

# Experiential Learning



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## Welcome to our experiential learning website!

As graduate students at The University of Arizona, we were given a class project to develop something that would explore a variety of aspects about experiential learning. We have created this website as a resource to demonstrate how both the university community and the community at-large can take part and benefit from experiential learning.

**"Experiential learning stimulates original thinking and develops a wide range of thinking strategies and perceptual skills which are not called forth by books or lectures."**

As suggested by this quote from "Teaching for the Two-sided Mind" by Linda Verlee

Williams (1983), experiential learning encompasses interactive learning, non-traditional structures, and much more. With experiential learning, a person is able to incorporate his or her personal learning styles and gain benefit from both traditionally structured classes and everyday life events. We have explored many avenues of experiential learning and we invite you to take a closer look through exploration of our website.

by Patti Bolle

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**Web development team:**

Rita Ellsworth and Stacy Enslen

**Graduate Project Team:**

Patti Bolle

Dana Brentt

Trish Claves

Rita Ellsworth

Stacy Enslen

Danielle Hunt

Hilary Seitz

## Experiential Learning: What is it?

Click on the image above to play the animation. You'll need the Macromedia Shockwave plug-in to play the animation. If you don't have the plug-in, you can download it for **FREE** by clicking on the button below. by Rita Ellsworth



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## Hands-on Examples: Integrating Experience with Learning

by Dana Brentt

There are as many means of

### **integrating experience with learning**

as there are those who follow their individual paths of discovery.

This experience-based approach to *learning* involves

### **patterns of growth & change**



which have effects on a learner's

### **development as whole person.**

Thus, it becomes essential for facilitators of learning to reflect on their own holistic strengths in order to recognize modes of effectively incorporating

### **experience-based teaching**

into a variety of learning environments.

*Above photo: rippling patterns of windblown desert sands*

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## Experiential Learning: Hands-on Examples

The experiential learning examples on this page reflect the variety of situations where hands-on experiences lead to learning.

Learning is facilitated when participants are actively engaged in a situation . . . including classroom activities, work-related experiences, and everyday events.



### Eureka of Discovery

Click graphic to view.



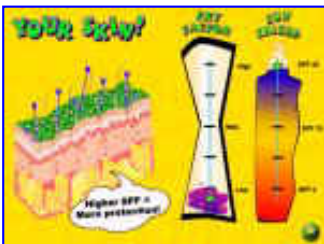
### Classroom Activities

Click graphic to view.



### Creating Together

Click graphic to view.



### Interactive simulation

Click graphic to view. This simulation uses the Macromedia Shockwave plug-in, download it for **FREE** by clicking on the button below.



### Beyond the Classroom

Click graphic to view.



**College Students:  
Collaborating with the Community**

Click graphic to view.



**Work-related Experiences:  
Adults Continuing to Learn**

Click graphic to view.



**Learning from Everyday Events**

Click graphic to view. This sample requires  
QuickTime to play the video. (Video size 251kb)



**Lifelong Learning: Clever Seniors**

Click graphic to view.

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## **Experiential Learning: Teaching Philosophy**

- **Understanding Your Personal Philosophy of Experiential Education** by Danielle Hunt
- **Taking the time to let your authentic self resonate** by Dana Brentt

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## Experiential Learning: Teaching Philosophy

### TEACHING FROM THE HEART

#### Holistic teaching

In his book Teaching from the Heart (1996), Apps approaches teaching and learning from a holistic perspective. This is different than the typical mechanistic model of education, which places the teacher in the position of 'expert' and the students as the recipient of the teacher's knowledge. Holistic teaching and learning involves the whole person, the body, mind, and spirit. This holistic approach addresses more than developing the mental capacities of learners, but views both teachers and learners as lifelong learners actively engaging life. This approach leads people into a process of self-awareness, the recognition of life cycles, and the role of relationships with people, nature, and community. Teaching from the heart is more than acquiring facts or knowledge about a particular discipline. It is about learning who we are and the role our self-knowledge has in our teaching.

