

Creativity is a continual learning process and is not just limited to the arts: Before starting this class I had often thought of creativity as something that was typically associated with the arts (which was inclusive of a number of areas including writing, dancing, music composition and visual). What I recently discovered while exploring the first theme of this course (Everyone can be a Creative Thinker) is not only could creativity be demonstrated in a number of ways outside of the arts, but it's also a skill that can be continuously developed if given the opportunity. I've traditionally thought of the skill as something innate to those who are able to exhibit it, but quickly learned that if given the proper guidance, is something that can be fostered and learned.

I can help others in developing creativity: Because my career focus is in education, I naturally am working in a capacity that allows me to help others. Within the themes explored were projects designed with an end result of helping others. Seeing so many benefits to incorporating a creative practice within education, I see this as a skill that if given additional research and opportunities to implement, can be used to educate others around the significance of developing creativity as a skill and guide others in the process. Even after this course, I plan to continue researching ways to incorporate this skill on a regular basis and continue building upon the teacher professional development curriculum I developed.

Educators play a unique role in developing creativity: While I think the focus of education has recently shifted for teachers to teach students to pass standardized test, the main goal of an educator is still to support the development of skills (literacy, math, critical thinking, public speaking- the list can go on) for students to be able to use in whatever profession they pursue in the future. Creativity, because of the skills that are developed and incorporated while fostered, should also be one of those skills taught and educators have a unique role in doing that. While I don't want to add another item to the laundry list of responsibilities of a teacher, I do think there is a chance for them to make a shift in the academic and long-term professional outcomes of students if time was taken to foster creativity in the classroom.

This course has helped me to explore a variety of ways to build creativity in others. First was the process of defining creativity and understanding how it can be developed. Creativity is the ability to think critically, distinguish between reality and hypothetical situations, but more importantly develop an intrinsic desire to learn that introduces new ideas and perspectives. This was the definition used when thinking about creativity in the context of my projects during the semester. As an educator, I also know the importance of developing creativeness in students as it promotes critical thinking and develops well-rounded individuals for the future. As part of the process for me I wanted to explore opportunities to incorporate creative development for students and support teachers in facilitating that process. In order to continue this work to hopefully implement in schools, there are a few things that need to be further developed. Because of the magnitude of the work needed, I've broken it down into phases:

1. Phase 1 is building an understanding of what creativity is or can be within the context of education. I started with a very generalized definition for my projects, but want to think more about how I can make it something that educators would connect with and want to build in the classroom. How can I connect it to the overall purpose of education?
2. Phase 2 is helping educators change their mindset about creativity and how it can be developed or exhibited. This will take a bit more research on my part and may need to ask current educators about their perspective on the idea /if it is even feasible. The main focus of this work would be for adolescent aged students (grades 8-12), which is based on research that identifies it as the optimal time to develop creativity due what's happening socially and mentally. Knowing that these grades are probably where most of the high stakes standardized testing happens and ultimately determines futures, what case can I make to build this skill to help make students college and career ready?
3. Phase 3 is doing additional research to further develop the resources I created to support the development of creativity for teachers and students. I have a good start with the products I created: teacher professional development curriculum and unit lessons for teachers to implement that support students in developing creativeness. That would include also looking into programs or schools that may already be incorporating this work. If most of these practices are being incorporated in private, charter or innovation schools, how can I transfer these practices to work in public schools that may not see the importance or have the resources to do this work?

This work could probably take me until I finished my degree in 2017 and beyond. There will always be new research or new issues to address in education, which I think could be solved (in part) with incorporating creativity at all levels. While I'm eager to start this work to promote changes within the education system, I think the first step would be to identify opportunities for me to work on developing my own creativity. Maybe it's taking on a new hobby or working on a new project; anything that will force me to think or view a situation differently and identify an alternative solution. Would I say my creativeness has increased over the course of the semester? If I define creativity in the context of this class and my projects then I would say yes. I've been challenged to create products within certain parameters (constraints), had a quest for knowledge as part of the learning and solution-defining process and gained new ideas and perspectives along the way. This development process started with this class and I'm sure I'll have additional opportunities to develop it other classes in the coming semester.