

Will Groben's Teaching Philosophy [03.24.04]

Teaching is not merely conveying information, it is causing people to learn! Teaching is inspiring students, empowering students for critical thought, and exciting students about the subject.

Inspiring students begins with keeping them awake! The effective teacher shows passion for his subject, passion for the well being of his students, and passion for the teaching process. He has a dynamic classroom presence, one that is fueled by enthusiasm and creativity. His personality is engaging to students, drawing them in with attentiveness, compassion, and courtesy. Inspiring students means compelling them to give up their passivity, exhorting them to choose ownership of the learning process. It means inducing them to desire more knowledge, to desire to stretch and excel, to desire to earn a good grade. The effective teacher encourages and affirms student effort. He creates useful and interesting activities which intrigue the students.

Empowering students for critical thought begins with rewarding them for thinking rather than for memorizing! The effective teacher uses Socratic Dialogue techniques to bring the students into the teaching process, and to provide them with opportunities for solving problems and devising their own theories. He creates original tests that push students a little beyond their comfort zone, providing them again with opportunities for solving problems and expressing critical analysis of theory and policy. Empowering students means giving them tools they can apply to ideas they find outside of the classroom. The effective teacher will first show a technique, then allow the students to try it in the classroom, and then ask them to demonstrate it on their own for the test. He provides in-depth feedback in class and on tests. He illustrates the lessons with examples of good and bad theory and policy.

Exciting students about the subject begins with making it relevant! The effective teacher provides real life applications of the theories and techniques he is teaching. He ties academic arguments to real life issues with current news articles and examples from his own life, or by using details he knows about the lives of the students. Exciting students about the subject means piquing their curiosity through the use of irony, surprise, and humor. The effective teacher will convey his passion for the subject and illuminate the interesting aspects of it. He will find ways to use the subject itself in his teaching of it, thereby bringing it to life for the students. In economics, one way to do this is to offer market incentives to bring about desirable student behavior, which allows them to see the power and efficiency of that technique.

The community college environment is a challenging one in which to teach! The effective teacher must provide an enlightening and inspiring experience for every student, which will include those with a ninth grade learning level up through those who could have gone to any college in the country. By mixing creativity, attentiveness, scholarship, proven techniques, and enthusiasm, he can excite his students not only about the subject, but also about learning itself, and can train them for critical thought in the process. The effective teacher can create an environment in which the students learn.