#### Becoming a **critical thinker** from Within

Apps challenges people in general, and educators more specifically, to become critical thinkers by questioning the assumptions that undergird the social beliefs and values we have been raised with and taught to accept. These assumptions are the values and beliefs of modernization which are described by Capra (as cited in Apps) as competition, monetary gain, people and the world functioning like a machine, and the unquestioned acceptance of truth as described by the 'experts.' In addition, assumptions that shape our lives are also based on the values and beliefs of our families of origin and life experiences that have impacted how we view the world. Understanding and questioning the assumptions by which we live and teach provides the opportunity for each of us to live authentically. In this context, authentic living is the result of consciously identifying and choosing the values, beliefs, and attitudes that shape our lives, and living in accordance with them. Some of these will remain the same, but some will change, from what we believed to be true as children or young adults. These changes may not be dramatic, but modifications of our beliefs. This process is elemental to understanding your personal philosophy. Apps (1991) and Huber (1998) believe that a personal philosophy is a working philosophy. A working philosophy is in the constant process of development. For example, people often reflect upon earlier years in their lives and realize that their beliefs differ somewhat from what they believed five, ten, or twenty years ago. Therefore, a personal philosophy is a 'working philosophy' in that it is in constant development as you reflect upon who you are, what you have learned, and what you believe today.

#### What is a **personal philosophy**?



A personal philosophy is different for every person. Just as people are unique, so is their personal philosophy. Your philosophy involves the values, beliefs, and attitudes that you hold about the world around you. Its basis is found first in understanding yourself, and then how, as an experiential educator, you implement your values, beliefs, and attitudes in your teaching. For example, as an experiential educator you may believe that experience is the basis for authentic learning. This belief about the nature of teaching and learning establishes the premises that will drive your choice of methods and techniques in your educational context. This belief would support such methods as cooperative learning, discussion, and the like. It is not likely that someone who values an experiential learning environment would use lecture as their sole method because it would contradict their value in experience as an educational tool.

## Why is it important to **understand** your personal philosophy?

Each person has a personal philosophy. Everyone has beliefs, values, and attitudes that drive their actions. However, everyone does not have a conscious awareness of what their personal philosophy is. Our philosophies develop throughout our lives, and are influenced by our families, friends, physical environment, and personal experiences. As a result, the beliefs, values, and attitudes we hold exist on an unconscious level until we examine our beliefs and recognize their influence on the decisions we make in our teaching and personal lives. Huber (1998) says that we should critically examine our beliefs, values, and attitudes to determine whether they are congruent with our actions as educators.

## How do you **develop an understanding** of your personal/working philosophy?

Understanding your beliefs, values, and attitudes requires self-reflection. Several questions, developed by Nancy Huber in her book Leading from Within (1998), offer guidance in understanding your personal assumptions that you hold about life. Three main questions that need to be answered are:

- What is real? (The metaphysical question)
- How do you know? (The epistemological question)
- What is of value? (The axiological question)

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## Experiential Learning: Developing Your Philosophy

### What are the components of a personal/working philosophy? by Danielle Hunt

#### Your Context

Your context has two components. First, there is your personal history that has brought you to this point as an experiential educator. This is about your past experiences. The purpose is to focus on how you processed relevant experiences in your life and the impact of your subsequent revelations in your decision to become an experiential educator. What process did you go through to arrive at being an experiential educator?

Second, your context is about the environment in which you work. This involves the institution you are involved with, the content you are teaching, and the people that you work with. The purpose of this component of your context is to identify the characteristics of your educational environment, and your role within it.

#### Your Assumptions, Values, Beliefs, & Attitude

Huber (1998) offers the following definitions for these terms:

*Assumptions:* "...those ideas which we take for granted and believe to be true."

*Values:* "...are qualitative estimates we make regarding worth."

*Attitudes:* "...describe the manner in which we think, act, or feel that reflects the opinions we hold."

*Beliefs:* "...go beyond likes and dislikes to those ideas and tenets that we accept as true."

The following four sets of questions from Huber's book will aid you in identifying your values, beliefs, and attitudes. It will be helpful to have writing tools available while you go through these questions. You may also want to take time and journal about each one over a period of time. If you are a visual learner, you may prefer using clippings, drawings, or other symbols to represent your beliefs. There are any number of methods that would be appropriate, do what is right for you.

#### 1. Beliefs about the lifelong learner:

- The moral issue – is human nature essentially good or inherently evil?
- What is the relationship between the mind, body, and spirit?
- Do people influence society or does society influence people?
- Are humans a part of society or, to some degree, apart from society?
- How much control over the natural world is appropriate?

## 2. Beliefs and values concerning the overall purpose of experiential education?

- To what extent is the purpose of experiential education to:
  - ...provide people with resources (knowledge skills, and attitudes) which will help them make adjustments to their social conditions and natural world?
  - ...provide people with resources to solve their own problems (problem-solving and decision-making skills)?
  - ...help people change social conditions?
  - ...help people become free, autonomous individuals?

## 3. Beliefs about what constitutes experiential education:

- Is subject matter or knowledge of value by itself?
- Is there something inherently good in knowledge?
- Is there certain knowledge that everyone should have, no matter what?
- Is knowledge only of value when it helps people to solve problems?
- What are sources of experiential educator credibility?
- Are there certain qualities that all experiential educators should have?
- What constitutes "subject matter" for lifelong learners?
  - Who should determine content?
  - What are the routes to determining content?
  - What are the sources of subject matter ideas?

