

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

I was always one of the overachieving kid in class. There was a handful of us in my graduating class, and we all sat in front, ready to spring our hand up with a quick answer to every question. It must have driven our teachers crazy. I didn't give much thought to why the other students in class weren't answering as quickly or following along as we did. When I thought ahead to becoming a teacher, it was kids like me that I imagined teaching: enthusiastic, energetic and driven.

As it happened my first hands-on teaching job was with students who were not at all like me. In the late 1990s I worked with children who had been labelled as 'at risk' youth. They ranged in age from 13 to 17 and were attending this special high school project, Youth LIVE, because they had been expelled from every high school they were eligible to attend. Many lived in group homes and some lived with parents in conditions of neglect or abuse. It was our job as teachers to teach these young adults basic subjects, such as English, math, and geography.

It was here that I first learned about different learning styles, about how to engage student interest, and about the power of self-perception to shape ability. These students had been told they couldn't learn, and as a result, they hadn't. I also learned how important it was that students be meeting their needs for food, shelter, and safety, before they can concentrate on acquiring new skills. The pleasure in helping a struggling student realize their potential is something I have never forgotten. I learned a lesson that shapes all of my teaching today: given the proper environment and approach, *all students are capable of learning*.

Helping students to become cognizant of their individual learning styles can change a struggling student's self-perception and help an advanced student locate areas for improvement. I present material using multiple methods so as to reach auditory, visual and kinesthetic learners.

University learning is increasingly seen as a product we have to sell, and our students, and other stakeholders see themselves as our customers. With this in mind, It is not enough to teach our students; by the end of the course, they must see themselves as *having learned*. As teachers we must make our teaching explicit, rather than implicit. One way I do this is to have them critique their own first essay. When possible, the opportunity to edit, re-write, and re-submit an essay offers students the chance to learn crucial editorial skills and to see their progress in concrete terms.

I aim to endow students with the critical thinking and communication skills that will serve them well as life long learners. Ultimately, my goal is for both the kid at the front with her hand up and the kid at the back who never volunteers an answer to leave knowing that they *can* learn and having a clear sense of *how to do it better* in their future work.