

As a professor at a community college, I teach a diverse student body which can make it hard to reach everyone where they are at. My students come with different levels of understanding and experience and typically face many challenges while juggling a lot of responsibilities outside of the classroom. My teaching philosophy to address this diversity in an equitable way is based on building relationships, using innovative pedagogy, incorporating technology, providing access, being an advocate, and continuously improving. I am a math teacher, but you will note that most of my teaching philosophy is not specific to teaching mathematics, rather, it is about how best to reach my unique students.

### **Building Relationships**

Making connections and building relationships with students is the key to culturally responsive teaching. Students who know that you care about them while you push them to do their best will be more successful because they feel comfortable making mistakes in front of an ally and learning through their misunderstanding. Students need to feel my presence both inside and outside of the classroom. I send reminders and emails, require office hour check-ins, take surveys of students to see how they are feeling and find out what resources they need. I send Early Alerts and other automated messages to let my students know that I am thinking about them. I make my best connections with students during group work, when I can come around to them individually, kneel on the floor to get at eye-level and talk through problems together (and joke around as well). I incorporate non-cognitive activities that require my students to reflect on their experiences in class and in life while also considering their behavior and attitudes, especially towards math. These reflections give me a peek inside their life. I get to hear their voices. Being relational is critical because it lets me listen, learn, and motivate my students while also providing individualized help for each student.

### **Using Innovative Pedagogy**

The diversity of my students requires a variety of teaching methods and assessment. It's imperative to present content in a variety of ways. Teaching concepts in multiple representations, i.e. graphically, numerically, algebraically, along with assessing in multiple ways, including group quizzes, individual and online exams, mastery-based assessments, projects, discussions, working on the board, etc. This allows students to shine in different ways. I'm a big proponent of active learning in the classroom, so I have incorporated a flipped model where students watch recorded video lectures at home, and then practice in groups during class time after a mini lecture. Group work gives me the opportunity to make a touch-point with every student at least once per class to gauge understanding and make connections. I emphasize the importance of productive struggle so that my students know that learning comes through mistakes. I also try to build confidence by assigning math study skills assignments that develop strategies to reduce things like math and test anxiety and increase grit and an internal locus of control. I utilize mastery-based learning to further promote persistence and reflection. My assignments are well aligned with learning objectives and provide transparent instructions and expectations. My Quality Matters training has helped me see the power of good course design and how it impacts student learning, especially in the online environment. I also strongly advocate tutoring for my students, encouraging the use of the math center and embedding tutors into my online classroom.

### **Incorporating Technology**

I feel that technology really enhances the classroom in many ways. Learning management systems enable me to create a well-organized online classroom that is easy to navigate. Embedded online tools like checklists, intelligent agents, awards, surveys, accessibility checkers, allow me to communicate with all students. It is crucial to have a big teacher presence, especially

in the online classroom, so that students know that I am thinking about them, keeping tabs, and giving feedback. I welcome the use of online software like MyMathLab because it adds additional support, immediate feedback, and active learning. It is also essential to create my own video lectures, in my own voice, so that students can hear my enthusiasm and perspective on the content. I utilize graphing calculators in my classes because this technology allows students to be able to solve realistic problems that would normally be too difficult to solve by hand, or in some cases, use the calculator to do basic math (like fractions) that may be preventing a student from learning more important concepts. I am also an early-adopter of using programs like Adobe Connect and Zoom to embed synchronous interaction into my online classes. In fact, my doctoral dissertation focused on the “*Effects of Synchronous Group Work on Learning and Community in Online Mathematics at Community Colleges.*” Technology, used appropriately, elevates the classroom experience and offers interactive tools that can meet a variety of needs.

#### **Providing Access**

Community colleges cater to students with diverse schedules and lifestyles, so we have to offer classes that will appeal to their varied needs. I enjoy creating online, accelerated and technology-enhanced math courses that enable students to take math in new and flexible ways. I strongly support math co-requisite pathways because they help students get to the courses they need in less time with additional support. All of these varied formats need to maintain the integrity of a traditional math course with appropriate learning outcomes all while providing access for students who would not normally be able to make college a reality.

#### **Being an Advocate**

Being a teacher doesn't stop outside of the classroom. I have to be an advocate for my students so can they receive the resources and opportunities necessary to succeed. Therefore, I need to be involved throughout campus on committees that affect students and college policies. I fight for my students to achieve better course placement options through multiple measures and guided self-placement. I can be a champion for students by instituting curriculum that helps them reach college-level mathematics more quickly and successfully. I work with advising to make sure students are taking the courses they actually need. I want to be involved in making choices about what technology and other resources would be best for my students. I can be flexible and accommodating for students when life gets in the way of school, and offer my training in Mental Health First Aid to get students the care they need. As a multicultural leader, I try to listen and learn from those not in the culture of power. I try to stay aware, avoid making assumptions, and be open to change.

#### **Continuously Improving**

Part of being a good teacher is being a good student. As a life-long learner myself, it is refreshing and necessary to attend conferences to learn best practices. It is essential to get yearly feedback from my students and collect data on my action plans for the year. Taking NED courses, for example, has given me a new focus on culturally responsive teaching, and I look forward to finding ways to make the grading in my math courses more equitable. Reading, learning, attending conferences, gathering student feedback, and program review are all key to making me my best. In my personal reflections, I aspire to help my students set goals that are attainable but push boundaries, provide support and independence, and make decisions that are thoughtful, evidence-based, and consider all perspectives; lofty goals that often require questioning what has always been done and doing something better.