## 4. Beliefs concerning the experiential education process?

- Are instructional objectives a guide for organizing action and directing the design of learning experiences and/or do they serve as basis for determining results of the learning activity?
  - Are objectives to be fixed or flexible?
  - Are objectives derived from learners' experiences or developed externally?
  - Should objectives always be written in behavioral terms?
- Is the learning process:
  - ...training of the mind and acquisition of basic truths?
  - ...conditioning or reinforcement?
  - ...the development of insight?
  - ...experiential and reflective?
  - ...a lifelong learning process?

## Your Credo Statement

Your personal credo is a list of action statements that you derive from the beliefs and values you identified in the previous section. Credo statements are stated in the first person, usually beginning with "I", and are grounded in your context. Your Credo Statement will typically be about a page, but it may be longer or shorter. Following are examples of credo statements:

I will stay true to myself, and encourage others to do the same.

I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses and act on them.

I will reflect on experiences for personal growth for others and myself.

I will value and support various learning types and personality temperaments.

I will continue to respect the multidimensionality of humanity, the spirit, soul, body, and mind.

I am an attentive listener and show each person the respect I like to receive.

## In Conclusion

Teaching from the heart is discovering who you are and teaching from what you believe. Writing your personal philosophy in one avenue you can use to become more self-aware and apply your self-knowledge to your teaching. Your personal philosophy is about YOU. It is about what you believe, what you value, and what you practice in your life. You don't have to show it to anyone, it is for you. It is a working philosophy in that it changes and develops throughout your life as you learn and reflect on knowledge gained through life experiences. It has three components: your context, your assumptions, beliefs, values, and attitudes, and your personal credo statement. I hope you decide to write your own philosophy. Personally, I have gained a great amount of personal insight and life direction by discovering what it is I truly value in life. I believe this process can do the same, and more, if you choose it as one method for walking your life's path.

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## Experiential Learning: Direct Experience Enriches

by Patti Bolle

In an effort to understand what people value from lifelong learning experiences, interviews were conducted with 15 facilitators and learners possessing a variety of backgrounds -- from professional trainers to returning adult students.

One common thread emerged from dialogues with facilitators...

**"I teach because  
I want to continue  
to learn."**

A majority of the facilitators said they have a love for teaching because they were able to continue to learn at the same time. The facilitators described their jobs as

**love of teaching**

fun and enjoyable.

They all revealed that to facilitate one needed to know how to be flexible. All in all, the facilitators expressed that teaching in the non-traditional setting allowed them the chance to create and develop personal teaching styles.

**personal teaching styles**

In discussions with lifelong learners, they described lifelong learning as a challenging adventure. Most of the learners mentioned that unique structuring of classes and workshops is what keeps them continuing their education. These learners also stated that they enjoyed a more relaxed learning atmosphere.

**lifelong learning . . .  
challenging adventure**

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## Experiential Learning: Direct Experience Enriches

by Dana Brentt

This depiction of the

### TREE OF LIFE

signifies the

### INTERCONNECTEDNESS

between that which is  
overtly apparent (reaching high, branching out)  
and that which goes on



This quilt-square was patterned after a Celtic design, and incorporated into a huppah which was used in a traditional wedding ceremony. This ceremony recognizes the chosen union of two individuals as they come together under the canopy (huppah), which symbolizes the new family home created by the couple through the sharing of their lives.

underneath the surface (a deep rooting).

Imagine this ancient symbol as a conceptual metaphor for  
the

### DYNAMICS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING.

Their interconnectedness,  
both within a single individual and across the whole of  
educational processes, is exemplified by the actions and  
words of  
effective facilitators.

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## Experiential Learning: Related Web Resources

compiled by Stacy Enslin

### Links for Further Information on Experiential and Lifelong Learning

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The [National Society for Experiential Education](#) (NSEE) A national resource center that promotes experiential-based approaches to teaching and learning.

The [Biology Project](#), an interactive online resource for learning biology, developed at [The University of Arizona](#).

[Catalyst](#) brings you tools, resources, and support to help you teach with new technologies.

[TIP](#) is a tool intended to make learning and instructional theory more accessible to educators. This database contains brief summaries of 50 major theories of learning and instruction.

[Education World](#) - This is a very comprehensive site with a Database of 110,000+ Sites (according to their front page). It includes a searchable database and covers a wide variety of education topics. Although it is a good starting point, be aware that there are a lot of "sponsors" at this site. (ie: advertisers!)

