

My Philosophy of Teaching  
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Being a reflexive educational practitioner is at the core of my development as a lifelong learner and an academic. As I continuously grow as an educator, my philosophy evolves along with me. The beliefs that I hold today, which shape my philosophy of effective teaching, are a product of my personal and professional experiences, cultural and social identity, and formal education. Currently, my teaching philosophy is rooted in four firmly-held beliefs about the significant roles of an educator: the moral agent, exemplar of positive interpersonal relationships among learners, facilitator of inquiry-oriented learning environments, and reflexive practitioner with a growth mindset.

**Educators are moral agents.** As a moral agent, it is the responsibility of an educator to carefully cultivate the intellectual, emotional, social, and academic needs of her students. She lives and teaches by the Golden Rule; and not only does she hold herself, her students, and colleagues to the principles of utmost moral integrity, but she also regularly communicates these expectations with others.

In addition to the responsibilities they have to their learning community, moral agents have an additional responsibility to the society in which they live. With an increasingly globalized world as my backdrop, it is critically important to me to teach and mentor my students with a social justice lens (see British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2010). My scholarly interests in multicultural education and equity pedagogy are inspired by the works of Paulo Freire, Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Linda Darling-Hammond. It is through their seminal works that I bring an awareness to the consequences of cultural hegemony, implicit bias, antiracism, and the celebration of diversity; and through modeling, I illustrate the benefits of cultural responsiveness, multicultural instruction, and equity pedagogy. While I have yet to quantitatively measure the full extent of my effectiveness in this regard, I believe the extent to which my students become more aware of their own moral agencies, biases, and privileges provides preliminary insight to the fruits of my labor.

**Educators are exemplars of positive interpersonal relationships.** Research shows that there is a link between interpersonal relationships and students' education outcomes (Zandvliet et al., 2014). I experienced this as a student and, therefore, do not question that correlation. If students' opportunities for success increase by developing relationships built on trust and respect, it is the responsibility of the educator to forge that relationship with all students and encourage it among others.

Building strong interpersonal relationships begin well before the first day of class. I introduce myself and the course as well as outwardly show my enthusiasm and appreciation for my students with a welcoming email prior to the first day of class. Then, on the first day of class,

I spend time becoming *a student of my students* (Michie, 2012); for the only way I know where we can go in the course is by understanding where we all come from.

One way that I assess my effectiveness in this regard is by intermittently surveying my students on their needs as learners. It is important for me to gauge their perceived value of the learning experiences in my class so that I can make adjustments as necessary. I have been privileged to experience very positive rapport with past students; I attribute this to my desire to learn from them, care for them, and support them as lifelong learners.

As an elementary and middle grades teacher, I wore many hats: teacher, counselor, coach, conflict mediator, event planner, cheerleader, nurse, and so on. Although the hats a teacher educator assumes may look different, they are just as important for her teacher candidates' success. I am committed to my students' growth as future educators, which means my role will always extend beyond that of a course instructor.

**Educators are facilitators of inquiry-oriented learning.** People are born as naturally curious beings. Therefore, as a facilitator of inquiry-oriented learning, it is the responsibility of the educator to set the stage that motivates students to *actively learn* and *construct their own knowledge*. This requires creating an organized learning environment that promotes productive struggle, purposeful interaction with other students, and opportunities to reflect on one's own learning (Nilson, 2016).

The Confucius philosopher, Xun Huang (312-230 B.C.E.) is credited with a well-known quote: "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." I find this quote from ancient times to be one of the most relevant and important educational quotes of the modern era. It drives my purpose as the instructor in the classroom: to support my students' socio-constructive processes of learning.

To motivate students to become critical thinkers, I employ the instructional frameworks of Wiggins and McTighe (2005), Halpern (2003) and Facione (2013). Using various teaching moves, my class activities are driven by one or two essential questions relevant to students and to the course objectives. I have three goals for each class: (1) present the essential questions, appropriate resources (e.g. articles, case studies, graphs, videos, etc.) and/or interactive experiences with enthusiasm and energy, (2) guide students as they productively engage in the inquiry process, and (3) assess their learning.

**Educators are reflexive in their practice.** Being a reflexive practitioner requires humility, critical thinking, a growth mindset, and continuous reflection. To improve as an instructor, it is important for the educator to recognize herself as a learner first and foremost. Through self-reflection and critical thinking about new discoveries in the field, educators must continuously internalize how much they have yet to learn and share with others.

I am committed to this role in several ways. First, as a lifelong learner, I am committed to maintaining a growth mindset. This opens me to being reflective on my areas of strength and growth. Secondly, I take an active role in my communities of practice (Riel & Fulton, 2001). I value collaboration with others through praxis, research, and service to improve educational

outcomes for others. Finally, I use student feedback and self-reflection to continuously self-assess my effectiveness as an educator.

Educators are not only charged with the task of enriching a student's intellect; rather, they have a responsibility to support students' growth holistically. I believe this task and the many roles that it takes is one of the most rewarding and enriching opportunities a person can experience. It is a privilege to be a lifelong learner or an academic; it is more than a privilege to be an educator.

### References

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