

Teaching Philosophy Statement

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Teaching and learning are more than just a job for me. It is the heart and soul of my identity and something that I am incredibly passionate about. I still remember my first day as a teacher, and how exciting it was to step into my classroom, meet my students, and teach for the first time. If you observed me walking to my car after teaching, you would find me dancing and possibly even jumping up and down while twirling with joy. That is how much I love teaching. It fills my heart and soul to the point that I almost feel as if I might burst, leaving me invigorated, inspired, and eager for the next class.

As an educator who follows the relational-cultural model of teaching, I believe that connecting with students and really getting to know them is one of the most incredible parts of teaching. I emphasize developing growth-fostering relationships with my students based on mutual authenticity, empowerment, and empathy. Each student's unique journey that has led them to this program, this course, and this moment in time, are humbling experiences that show their determination, resilience, and dedication toward their own intellectual pursuits and desire to make the world a better place. It is a profound privilege and honor to be trusted to guide their education and walk alongside them as they learn and grow.

I teach in such a way as to elicit transformative moments of understanding within my students by incorporating elements from Freirean-based critical pedagogy, emphasizing problem-posing, critical thought, experiential learning, and social justice. I value bringing the voices of those who are marginalized into the classroom. Most importantly, I see myself as a learner alongside my students, learning from them as they learn from me. I frequently model vulnerability with students by sharing professional struggles I have overcome to help students understand that learning is a process. I closely watch for moments when students appear disconnected from their learning experience and work to assist them in reconnecting to the course.

My teaching methods are creative and innovative, and I find myself often coming up with new ideas. If you gazed in my classroom, you would hear laughter, you would see curiosity, and you will feel the deep self-reflections brewing within every student. Our only limits are our imagination, and I believe mine is limitless. I am constantly exploring new ideas and researching innovative ways to teach course material, as well as networking with other inspiring counselor educators in the field.

Assessment and feedback are also important tools that I incorporate to gauge the knowledge students are retaining, the effectiveness of my teaching strategies, and give my students a voice. I am transparent in my work and explain my thoughts and the reasoning behind my assignments, course content, grading, and so on. I actively seek out student opinions and spend time in reflective contemplation to ensure I meet their educational needs. I recognize my position of power, and work to address any conscious or unconscious biases that I may have.

Teaching is something that I put my entire heart and soul into. It is a piece of me that has been present since I first entered this world. I can see the teacher in me, weaving through every childhood experience, through my first foray into adulthood, and through my work as a counselor. No matter my job title, I have always been a teacher at heart. I even teach in my spare time by leading a Girl Scout troop!

My sincerest hope is that my time as a teacher aligns with bell hooks' quote that we must "reimagine education as a practice of freedom, a journey that not only informs but also transforms, empowering us to transcend the limitations of conventional learning and embrace the full spectrum of human potential."