Teaching Philosophy

My Value and Teaching Role in the University Setting

For a career in academia I hold *three core beliefs*:

1. Teaching is critical, not only to my own scholarly activities, but central to future generations of speech-language pathologists.

2. Bridging research and practice is for the ultimate benefit of our clients/students/patients.

3. Through shared and respectful interactions, a truly civil society can prosper. This is realized through respectful discourse with peers and students at every level of inquiry and within an environment that fosters creativity and independent thought.

Foundational Teaching Principles

I utilize three major principles that highlight my underlying beliefs of instruction:

1. **I actively engage students in learning.**

   University teaching faces numerous challenges, and it is critical that teachers use methods that will prepare the next two to three generations of students to be active and life-long learners. Students entering our programs are tech savvy, confident, and from diverse populations. Our jobs as teachers, more than ever, must make learning personally meaningful, collaborative, and meta-cognitive. For example, one way I have found to successfully engage students is by using case-based and problem-based learning strategies (Savery & Duffy, 2001; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014). I first step through real or simulated case problems with the full class, then move to a small group discussion format to answer questions together, such as, "What is the primary problem?" "What could be some causes of this problem?" "What evidence in the literature have we learned thus far would support both diagnosis and treatment?" and finally, "What conclusions could be drawn, and what could we do about them?" Toward the end of the semester, individual students can tackle more challenging cases using the fundamental and relevant problem-solving strategies learned as a group. It is important to use an active and "guided design" along a hierarchy of learning/thinking to simulate real-world interdisciplinary experiences that are critical in the modern workforce.

2. **I demonstrate passion for our field of study and practice.**

   I strive to serve as an exemplary model of a modern academician through active integration of practical experience and applied research. Over twenty-eight years as a practicing speech-language pathologist I served in roles such as clinical and academic mentor and speech department manager. The critical interactions inherent in these roles allowed me to model excellent communication and clinical acumen despite the oft stagnant or complacent working environments. When interns worked with me in the clinical environment, I was able to model successful transfer of classroom learning to clinical practice, and demonstrate both my compassion for clients, and my passion for teaching. This skill resulted in my

consistently receiving high student evaluation scores in the area of "instructor's ability to motivate student learning". Additionally, as an adjunct faculty instructor, I frequently thought about how to infuse more complex experiential learning methods into the course, such as providing real-case video analyses, scheduling students to visit a medical center to observe fluoroscopic swallow studies, and scheduling students for a school, skilled nursing facility, home health, or medical visit to help students understand the complexity of client "cases". Students reported their appreciation of understanding the material at a deeper, yet practical level that helped them identify influential factors that ultimately impact client outcomes. My own evolution and self-reflection as an instructor helped me combine my enthusiasm for this field of study (Murray & Macdonald, 1997) with the necessary instruction in foundational concepts, theoretical knowledge, and research evidence.

3. **I encourage and develop critical thinking and analysis.**

Instructors should impart a level of commitment to a course, and be explicit about learning and assessment strategies. Reliance on traditional methods of lecture and memorization of facts has proven inadequate (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014). The Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Program (2011, p. 7) lists six essential learning outcomes for college education: (a) inquiry and analysis, (b) critical and creative thinking, (c) written and oral communication, (d) quantitative literacy, (e) information literacy, and (f) teamwork and problem solving. It is incumbent on instructors to explicitly include these elements in our teaching approaches since they will allow students, at any level of thinking, the time and practice to delve deeper into contexts or situations. This also provides students the opportunity to *apply* their learning during formulation of reasonable solutions to real or simulated clinical applications. For the undergraduate, and in particular the master's level student, the more opportunities there are for creative application and greater transferability to real-world applications, the higher their ratings of the instructional environment.

My teaching utilizes:

- Experiential Learning that…
  - uses real-world situations, problems, equipment, or actions to the greatest extent possible.
  - creates situations that are complex, ill defined, and may have more than one answer.
  - involves situations that reflect the kind of problems learners would encounter in practice and in their discipline.
  - provides as comfortable an environment as possible to reflect and share feedback.
- Multiple methods to assess learning depending on the purpose of assignment or task that…
  - Combines summation testing with rubric scoring.
  - Evaluates participation, application, analysis, and final product in total grade.
  - Provides opportunities for both individual and group learning and assessment.

- Cultural, linguistic, and ability-sensitive practices that…
  - Create an environment that is supportive and active in both understanding and demonstrating different perspectives and points-of-view.
  - Use materials (pictures, photos, symbols, media) that are thoughtful in their presentation and representation.
  - Use Universal Design for Learning that allows any student access to technology for full participation in the curriculum, and supports the student's diverse speaking, reading, writing, or cognitive needs.
- Models for learning that are supported by research, such as:
  - "Change up" activities to hold student's attention and engage a greater level of cognitive learning (Middendorf & Kalish, 1996).
  - Timed sections for both individual thinking and purposeful social interaction
  - Timed sections for problem-solving activities, for example, "think/write-pair-share discussions, brainstorming, buzz groups, true/false or myth-busting, picture making, and structured controversies.
  - An example of a model for learning that was student driven and motivating for one particular class: *In an effort to address diverse learning styles and keep students actively engaged in learning, I spent a few late nights creating different types of activities to sprinkle throughout my curricula. However, things didn't go as planned. During one class with several gregarious members, I experienced my first dissent of a planned activity. A few more assertive members asked if they could replace my planned activity with something they thought would better meet their learning needs. In other words, they wished to employ their technological savvy and create an online "Jeopardy Game" for learning their assigned neuroanatomy. With my consent, they formed two teams, and spent one hour creating the content for the game categories. Interestingly, the students created much more difficult questions and content than I would have, and came to their own realization that much more studying was needed before actually playing the game. Through consensus, the game was planned for next class, and throughout the week, I heard from other professors that the students seemed motivated and intent on studying their neuroanatomy. The next class, the students arrived early and re-arranged the room placing two long tables opposite of each other. They then ceremoniously placed two plastic game buzzers in the center of each table. Before taking their seats, the students anointed me "Jeopardy host", and asked that I select the two teams. It was at this point that I realized neuroanatomical coloring books were no longer 'de rigueur'.*

My preferred methods of teaching evaluations include:

- Receiving verbal feedback from students related to their course work and writing assignments.

- Incorporating feedback from students on all elements of the course and instruction from student ratings/evaluations.

- Receiving feedback from peers, such as, classroom observations, shared video consultations, and constructive conversations.

- Participating in instructional improvement courses.

References

Middendorf, J., & Kalish, A. (1996). The " Change-Up " in lectures. *The National Teaching & Learning Forum*. https://doi.org/10.1002/ntlf.10026

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Savery, J. R., & Duffy, T. M. (2001). *Problem Based Learning : An instructional model and its constructivist framework. Learning.* https://doi.org/47405-1006

Svinicki, M., & McKeachie, W. (Eds.). (2014). *McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college & university teachers* (14th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Centage Learning.