

## **Unit 2**

### **Developing Your Philosophy of Teaching**

#### **Unit Objectives**

1. Write a first draft of your teaching philosophy -- or a new draft if you have done this before.
2. Revise that draft based on peer feedback, discussion, and reflection.
3. Relate your teaching style to your philosophy.
4. Revise your teaching philosophy for different audiences.

## Writing Your Philosophy of Teaching

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory." This quotation is closely associated with the renowned social psychologist, Kurt Lewin, who also believed that good theories are shaped by practical experiences. The development of your teaching philosophy is the heart of this unit. It is shaped by your experiences and forms the theory that guides what you do as a teacher.

Effective teaching begins with the teaching philosophy, which represents the personal theory that teachers construct to systematize their rationale for guiding student learning (Schonwetter, Sokal, Friesen, & Taylor, 2002). This statement of your teaching philosophy is far from a static document. An essential characteristic of effective teachers lies in their willingness to learn or change for a lifetime. As such, teaching philosophies evolve through the changing seasons of a teacher's life and career. In fact, it will change even in the relatively short time that it will take you to work through this guide.

In this Guide we follow this model:

Philosophy > Objectives > Methods > Learning > Evaluation > Reflection

Your philosophy (explicit or implicit) of teaching and learning determines the objectives you choose for your courses. These objectives lead to decisions about the most appropriate teaching methods and ways of assessing student learning. All of this is evaluated and modified based on the data you obtain from teaching, and your reflection on what happened during your teaching. This reflection may lead you to repeat the cycle beginning with revising your philosophy.

As you go through this guide you will be asked to make the links explicit. What are those arrows (>) in the model? You will see that your philosophy will guide your teaching from major areas such as your course objectives to mundane aspects like your attendance policy.

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**Activity: Write your philosophy of teaching.**

Asked to write their philosophy of teaching, most participants find they have several questions. What should I write? How long should it be? The primary reason for asking you to write without preparation and suggestions is that this should be your philosophy, not that of some expert. It should be yours in form as well as content. You are not starting from a blank slate, but from years of experience as a student and perhaps with a little or a lot of teaching experience. So simply begin. The only requirements are that you write in the first person (this is your philosophy) and use non-technical language because others will read it eventually.

*Instructions.*

Everyone has a preferred way of thinking and composing, so here are some suggestions. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Think about teaching and whatever that brings to mind, perhaps occasionally jotting a note. Then do some free writing, where you write continuously without taking your pen from the page. Next, reflect on what you have written, and finally re-write it doing a little organizing in preparation for showing this first draft to someone else. Devote about an hour to this. Or do this for a while, change to some other unrelated activity, and then come back to your philosophy.

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For beginning teachers, and experts alike, the abstract nature of the process by which an initial teaching philosophy is constructed or revised can be viewed as intimidating or

meaningless. In this Unit we provide advice for how one might go about constructing an effective teaching philosophy statement.

## Reflecting on Your Teaching Philosophy

Our own experience provides the basis for much of what we write in a teaching philosophy. We think of good and bad teachers we have had, in and outside of the classroom. We recall reading things about teaching that struck us as profound or useful. Our view of human nature and the meaning of life come into play.

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### **Activity: Revise your teaching philosophy.**

These are some potentially useful questions to stimulate your thinking about your teaching philosophy:

1. Who was the best teacher you ever had? Who was the worst? (Or think of a composite of these good and bad teachers) List their characteristics.
2. Describe your style or the style you expect to have when you teach.
3. If you overheard students talking about you and your teaching, what would you want them to be saying? Why is that important to you?
4. How do (or would) you motivate students to help them learn? What motivators would you never use?
5. Does (or would) your teaching vary depending on the course you are teaching and the kind of students you have? Are there essential principles in your philosophy that would not depend on the situation?
6. Think of a metaphor for your teaching. Why is your teaching like this metaphor, and in what ways is it not like your chosen metaphor?

After thinking about these questions, revise your draft.

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You have taken the first steps in constructing a teaching philosophy. As our model indicates, your philosophy of teaching determines the objectives you choose for your courses. These objectives lead to decisions about the most appropriate teaching methods to implement in the classroom and viable ways of assessing student learning. In reality our teaching rarely develops in this rational, linear manner. In fact, teaching philosophies are intended to be reconsidered frequently after experience teaching “in the trenches.”

