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| **Principle** | **Description of Theory** |
| *Child-centered* | The best starting point for schooling is kids’ real interests; all across the curriculum, investigating students’ own questions should always take precedence over arbitrarily and distantly selected “content.” |
| *Experiential* | Active, hands-on concrete experience is the most powerful and natural form of learning. Students should be immersed in the most direct possible experience of the content of every subject. |
| *Reflective* | Balancing the immersion in direct experience must provide opportunities for learners to look back, to reflect, to debrief, to abstract from their experiences what they have felt and thought and learned. |
| *Authentic* | Real, rich, complex ideas and materials are at the heart of the curriculum. Lessons or textbooks that water down, control, or oversimplify content ultimately disempower students. |
| *Holistic* | Students learn best when they encounter whole, real ideas, events, and materials in purposeful contexts and not by studying subparts isolated from actual use. |
| *Social* | Learning is always socially constructed and often interactional; teachers need to create classroom interactions that “scaffold” learning. |
| *Collaborative* | Cooperative learning activities tap the social power of learning better than competitive and individualistic approaches. |
| *Democratic* | The classroom is a model community; students learn what they live as citizens of the school. |
| *Cognitive* | The most powerful learning for children comes from developing true understanding of concepts and higher order thinking associated with various fields of inquiry and self-monitoring of their thinking. |
| *Developmental* | Children grow through a series of definable but not rigid stages; schooling should fit its activities to the developmental level of students. |
| *Constructivist* | Children do not just receive content; in a very real sense, they recreate and re-invent every cognitive system they encounter, including language, literacy, and mathematics. |
| *Psycholinguistic* | The process of young children’s natural oral language acquisition provides our best model of complex human learning, and, once learned, language itself becomes the primary tool for more learning, whatever the subject matter. |
| *Challenging* | Students learn best when faced with genuine challenges, choices, and responsibility in their own learning. |