

Teaching Philosophy

My first experiences as an educator were as an elementary classroom teacher and a special education resource teacher. It was during this time that I began to establish my personal teaching philosophy rooted in Social Justice and the application of Funds of Knowledge in classroom settings through culturally responsive pedagogy. I believe that all students are capable learners who bring unique and valuable experiences to the classroom. These experiences can be the foundation for meaningful learning for all students. As an instructor it is my job to help guide students in connecting their own social and cultural experiences to new knowledge. Combining Social Justice with the concept of Funds of Knowledge provided a new perspective built on the idea that all knowledge and experiences hold tremendous value, not just those presented in the mainstream curriculum. Students in my classroom were also encouraged to use the skills and knowledge of the classroom curriculum to further connect and explore their own cultures and values. For example, when learning about writing informational texts, one student who was a member of the Pascua Yaqui tribe chose to write about the significance and role of the deer dancer to the people of the Pascua Yaqui tribe.

In addition to viewing all learners as competent and capable, when working specifically with adult learners I maintain a focus on their unique needs in an effort to foster theory into practice thinking and application. It is of great importance that my students learn by doing as a way to understand the why behind content presented in my courses. Understanding how to apply concepts of child development and assessment to their own experiences and their field of study helps students develop a sense of ownership over the material and an intrinsic motivation for mastery.

I often engage students in discussion and provide ample opportunity for reflection on their own learning. As a faculty member in the College of Education, I believe that it is my responsibility to exemplify best practices in teaching including learning by doing and using culturally responsive pedagogy. Assignments in my classes are designed to get students engaged in the application of the content across many contexts. It is not enough for students in my classes to memorize and recite basic information. I teach for mastery in application. I am passionate about teaching and learning. I have always viewed myself as a lifelong learner and hope to inspire the same enthusiasm for teaching and learning in my students.

Regular formative feedback is provided to help guide students as they reflect upon and regulate their learning. I am continuously collecting data through formative assignments and assessments to assess where the students' level of understanding lies, where any misconceptions may be present, and if any additional instruction may be needed. I use this data to inform my instructional decisions and to modify my instruction to ensure that mastery is an attainable goal for my students.

The feedback and data collected also informs my own professional development and teaching practices. I am a lifelong learner, continuously seeking to grow and evolve in my profession. I pay careful attention to the formal and informal feedback that I get from students through their performance on assignments and exams, their nonverbal cues and level of engagement during class, as well as their scores and comments included in their course evaluations. This information assists in my abilities to adapt my teaching strategies, pace, and content to best meet the needs of my students. I also engage in research and professional development that inform my teaching practices and allow me to continuously grow and improve as an educator.

Beyond teaching content, I am also passionate about providing my students with a model of a compassionate and caring instructor. Educational outcomes at the University level are often attached to high stakes for students, which can result in stressful student experiences. I see it as part of my role to help students find balance in their lives and manage stress in a productive way. It is important that they develop healthy coping mechanisms and an overall sense of wellness in their own lives so that they can successfully engage in learning. My current research related to student experiences of failure is designed to help identify avenues for intervention that will not only impact student success and wellbeing while they are at the University, but also as they continue in their own professions.