Introduction

In this presentation we will demonstrate an interactive learning module that was designed as a learning tool for preservice teachers in order to facilitate the development of their own personal philosophy of education. The purpose of the presentation is twofold: to give participants an overview of the module and to illustrate how the use of such web-based technology facilitates an online learning community in which preservice teachers make meaningful connections between knowledge-of-practice to knowledge-in-practice.

Framework

The learning module incorporates several known principles that encourage higher level learning to occur: (1) it is user goal oriented in that it is connected to the learner’s personal agenda, i.e. to develop a philosophical framework for their future teaching (Beireter, 1989). (2) A major portion of the learning experience is case-based. Users will be asked to view and reflect on real classroom lessons, hence the learning is set in a context that is meaningful to the user. (3) It is designed to encourage High Level Transfer (Perkins & Salmon)--the abstraction of knowledge from one context (theoretical knowledge) to the application of that knowledge in another situation (knowledge-in-practice).

Learning Module Phases

As students interact with the module to develop their own philosophy of teaching they go through the following four interrelated “module phases”

Phase 1

Read about and reflect on the major education philosophies. Read portraits of and reflect on, major educational theorists who support these philosophies. Through a series of reflective prompts designed to elicit the principles behind the knowledge that the users have been introduced to, users make connections between the philosophies and the theorists. Users each respond online to their initial comfort level with each philosophy.

Phase 2

In this phase users connect their own understandings of the educational philosophies to educational practice by viewing classroom video cases. There are a series of five video segments that were chosen to illustrate lessons that have components in common with each philosophy.

Phase 3

Users next respond to prompts that are designed to help them determine their own teaching philosophy. Before the user answers the questions, they see how the teachers in a particular case responded. In groups they reflect on the connections between the two and report back to the whole group.
Phase 4
Each user reflects on their own responses to philosophy surveys and case studies in order to
develop a “working” statement of their personal educational philosophy. A template is provided
to help preservice teachers develop an organized essay.

Discussion
The idea from this module arose from observing the difficulty that prospective teachers had in
one of the authors’ social foundations classes as they struggled to write their personal education
theories (one of the requirements of the course).

This online learning module is currently being used with 25 preservice teachers in a small
Midwestern University. Preliminary results of its evaluation will be shared as the final portion of
this presentation.