

## **TEACHING PHILOSOPHY**

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One of the challenges of teaching a human development course is to present how people are alike yet unlike one another. I strive to do this through an infusion of multicultural perspectives, and nurturing the learning environment for students to discover their voices based on observations and life experiences. My approach to teaching human development courses is based on a student-centered partnership. I believe that my role is to clearly and effectively present information, establish interdisciplinary connectedness, intellectually challenge my students so that they approach the world around them with a newfound curiosity and critical perspective, and link theory with everyday lived experiences. I stress that the textbook is merely a stepping stone, and urge students to delve deeper into understanding the complexities of human development across the lifespan so they may make a tangible difference as a human service professional. When students are successfully able to speak and respectfully listen to varied perspectives, the catalyst for learning has been set in motion. Such a collaborative learning environment sets the stage to strengthen professional competencies, and eventually, become life-long learners.

I love to teach, and take pride in being an enthusiastic and effective teacher. I strongly believe in the intrinsic value of education, and am keen to provide my students with the tools to become effective communicators, successful scholars, and well-informed, active citizens. I bring rigor and variety into the classroom with student-led discussions, team analysis of practices/programs in a global context, student presentations with an international focus, field trips, invited guest speakers, and embedded service-learning components. I believe that teaching requires continuous quality improvement. As teaching technologies change, I find myself increasing my repertoire of teaching tools (Peergrade, GoAnimate, Adobe Premiere Pro, etc.). Such interactive pedagogical techniques and technological tools empower me to determine the best approach for my students, in particular, being mindful of diverse learning styles.

At Penn State New Kensington (PSNK), I have been passionate about fostering student competency through a curriculum of international engagement. Tucked away in rural Westmoreland County, the opportunities for cultural enrichment within and outside the classroom were few. In 2006, I proposed that our campus adopt a theme country focus for each academic year, and that efforts be underway to incorporate the theme country within the classroom, and foster simultaneous co-curricular activities on campus. In 2007-2008, the first focus country at PSNK was China. This was followed by India, Ecuador, Kenya/Tanzania, Spain, Ireland, Canada, Spain, Turkey, Brazil, and currently, Syria. Whether learning about an engineering marvel in China (Three Gorges Dam), having a Skype conversation with a Maasai elder, traveling to the Galapagos Islands, listening to the Erhu instrument, or playing a game of cricket, the enrichment opportunities have been plentiful and meaningful for the students.

I believe that a good teacher must be actively involved in the scholarship of his or her discipline. For it is only by pushing the frontiers of one's own knowledge that one is able to genuinely convey the excitement of discovery and developmental changes in the human experience within the classroom.