At this point, it may be useful to review some teaching philosophy statements. You will find these examples in a supplement to this chapter (Appendix A). Please do not go to these statements until you have written a second draft of your own philosophy so that you are not unduly influenced by the writing style and ideas of others. Remember, this should be your philosophy. These examples are not provided to serve as reservoirs of ideas to borrow, rather they are provided in hopes of further stimulating critical thinking about your own personal style of teaching students.

***Critical Thinking Interruption: Critiquing teaching philosophies***

- **What views noted in the teaching philosophies in the Appendix resonate most with you?**
- **What would you like to have clarified and added in these statements?**

There may be some clichés in what we write, but mostly our ideas are deeply felt. Writing that is deeply felt may not, however, be writing that is clear, and that is why having someone else read your essay can be helpful.

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**Activity: Collaborative review.**

Find another person who also is developing a teaching philosophy and exchange your essays. For most of us, showing our writing to another person is threatening, especially when it is an early draft. Realize that you both are in the same boat, that yes, it is rough, and you might have some grammatical and spelling errors, and you really can say it better. After getting over your reluctance for self-revelation, use these questions to guide your critique of each other's essay:

- What are the main points of this essay?
- What is the strongest part of this essay?
- What is the weakest part of this essay?
- What additional questions do you have and what other sub-topics would you like to read about in this essay?

Write your responses to these questions about your partner's philosophy statement then communicate with that person and discuss what each of you wrote. One of the best methods for developing as a teacher is talking with others about what we do and think. Once you have received feedback from your partner, make some notes for yourself about how you may want to revise your philosophy.

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The teaching philosophy is an evolving statement that will change as you work through this Guide, and later as you continue your teaching. The process of change is based on the psychological theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). When we have two thoughts (cognitions) that don't fit (dissonance) this makes us uncomfortable, and we can eliminate that

discomfort by changing one of the thoughts. In teaching your thoughts come from your philosophy and your practices; when they don't match one or the other must change to reduce the dissonance.

In Jim's and Jason's teaching philosophies (see Appendix A), there are organizing principles that are not always implemented religiously in the classroom. For instance, we both speak a great deal about the importance of active learning (e.g., debates, critical thinking discussions, hands-on activities), yet realize that our classes often involve lecturing to students much more than half of the time. When we recognized this dissonance, we each described feeling exasperated with ourselves because this discrepancy had been evident for several semesters. In discussions, we wondered why we were so reluctant to change either our philosophies or our teaching methods. Unfortunately, without careful and frequent deliberation and discussion, cognitive dissonance is difficult to identify and not always easily resolved. In fact, sometimes more than one discussion or formal feedback session is required before discrepancies between philosophy and practice are realized and remedied.

## Teaching Style

Your philosophy may include a description of what you will be like as a teacher -- your classroom performance and how you relate to students. Like your personality, some of your style is determined by heredity, but much of it is learned and can be changed. You have some choice about teaching style, which is why it is worth thinking about it here.

Jay Parini (1997) says that teachers "need to invent and cultivate a voice that serves their personal needs, their students, and the material at hand," and this "self-presentation involves the donning of a mask," our teaching persona (p. A92). We agree with Parini that you "learn to teach by listening closely to your own teachers, by taking on their voices, imitating them, digesting them so that they become part of your own voice (p. A92)." These characteristics are blended with our own, and over time we discover what works well for us so that a more authentic persona develops.

Several typologies of teaching styles have been developed to describe ways of relating to students. We are not particularly in favor of putting people into categories; they almost always are incomplete and overlapping. However, Anthony Grasha has developed a typology that is useful as an exercise to understand your teaching style. His book, *Teaching with Style* (1996), includes an inventory (p. 159-164) that will give you a score for each of these five teaching styles (adapted from Grasha, p. 154):

- Expert. Possesses knowledge and expertise that students need. Maintains status by displaying detailed knowledge and challenging students to enhance their competence. Concerned with transmitting information and insuring that students are well prepared.
- Formal Authority. Status comes from knowledge and role as a faculty member. Concerned with giving positive and negative feedback, establishing learning goals,

expectations, and rules of conduct. Provides students with the structure they need to learn.

- Personal Model. Teaches by personal example and models how to think and behave. Oversees, guides, and directs by showing how to do things and encouraging students to observe and emulate the model.
- Facilitator. Emphasizes the personal nature of student-teacher interactions. Guides students by asking questions, suggesting alternatives, and encouraging students to make informed choices. Overall goal is to develop the capacity for independent action and responsibility.
- Delegator. Concerned with developing the capacity to function in an autonomous fashion. Students work independently or in teams with the teacher as a resource person.

