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Teaching Philosophy

As a librarian I have the privilege of interacting with individuals on a daily basis. I take it upon myself to serve people with understanding and compassion, and it is my responsibility to ensure their information needs are addressed no matter if I interact with them once or dozens of times. Along with these exchanges, I also have the privilege of reaching more than just one person by providing information literacy instruction through in-person and online sessions. Again, though I may see these students once or multiple times over the course of a semester, I have the responsibility to all students to ensure that they are receiving the same compassionate service, applicable knowledge, and transferable skills, as they would receive in a one-on-one transaction with me.

Society is continually evolving into a digital, globalized, and connected world, and we increasingly see students in need of information literacy skills that stay with them after they leave higher education. Students will achieve the information literacy skills outlined by the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education in my classroom. These skills aren't just relevant to their academic life, but also relevant to their careers and personal lives. I have three unique criteria that I must meet in order to teach these skills and create a successful, inclusive, and effective learning environment. Successful learning situations occur when life-long learning is the underlying goal, the holistic student is addressed, and students leave the session feeling confident in their abilities and the material they learned in that session.

When I teach I include all learning styles based off of Kolb's Learning Style Inventory. I want students to have a wide variety of learning experiences from listening to a lecture about an abstract concept, experimenting with the material they are learning, having an experience completing a task, and reflecting on the class session. I believe that a "good" classroom evokes all learning theories – doing, thinking, and feeling – or Behaviorist, Constructivist/Cognitivist, and Humanist models. Personally, I am most drawn to the Humanist model, as I believe the whole person must be reached and invested in the learning process. I believe learners' physical and emotional states influence their learning, and a positive attitude toward learning, the classroom, and material presented in the class means a better quality of learning and a more confident student.

In my lesson plans, I try to incorporate a Humanist approach by including a certain amount of self-reflection into the class. My goal is to have learners gain a better insight into their own learning habits, values, and potential. The students reflect on the material and how they can apply it to their own lives outside of the classroom, reinforcing the concept of lifelong learning. I also incorporate other activities into my lessons that encompass other learning styles. For example, mini-lectures allow abstract conceptualizers to think about the material while taking notes, while think-pair-share activities allow the active experimenters to experiment with a case study and learn from each other.

My favorite ways to assess student learning are through in-class assessment techniques. For example, when my students complete a think-pair-share exercise, we write each group's responses on a whiteboard. I am able to assess their learning through the group discussion and whiteboard responses. I also test the students using

an empty outline classroom assessment technique. I hand out an incomplete outline for the students to complete as they view a short video or I give a mini lecture. I can check their answers in class or take the handouts home to be graded. I also have some experience creating rubrics to assess performance, but I have not had a chance to use one in an information literacy class setting. This is an assessment tool I would like to use in a classroom situation, both one-shot and long-term classes.

My values and beliefs as a teacher are inclusiveness and an open atmosphere. My students benefit from a classroom environment where they can be comfortable to experiment, make mistakes, and express themselves freely. I believe in a vulnerable classroom that espouses compassion from both the students and the teachers, and I never want anyone to feel inadequate for making a mistake or being him or herself. I also believe in life-long learning. We never stop learning even after we leave school, so my teaching will include the skills students need to not only succeed in the classroom, but also in life as well. I aspire to create an environment where students want to learn, and want to continue to learn. A perfect teaching situation is when students are engaged and excited, actively participating in individual and group work. Students are taking responsibility for their learning by volunteering their own ideas, teaching each other, and interacting with me. I am not just lecturing to them, but facilitating the learning. I am their coach – I teach the students what they need to do to succeed, and have them participate in exercises that help them do that.

I am a brand new teacher with a year's experience examining learning theory, planning lessons, teaching, and assessing student learning. I have grown from a shy beginner, scared of trying different and challenging lessons, to one that isn't afraid of taking risks in the classroom. I believe failure is a part of success, not its opposite, and I see it as an opportunity for growth. Teaching is both an art and a science, and I am perfecting the "art" part. I realize now that it is not about having all the answers, but learning as I go. My goals are to continue to practice my teaching, and improve on the art of teaching. I am going to continue to take risks and learn from my mistakes. I will be a role model to my students by showing them that anyone can take a risk, and it if it doesn't work out its okay because we can grow from the experience and be better people for it.