

Philosophy of Teaching

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## Philosophy of teaching

*"We are what we learn to be."*<sup>1</sup>

As an adult educator, it is my goal to understand student context to facilitate (not dictate) active, engaging educative experiences that have real-world application, encourage critical thinking, and instill a desire for lifelong learning (Dewey, 1938).

The basis of my teaching philosophy comes from the progressivism and constructivism theories (Ross-Gordon, Rose, & Kasworm, 2017; Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, 2017). Adult learners are not empty vessels to which an instructor deposits learning material; rather, they "actively construct their own knowledge and learn through their interaction with...other people and objects in the world" (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, 2017). Adults are continuously learning from their own experiences, creating and strengthening neural connections in the process (Dewey, 1938; Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, 2017). As an adult learning facilitator, it is my job to create an environment that encourages learners to want to actively construct new knowledge (and neural pathways).

Learners come to the classroom with a variety of experiences, opinions, levels of knowledge, and preferred ways of learning; though I am but one node in the learner-centered system, I believe that it is my job to influence the other nodes to create the optimum conditions for successful learning. Here are five elements of my teaching philosophy that aim to motivate and engage students to maximize learning:

- 1) **Creating Community** – I believe that creating an inclusive community of learners is an important factor in stimulating motivation and developing interpersonal skills. Allowing time for introductions and sharing stories is one way to achieve this.

- 2) **Defining Goals and Successful Performance** – Adult students come to the classroom with different goals in mind; I believe that having students define their individual goals will help me structure the class in a way that will meet their goals and maximize the value of learning activities. I also believe that defining the measure of success is helpful, and would like to help shift learners from grade-based to comprehension and application-based success measures.
- 3) **Providing Engaging Learning Activities** – I believe people learn best by doing, and that active and collaborative learning activities foster self-discovery, develop interpersonal skills, and maximize engagement. Working in a STEM / industrial context, I can meet these goals through the use of practical problem-based learning, project-based learning, and simulations, along with hands-on demonstrations (Washington, 1963; Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, 2017). I also hope to enhance the relevance of these activities by giving students choices in their projects.
- 4) **Facilitating Reflection and Critical Thinking** – I believe that reflection is a critical component of hands-on learning. Reflection helps students to synthesize classroom learning with real-world applications. Whether through group discussion or written word, we will ask and discuss questions that foster the development of critical thinking skills. In a world with so much information and opposing opinions, teaching students to critically think for themselves is essential to maintaining internal freedom (Dewey, 1938).
- 5) **Soliciting Feedback** – I believe that it is important to solicit feedback from learners at every stage of the learning event (Smith, 2017). This not only teaches students to voice

their opinions in a respectful manner, but also lets them know that they have a say in their learning.

With this philosophy, I will never blame the learner for not learning; rather, I will change the system so that all learners can succeed on their own terms (Conklin, 2012).

References

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Washington, B. T. (1963). *Up from Slavery*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company.

Wlodkowski, R and Ginsberg, M. (2017). *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn*. Jossey-Bass.  
(1) Quote citation: (Wlodkowski and Goldberg, 2017, p 77).

Footnotes

1. Quote from *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn* by R. Wlodkowski and M. Ginsberg, cited in References section.