

My Teaching Philosophy

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I touch the future. I teach."

Christa McAuliffe, Teacher and Challenger Astronaut

A teacher's job is to provide learners with a 'compass' to guide them through the messy task of learning. The teacher gets the learners started by imparting key knowledge areas or concepts. The teacher then sends the learners on their learning journey by 'pointing' them toward applications of the knowledge. Learners explore the new territory on their own or in groups, but the teacher sets up 'compass readings' along the way to ensure that learners do not lose their way. At these checkpoints, the teacher and learners both stop to evaluate progress and provide each other with feedback. Learners may take different routes to learn; some routes are messier and more arduous than others are. At the journey's end, all those involved are learners and they celebrate the accomplishment. Teaching and learning..."you can't have one without the other".

My Teaching Values and Principles

I believe that applying knowledge to different clinical scenarios provides relevance and facilitates learning. For example, I provide fundamental knowledge while simultaneously challenging students to use the knowledge for professional reasoning in physical therapy and interprofessional teamwork. I expect students to critically evaluate knowledge from diverse sources and apply it to solve clinical problems. However, students need guidance and modeling to begin thinking and learning in this way. I offer guidance by asking questions in class and in the learning materials. These guiding questions challenge students to deliberately explore their understanding of knowledge in order to apply it to a scenario. I offer modeling by my enthusiasm for the topic and demonstrations of applications from my clinical experience. I do not want students to memorize huge amounts of information; I want them to use their knowledge. I try to follow the adage 'less can be more' to help me identify the key concepts to be learned by students at a deeper level.

My beliefs as a physical therapist are incorporated into my teaching. Physical therapists work in partnership with clients to find ways to manage problems interfering with mobility. My job as a teacher is to create a learning environment that promotes a shared responsibility in learning. I clearly communicate high but realistic learning expectations to students. I use questions to facilitate the students' thinking and I openly receive their questions. The dialogue generated by questioning provides me with an opportunity to gauge the students' knowledge and give them feedback on their clinical reasoning. Students are also encouraged to reflect on their learning and utilize feedback. I genuinely respect students as 'colleagues in training' and constantly learn from them. Students tell me that my respectful communication fosters their respect and eagerness to meet expectations. I enjoy watching students' expressions when they 'get it'. I make myself readily available to help students help themselves learn. I feel very privileged to be a part of the students' professional development as physical therapists. I apply these same principles in a mentoring role with other teachers. Other teachers tell me that my 'nothing ventured, nothing gained' attitude encourages them to step out of their comfort zone and try different teaching ideas. I revel in the joy of teaching and learning with students and faculty alike.