

Brittney Belz

Teaching Philosophy

*“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.”
- Albert Einstein*

Everything that I believe in and endeavor to embody can be summed up in a few words – trustworthy, encouraging, engaging, creative, knowledgeable, and unique. This extends beyond my teaching and into my personal life. I do not think that anyone can successfully teach in a manner contrary to who they are as a person. Because I try to uphold these virtues in my life, I also try to develop my teaching philosophy based on these ideals.

I believe in the dedication and perseverance of both student and teacher towards the goal of further understanding the world around us through the discovery of the learning process. I also believe that the process of learning is just as important as the product. Many times, the student may discover more about themselves through the acquiring of knowledge than from the knowledge itself. Everything a student takes away from the classroom becomes a part of who they are, and that truly is the foundation of learning.

Trust is essential for an instructor to keep order in the class and yet allow the spontaneous spark of discovery to emerge. The students need to be able to trust that the teacher knows the material in order to feel confident in what they are learning. They must also be allowed to feel that what they contribute to the class holds importance as well, and that the teacher values what they bring to the learning experience. I believe that I need to keep learning and pushing myself to be the best that I can be in order to deserve the faith that students have in what I am teaching them. No human is infallible, but to the best of my ability I try to be as conscientious in what I teach as I possibly can and recognize the truth that others have to contribute.

One of greatest challenges in teaching lies in helping the student see the potential for greatness they have within them. The teacher needs to help the student focus on their goals and encourage them towards increased progress and achievement. This process can be supported by efforts not just of the teacher, but by their fellow students as well. Encouragement from peers produces amazing results in the self-confidence of a student. Students who participate during classes, particularly in a discipline such as theatre which is based upon the principle of collaboration, learn from each other as well as the instructor. They can help motivate, challenge and encourage progress in each other, and should be given ample opportunity by the instructor to do so.

A good teacher will guide their students to learning, but a great teacher will not be afraid to learn from them along the way. The combination of ideas that emerges from the discussion and explorations in class keeps material fresh and alive for both the teacher and the students. Allowing the class to be shaped by the unique individuals within it makes the students part of the learning process, and allows them to take responsibility for themselves and each other.

Finding alternate ways to communicate with students, allows the teacher to explore various paths to the same objective. By allowing some variation and flexibility in the means by which knowledge is presented, the teacher is not constricted by tradition, but rather empowered by creativity. As a teacher I try to give the students a sense not only of the rigid facts and skills that the class is based on, but also of the possibilities it reveals to them. For this reason, I prefer to create hands-on learning experiences in the class room that allow the students to see how the theoretical knowledge they learn applies to real life. This helps the students to see past the next exam or assignment, and encourages them to retain the knowledge beyond the classroom setting.

It is a privilege and a responsibility to be able to guide others in the pursuit of knowledge. I once read that, “Learning is something students do, not something done to students.” As a teacher, I believe in facilitating the students’ desire to learn rather than forcing them to learn; thereby making them responsible for their own progress. Material presented in a clear and engaging way helps the student desire to learn more and pushes them to excel in their studies. If I, as a teacher, give them the tools, guidance and encouragement to discover knowledge for themselves; learning becomes an adventure rather than a chore.