

Teaching Philosophy

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Growing up, I never wanted to be a teacher. I always wanted to be an artist, whether creating a masterpiece meal as a chef or creating beautiful environments as an interior designer. It was not until my junior year in high school, when I started working as an Algebra tutor, that I found a new passion, teaching. I enjoyed the aspect of working one-on-one with a student showing them ways to understand the concepts of Algebra. I loved talking with them and figuring out what would help them understand the concept and apply it consistently to complete their assignments and tests. Each student I tutored was unique, and I had to develop a different approach to ensure they learned Algebra. I did not understand at the time that I could have a career as a teacher. I thought this was just a way to make some extra money apart from my typical part-time job.

In my senior year in high school, I started working at a daycare in the 4-year-old classroom. Most afternoon teachers were glorified babysitters. Our job was to keep the kids entertained after naptime until their parents picked them up. This was a teaching daycare, and the children had already completed the curriculum for the day before naptime. I did not simply want to watch the children play outside or have them watch a movie—I wanted my class to continue their learning process. I took advantage of several free weekend workshops for elementary education that taught gaming strategies for children aged three to ten. Then I worked with the morning teacher to continue the day's lessons after naptime creating activities that included learning games and story creation. The students enjoyed the games, and the morning teacher was pleased that I took an active interest in teaching the children. The activities I had planned helped the students retain the information they had learned from the morning session, and by the end of the spring, the class was further along in their curriculum than in previous years.

I continued to work at the daycare as I started my college journey. I had a love for technology and focused my studies in that field rather than education. By the time I graduated with my associate degree, I had moved from the classroom into the office and performed administrative assistant duties. This move kept me out of a direct teaching role for the next 20 years. I moved between several positions in different industries before working at a community college as an administrative assistant. After my first year of work, I was asked to teach a non-transferable Microsoft Word course. I never dreamed I would be qualified to teach a college course, but my work experience in the industry was valued more than my degree for non-transferable courses. This was the catalyst that sparked my interest in furthering my education and achieving the goal of teaching more advanced subjects.

I became a non-traditional student in 2016 when I decided to start a new educational journey. This was my first experience with online learning, and I loved it. This modality gave me the freedom to learn anywhere and taught me about my learning style. I struggled my first week in an online history class. I was required to read a chapter and then take a test. The instructor offered a slide deck to enhance the information we should be focusing on as we read, but I struggled to complete the test. I was frustrated and decided to reread the chapter. An hour of rereading the chapter left me frustrated and still lost. I decided to read the chapter out loud, hoping to connect a little more with the material. After I had finished reading the chapter aloud, I retook the test and received an A. I had discovered that I need to hear the information while I read it to absorb it and learn. This made me wonder how many students struggled the way I had. This changed my outlook on the courses I had been teaching. My goal is now to design a course to deliver various instructional materials that will accommodate various learning styles. I also

strive to discover what drives students to learn and retain their information to deliver instruction that will impact all learners.

Throughout my time working at the community college, I have gained a variety of teaching experiences, including working one-on-one with faculty and staff, teaching them how to use technology, and developing training programs to present to a group of faculty and staff. I have continued to teach online courses each year, including Microsoft Office, Web Design, and Business Communications. Each subject has enriched my teaching experience and challenged me in different ways, including students who cannot connect with the subject matter, students who do not understand technology, and students who struggle to communicate effectively.

Currently, my position of Instructional Designer and Technologist allows me to work one-on-one with faculty, teaching them how to use the college's learning management system (LMS) and other software and devices to deliver effective instruction. Working with these adult learners has given me a new appreciation for the older student population. They are eager to learn and have experiences that I can draw on to enhance their learning. Working with these adult learners has taught me patience while working with students. One English faculty member did not want to teach online classes and was not comfortable with technology. The pandemic forced them into the online classroom, and I spent many days working with them to learn the LMS and implement their face-to-face teaching strategies in the online classroom. There were many frustrating sessions, but with patience and analyzing what tactics failed and which were successful, I was able to teach them how to utilize technology to deliver the same caliber class online that they did in person. This faculty member continues to visit my office weekly to learn new ways to utilize the online environment.

