As an educator and as a learner, I believe that all learning and knowledge is situated within specific contexts, and that every learner only acquires knowledge by connecting new information with currently held knowledge through activity that engages the student and creates within the student motivation to care about the subject being taught. I believe this also means that in order for what is learned to have meaning, it must in some way enrich the life of the learner through increasing the personal power and possibilities of the learner to manifest their will and desires.

I believe that constructivism provides a good base for understanding the idea that learners connect new knowledge to previously integrated learning, and the theory of situated learning gives an understanding that knowledge is acquired in specific contexts, and an emphasis on project and problem-based learning enables a learner to more fully integrate the knowledge they are learning in concrete and empowering ways.

My personal methodology of education involves the use of storytelling and game-playing, in specific, the use of role-playing games, which not only provides a site of new literacy (closely related to James Gee’s argument of situated learning in video games), teaching a host of metacognitive skills related to social interaction and collaboration, but also ties into our deeply-seated love for story and narrative as humans.

Because the learners are collaborators and are assuming the roles of individuals in the narrative that may differ slightly or greatly from their own points of view, there is a tremendous opportunity for the development and practice of empathy, and the level of engagement is high, as the learners become invested in the outcome of the narrative and the effects that their ‘actions’ have on that same narrative.

This approach also draws on a model of cognitivism known as ‘anchored instruction’, placing the narrative as the framework for a collection of interconnected questions and problems that the learners much necessarily engage with and provide answers to that are learner-centric and are modeled on realistic or natural situations.

It is my believe that this approach has a strong correlation with the 21st century skills movement, as well as being well-situated to integrate with the Common Core State Standards, as it promotes critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity, and encourages investigation of subject matter related to the content of the game and the metacontent of the social interactions involved in creating the shared narrative.

I have found in my own experience, evidence for the effectiveness in learning results and engagement through these methods, and seek to extend this evidence in formal ways through my academic work.