[The Education Coalition](#). Resource site including information on Educational Development: Learning Styles, Distance Education, Education & Technology, and Assessment & Evaluation.

The [Centre for Extra-Mural Studies](#) at the [University of Cape Town](#) has a Web page with a definition of [Experiential learning](#) and explains its dynamics. It also includes a link to ICEL. ICEL is the International Consortium for Experiential Learning. It is a network of organizations and individuals whose aim is to promote experiential learning at a global and international level.

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[Discovery On-line](#) has lots of neat games and discovery type activities. [Discovery School](#) includes grade appropriate information and lessons. It is the World Wide Web site from the education department of Discovery Communications, Inc. They state that their goal is to provide innovative online materials for teachers and students.

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[PBS](#) has always been involved with life-long learning. Through informative and educational programming and also at their web site. Under the [NOVA](#) section, for example, there are many hands-on activities including a section on pyramids that uses QuickTimeVR to let you experience a "walk-thru" the passages of the pyramid -- very neat. Check it out -- [HERE!](#) There is also a [teacher area](#) that is quite nice and worth a visit. More interactive online science activities can be found at this site as well. [Click here](#) to visit them!

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[Project WET](#) activities are designed to satisfy the goals of educational programs by complementing existing curricula rather than displacing or adding more concepts. Project WET activities provide many opportunities to address curriculum objectives and educational standards. These interdisciplinary activities designed for students in grades K-12 are perfect for use in formal and nonformal education settings.

- Locally, here in Arizona, be sure to contact: Linda Stevens-Moore [Stevensm@u.arizona.edu](mailto:Stevensm@u.arizona.edu), Water Resources Research Center, 350 North Campbell Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85721. (520) 792-9591.
  - Website: <http://ag.arizona.edu/azwater>
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Stop by the [Informal Education web page](#). Based out of London, come see how they view this topic across the pond.

Closer to home is [CYFERNet](#). It provides practical, research-based information on children, youth and families. Sponsored by several agencies including the [Cooperative Extension System \(USDA\)](#), among others.

[TAPPED IN](#) is a shared teacher professional development (TPD) workplace patterned after a real-world conference center. Teachers with diverse interests, backgrounds, and skills can share experiences, engage in mentoring and collaborative work, or simply meet their colleagues.

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For the younger crowd, here are a few sites related to homeschooling. This is an alternative that has regained popularity in the last several years. There are many sites on this topic, here are jsut a few to get you started:

[ERIC Clearinghouse](#) - Includes the origins of homeschooling and some statistics.

[Homeschooling FAQ's](#) - Answers to some pertinent questions for those considering this alternative form of education.

The [Homeschooling Information and Homeschooling Resource Pages](#). Set up by a home education magazine. Numerous resources and links for more information.

[Alternative Education Resource Organization, AERO](#), is a non-profit organization founded in 1934. AERO helps people who want to change education to a more empowering and holistic form. It helps individuals and groups of people who want to start new community schools, public and private, or change existing schools. It also provides information to people interested in homeschooling their children, or finding private or public alternative schools.

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[Distance Learning Resource Network](#) - Want to know more about distance and Distributed learning? Here is a great starting point. The Distance Learning Resource Network (DLRN), located at WestEd, is the dissemination project for the U.S. Department of Education Star Schools Program.

[This page](#), put together by the Florida Institute for Small and Rural Districts is a great resource if you are interested in distributed or distance learning. There are tons of links here and it is worth a look.

Although compiled in 1997, this page includes numerous links to distance/distributed learning sites. Since the list is fairly old, not all links will be active. [Still worth a look](#).

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The [University of Arizona](#), located in [Tucson](#), has numerous opportunities for life-long learning through their [Extended University](#). According to their mission statement, "Extended University advances The University of Arizona's land grant mission of outreach and service by providing flexible and innovative educational programs for people of all ages and backgrounds." They offer diverse opportunities from [childrens programs](#) to [Elderhostel](#). Be sure to check out their home page for more information.

[Pima Community College](#) offers numerous classes, including many that are non-formal in nature. This forward thinking community college offers courses and programs that are tailored for the working adult. Included in its offerings are [Telecourses](#) and [internet based courses](#). If you are looking for an alternative to a traditional classroom course, be sure to check them out.

For an interactive learning experience online, come on over to the [Dragonfly](#) site. This site deals with scientific exploration and hands on investigation. Although the main site is mostly for kids, there is a teacher/parent area [here](#). There are also E-mail lists for both children and parents. The [e-mail list](#) for kids connects children with scientists and university science students. A great way for informal learning to take place!

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