The instructions for this inventory ask the respondent to keep a specific course in mind when completing the inventory, thus recognizing that our style may vary depending on the situation.

Grasha has done extensive research with the inventory and reports clusters of styles that go together. For example, he found that the most common cluster (38% of faculty) has a combination of expert and formal authority as the primary teaching style. An [online version of the inventory](#) which automatically does the scoring is also available.

**Activity: Put some thought into your own teaching style.**

- Which of Grasha's teaching styles best describe your unique approach in the classroom? Complete the online version of [Grasha's Teaching Styles Inventory](#), and then consider the following questions: How do the results match your image of your style?

- How does your style differ for different courses? If you completed this for only one course, what differences might you expect to see in some other course that you might teach?
  - How do the results compare to what you have written in your teaching philosophy? If there are differences, will you change your philosophy?
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The major objective of this unit has been for you to develop *your* teaching philosophy, and to increase the likelihood that it really is yours; we have provided minimal direction on the content and style of your statement. We hope you feel the result is your own deeply felt view of teaching and learning.

There are sources you can use that give more specific directions about how to write a philosophy of teaching. Two documents ([American Chemical Society, 2000](#); [Chism, 1997-1998](#)) provide particularly useful suggestions. We suggest that you not read these until you feel that you have made sufficient effort to write a philosophy that truly is your own in both content and style. Nancy Van Note Chism suggests that the philosophy statement should be individual, reflective, and personal, creating "a vivid portrait of a person who is intentional about teaching practices and committed to a career" (p. 32). The American Chemical Society (ACS) brochure is more directive than we have been, however, you may find the advice on documentation and reflection of interest.

The staff of the teaching and learning center at the University of Michigan conducted a survey of faculty search committee chairs at large universities (Kaplan, et al., 2007), in which they asked, "What makes a teaching statement successful?" The responses were sorted into these five categories (p. 248):

- Offers evidence of practice. Statements provided specific examples linking their philosophy to what they actually did as teachers.
- Is student-centered and uses active learning.
- Demonstrates reflectiveness showing how changes were made in the classroom.
- Conveys enthusiasm for teaching and a vision.
- Is well written, clear and readable.

According to respondents, poorly written statements were “generic, full of boilerplate language, [and did] not appear to be taken seriously” (p. 249).

The report of this research includes a [rubric used in the Michigan teaching center to evaluate philosophy statements](#). You may find this information helpful, but remember, what you write should be *your* statement and reflect your beliefs.

## **Audience**

Being aware of the audience for your statement is very important. According to the [American Chemical Society](#) publication, "The most important audience . . . is yourself" (2000, p. 7). You are least constrained by style, length, and other details when writing for yourself. Eventually you may have a file with notes, drafts of early versions, and reflections on your development. This is the practical theory you use to implement your teaching style.

However, there will be other important audiences. When you search for an academic position many places will ask specifically for your teaching philosophy, and will expect to see it in a more concise form than one you have written for yourself. If you are successful in your job search – or already have that academic position – you will be evaluated for salary increments, promotion and tenure. Then Deans and committees will want to know how you view your teaching. Be informed about your audience. Your core values should not change, but you can use different examples and emphasize certain elements of your philosophy. Actually, your recognition of those differences can itself be a part of your philosophy.

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### **Activity: Applying for a job or promotion.**

Imagine that you are applying for a position at an institution that has asked for your approach to teaching, i.e., your teaching philosophy. If you already have a position, imagine your promotion committee asking for that statement.

- Take your latest draft and re-write it for this new audience.
- Ask a person who is in a position to hire or promote faculty to review your teaching philosophy, and provide feedback.

There is one other version of your philosophy you probably will need if you interview for a job, the “sound bite.” A busy Dean will have glanced at your materials, but not have had time to read them carefully. The Dean says, “tell me about this teaching philosophy of yours.” If you only have a minute or two, what will you say? Develop your sound bite and present it to a friend.

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We are not the first people to have thought about a philosophy of teaching or, more generally, of education. Famous philosophers including Aristotle, Kant, and Dewey have written extensively and with great wisdom on this topic (Frankena, 1965). One of the characteristics of good teachers is that they are scholars of teaching, which means that they read extensively to discover what others think and do, and keep up with the research on teaching, both in general and in their discipline. It is not enough to base one's ideas about teaching only on personal experience. We would not want our students to do that, but would want them to become educated by reading and thinking critically. At the end of the units in this book, we include some suggestions for future reading. These lists are intended to further stimulate your thinking about your teaching.

