Belief Statement

As an educator I have a strong belief in constructivism through student inquiry. As a high school English teacher my thoughts are most reflected in the work of Bruner and Vygotsky. I believe the best teacher is frequently another student with the ‘grown up’ teacher helping students to co-construct meaning and understanding (Woolfolk, H., & Ellen, 2002). To borrow from the work of the teacher/researcher Jeff Wilhelm, I would suggest that inquiry is valuable as a form of constructivism in that it leads to

* + **Toolish real life heuristic value to learning**. Learning something that does actual work in my real life
  + **Apprenticing students to communities of practice.** Having English students think and make the same ‘moves’ as an academic writer and thinker does.
  + **Having student work as the central focus.** Through student uncovering and inquiry the teacher is a participant and catalyst—not the simply the person with the answers. (Wilhelm, 2007)

Bruner’s approach to constructivism holds that “each of us generates our own ‘rules’ and ‘mental models,’ which we use to make sense of our experiences,” (*Constructivism,* 2011). Furthermore, that “as far as instruction is concerned, the instructor should try and encourage students to discover principles by themselves” ("Constructivist theory," 2011).I feel strong affiliation to those statements and in what Richard Rorty (and others) have said that truth is made not found—therefore our students should be actively questioning, parsing, and more importantly, creating there own truths (Rorty , 1989).

In my practice I have found the inquiry constructivist approach is both more challenging and more rewarding when compared to more traditional approaches. Too often students are used to forms of learning as ‘telling’ that they are confused and reluctant to try to approach learning as understanding or as culture making. It takes great efforts to ensure that students have enough trust to be able to open themselves to more challenging ways of learning and knowing. When students buy into a constructivist approach based on inquiry, they are more engaged as they reach conclusions that are wholly their own.

References

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