

Teaching Philosophy

My classroom is designed as an inclusive learning community founded on justice and equity for each member. As a teacher I create the conditions for each student, no matter their intersectionality, to develop to the best of their abilities. I do this by building classroom systems that surround students with the latest research, positioning students as active leaders in their learning and routinely connecting students with their classmates so they learn on many levels from one another. I believe that classrooms, like organizations, are communities and I work to make them strong, supportive and trusted places for people to show up ready to do their best work. No matter where my students go after my course, they bring themselves along. I assist my students in knowing and trusting their best selves so this is their traveling companion on the adventure that is their future.

I believe self reflection and creative thinking are core to learning. Early in my career I went on a reflective journey to find a calling that spoke to me, I found points of change coupled with social-emotional competency. I see exploration is a key part of learning and I build courses that create space and structured opportunities for students to design their own intellectual adventures within our learning community. Self reflection and applying learning actively to your own life is another key to lifelong learning, one I maintain as a daily practice. My courses are built on activities and assignments that require students to do things such as apply the classroom concepts to their own lives and select the concepts that speak most to them for deeper study. Some examples are students as guest lecturers for the day, reflection journals and the co-creation of a class Social-Emotional Toolkit for Good Living.

I believe our world needs courageous, innovative thinkers who can do a good job implementing change when and where it is needed. My Masters Degree in Adult Education and Organizational Development taught me about the courage it takes to champion change within a system and how to attend to the human needs throughout this often challenging process. These ideas infused my subsequent career in Human Resources Development as well as the work I do today with my students. I challenge my students to learn the latest theories and then think outside the box to explore creative implementations and methods for integrating them within the demands of the 21st century work world. Some examples are group projects that require students to build upon one another's ideas and class discussions that explore hard to solve social problems connected to the course content.

I believe that researched learning and development theories matter and I have seen the effect they can have on learning. While working at an international consulting firm, I created corporate training for some of the largest companies in the United States with a focus on building the soft skills of managers across the organization. In doing this we utilized some of the latest teaching and learning strategies such as active learning and chunking. I worked hard in this role to create meaningful activities that engaged our students on many levels from cognitive and structural to emotional or physical. I also designed courses based upon 15 minute segments that got students moving and engaging with the content between short segments of lecture. We found this was learning that stayed with our students and was translated into practice back on the job. I continue this practice of a focus on employing research-based best practices to achieve student learning in my classes.

I wrote a book about the personal and emotional transitions of pregnancy and new parenthood when I saw how overlooked that area of transformation was for women and their partners. It was a process of new parents sharing stories that brought an idea to life, strategies that helped readers try out the concepts in their own lives, and resources that made room for questioning, informing and exploring . The result was a tool that helped others as they traversed the path into parenthood. My belief is that student assessments should have this same worldly relevance. Students can see their own learning and take authority over it when they share course content with others, research findings are sorely under communicated to the general public, and students see the value of course content in their own life when applying it in the real world. These three legs hold up my philosophy of assessment, that it is best when tied to application of course content outside of the confines of the classroom. Finally, throughout my courses, I am sensitive to the unique life-situations that may be faced by students. They have the option to employ a variety of modalities within one assessment or assignment, allowing them to leverage their strengths and areas of interest.

I believe that teaching from a larger frame of transdisciplinary thinking will increase student learning and understanding of systems thinking, complex issues, and future work/life needs. In 2006 I started a small education company focused on infusing life skills into daily lessons on the topic of art, science, math or music. We worked across disciplines and technologies to increase student critical thinking, systems awareness, curiosity, and creative thinking. When teaching I work to bring a diversity of thinkers, ideas and concepts from across disciplines to reinforce ideas or expand concepts and highlight system complexity. I use technology to aid in this process, adding interest, visual impact, additional information and exposure to online communication tools such as Padlets and Word Clouds which students can employ in the future.

In all I do, I strive to help students stretch into the complex spaces, take authority over their learning, deeply listen to one another, and build a classroom of courageous learners who are willing to take the risk to stretch beyond their comfort zone.