

EDP 5003

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Individual Statement of Philosophy

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I think everyone is born with some level of innate capacity to learn and memorize in order to survive, but external influences in the environment are required to activate that capacity. Those external influences include whatever objects surround us, sensory impressions, and other people. While I think our earliest motivation to learn is externally focused – to please caregivers so they will keep nurturing us – I believe that eventually that motivation evolves and turns inward. Ultimately, I think the person who is truly learning is doing it to please himself or herself, and that generates motivation to self-regulate. I firmly believe that external influence is necessary to promote learning.

I come from a family of teachers. For much of my childhood, I figured I would teach, too. But by the time I reached college, I chose to be an editor. However, fate stepped in after graduation, and I landed in educational publishing – not too far from the teacher career path. After twenty years of writing and editing for children’s media, I have developed a sense of how to reach and teach children thanks to my own experience, the guidance of mentors, and audience response to content. But I’m looking for academic validation to the external teaching influence I provide. I want to formalize that sense of how to communicate with and teach children by earning a degree in education. In doing so, I hope to better understand child development, learning theories, and instructional methods so I can optimize the teaching I do from afar.

The publishing projects I manage focus on teaching financial literacy to three distinct youth audiences between the ages 8 and 24. I believe it’s vital for youth to understand basic financial concepts and money management, especially considering our country’s current over-reliance on

credit and the prevalence of predatory lenders. In today's society, learning financial basics to practice in the real world is as valuable a survival skill as reading.

I reach and teach these audiences through print and digital media using an audience-centric method. Before my team and I produce content, we consult with members of audience panels. We adapt and change our approach based on audience reaction. Panel feedback to the final product, combined with unsolicited positive responses from other readers, indicates when we hit the mark. I've learned that the most successful content is grounded in reality. Money management and financial literacy lessons should never be theoretical. Rather, these lessons are most successfully taught when we use real situations and real people that our audiences can relate to and learn from.

So in my current role, I lead my editorial team to find real-life stories about, for example, kids saving for big purchases, teens using checking accounts for the first time, and young adults faced with the decision of whether or not to accept credit card offers. Then through magazines, a podcast, and a Website, we provide a forum for those real people to tell their real stories so that the audience can learn by watching their peers succeed and fail at age-appropriate financial pursuits. The audience connects with these stories because they see a reflection of themselves and their experiences. Lacking the direct one-to-one contact provided by a classroom, I also lead my editorial team to make the content interactive so that the audience is motivated to be engaged.

Recognition from educational publishing industry experts is one way I measure effectiveness, but I consider my best gauge to be feedback from the audience itself. Their e-mails, calls, letters, and responses to the content reveal successes and failures and are the best indicators of how I should proceed with teaching concepts through media in the future.