I base my teaching philosophy on constructivism learning theory, "learning is how people make sense of their experience—learning is the construction of meaning from experience" (Merriam, 2013-10-14, p. 36) and humanistic learning theory—learning is student-centered and "the teacher is a facilitator of self-directed learning rather than a dispenser of knowledge" (Merriam, 2013-10-14, p.30). I have never believed there is one way to learn something, as evidenced by how I tutored Algebra and assisted the English faculty member. Each student learns differently, and I need to give students the freedom to discover the best way to learn the material I am presenting. I use this technique when I work one-on-one with faculty teaching them how to use technology. When I first started teaching faculty, I would present a demonstration lecture on the technology and expect the faculty to take notes and then perform the actions on their own after the lesson. I quickly learned this was not working because I would meet with the same faculty several times, repeating the same lessons. I changed my strategy and presented the technology, discussed the steps needed to use it properly, and then had the faculty perform the steps. The faculty would still take notes while I was presenting; however, the difference in this approach was allowing the faculty to perform the actions after they had listened, watched, and actively took notes. They were more confident in what they had learned because they were reinforcing it with immediate action. This small change resulted in fewer repeat appointments to relearn the process. Their notes and recollection of what they had performed made it easier to absorb the information and retain it.

My supervisor has commented that my patience and understanding when working with students is impressive. I do not get frustrated when a student cannot grasp a concept. I take a moment to evaluate what the student comprehended, review how I presented that concept, and adjust my methods for teaching the student what they did not understand. Working one-on-one

with various adult learners has shown me that each student learns differently, and a good teacher will adapt their instruction as needed to fit the student. I can successfully teach one student how to create a test in the LMS by showing them how to perform the steps and providing written step-by-step instructions. However, the next student may not learn like that, and I will need to provide the step-by-step instructions on paper and give them auditory instructions while they perform the steps. This gives that student an experience to remember each time they sit down to repeat the process.

Currently, I am teaching Microsoft Office, and learning, or mastery, can be subjective. My students have a wide range of experience with the programs, so learning for a novice could constitute simply opening the program and starting a new document while learning for an experienced user would be completing a mail merge. All of these are essential aspects of using the program, and the goal of the course is for the student to have a working knowledge of the programs and be comfortable using them to perform everyday tasks. The novice student may walk away with more learning moments because they are new to the program, and the experienced student will have a limited amount of learning because they are learning the advanced skills towards the end of the course. Both students' learning is considered successful if they can follow the instructions and produce files utilizing the techniques demonstrated in the textbook and the videos. Students have mastered the discipline when they complete the Microsoft Office Specialist Certification (MOSC) exams, and the material covered in my course prepares the students to complete the exam.

My perfect teaching situation is teaching adult learners in a hybrid setting, with my role being more of a facilitator. I will prepare content and deliver it via video, allowing a student to watch the lesson on their own time before class and allowing class time for questions,

completing assignments, and one-on-one instruction. This will also encourage students who do not have a computer to complete the course because the classroom will be a computer lab setting. The learners who learn the best reading text and watching videos can work at their own pace, only seeking me out if they need support beyond the video instruction. The learners who need more support will have me available in the classroom for one-on-one support, allowing me to figure out what the student needs to learn the concept and deliver instruction catered to their specific learning style and needs.

The classroom portion of the course is essential. A fully online course does not offer that built-in time for the student and instructor to meet face-to-face if necessary. It has been my experience that online students hesitate to arrange a meeting or tutoring with their instructor, and the hybrid setting will remove that hesitation. Meeting with online students for one-on-one tutoring has made a difference in their learning. I was able to have a candid conversation with the student and adapt the instruction to fit their learning needs. The hybrid set has built in the time for students to work on their assignments and seek assistance, encouraging communication.

My online courses are designed with a self-directed approach. The course materials consist of a textbook, various supporting videos and industry articles, and a series of videos I created showing how to complete the tasks presented in the chapter reading, explaining the process in greater detail. The students are presented with a suggested timeline to complete the course, but they have the freedom to complete the course at their own pace. The adult learners can read the text and apply the information to their own experiences, resulting in a personalized learning experience that allows them to complete the assignments. This design has worked well with my adult learner students; however, this structure did not work well with a class of dual credit students. These students are accustomed to the structure of specific due dates for each

assignment and lectures explaining the textbook's content. I adjusted the course for the dual credit course to include recorded lectures explaining the text and incorporated due dates for the assignments. This new structure proved successful for the younger students and prepared me to adjust my teaching style to accommodate this type of learner.

