

Blaec A. Bejarano — Teaching Philosophy — January 2022

Phone: (850) 207-6407

Email: BlaecBejarano@gmail.com

Website: BlaecBejarano.com

In my opinion, quality learning takes place when four criteria are satisfied. These criteria are personal connection, active participation, application, and utilizing learning styles conducive to an individual's acquirement of knowledge. My role as an instructor is to fulfill these criteria to the best of my ability, and I can achieve this through my interpersonal communication abilities, engaging students via active involvement/assignments, my expertise/interests in mathematical applications, and varying my teaching style to incorporate proven teaching methodologies which encapsulate as many students as possible. My goal is to implement each of these "pillars of learning" while disseminating the necessary course material, and my track record through both course grade comparisons and teaching evaluations has reflected my proficiency in attaining this objective.

Over my several years of teaching as a graduate teaching assistant, course instructor, and middle school teacher, I have found that making a direct connection to students is the most effective way to ensure that they are comfortable receiving the required assistance for solidifying their knowledgebase. I attain these connections by talking to my individual students as well as small groups during active learning assignments. I also have the advantage of being a youthful educator, so relating to the struggles/challenges that pupils face regarding assignments and general student life comes naturally since I have recently been a student myself. One of my favorite things about teaching is serving as a guide for the passions and interests of younger learners, and ultimately, it is why I have continued to follow the path of pedagogy to this day.

Furthermore, I choose to teach by employing active learning because it is both a statistically proven/data driven tool for instruction with the purpose of the long-term retention of information, and as an applied mathematician, I find it important to adequately prepare students for their future careers by relating specific mathematical techniques and their relevance to their exact fields of interests. I have accumulated this information via applied seminars I attended as a graduate student and as Chapter Secretary of the Society of Industrial and Applied Mathematics. Whether it be physical biology, population dynamics, uses in mechanical engineering, aerospace, computer science, financial/actuarial mathematics, or the numerical modeling of environmental phenomenon, I tend to have a good sense of the sort of methodologies that are instrumental in the meaningful continuance of their personal education.

Often, it is this very spark of interest concerning the implementation of mathematics in students' area of focus which enables them to endure and ultimately prevail throughout this type of essential training, shaping them into valuable assets in the domains of their choosing. Moreover, over time I have found that motivating students by serving as a positive role model, giving them the proper guidance that allows them to see the potential of their current paths via education opportunities in student organizations, seminars, or by working directly with departmental faculty/advisors, is crucial to student success. Even having personal conversations which instill a sense of affirmation in their academic track is incredibly useful in boosting the moral of future graduates.

However, when individuals are struggling with course material, I have discovered that varying learning approaches is an effective way to reach those who are not connecting with certain concepts and

is imperative to keeping the class on the same page. Whether that variation be through visualization practices, offering unique analogies, working up from a lower level initially, addressing previous gaps in knowledge, or simplifying by providing more accessible questions, tips, and walkthroughs relating to the problems at hand. Additionally, I have arrived at the conclusion that these methods are particularly effective through my student teaching evaluations, instructor evaluations, discussions with colleagues, and in general, by having conversations with students regarding what has been most helpful to them over their time in my course and others.

Also, my grade-based data record is well above average due to my sincere commitment to struggling students, the practical advice I supply, as well as my ability to connect with and motivate them. It is quite evident from the amount of extra time that I dedicate to my course that I care for the individuals who are enrolled, and I make it a personal goal of mine for them to feel comfortable relaying what their needs are, and how I can better address them. Further, I try to be an understanding person, as life happens to all of us. While I am strict in many regards, and by no means am I an easy-going instructor, in fact I constantly push my students to their limits, but I also pride myself on being human-oriented, and by that, I mean that I take students mental and physical well-being seriously.

Clearly over the past several years, with the challenges faced by all during the Covid-19 pandemic I have found it necessary to be lenient in certain circumstances that are out of students control, such as being sick, having to care for others, and/or feeling overwhelmed by other various situations. Especially during a time of mainly virtual interactions that many do not find conducive to their own learning styles. I attempt to remedy this by delivering a fully human aspect in my teaching philosophy, and if this is used appropriately and not taken advantage of, I try to offer students the benefit of the doubt, knowing that their education is in their own hands at the end of the day. In other words, I truly believe that the effort a student puts into their work, is what they will ultimately get out of any educational experience.