotional developmental stage.
- The school and teachers must provide modeling, skill development, coaching and reinforcement to build the expected behavioral skills, and empower students' appropriate behavioral choices.
- The school and teachers must set clearly defined (and as natural as possible), consequences, appropriate to students' social/emotional developmental stage, should students make choices that defy the natural boundaries.
- Consequences must include the developmentally appropriate discussions with students as well as the choices/actions students can take to rebuild broken trust and rectify negative impact.
- Students should be offered developmentally appropriate support towards rectification.
- Wherever appropriate, students should be involved in developing the full set of community agreements and the application of consequences.

Universal core values uplift and support the whole.

Universal core values support individuals and communities to thrive. Though parents and guardians hold ongoing responsibility for this education, schools are perfectly positioned to support students' deeper understanding of civic responsibility and the skills to effect these values. Values should be placed in a context that demonstrates benefit to self and others. Behavioral literacy allows universal core values to be successfully expressed. Consequences (as natural as possible), are enacted when core values are broken. Universal core values include:

- Refraining from physical, verbal, and emotional violence towards people, animals and plants
- Respect for others' property and belongings
- Being truthful and accountable in actions and words
- Upholding and championing human dignity
- Embracing and respecting diversity in all its forms

Relationship building and partnership are core to school behavior management.

There is an essential human need to bond and belong. When this need is nurtured in healthy ways, it results in pro-social behavior emerging from the individual's locus of control. Schools are key to reinforcing the critical elements of pro-social bonding (per Social Development Strategy - J.D. Hawkins and R.F. Catalano). Schools should provide:

- The opportunity for involvement in productive, pro-social roles
- The skills to be successfully involved in those roles
- The recognition and reinforcement for their pro-social involvement