Over the course of approximately twelve years of public education I had thirty six different teachers. Each of these teachers had a different style of teaching that they brought to my education and they taught me over the years what made a good teacher and what was not. As I began to pursue teaching myself, I tried to learn from all of these teachers that I had and tried to craft myself into a better teacher not just for myself but for my future students. Using that knowledge and the ample time I had during the University of Victoria education program to reflect on who I want to be as a teacher. Through those reflections I have come up with four themes that represent who I am as a teacher and that also relate to the British Columbia Principles of Learning. These themes are: Alternate points of view, creativity, what a teacher is and including introverted and shy students.

The first theme I wish to write about is featuring alternate points of view in my classroom. This theme has come up several times over the course of my teacher education. Initially, it was introduced through a Ted Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie called “The Danger of the Single Story.” This talk focussed on how we often find ourselves believing something that is a traditional representation, for example the image of the starving African child, and forgetting that this cannot be the only type of person or image. This Ted Talk reminded me of a well-known quote from Winston Churchill that states “History is written by the victors.” In social studies and history classes it is so easy to just fall into the traditional perspectives of the ‘victor’ who won the war and therefore got to write the history books about it and choose how to tell the story. We in the west often forget that there was more than just the suffering of the British or Canadian troops in World War One. Those on the other side of the trenches often suffered in similar ways. We vilify those who lost the war because they were never given the chance to write the popular history books. I find it incredibly important to pass on the perspective that we overlook. I want the students in my socials studies classroom to understand how the Germans felt in World War Two or what the First Nations people thought during colonization. On my practicum, I tried to bring in alternate points of view by teaching a lesson to both my Social Studies 10 and 11 classes on Residential Schools from the perspective of First Nations people. However, this featuring of alternate points of view is not something that can only be applied to social studies. I found it can also be applied to my other teaching area: English, though I have less experience in this area. In English classes there can be a tendency to just read books written by old white men who often have been dead for a rather long time. These books are considered classic and they should by no means be discounted by English teachers, but they should not be the only perspective brought into the English classrooms. I want my students to read works of female authors like Margaret Atwood and First Nations authors like Joseph Boyden, not just William Shakespeare and George Orwell. I enjoy Shakespeare and Orwell as much as the next person but I think it is important for my students to understand as many perspectives as possible. During a lesson I guest taught, I had the students write ‘fan-fiction’ for *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee where they had to re-write a scene from the book in anyone but Scout’s perspective. This was a simple exercise that allowed students to explore different perspectives and try to understand what motivated the other characters in the book.

The second theme I want to write about is my thoughts on what the role of a teacher is. These different roles directly relate to one of British Columbia’s Principles of Learning: ‘People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.’ Through the roles of gate keeper, translator and guide we get to know our students and how they learn and at what rate. The first role is the role of a gate keeper. As a teacher we stand before a gate that holds back a vast wealth of knowledge. By getting to know our students we learn how much knowledge they can handle at a time. If they cannot handle a lot of knowledge we only open the gates for them a little bit and allow a small trickle to come out. If they can handle more, you can open the gates wide and let a flood out and allow them to explore the knowledge for themselves. Next, we act as guides, leading our students to the knowledge and knowing our students well enough that we can tell when it is time to allow them to figure things out on their own. Finally, we act as a translator. We make the knowledge easier to access as a whole and we help to make it easier to understand. I want to play these roles for my students. I want to open the gate and guide them to the knowledge they are looking for. I want to translate it for them if they need that but most of all I just want to teach them which means I need to play all three: gate keeper, guide and translator.

Creativity is something that has always been a big part of my life. It has been since I was younger and up until now and it will always be an important part of my life. Due to of this important role that it plays in my life, I want to bring it into my future classroom and bring it to my students. Creativity can play a major role in so many ways in a student’s life. Creativity can be used to give a voice to those who lack one or give your students a chance to take risks. Most importantly though, I believe that creativity directly relates to a second of the B.C. Principles of Learning: “Learning requires the active participation of the student.” I have found that creativity can be used to show if a student truly understands a concept rather than if they have simply memorized it and written it down on a test. It is far better to have a student write a metaphor or a simile than simply record the definition. As creative work can be much riskier than the traditional essay, you have to ensure that your classroom is a safe environment. If they feel comfortable they will be sure to be more comfortable taking risks. Additionally, as creative work can be a lot harder to scaffold, students will have more questions about what is expected of them but I feel that the work that you put into it will be worth it when you receive the work back from your students. Encouraging creativity can be as simple offering assignments where students can explore topics that interest them and by offering them options. With a bit of work I will do my best to bring creativity into both my English and social studies classrooms, and any other class that I may end up teaching.

The final theme I want to write about is working to better include shy and introverted students in my classroom so they feel comfortable participating in a group setting. This theme relates to the final Principle of Learning: “Learning is both an individual and a group process.” As a person who identifies as introverted, I had a hard time speaking up in class, answering questions and participating in classroom discussions. I easily mastered individual learning but missed out on the group process, which is a vital part of the education experience. I do not want my students to feel like they have missed out on a crucial part of their education and so I want to help those who don’t feel comfortable sharing or contributing feel comfortable enough to do so. I understand that this is not an easy or overnight process but I really want to work this into my future classrooms. The best way I think you can do this is by working up to it. I would start with small things like think-pair-shares and A-B partner talks, to offering the opportunity to do a video presentation or a one on one presentation. The more opportunities you give to students to practice presenting or answering questions in class, the better that they will get at it.

The many years I spent in the education system have greatly prepared me for my future as an educator. I have come across a very strong set of beliefs rooted in the Principles of Learning and my own experiences as a student. I am certain that if I can bring creativity and inclusion of all students and different perspectives in content and a strong understanding as my role of an educator, I will become the best educator that I can be and that the learning experience will be a meaningful one for my students.