

First of all, I am a facilitator, a coach, a guide, a co-learner. I embrace teaching as an opportunity to inspire and empower. In my view, teaching is not about instructing or imparting information to students as if their minds were waiting to be filled with my knowledge. Rather, teaching is igniting transformative learning; empowering students to take responsibility for their learning, inspiring courage to grow intellectually, cultivating curiosity, providing opportunities for developing relationships, clarifying values, uplifting the spirit and igniting action. Ideally, I want students to feel personally changed by their participation in a course. Transformative learning is most likely to occur when students become personally engaged with the material and perceive the subject matter to be directly relevant to their own lives. Learning, then, is experiential.

Furthermore, the student should be the focus—not the teacher. While the process of reading examples and completing exercises in textbooks and from handouts is valuable, the real learning comes through the student's own efforts at solving problems. Learning is also a social endeavor; therefore, I facilitate learning through group work and student-led discussions; problem-solving through student inquiries and debate; writing through peer review; and computer literacy through research and discussions board participation.

Generally, I believe the role of a teacher is to be a facilitator. We should work to be flexible, adapting our approaches according to the needs of the learners, the subject matter, and the setting. Teaching is a process of encouraging students to make connections between their experiences and the subject matter. We must work to create bridges between the classroom and the world because learning has not actually occurred until the student makes a connection between prior knowledge and new knowledge—understands a reason for remembering the data. As teachers, we should enable our students to become responsible for their own learning. We should vary our teaching styles and should expect students to participate in a mixture of lecture, discussion, and collaborative activities.

I believe that teachers and students must be part of the constantly changing technological landscape. I believe that we should not only teach with technology but about technology as well, providing students with the skills to critically evaluate how they use and access technology. To do so, technology must be carefully integrated and should complement the course goals, objectives, and content matter. Online interactions and Web 2.0 tools allow our students not only to interact more with the instructor and with one another, but also to become active participants in a community larger than the classroom itself. Technology allows us to create more authentic learning environments and assessments.

It is crucial that teachers recognize the power inherent in their role and are self-reflective about their actions. In my teaching, I work to be mindful of my position as a role model of the kind of learning I strive to promote among students. Transformative learning is a reciprocally educative endeavor—informative and uplifting for teachers and students alike. It is about “opening hearts and minds...” and changing lives for all those involved in the process.