Students in my Microsoft Office course will end the semester knowing how to use the suite of programs to complete work that may be required by an employer or in their classes, such as formatting or creating a business letter, flyer, report, presentation, and data analysis spreadsheet. The projects in the class are designed to assess the students' knowledge of the concepts and procedures and not their creativity; therefore, the assignments are designed for the students to perform specific tasks resulting in each student submitting identical files. I have established grading rubrics based on completing each step in the process to complete the project. Rubrics allow students to know how their assignment is graded and the weight of each step in the process. After incorporating the grading rubrics into the course, the student pass rate in the course raised 25%.

The ultimate measure of success is the students who obtain the MOSC. This credential solidifies their success in the course and is a credential many employers value. Student assessment includes projects that require implementing the skills learned in the textbook chapters and included on the MOSC exam.

I believe that students who do not see an instructor do not believe an instructor is present; therefore, I record video announcements regularly for my online courses. Students need to see you are a natural person and the class is not some automated system of announcements and grading. Instructor presence keeps the students engaged and more successful in the course. I do

not consider my instructional videos instructor presence. I do not appear in the videos; the students hear my voice as I narrate the instructions.

I had several instructors that mentored me and helped me navigate my educational journey. These mentor relationships were essential to my success as a student and employee. This experience has inspired me to volunteer as the lead advisor for my college's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK). This role allows me to mentor a wide variety of students in the college. Students who are members of PTK tend to overextend themselves and set unrealistic goals and expectations for their classes, grades, and personal lives. As a mentor to these students, I counsel them on setting realistic goals and expectations. They need to realize they do not have to take the most challenging classes or be the top student. I was a member of PTK and was the typical student, taking the most challenging classes, volunteering for every committee and community service event, and being the primary support for my family. I was stretched beyond my capacity and close to giving up on everything. My PTK advisor saw how stressed I was and helped me put everything into perspective and set realistic goals and expectations. My experience helps me mentor PTK students, and they have commented that sharing my experiences helped them accept my help because they felt I truly understood their perspective. I was not just another teacher trying to tell them what they should or should not do with their lives. Seeing these students graduate and transfer to a university or start a successful career is rewarding and the reason I will continue to mentor students regardless of where I work or the position I hold.

I mentor the students in the graphic design program at the high school where I graduated. Every year I schedule time with the graphic design teacher to talk with the students about my experience as a graphic designer. These classes are part of a career path for the students leading to enrolling in a graphic design program at our local community college and the goal of a career

in graphic design. Sharing my experience of my hobby turning into a career inspires these students to continue their path because I achieved success with no formal training. I let them know their advantages over me because they are learning design and concepts that I have to spend time researching and learning on my own. It is rewarding to get student success updates from the graphic design teacher, especially when the students commented that my talk inspired them to keep going when they wanted to quit. Success stories are essential to students, and that is why I continue to mentor these students annually.

I have grown as an educator over the past five years. Each new class enriches my knowledge and experience, and my passion for teaching grows too. I take advantage of every opportunity my current employer offers to develop my skills as an instructor. Currently, I am working on completing a master's program to help me grow as an educator and instructional designer. I love to learn and always find myself back in a classroom. My love for teaching grows each semester, and my goal is to transition my career from instructional designer to full-time instructor.

My ideal job would be teaching adult learners in either an online or hybrid setting. Technology is a critical factor in all disciplines I am credentialed to teach, and having an online component in the course is essential to expose students to technology. Many people that fear technology were thrust into it as a result of the pandemic. These learners need every opportunity to acclimate to technology, and an online classroom gives them experience with technology that can translate to other aspects of their lives.

Full-time teaching can be in the capacity of an instructor in a college program or professional development training for working adults. I have worked in both areas and find value and fulfillment in each situation. My disciplines are taught in both programs; I have seen success

with the curriculum I teach in both settings. Teaching people new skills is my passion, and seeing my students succeed in all aspects of their lives due to my teaching skills is rewarding.

In conclusion, teaching has been a part of my life from an early age. Tutoring my peers in high school prepared me to train my colleagues in my current position. Teaching preschool children was the first step to teaching at the college level. Both aspects of teaching are rewarding, and I would be honored to hold a full-time position either teaching college classes or a training program. Both environments allow me to develop a self-directed program that originates from both constructivism and humanistic learning theory. Learning is subjective, and that should be reflected in the curriculum and how the teacher interacts with each student. Teaching and learning are not hands-off experiences. A teacher cannot simply put a class together that runs automatically. A teacher needs to interact with the students and help them be successful in the course, guiding and mentoring them throughout the course and their entire education journey. This is how I design and execute every course I teach, and I look forward to the opportunity to continue this process and grow as an instructor as I learn from my students and future professional development opportunities.

Reference

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