

My Personal Manifesto

Change is both an essential feature of life and the only constant. Our ability to adapt as teachers and have our students be adaptable to the intellectual needs of the society and marketplace become more evident as we realize that every student should have some kind of post-secondary training.

To do this, students must learn how to use technologies to solve problems. For me, this is the challenge of 21st century learning. The distractions, the candy bars of social media among them, are tremendous because we are awash in instantaneous information. Teachers have to provide relevant and engaging material and activities, more so than the distractions so learning can occur.

More than the distractions, students have different sets of socioeconomic (SES) rules with which they have been born. Students from poverty, especially generational poverty, have a general reliance on entertainment and humor that aids them in navigating the world. Safety is of a significant concern to students from a lower SES. Schools are generally built around middle class rules; that is to say, hard work leads to rewards. As educators, we have to realize what makes all of students tick (motivations) and then have them adapt to culture of schools which require them to produce.

This kind of work requires extreme amounts of perseverance, requiring patience and tenacity. Many fictional and non-fictional examples of this are evident in literature, popular culture, lore, and history. Showing our students these and celebrating them when they happen as a result of the classroom are critical to individuals' growth.

A variety of tools and methods are available to educators. No right way exists to teach correctly. I have found that real learning can occur when students can become motivated to extend learning outside of the set class time and show me what they know in class. Because students are resistant to doing homework and much debate exists in journalistic circles about the worth of students doing excessive amounts of it, I utilize flipped classroom strategies to maximize class time. I have also found that when I talk, I cannot hear what the students are thinking.

Making learning fun has been a goal of mine, as well. This has involved turning learning and grading into a game. Students are incentivized to score as many XP by doing assignments well. I have observed students work hard to level up, leading to higher grades than I have ever had and levels of knowledge that I had previously only dreamed,

When as an educator I blend together the understanding of my students' backgrounds, of our place in the universe, of the purpose of schools, and the needs of the future, I can create an environment of learners that enjoy what they are doing and want more.