

Teaching Philosophy

Early in my academic career, I realized that we don't all learn in the same styles, at the same speed, nor as well under the same conditions. My siblings and I, while all raised in the same family, have very different learning styles. Some of us are better in lecture classes where we listen, absorbing information, while others of us are better at digging in with our hands, to feel the information through more tactile modes of learning. Where we've learned we can be most successful, however, is in applying our individual styles to a group dynamic to develop a collaborative approach to development of the projects we work on together.

I apply this same philosophy to instruction by observing each student, assessing what the best method of approach is for that student, and tackling learning on an individual level in addition to group conversations, an idea that is influenced by the constructivist learning theory (Dewey, Vygotsky, Piaget, et.al) in education.

The learning process is most successful and students grow in both their learning of a specific subject and of themselves when they are actively engaged in their learning environment. To emphasize this belief, I promote cooperative and active learning strategies, like peer review, in my classroom and develop assignments that encourage analytical and critical thinking while offering opportunities for creative application of that thinking.

As a former instructional technologist, I am eager to introduce new technologies into my classrooms, and tend to be on the leading edge of doing so. However, I do so with consideration of the limitations of the technology, the importance of the technology in a given situation, and the affordances that may be required to employ it. I engage students in the latest social media not because it is popular, but because it will enhance and further our understandings of the information we are studying or the ways we communicate. I encourage students to use the technology that will best fit the project and, thusly, their audience's needs. This is key to understanding the processes that are required for being effective communicators.

Ultimately, my goal is to respect the diversity of the students who enter my classrooms and to encourage them to both celebrate that diversity and to appreciate the diversity of others. Working in groups, developing creative projects, and expressing individual ideas allows students to cultivate that appreciation and to learn how to work with diverse populations to create the best project possible.