

Teaching Philosophy

I believe that writing and other kinds of learning should be approached as an incomplete process. The goal of a teacher should be to produce students who, although they will probably not be virtuoso writers at the end of one semester's tuition, will be able to continue learning with or without the aid of another instructor, and who will possess the intent to learn. In other words, the composition instructor's guiding ambition should be to give the student tools that he or she will be able to use, no matter what environment; whereas it isn't possible to teach every aspect of writing in one semester, it is possible to "hit the high points," that is, to associate basic principles with ideas that will, one hopes, be triggered by the work of a subsequent teacher or by factors within any incidental writing tasks later performed by the student. For example, if the student develops the habit of always performing at least one slight revision to every piece of writing, then the student may continue to consider revision after any writing task, whether it is an essay or an instant message.

It is vital to share with students the reasons for the skills and facts they are learning. MLA and APA style, for instance, are notorious for provoking the question, "Why are we learning this?" When it is put into context and explained as a standardized set of directions for guiding others to the resources a writer has used, the student's objective becomes more clear, and therefore both easier and more acceptable.

The single most vital skill is mapping what one needs to know to complete the objective at hand. This, more than anything else, can lead to success at writing, the study of literature, or any other academic goal. Of course, one skill isn't all a student will need, but the ability to plan a learning map is the fundamental underpinning of composition; it is, in fact, the basis of the

process-centered approach to teaching. Yet the teacher and student must recognize that product is also important, and that balance is essential.