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Teaching Philosophy

I have no question that students who learn, not professors who perform, is what teaching is all about. . . .

Teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal-or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions, and good teaching requires that we understand the inner sources of both the intent and the act. (Palmer, 2017, p. 7)

Palmer captures the essence of who I am as a teacher. I see myself as having a privilege relationship with my students where I am gradually awakening and transforming their assumptions of the world around them. Students bring a sense of purpose to this relationship by continually challenging, motivating, and inspiring me to do better. This relationship has three basic ingredients: the content under study, the resources to support the learning, and my own pedagogical practice. My philosophy statement focuses on the third element, my pedagogical practice.

As a teacher, we play a complex role in orchestrating the learning environment. For me, the success of student learning is directly connected to my ability to understand the process of learning and the conditions under which learning occurs. Teaching is not simply being a knowledge conveyor belt where I turn on a switch and become the information giver and my students are passive information receivers. Rather, my focus is on encouraging students' active interaction within a learning space. My teaching philosophy reflects this process of learning, a constructivist perspective. This space is where adult learners (students), "manipulate" new knowledge and actively connect this knowledge to what they already know or have experienced. I view this learning space as a community in which we all have a collective responsibility to build knowledge and understanding. I believe students need opportunities to engage with colleagues purposefully in understanding norms of practice. These ensuing conversations provide an entrance into an inquiry learning approach that focuses on addressing common problems in their future classrooms.

Recognizing that success as a learner depends on my ability to actively engage students in their learning, two guiding principles, agency and reciprocity, frame my teaching philosophy.

For me, agency is a pedagogical view in which students take responsibility for their own learning through inquiry that is both meaningful and relevant to them and where autonomy over their own learning is developed by building connections, making choices, and taking appropriate actions. Agency is not something that is given to students but is something that we mutually share and develop. In order to create the autonomy to learn, I actively engage in co-examining both the concepts under study and the environment in which students are approaching their learning. This active transfer of agency, in turn, connects to the second principle of reciprocity.

I recognize that there is distinct role relationship between myself, as instructor, and our students. I also acknowledge that relational trust is the initial steppingstone in advancing a shared commitment to learning and a degree of risk taking. Understanding these two points, reciprocity focuses on developing a unique relationship. In the presence of conceptual knowledge, I believe there can be no dichotomy of roles where I am the sole producer of knowledge and our students are only consumers. I believe that we agree to be influenced through mutual engagement that determines the academic content, the conditions of learning, and even the nature of the tasks.

I believe that both principles form a stable frame of practice and are foundational in the

evolution of my teaching philosophy. In the end, the essence of teaching is about having the courage to be genuinely human.