

Teaching Philosophy

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Coaching students to become self-directed learners is the central focus of my teaching. STEM courses are known to be particularly challenging for students, so I feel it is extremely important to help them practice effective learning strategies to become self-directed learners. Without these skills students find it difficult to meet the challenges that lie ahead and never learn how to apply what they have learned to real world problems. If the goal for my students is to be self-directed, then I know that it is also my responsibility to address their motivation to learn by creating learning environments that encourage curiosity, creativity, build confidence, and help to create a true sense of belonging.

Many of the learning strategies that I share with students focus on metacognition and I create opportunities to practice these skills all semester. An example of putting strategies into practice is asking my students to generate “How” and “Why” questions in connection with their homework. This helps students make connections between concepts that might otherwise be missed. Another example is asking students to formally complete self-assessments after midterm exams to evaluate their performance as well as to initiate the use of new learning strategies. I use peer to peer discussions in class during clicker questions, and group problems, and I also use out of class peer facilitated group work sessions as a way for students to gain immediate feedback on their progress.

Motivation drives all behaviors, so to promote use of effective learning strategies and, ultimately learning, I always start my courses with an expectation survey to obtain background information from my students. After reviewing their responses, I follow up in our very first class with a discussion that addresses their goals and concerns and explain how the course structure and instructional support system can assist them. I am explicit with the course goals for their learning and share my reasoning for the structure and content of my assessments. I also share my expectations regarding our conduct as a learning community, because I want all my students to be comfortable engaging with their peers as well with me. Motivation to learn must be considered in all aspects of the course, so I try to develop value for the topics covered by pointing out the relevance and how this information can be leveraged in other courses. I address issues of self-efficacy by reinforcing the importance of practicing effective learning strategies, and I continually work on getting to know my students so that I can engage them in

In addition to coaching through effective learning strategies and motivation, I view assessment as an ongoing process of measuring achievement through the use of the strategies. I am well aware of the material I must cover in any course I teach, but I am equally aware of the skills and behaviors I want my students to develop as scientists. I know that every student is an individual and my role is to support the learning of all my students. I develop assessments that are aligned with the goals I have shared with my students, and I use the responses my students provide in any form of assessment as feedback. I also solicit feedback on course climate, and the usefulness of assignments and discussion of learning strategies.

My role as a learning coach is to work with my team as a learning community. We learn together through practice of effective strategies, motivating each other and continuous feedback.