In Unit 10 we will look at the teaching portfolio as a medium to present your teaching when you are looking for a job, seeking promotion and tenure, and for you own development. For any of these purposes, your philosophy statement will be the central document; everything else grows from that.

**Looking Ahead**

In the next unit we work on the design of a course. This is where you put your teaching philosophy to work. As you wrote your teaching philosophy statement, you probably were thinking about teaching experiences you have had or expect to have. Using your imagination is a good way to develop your philosophy. We have visualized ourselves standing in the front of an auditorium full of students, speaking eloquently, and seeing the students being fascinated and inspired. Yet we believe in the importance of active learning and frequent assessment. Planning a course will force you to make choices about objectives, methods, assessments, and how they all fit with each other and with your philosophy. You may have to put aside your dream of an award for performance, and substitute satisfaction in achieving specific objectives.

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### **Additional Recommended Readings**

Bain, K. (2004). *What the Best College Teachers Do*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Conclusions drawn from a 15 year study of over 100 outstanding faculty members from a range of campuses and disciplines. The author provides practical advice and examples on teaching culled from the faculty members in the study. This book tops the list of Mary's favorite books on college teaching.

Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

This is a general discussion of teaching, but with particular emphasis on self criticism for improvement.

Halpern, D. F., et al. (1998). Scholarship in psychology: A paradigm for the twenty-first century. *American Psychologist*, 53(12), 1292-1297.

These authors present a strong case for putting the scholarly side of teaching on a par with other conceptions of research.

James, W. (1958). *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to students on some of life's ideals*. New York: Norton. (Original work published 1899)

In over 100 years no one has written a better book on principles of psychology applied to teaching, and this book is written better than any other. The best edition of this book is from

Harvard University Press, but the one cited here is inexpensive. It also contains talks to students on life's ideals.

Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book is inspirational. Palmer writes not only about the joy of teaching, but also challenges and disappointments.

Tompkins, J. (1996). *A life in school: What the teacher learned*. Reading, MA: Perseus Books.

An intimate view of a teacher's struggle to find her values and style. Jim doesn't agree with her teaching methods, but joining her in the process of discovery is quite worthwhile.

## **Appendix A**

### **Teaching Philosophy Statements**

*In addition to the philosophies of the editors, we have included several other teaching philosophies. The others are from volunteers who gave permission to include their statements as examples.*

Jason Sikorski  
Central Connecticut State University  
Written in 2009

As my teaching experience accumulated and my love of teaching intensified, I began to think more deeply about my role as an educator in society. I began to read extensively about the relationship between scholarship and teaching and came to understand that psychologists are in a unique position to impart knowledge to students. After all, many of the behaviors exhibited by “master teachers” across disciplines include a heavy dose of psychology. For instance, the best teachers use operant learning procedures (e.g., positive reinforcement), cognitive psychology principles (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving, meta-cognition), and even social psychology (e.g., creating an environment conducive to learning gains) in the classroom. Being passionate, knowledgeable, and approachable sets the stage for students to learn in class, just as developing rapport in therapy could lead to client gains. In short, the most essential tenet of my philosophy on teaching is to use what I have learned as a psychologist in the classroom.

I strive to create a classroom that is comfortable and conducive to the critical evaluation of principles in psychology as they apply to our own lives. I supplement student readings with lectures, discussions, and vivid demonstrations that I hope bring to life what students read. In my mind, if students cannot take psychological principles out of the classroom and apply them to their own lives, then we as teachers have not fulfilled our responsibilities as educators. We should desire to be meaningful in the lives of our students. Thus, my second tenet of my philosophy on teaching is to be accountable for making learning last and being a role model for the passionate pursuit of lifelong learning.

Finally, I always want teaching to be fun. I have no reservations in admitting that I teach and write about teaching because I love it. Teaching to me represents a passion, an important responsibility, and a true joy that I plan on pursuing for the rest of my professional life. The rich and invigorating academic environment at my University is ideally suited for me as someone who will always desire to learn and to teach.

Beth Kania-Gosche  
Lindenwood University

“Teachers teach more by what they are than by what they say.”  
-Anonymous

Students learn by being challenged, and the best teaching arises when the instructor is also challenged. Education should help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and improve both. Therefore, the challenges must come not only from the teacher but also from other students, situations from the real world, and from within the student. Providing choices for students, both in topic of assignment and in scoring of the assignment, increases motivation and variety in the classroom, while increasing the respect students and teacher have for each other. The teacher’s job is to push students who are not challenging themselves enough and scaffold those students who may be frustrated. My job as a teacher is also to ensure that students have the necessary skills and prerequisite knowledge to meet the challenges presented in this constructivist classroom.

