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Teaching Philosophy

There are many different aspects to my philosophy of teaching, but in the center of it lies the care of and attention to the students. In addition to woodworking skills my goal is to teach them how to be successful by empowering them to **make**, **think**, and **act** on their own.

It has never been my goal to churn out perfect furniture makers, woodturners or box builders. These are valid and important pursuits, but you don't need to go to college or art school for any of them. My goals as a teacher are more esoteric. I want to empower the students to determine what is important to them about art/woodworking/making and life and to pursue those things to the best of their ability. My job is to listen to them where they are, help them figure out where they want to go, and give them the skills to begin their journey.

How do I do that? In an introductory class, it's easy, I usually start with the simple things, like introducing the woodshop's tools and how to use them without hurting yourself. This is obviously important from a safety and liability standpoint, but it also empowers my students to do things that they didn't think they could do. I like to get them familiar with pushing the limits of their comfort zone because it leads them to try different things without being anxious about the unknown.

I also emphasize that screwing up is part of the process. My perfect teaching environment would be a place without grades that allows the students to explore making without worrying about grades and deadlines. I know this ideology doesn't fit the academic protocol, but I still work to make the students comfortable spending time working in the woodshop. They create a community there, exploring the things they can do with wood and other materials, and making their best work together.

In my more advanced classes, I set up my project assignments so that each builds on skills learned in previous projects. As the students practice old skills, they develop new ones, and they begin to problem solve on their own. As their skills progress, the assignment constraints get looser, and I ask the students to propose their own projects, exploring their own voices and motivations.

Throughout this time of skill building and material exploration, I interject critical thought and dialogue about their work. Additionally, readings, videos, discussions, and lectures give us a framework to investigate history and theoretical issues. I encourage the students to inform the direction of our conversations, while providing a solid foundation in contemporary art and craft discourse. My perspective is far from the only one, so I introduce a variety of viewpoints to the students and work to help them discover their own. Through an exploration of the ways that folks have used and continue to use art and craft to enhance the world around them, I intend to spark curiosity and a sense of purpose in my students.