

Teaching Philosophy

Jessica Fabbriatore

You can increase a student's intrinsic motivation by creating a positive environment for them to explore their thoughts and express themselves which is what I strive to do in my classroom. When it comes to teaching, I believe the primary way to promote a positive learning environment and intrinsic motivation is to foster connections in the classroom, with the content, and to the world outside of the classroom. I approach this task like I approach most things in life- with planning, compassion, and flexibility. Indeed, although students have similar needs and similar goals, they are unique in their backgrounds and motivations. Students need to know what is expected of them and they need to feel like what they are learning has a purpose.

I believe that when students know they are seen and respected, they open themselves up to exploring new ideas and perspectives. To allow for that growth, I create an environment where students know me and know each other. One way I make this connection is to break down the barrier between them and me. I let them know I am available and approachable by talking with them before and after class, asking genuine questions about their experiences, and sharing examples from my own life as appropriate. Another way I make that connection is to foster peer relationships in the classroom. One way I do this in my classes is by encouraging students to turn in their phones when they come into the room so that they can get to know their classmates. I find this useful because it helps the students engage with the content by engaging with one another. After talking with students, they also appreciate turning in their phones because they have made friends and feel less distracted by the possibility of looking at their phones.

I believe students are eager to learn when they are provided with the right tools. Clarity (e.g., clear expectations) and immediacy (e.g., psychological closeness) are two of the most essential tools in ensuring students retain information. I use these tools in my classroom to make sure that each student in my classroom knows where to find information, how information will be presented, and that I am available as a resource for further clarification on information. For example, I regularly use effective teaching practices such as previewing and summarizing the content and providing different ways to learn content (such as self-assessments, discussions, videos, and other web resources). Because I know immediacy is essential, I learn my students' names, walk around the classroom, and use midterm teaching evaluations like "stop, start, continue" to check in with my students throughout the semester. I value getting to know my students, and I regularly send individual resources to students based on the conversations I have with them.

I believe content is most valuable when students can see its relevance. I start each semester with a quick survey to find out more about their academic life (e.g., major and year in school), professional goals (e.g., potential careers and how my class might help with it), and personal life (e.g., favorite shows/music, extracurriculars, and birthdays). Throughout the semester, I constantly refer back to that survey so I can weave their interests into examples to make it easy for students to make connections to the materials. I encourage students to develop their own examples as well. I provide examples of where they may be able to apply concepts in their day-to-day life. For example, when I teach intercultural communication, I ask students to identify their implicit biases and then reflect on how those biases influence their communication with others in their conversations. In classes like small group communication, I incorporate service-learning projects so students have the opportunity to learn about the town they are in while applying what they have learned in class.

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My goal when I teach any course is to help students make connections- with the content, each other, and the community. I do that by creating a collaborative environment with a focus on clarity and relevance. Communication is one of the few disciplines where students can leave class and immediately apply what they have learned. By teaching my students better communication skills, I help improve their personal lives and prepare them for their professional lives which is ultimately what I believe teaching should be.