**Personal Educational Philosophy: Jason Harmon**

Every human being is born with unique talents, character traits, gifts, abilities, and weaknesses. Each person is special and distinct, and has special roles to fulfill in their life. As learners we are to seek what is good, true, uplifting, and wholesome. We learn through divine revelation (prayer, listening to promptings and feelings that come into our heart and mind), school settings where we are instructed by people who know more than we do, reading and studying, testing and trying out what we learn and what we believe is good and true, and holding onto and continuing in what brings us the best results. A true learner is excited about life and understanding the world around him and how it works, and will seek the beautiful and good, and share it with others. They will respect all people, and behave in ways that build others and help them to become their best selves. Lastly, we’ll never hold the golden key to all knowledge. A true learner is humble and open to new ideals, beliefs, skills, and wisdom.

There will always be a need for teachers. A teacher’s main role is to prepare lifelong learners, and facilitate lifelong learning. They are to share/teach their knowledge, expertise, or subject matter; and assist students in learning, questioning, testing, and applying that knowledge to their personal lives. The teacher brings up critical questions and discussions that lead students to understand and apply knowledge to their lives. Lastly, a teacher is a mentor who develops a vision in the heart of learners, and opens up their minds to new possibilities.

As learners gain competence in important life skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic, listening, working as a team, technology, and creativity (art, music, cooking, woodworking, etc.), they will be off to a good start, but not yet the “right start”. After the basics are explored and hopefully mastered, a teacher facilitates understanding and in depth questioning and reflection into the sciences (the world and universe around us and how it works), history & social studies (economies, governments, society, historical events, cultures, laws), and writing, literature, music, art (its impact historically and now). Teachers will facilitate the understanding of these historical contexts and what they mean for students in their lives. Ultimately students will be led to find their own answers finding purpose and direction in their lives.

The methods used in teaching are just as important as the subjects that are taught. A balanced teaching methodology that recognizes the different talents, abilities, and learning styles of all learners is critical. Subjects are first taught and learned mentally through reading, lecturing, note taking, watching videos, and visual aids. Then learning must be demonstrated through the use of examples that relate to the students lives and show what can be done with what was learned. The next important step is Practice, where students put to use what they have learned, demonstrate their understanding, and engrain it into them so it can be used in the future. Next, students’ work will be evaluated. This can be done by the teacher, but could also be done by the student, so they learn to think critically on how they can improve. Lastly they re-practice and improve where improvement is needed. Two other teaching methodologies that are important to use are collaboration and teaching. Collaboration allows active participation in groups where students can talk to others and express their points of view. Teaching is giving students opportunities to teach the subject matter so it is better understood and remembered more completely.

There are several important purposes of education and schools. First, and possibly foremost is our responsibility to develop each child intellectually and socially. We want them to reach their dreams and potentials and become productive members of society. To a certain extent schools can and do transmit social norms and values. We also have opportunities for bringing about social change. This must be done carefully, but through our school systems we have seen changes in the trends of smoking, and often get opportunities to bring in groups to talk about and discuss staying away from drugs, avoiding teen pregnancy, and believing in yourself. We also serve a role in preparing students for college and the workforce. Education is so important to me because it opens up the doors of possibility to my mind. An institution of learning takes students with little knowledge in subject matter, and builds scaffolding that can help them reach the stars.