

Teaching Philosophy Statement

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Learning and Teaching

When I consider how to best define learning and teaching, I believe that Cameron Fincher (1998) summarizes it well by saying:

In its broadest sense, learning can be defined as a process of progressive change from ignorance to knowledge, from inability to competence, and from indifference to understanding. In much the same manner, instruction or education can be defined as the means by which we systematize the situations, conditions, tasks, materials, and opportunities by which learners acquire new or different ways of thinking, feeling, and doing. (p. 58)

I believe that the best learning engages students and offers ample opportunities for interpersonal interaction to gain knowledge, competence, and understanding. Part of my role as an educator in the area of career exploration includes creating a classroom environment and assignments that will enhance students' understanding of career opportunities and encourage them to take positive actions to reach their personal and professional aspirations. I feel that this is done best in the context of an environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves. That being said, as a class we will work together to create an inclusive environment by creating a set of norms that will lay the framework for how we are expected to treat one another. Students who are partners in creating class norms are more likely to experience some level of ownership, participate in instruction, and contribute to mutually respectful relationships (McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2003).

The Chinese proverb, "Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand." also speaks to my philosophy of teaching. In a career exploration course, I feel that lecturing to students is largely ineffective because of the personal discovery and reflection that must take place on the part of students as they discern a major or career area. Students will be introduced to tools and resources that will actively engage them in self-assessment to better understand what they are looking for in terms of career. As students become involved in their own learning, they will grow in their own understanding of what is important to them.

There are three major learning objectives for this course. Students will be able to identify their career interests, skills, values, and personality style in an effort to recognize potential career options, learn how to research careers through a variety of resources, emphasizing education requirements, job duties, job outlook, salary, etc., and design an action plan that includes educational and career goals. To meet these learning objectives, students will complete a variety of assignments, including, but not limited to, interest and skill-based inventories, reflective journaling, informational interviewing, and developing an individualized action plan. In addition, I will draw on the experiences of others by hosting panel discussions and guest presenters from a variety of career fields.

Authenticity

I am passionate about career exploration because I have changed careers several times since graduating from Ohio State University in 1993 with a bachelor's degree in education. Throughout the course, I will intentionally incorporate personal and professional experiences in navigating my own career changes because I feel that it is important to be authentic and share with students some of my own challenges with the process. Career exploration and/or career change may induce panic and stress as individuals consider how they want to make an impact, and this pressure and anxiety that students feel can lead to inaction and/or the desire not to

persist in their goal to pursue higher education. It is my goal to break down the process of choosing a major and/or a career into manageable steps. Also, I believe that every student brings to the course their own unique perspective, based on their individual background, identity, and life experiences. I expect students to share their experiences because I believe that discussions where students have an opportunity to reflect on their past as they consider their future plans enhances their learning and development.

Facilitator vs. Expert

As an educator in the field of career exploration, I will tell students that I do not consider myself an expert or the final authority. There is no “right” way to proceed when it comes to choosing a college major or career and I want students to understand that I am going to expose them to activities that will help to direct them in their decision making. I view my role as being more of a facilitator, where I lead discussions and classroom activities in an effort to help students draw on who they are and their previous experiences in an effort to understand how this information can assist them in making informed decisions as they plan for their future. In addition, I want to challenge students to think critically about choosing a major and/or career that will realistically fit with their future goals, personality, and lifestyle. For example, I will ask students to answer the following questions:

1. What are your favorite kinds of books, magazines, and websites?
2. What is your dream or fantasy job?
3. What is your favorite hobby?
4. What do you most look forward to doing in your free time?
5. If you had unlimited resources, what would you be doing?

Then I will ask student to think more critically about *why* they responded the way they did to these questions. Activities such as this are important because they require students to dig deeper to assess, question, and determine their most preferred qualities and attributes, and increase their career planning effectiveness. In addition to being a resource for students, I also want to point students to a wide variety of resources to gain more information about career exploration.

Attitude is Key

As we move through the course content on career exploration, I will share with students a quote by Henry Ford, “Whether you think you can or think you can’t you are right.” This will lead to a discussion about the important role that our minds and our attitudes play in our daily lives. I will ask students to share personal situations in which their minds and attitudes contributed positively or negatively to situations. I will also touch on how I believe our thoughts impact our feelings and our feelings impact our actions. Students will gain a better understanding about the impact of positive and negative self-talk and how what we say about ourselves and believe about ourselves makes a difference in what we do.

References

- Fincher, C. (1998). Learning theory and research. In K. A. Feldman & M. Paulson (Eds.), *Teaching and Learning in the College Classroom* (pp. 57-80). Needham, MA: Ginn Press.
- McDonald, J., Mohr, N., Dichter, A., & McDonald, E. (2003). *The power of protocols: An educator’s guide to better practice*. New York, New York: Teacher College Press.