

Teaching Statement

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I continuously strive to improve my teaching through self-evaluation and observation of student outcomes. I set a few simple goals common for each course:

Give students a reason to come to class. Every day, do something in class that students would not otherwise see. Explain something that they would not otherwise be likely to understand. Present a point of view that is not offered in other course material.

Show that you believe the students are capable of succeeding, at least until both the student and teacher are overwhelmed by evidence to the contrary. Encourage students by noting individual achievements and tell everyone outright, "I know you can do this." That seems to help.

Most learning happens outside the classroom. Homework and projects must foster that learning. Exams need only demonstrate that learning happened out there, not that students can perform in a high pressure environment. If the teacher can promise that the way to prepare for the exam is to do the homework, students will do a good job on the homework and on the exam and a great deal of the anxiety that interferes with learning will be avoided.

And finally, there is nothing wrong with the archetype "student". We need not look elsewhere for a metaphor on which to base our approach to teaching. If we carefully keep in mind our students' needs, we will be good teachers and our students will succeed in learning. Good teachers understand that students need and want to see new ways of thinking, students welcome guidance and encouragement, they want to participate in an exchange of ideas, and they want to experience the principles of each discipline they study. These principles are the basis of a relationship of mutual respect that leads to learning all around.

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