

My passion for teaching and learning has evolved into a deep commitment to prepare the next generation of exceptional education professionals. In teacher preparation and as a mentor, I focus on providing an inclusive and compassionate learning environment where students are empowered to explore, apply, and question evidence-based practices meaningfully. My classroom climate emulates a community of practice, which embeds shared knowledge building and technology integration.

Classroom Community

I am committed to student-centered pedagogy, guided by trauma-informed practices, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and flexibility in meeting the diverse needs of adult learners. I strive to create a trauma-informed and trusting classroom by building flexibility into my practices so that all students can meet ambitious learning goals without fear of failure.

For example, I proactively provide flexibility in deadlines or alternative assessments. I ensure students know their well-being is a priority and their thoughts and learning journey matter. If my student knows this is true in my classroom community, they are more likely to engage and persist through challenges. I create a supportive, resilient learning environment where setbacks are seen as opportunities for growth, paving the way for future success.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) leads me to plan for learner variability and proactively design instruction that shows my students I appreciate their individuality. UDL means offering flexible ways for students to engage with material and show their learning. For example, I may present key concepts through a mix of readings, collaborative assignments, and technology-embedded activities, which allow students to have agency in the demonstration of their understanding. By building choice into course design, I ensure that all students have access through multimodal assessment options. Each has an opportunity to excel in a way that builds agency for them. Active opportunities to reflect on UDL working for them and their peers in my courses help students form experiences reflecting the evidence-based practice in their future classrooms.

Grounded in adult learning theory, I recognize that the multifaceted backgrounds and experiences my students bring are powerful assets to our shared classroom community. I strive to adapt to my students' needs to remove unnecessary barriers and build mutual understanding of elevated expectations. Making my students feel safe and respected makes them more able to engage deeply and take intellectual risks. Ultimately, I strive to empower future special educators who are reflective, innovative, and committed to access to education for all learners.

Modeling Collaborative Knowledge Building Practices

I enact my philosophy by using evidence-based teaching strategies that actively engage students and model the kind of inclusive instruction, assessment, and reflection I want them to deliver to their future students.

I position myself as a facilitator of learning rather than a one-way lecturer, creating a collaborative atmosphere where learners' voices drive discussion related to the world they will find themselves teaching in. For example, I incorporate current case studies and problem-solving activities drawn from authentic classroom scenarios, then guide students through reflective group discussions to analyze challenges and co-develop solutions. These activities invite the varied perspectives and experiences in the room and demonstrate a shared knowledge-building process. By honoring student autonomy and encouraging active participation, I help future teachers build confidence and ownership of their learning and model a practice they can adapt and utilize in their teaching. Assessment in my courses is authentic, formative, and growth-oriented.

In alignment with UDL principles, I use varied assessment methods to give students multiple avenues to show their learning. Whenever possible, I offer choices (e.g., a written paper, an infographic, or a short video presentation) so that students can play to their strengths while meeting the learning objectives. This approach mirrors what I encourage them to do in their future classrooms: differentiate assessment to gauge each student's understanding accurately.

I also emphasize the importance of reflection and metacognition in knowledge building. After any activity related to class, I ask students to write a brief reflection or engage in a debrief discussion connecting their experience to course concepts with a critical friend. These reflections are not one-off experiences; students must revisit them throughout a semester to continue building on their perceptions of their learning experiences. This not only consolidates their learning but helps them develop the habit of reflective practice and careful consideration of the sum of their own learning and teaching toolkit.

Use of Technology and Innovation

I embrace and encourage a sandbox approach to the use of the latest technology and innovation available. By integrating innovative technology thoughtfully, I prepare future educators for modern classrooms where they do the same. I provide my students the opportunity to be confident and critical in their implementation of technology in their practice.

Digital literacy and confidence-building are priorities in all my instruction. I start with embedding basic tools and their explanations and gradually progress to more complex applications, ensuring everyone masters foundational skills before moving forward. My class provides a space for repeated practice with emerging technologies. Students are less concerned with the success of the technology, versus understanding where failures come from and how they can better approach a similar issue in their next chance.

I foster the idea that it is okay to click the wrong button or have a simulation go awry, then plan for reflection and another iteration that comes out of it. They learn to critically evaluate how a given technology can serve pedagogical goals and how to implement tools thoughtfully and responsibly to support learners with exceptionalities. Over time, students improve their technical abilities and develop an adaptive mindset toward innovation. They are left better positioned to leverage the next innovation that comes their way.

Future Goals

Teachers are lifelong learners. I am no exception. As I progress in the doctoral program, I plan to seek out training in advanced pedagogical strategies (such as learning more about adult learning in my coursework and online teaching techniques in practicum) to enhance my effectiveness in across instructional modalities. Courses I teach will encourage students to be mindful of the contemporary issues around equity and accessibility and their legal frameworks. I intend to model the importance of staying abreast of emerging evidence-based practices, updating my course content to prepare students for an evolving landscape. I envision developing courses and modules that collaborate with learners to explore the use of technology at the intersection of serving students with disabilities.

Conclusion

In summary, I will continue to emphasize the pillars of inclusive pedagogy, evidence-based practices around collaboration and reflection, and technology implementation in my practice. My teaching is as much about humanity as it is about strategy, and I will maintain that balance by infusing compassion, collaboration, and creativity into future endeavors. In doing so, I aim to contribute to the preparation of special education leaders who are skilled and knowledgeable, but also empathetic, innovative, and reflective.