

Online Teaching Philosophy

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All education should have three main goals in mind – the betterment of the individual, the betterment of society, and the betterment of humanity. Learning arises through language acquisition (Chomsky, 2006; Vygotsky, 1986). Therefore, learning requires interpersonal communication. Situated learning environments, similar to historical guilds, offer a model that when implemented, even in a modified form, can enhance and enrich learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning that promotes collaboration and teamwork as well as a supportive learning community embraces primary goals of situated learning. Effective and dynamic learning occurs when both teachers and students are engaged in learning, e.g., teachers reflectively monitor their instruction and students' progress while students navigate course materials and activities receiving feedback via assessment. When teachers and students cocreate communities of inquiry, respecting themselves and others, supporting others, and exploring and applying course content, students learn essential interpersonal skills necessary for healthy societies and communities and teachers evolve (Fiock, 2020; Putnam, 2015).

Online learning experiences inherently can be alienating. Instructors can facilitate necessary interpersonal communication by requiring low-stakes and high-stakes student activities which also provide support and develop a learning community. For example, encouraging student introductions and sharing random information can occur in a “class café” discussion forum. Peer evaluation of assignments and collaborative projects, even interviewing a student colleague, provide students with active learning activities requiring them to connect with people and not just the course material (Fiock, 2020). Instructors support learning and student motivation and engagement by providing timely feedback, encouraging weekly announcements, direct instruction synchronously, facilitating respectful and inclusive communication, providing clear expectations and requirements, and personal communication via email or text. Regardless, of how much personal interaction students choose to experience, encouraging student social presence and providing a regular online teaching presence creates a foundation for successful and rewarding online learning.

Education that allows individuals to explore possibilities, explore themselves, and gain valuable skills and knowledge is critical for students becoming motivated and skilled employees. All educators should work together with business leaders to ensure that each high school diploma, vocational certificate, and higher education degree result in a job and career. As adult learners, higher education students in online courses want to be successful on assessments and will more likely value the online learning experience when they experience success (Chen et al., 2018). Thus, instructors need to make sure students understand how course objectives are aligned with career goals and how the structure of the online course will support them being successful with the course material, ultimately helping them in their career. Education that respects personal differences and is culturally responsive encourages empathy, self-esteem, and student motivation (Payne, 1996). Ideally, an incredible learning experience offers avenues of discovery in all areas of the human experience – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

Teachers in any subject and in any grade hold tremendous responsibility. Not only are teachers charged with the care and development of precious human beings, teachers are also ambassadors of the future because teachers are preparing future adults and citizens. In order to prepare students to better our world and humanity, discourse and evaluation of ethics facilitates future decision-making. Examining ethics may require discussing morality, in which case, education can be a practice environment for

finding ways to agree and disagree civilly and respectfully. Providing students with a systematic process of investigating problems, exploring problems and solutions, discussing problems and solutions, and reflecting on the problems and solutions provides students with a pathway for developing deep learning content and critical thinking (Fiock, 2020). Deeper and more meaningful learning engagement can also increase student motivation, resulting in a more educated citizenry.

Finally, teachers can effectively deliver phenomenal educational experiences by capitalizing on their teaching style, embracing their challenges, and implementing design principles. Teachers must combine contextual and direct instruction to stimulate critical thinking and effective language acquisition (Marzano & Kendall, 2007). Teachers must also creatively construct learning experiences that honor and respect many educational stakeholders while simultaneously being innovative and responsive to technological and societal changes (Papert, 1980). Adopting a role of true service with humility allows teachers to receive the ultimate teaching reward, seeing students light up with joy as they learn.

In summary, online education that communicates clear goals, expectations, learning activities, and learning assessments is critical for self-directed learning. Further, online education should ideally create alternative assignments and assessments that encourage learners to interact with their subject in the real world. Creative application of universal design for learning and accessible formatting ensures that all students can effectively learn online. Creating opportunities for student collaboration and interaction during the online learning process provides stimulating and enriching learning and supportive communities of inquiry.

References

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