The teacher models the classroom expectations for the students. Students learn where they feel safe, both physically and emotionally, so building a community of learners is essential at any level of education. The perspectives of my students are important to me, because there is only one teacher and many students in a classroom. In the college setting, I consider myself a model for my students, who are future teachers. I strive to always “practice what I preach” by actually demonstrating the instructional methods, theories, and technologies.

I try to respond to the needs of my students and improve my practice by asking for student opinions. I never teach the same class twice, using previous experiences to improve my practice. When students turn in assignments, I always ask for feedback and recommendations, modeling reflective practice. Students ask questions not only of me but also of the entire class. My teaching style is informal; I often use humor and personal examples to expand concepts from the textbook. I want my students to feel comfortable asking me questions, asking for help, or disagreeing with me.

Many of my assignments require research beyond the textbook to journals in the field. I want my students to be able to find, comprehend, analyze, and apply current journal articles and research in the field. Even in courses that are not directly related to writing, I demand it from my students at almost every class meeting, usually sharing my own writing as well. For assignments I want my students to see a broader audience than just the instructor, so they share their completed assignments with a group before turning them in or the assignment itself may be a presentation or teaching a lesson to the class. As I always tell my upper level education students the first day of class, “I want you to stop thinking like students and start thinking like teachers.”

Alisha Francis  
Northwest Missouri State University  
Written in 2009

As a teacher, I view my role as similar to that of an orchestra conductor. My goal is to create a synergy, creating an environment where the students can move beyond the individual pieces of information to realize greater knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding. The students are not, however, in the role of the audience passively taking in the experience. They are the performers who bring their prior experience and knowledge, engaging with the material.

The discipline of Psychology offers significant insight into the learning process, highlighting the importance of active engagement and experience. As an instructor, I am an essential part of that experience. As with a conductor, I have to determine the focus, pace, and tone – in my case, the composition is the specific course as well as each class session. I pull together the different forms of knowledge, including course content, life skills, and learning skills. Then, I work to find a structure that best facilitates their interaction, considering not only the process of information delivery, but also creating an environment conducive to learning.

At times, the content requires that I assume the role of expert – I must convey facts and concepts to provide a foundation for subsequent learning. Many times, however, I can utilize active and experiential learning techniques to facilitate learning without being an expert delivering information. By employing varied teaching methods I encourage students to engage with the subject matter, helping them “teach themselves,” and teach their peers.

This approach to learning may also require that I assume the role of mediator or translator in order to help students reconcile various perspectives. Facts and concepts do not always form a perfect picture of knowledge, creating perceived contradictions for students. Similarly, active and experiential learning activities may surface differences in personality and perspective that lead to conflict between students. My role includes helping students recognize the value in different perspectives and understand how differences may be complementary.

Feedback, related to both assessment and evaluation, unifies many aspects of the learning process. I strive for a balance between encouraging students and challenging them, attempting to establish realistic standards for academic performance that consider student morale and self-esteem but do not sacrifice rigor.

As a teacher, I hope that each student achieves insight and understanding that they would have had if I had not been there. At the same time, I understand that students come to the classroom with different motivations, abilities, learning styles, and perspectives – the same thing that sparks interest and a desire to learn in one student may leave five others yawning and frustrated. While I can not be all things to everyone, I can establish a student-centered learning community that values diverse perspectives and integrates them into course content, challenges students of varying abilities, and engages students with differing motivations.

Sometimes – some classes, some semesters – the end result lacks harmony or coherence. Sometimes, my rhythm will not mesh well with the students. Sometimes I’ll be too enthusiastic

with one component, overwhelming the students. Sometimes I'll overlook a nuance, and the results will be lacking. Many times, however, it comes together beautifully. The students and I find a harmony with knowledge, creating a learning environment that is powerful.

From Passion to Desire.  
James H. Korn  
Saint Louis University (Emeritus)  
Written in 2000

“I have a passion for teaching” was the opening phrase in the two previous versions of my teaching philosophy. During the past two years I have come to doubt that this is the feeling that drives my teaching and is most present in it. I become tired of teaching too often, I look forward to the days I am not in the classroom, and I doubt my authenticity when I read that phrase. I am a good teacher, but not passionate. What I do experience is the excellence of desire.

