

Jessica Merrikin's Philosophy of Education
A statement of Decolonization, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

I will begin by situating myself as a white, straight, cis-gendered woman of settler ancestry. I walk through life supported by the most dominant privileges of our society. I begin many introductory statements this way as I believe drawing attention to this fact keeps me rooted in awareness and curiosity. This guides my practice and ultimately supports the wellness of a diverse classroom. Consciousness of decolonizing my practice compounded by emphasizing choice, nurturing growth, creating safe spaces for my students, and maintaining personal accountability is how I intend to be an educator who is equitable, inclusive, embraces diversity and actionably responds to the TRC 94 calls to action.

A sentence that guides much of my thinking is "What do I know to be true and why?" I ask myself this when planning units and assessment because much of what we task students with is rooted in colonial ways of thinking and performing. It is a simple, yet effective guide in critically examining where my intentions come from and whose truth their purpose is rooted in. All ways of knowing and being are legitimate and therefore perceptions of truth must be critically studied.

I hope to foster an understanding of life-long-learning in classrooms. This looks like diversified assessment that emphasizes the collection of knowledge and skills as a personal and unique journey. Students will be involved in the process of assessment and identifying next steps through individual mastery conferences and regular practice with assessment as learning tools.

To extend this growth-mindset and prioritize equity in my classroom, choice will guide the student experience through inquiry-based learning and again, ownership of the assessment process. I feel passionate about supporting the choice of expression. I hope to give students the choice to express themselves orally, artistically or through written word whenever possible.

I believe that all of the ladder intentions cannot be successful without first creating a space for all learners to feel safe and essential. Genuine attempts to know students, to inquire about their lives and make personal connections will be foundational to students feeling safe. I will promote an environment where all students see their opportunity to provide a safe space for their peers by modeling and teaching the results of reciprocity and kindness.

Finally, I will ensure that I am an educator who is conscious and student-centered by applying much of the same techniques to my own journey. I will remain critical of my intentions, take advantage of life-long learning, embrace self-assessment and work to be a modest mentor who is aware of the space that they take up.