

The Importance of Education:

Education has always been very important to me, and it has always been an integral part of my life. I see myself as a lifelong learner who will always be learning through research, experience, and interaction with others. One reason that I desire to be a professor is that I want to share what I have learned about learning, teaching, and working with children, but also look forward to learning even more from my students.

One of my undergraduate professors once told me that all he desired, all that he hoped for, was to help his students learn. He explained his desire by asking me to imagine myself standing on his shoulders and seeing a little further into the horizon, and thus seeing beyond his scope of vision. I hope to achieve the same goal: to help my students see at a greater distance into the horizon than I can see.

Perspectives on Teaching

Teaching is extremely challenging. I understand how much energy, time, and planning would be involved. In my previous experience, I was surprised how complex, demanding, and rewarding teaching could be. Words cannot express the gratification in successfully teaching someone to grow beyond their current abilities and beyond their academic difficulties. As an instructor, I believe I need to continue to grow in my own abilities. For me, a teacher is one who is respectful, understanding, approachable, and supportive. The way I interact with students demonstrates my respect for them. For example, I never say anything derogatory to them or use them (or any of their work) as a poor example. I illustrate understanding by listening to their needs, even if I am unable to comply. Because I treat students with respect and understanding, I am approachable; students often ask for additional help and thank me for making them feel comfortable and not intimidated for asking questions. When I work with students, I am supportive of their ideas and desires.

Perspectives on Learning

Learning is a lifelong process. I find it difficult to divide any experience from learning, and I do not think that any day passes that I do not learn something. Life is experience, and experience is learning.

We learn by example. When I taught and translate IT terminology into laymen terms to NASA scientist and management, I have been able to overcome their difficulty in understanding the terminology by simply being patient and focusing on something they can relate to and quickly learned the power of providing examples for them. Too often, instructors assume that students have learned the basics (or even more complex topics).

We learn by doing. People learn to read by reading, people learn how to use computers by interaction with hands on experience. In essence, we internalize new experiences by performing those exact tasks. This reminds me of an ancient proverb:

Tell me, I forget.
Show me, I remember.
Involve me, I understand.

We learn by creating our own meaning. There are so many factors, including our own past experiences that influence our learning. No matter how we attempt to assess student learning, or how much we impose our ideas upon students they will create their own meaning and understanding of the material. Learning is situated in the past and present interactions that the students have

experienced, over which instructors have no control. I have a Autistic son, he only receives instruction like a computer, but I have been able to teach who they said was unreachable. Now he uses a IPAQ and can use windows on it to talk and express himself. A Good teacher always expands the scope of the student.

We learn through discovery. Especially in regards to using new technologies, I find that we learn best through exploration and by trying new things. It would be easy (and boring) for me to explain to students step-by-step how to create a database, but it is more fun and interesting for them to discover on their own how to create one (with some guidance).

We learn from our mistakes. Some of my best learning experiences were gleaned from my mistakes. In several cases, I learned that a particular strategy was not effective, and should not be used again; in others, I learned that it should be repeated. For example, when teaching a science methods class to teachers, I learned that few of the teachers knew how to write effective objectives. Unfortunately, this happened towards the end of the class, but I have learned not to assume that even experienced teachers have been taught all of the basics.

Perspectives on Teaching and Information Technology

In today's Information Age, I believe it is imperative for instructor's at all academic levels to employ technology in their instruction, in particular because it is so prevalent in our society. There is not one facet of life that is not tied to technology in some way. However, I also believe it is important to utilize technology in meaningful ways and with purpose. Simply using technology for technology's sake defeats the purpose. Further, technology should be used to make things easier and more efficient, not to make things more complicated.

Technological literacy is also vital, and will become increasingly important as we become more and more dependent on technology. Not only will students need to understand how to use technology as tools, they also will need to know how to solve problems using these tools.

Since this is my field of expertise, my goal is to emerge students in a learning environment that is motivating, enlightening, and delighting and where students are free to learn, practice, ask, and think. May my teaching helps students become dexterous IT professionals who know both how to learn on their own and how to work with other people. I hope I focus on teaching them how to think, not what to think.