

### Teaching Philosophy

For me, teaching is a passion and one of the primary reasons that I decided to pursue a career in academia. This passion was instilled by my own experiences as a student of excellent teachers in elementary and secondary school. As a student with an exceptional learning need, I benefitted from passionate and engaged teachers who strove for excellence in their teaching practices. Each day, they endeavored to impart knowledge in a manner that both challenged my development and encouraged self-learning and discovery. They cared for their students and their growth, and it showed every day. It was because of my experiences that I initially intended to become a teacher when I began attending post-secondary education. However, I soon became aware of a second passion, child psychology, which has since captured my attention and focus.

As I neared completion of my doctoral degree, the opportunity to blend these two passions, teaching and psychology, drew me to a career in academia. However, as I embarked on this new journey, I became all too aware of my limited experiences with teaching. My initial teaching activities were modelled upon previous teachers that I attempted to emulate, with varying degrees of success. However, with experience and reflection, I began to appreciate and understand my own perspectives on teaching and how I could enhance my skills with this important activity. I began to realize that my teaching style is conceptualized through several principles that I aspire to incorporate into each class.

Learning is developmental in nature. The developmental philosophy is central to many aspects of psychology as evidenced by numerous prominent influential theories (e.g., Piaget, Vygotsky). These theorists emphasize that development, in its various forms, occurs in stages through systematic development of skills and competencies in conjunction with experience. As an application of developmental principles, I believe that student learning is facilitated when new knowledge is built upon previous learning, such that students make connections between concepts that support a deeper and more comprehensive understanding. This approach to learning is particularly evident in school psychology given the complex nature of the field and the multifaceted challenges that our graduate students experience in the training program. The School and Applied Child Psychology program consists of a large number of required courses that are demanding for students in terms of workload. As one method to support student learning, I endeavor to link information taught in my courses with that from other related coursework as well as previous learning that students have had. For example, understanding a child's possible social/emotional/behavioural challenges in isolation from other contextual factors is a very limiting and reductionistic approach. As such, graduate students are encouraged to explore other potential influences on a child's social/emotional/behavioural challenges, such as cognitive, neuropsychological, academic, language, familial, and social factors, to obtain a more complete understanding of the child. It is through this developmental framework that students are able to link information from their courses and apply that new network of knowledge for the betterment of their clientele and their scope of practice.

Experiential learning is key to developing skills in School and Applied Child Psychology. My primary instructional expertise in our School and Applied Child Psychology program lies in

psychological assessment and differential diagnosis of childhood disorders. As such, I have primarily instructed theoretical courses on academic and language assessment (EDPS 652), cognitive and neuropsychological assessment (EDPS 657/665) or social/emotional/behavioural assessment (EDPS 660) in addition to applied practicum courses on academic and language assessment (EDPS 656), cognitive and neuropsychological assessment (EDPS 675/663), social/emotional/behavioural assessment and diagnosis (EDPS 676), and advanced clinical assessment and diagnosis (EDPS 795). Each of these courses contains a strong emphasis on the theoretical understanding and framework of the constructs being evaluated (i.e., children's cognitive ability), practical instruction in the use of formal and informal approaches to assessment of these constructs in students, and applied experience with understanding and conceptualizing the results of these assessments to better understand student strengths and weaknesses. At the core of all of each course is applied, hands-on experience with assessment and diagnosis so that our graduate students can acquire deep and meaningful understanding of the dynamic nature of school psychology as it pertains to assessment and diagnosis. Part of this process involves students obtaining direct experience with specific psychological measures/approaches with actual clients (i.e., clinical work in the University of Calgary Applied Psychological and Educational Services clinic). Alternatively, I bring my clinical experience to bear through the frequent use of case studies and/or specific examples during classes. I firmly believe that it is through this hands-on, experiential learning process that students gain an appreciation for the subtleties of this field of practice and a deeper awareness of their own specific skills and areas in need of development. Indeed, a consistent piece of feedback that I receive from students is that the hands-on components of every course are their favorite and what enabled them to enhance their learning and skills in each course.

Establishing high expectations and support for students encourages learning, engagement, and success. School psychology is a demanding field, and it is my responsibility to ensure that students are actively engaged in their learning so that they are prepared for their career upon completion of our training program. As part of this responsibility, I ensure that students are aware of the expectations for their coursework and related assignments, and support students to complete their best work. This support often involves individual out-of-class meetings and discussions regarding assignments and how a specific student could approach them to improve the quality of their to-be-submitted product in addition to open discussions about these topics in class. By engaging in these activities, I believe that students feel that they are challenged to achieve at a high level yet supported to be successful. I also foster a culture of support for each student and among students, such that they are encouraged to work together to improve their individual and collective work. In turn, students are motivated to be involved in class discussions and support each other's learning. Although other course instructors encourage competition among students as a method to enhance the quality of student work, it has been my experience that such competition results in bitterness and interpersonal conflict among students that detracts from their personal and professional development. Indeed, I strive to be a positive example of collaboration and collegiality so that our students learn how to work with one another while achieving to the highest level.

Students differ in their interests, abilities, and learning style – teaching to each student is important. One of the primary tenets of school psychology is an appreciation of the individual

differences of children and adolescents that may influence their learning. Indeed, the primary goal of school psychology is to better understand these unique differences to provide support to improve the developmental outcomes of students in schools. However, it has been my experience that this awareness is often lost in graduate school, with many course instructors failing to understand that graduate students also differ in terms of their skills, abilities, and learning style. I make it a personal goal to acquire a personal understanding of each graduate student in my courses so that I can adapt my approach to teaching to better address their needs and enhance their ability to meet the learning objectives of the course. In doing so, I believe that I have developed an interpersonal style of teaching that resonates with most students, as indicated by my USRI ratings and nominations/receipt of awards for my teaching.

Integration of evidence-informed knowledge and practice is key. The School and Applied Child Psychology program is predicated upon the scientist-practitioner model which espouses the goal of development of student knowledge in theory, practice, and research methodology. I strive to integrate this approach to graduate student training through the incorporation of empirical papers providing scientific evidence for the theoretical constructs to which the students are exposed. Students are encouraged to learn about the evidence for and against specific theories and constructs, and question the suitability of the evidence for adoption into their own practice. In addition, I expose students to evidence-informed assessment and intervention approaches so that they may learn appropriate and effective ways to work with their clients. As a result, students leave our program with a strong understanding of the scientific foundations of psychological practice in schools that effectively prepares them to enter the profession.

Reflection upon my teaching is an active responsibility. Although I am confident in my approach to teaching, I firmly believe that there is always room for improvement. I engage in active reflection upon my approach to teaching before, during, and after each course in order to identify area(s) that may be enhanced to improve student learning and outcomes. As part of this process, I ask students to provide me with confidential feedback, if they desire, regarding the positive and negative aspects of the course and/or my teaching. In so doing, I aim to actively ensure that students feel free to express their views regarding how each course may be improved for the betterment of subsequent cohorts of students.

Good teaching is not a solitary endeavour. I strongly believe that good teachers are not made in isolation. Rather, it is the interaction amongst teachers of differing skillsets and abilities that result in the greatest improvement. As such, I strive to receive feedback on my teaching from my colleagues as well as provide such feedback for our mutual benefit. I also actively solicit advice regarding the structure and focus of my courses so that I may ensure that our students receive instruction on the key principles required for their professional development. Finally, I work with my colleagues to ensure that courses in our School and Applied Child Psychology program cover all necessary curriculum to prepare our graduate students to work in the field.