

## Philosophical Statement in Three Parts

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### On One's Humanity

The world is a difficult place to navigate, and this is why people develop beliefs or worldviews and stick to them. Our worldviews are the lenses “through which [we] make sense of life as a whole,”<sup>1</sup> and in that vein, there are a few principles that I live by. Equipped with an agreeable moral and ethical compass, I believe the most important principle is to respect everything. It first begins with respecting myself for my strengths, flaws, traits, and everything else, and continues by extension to those around me, my environment, and the teams, communities, and institutions that I am a part of. The second principle is realizing that respect means an ambition to actively want to be better everyday, for it would be inappropriate to hold back the very people that I respect, including myself.

These two principles underlie what it means to be what society generally accepts as being a good person. Good deeds that align with what I know to be morally and ethically good helps me become better than the version I was previously, out of respect for my own character, progress, and development. Bad deeds that are against my moral and ethical compass are a step away from progress and betterment, and must therefore be corrected if I want to maintain the respect that I have for myself as measured by my character and continual progress towards excellence as a human in life's complicated journey.

These principles help guide my actions and guard myself from apathy, as I consider apathy to be the loss of respect for my own development and progress that I always aim to keep striving for, since I respect myself enough to want to be better every day. But, while on this quest, I also respect that I have my own flaws just like every other human, and that it takes time to understand and accept these as I continue to learn from them.

I believe that this is a humane way of living that serves me well no matter what I try to pursue. I also believe that this respect must be extended to everything else (hence “respect everything”). I respect another person's well-being and progress enough that I do not try to take it away from them. I try to understand other's actions on a holistic basis, respecting the fact that every human has their own unique stories and missions that manifest in various ways. I respect enough the environment, communities, and institutions that I'm in to want them to also be better every day. Therefore I refuse to participate in apathy or carelessness because I have too much respect for myself and the people, communities, and institutions around me.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel L. Shapiro and Jonathan Iwry, “Worldviews in Conflict: Negotiating to Bridge the Divide,” *Negotiation Journal* 38, no. 3 (June 2022): 435–52, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nejo.12407>.

But first, I must *want* to continue striving for my own progress and excellence, and I do, because I respect my potential and my capabilities enough to know that I want to, and can be, proud of myself even decades down the line. I have enough respect for myself to know that I deserve all the help that I can possibly receive, from myself.

### **On Education**

I believe all our actions have everything to do with how much we respect ourselves and our own skin ('identity'). As an educator, I believe it is my duty to teach children how to respect themselves and then each other. Practically, I believe this is best done by taking the students on a journey with me towards a challenging, yet achievable goal towards excellence. School is where we teach children that they indeed can do it, and that they indeed can go on to do great things. A guiding purpose will help students navigate the inevitable social or academic difficulties they may face both inside and outside of school, to give them confidence in their own talents, to give them a basis to be able to respect themselves in the first place. Then I teach them to extend this respect to their peers, teams, and communities. My job is to give my students something they are proud of themselves for, to value the journey towards a purpose and excellence, and to continue to want this out of themselves in the future as they continue to mature and discover themselves. I respect my future students too much to not believe in them. I respect our societies too much to not attempt to provide them with mature and healthy young adults. And I have too much respect for myself to be a poor teacher.

### **On Music Education**

Music is precisely an activity where students are taken on a journey towards a challenging, yet achievable goal towards excellence, and this is why I believe music education is integral to the school curriculum. However, what's more important than deciding to teach music is how we teach music. I believe music education in schools is less about threats of failure or punishment when tough standards aren't met, and is more about letting the students discover themselves, with our guidance, that they can indeed achieve excellence. It is not so important that they hit a standard, or achieve a good rating, but more important that they did all they could do to get better and learn that this process is something that can provide them fulfillment. If we, as self-respecting teachers who respect our student's capability and autonomy, expect great things from our students, believe in their capabilities to be better, and let them discover that they can do both of these things, the students will have been taught confidence and what it means to grow by striving for better every day, and will soon learn what it means to be a part of a culture of ambition towards progress. Then we can develop the leaders of tomorrow, who will have the confidence in themselves and their skills to be able to see something that could be better and then teach the next generation of children just what it means to take the very action to make that something that much better.

And I believe that a safe positive music classroom is the best way to teach these life necessities.