On Developing a Philosophy of Assessment

The dictionary defines Philosophy as follows:

**phi·los·o·phy n. pl. phi·los·o·phies**

1. Love and pursuit of wisdom by intellectual means and moral self-discipline.
2. Investigation of the nature, causes, or principles of reality, knowledge, or values, based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods.
3. A system of thought based on or involving such inquiry: *the philosophy of Hume.*
4. **The critical analysis of fundamental assumptions or beliefs.**
5. The disciplines presented in university curriculums of science and the liberal arts, except medicine, law, and theology.
6. The discipline comprising logic, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and epistemology.
7. **A set of ideas or beliefs relating to a particular field or activity; an underlying theory:** *an original philosophy of advertising.*
8. A system of values by which one lives: *has an unusual philosophy of life.*

We are most interested in the definitions 4, 7, & 8.

Your assignment is to put on paper your philosophy of assessment. What is interesting about this assignment is that you each have a philosophy – whether you have thought about it or not. The way you assess is a direct outgrowth of your philosophy. Below I am going to give some suggestions as to things you might want to include. The list isn’t exhaustive nor is it necessary that every item be included as a distinct item. However, each of the items should probably be covered in some way.

I, of course, hope that I have lead you to analyze your philosophy and adjust it if necessary to match new knowledge that you have acquired. I believe that actually putting your philosophy on paper is an important piece of introspection. It causes you to carefully analyze your thoughts. I hope you find this beneficial.

**Items to consider for inclusion:**

- Why do you grade? What are pros and cons?
- Of what use are grades?
- How do you use them to benefit your students?
- How can you make grading fair for all?
- What is the role of homework and tests?
- How much weight should each get?
- What determines what sort of grading scale you use?
- How should late work or unsatisfactory work be handled?
- How much should parents know about their child’s progress? How do you communicate with them?
- How do you deal with the high end and the low end of a class?
- What sort of grade distribution do you envision for your class?
- How do you deal with students who have different learning styles?
- Are there things you require that don’t show up in the grade book? Why?
- How are instruction and evaluation related?
- What methods of assessment are most appropriate?
- What do you believe about students capabilities to learn?
- Who is responsible for students learning?
- What is the role of effort and participation? How does it affect the students grade?
- How will you deal with intellectual dishonesty?
- If your philosophy is drastically different from your school’s administration – how will you deal with it?
- Achievement/standardized tests.