This excellence of desire means wanting something with all your heart, and continually trying to find it. But what you want is unreachable so it is the wanting, the desire, that is excellent, not some outcome. It is about being and doing; about living the teaching life. It shows itself in teaching most often in the daily work we do, not only in those too rare peak experiences of glory in the classroom, and not in the prizes for excellence that some of us receive. I want to be a good teacher at the mundane level of class preparation, teaching methods, and relationships with students. I want this. That is the excellence of desire.

Maybe I am trying too hard. After one-third of a century of teaching I should have this all figured out. Desire is powerful, and trying to be excellent is a burden. Am I doing enough and is it good? Will they like me and, more importantly, will I like me? Trying too hard means over-preparing, compulsing over phrases in lecture notes, and worrying about how you will do and are doing and have done. But this energy is directed at the process of teaching, not the outcomes. What I want is to feel the spirit present in the classroom, and in my thoughts about class and my subject. The excellence of desire is expressed not only in the intense wanting during the struggle with my tasks, but also in my more relaxed awareness that this is my task. I am a teacher.

Wanting is what is spiritual about teaching: it is our animating principle and it gives us life. Although intangible, it is essential to our nature as teachers. It is our soul. I try to bring this spirituality into the classroom because I believe that is my most important role as a teacher; it defines for me what teaching is: bringing the spirit with the knowledge to the students. I call this “closeness learning,” to distinguish teaching with soul from teaching that emphasizes technology and “distance learning.”

I have retained some specifics from the previous versions of my philosophy:

Teaching is a form of service to others, my students. I respect students as free, responsible individuals whose most important task is learning how to learn.

I try to show the beauty and power of ideas based in fact and imagination.

I value active and collaborative learning, and continue to fight my habit of teacher-centeredness.

Teaching is a community activity. We learn about teaching from each other. Conferences and conversations about teaching are the Viagra for my passion and desire.

As a senior member of this teaching community, I have an opportunity to help develop the next generation of teachers. I want to be able to make a difference not only for the students in my own classroom, but also for the students of those future teachers. That is my greatest desire.

Mary Stephen

Visiting Professor, STEM Center, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

Revised 2012

I learned two very valuable lessons about teaching from the teacher who most influenced my beliefs about teaching. The first lesson was the importance of treating each student with respect and as a unique individual, and the second was the value of sharing your love and interest in your subject matter with your students. These two lessons lie at the heart of my teaching philosophy. Over the years, I have taught different content areas (mathematics, computer science, and instructional technology), discovered new research on learning, been exposed to new teaching strategies and had access to new tools and teaching settings. All of these things have influenced my thoughts about teaching and led me to reflect on and re-examine the effectiveness of my teaching strategies, course objectives and type of assessment that I use. I believe that as a teacher, it is important for me to understand my students and teach in ways that they might best relate to. When I first started teaching at the university level in the 60's, I taught mathematics. The approach that I used then was appropriate for my undergraduate students at that time; however, it would not be a successful approach for today's learners or for the graduate education students I now teach about instructional technology.

I believe that both the student and I have responsibilities in this teaching-learning dynamic. I believe that ultimately students have responsibility for their learning and I expect that they will assume that responsibility. At the same time, I believe that my role as a teacher is to motivate students to learn, challenge them to do their best and model and guide them in the learning process. I believe in creating an atmosphere in which students feel safe to learn not only from success, but failure. I willingly provide additional assistance to any student struggling with concepts and skills. I will not embarrass a student and I actively encourage and answer all questions. I believe that I am not the only teacher present in the educational setting, and that students can also learn from each other just as I can learn from them. I also have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about new developments in my content area.

I believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. I try to ensure that I incorporate active learning strategies in my classes and assignments. While currently my courses focus on integrating technology into teaching, I believe firmly that it is important to use technology only if it lets me do something I could not otherwise do in teaching or it provides a way to teach something better. Technology should be used as a tool in teaching only if it serves a meaningful purpose in achieving course objectives.

I believe it is very important to relate course content to students' interests and backgrounds and to create assessments when possible that enable students to relate course content to their academic and professional interests. I believe assessment activities are important in the learning process as is providing meaningful feedback on those assignments. I prefer assignments that require students to use what they have learned in a way that demonstrates their

mastery of the content and skills, and I attempt to give students written summaries of my comments and suggestions for every assignment.

My philosophy continues to evolve and consequently so does my teaching as I strive to meet the needs and interests of today's students. Yet, I hope that two things never change – respect for each student and sharing the enthusiasm for the subject I am teaching.