

My overall goal as an educator is to provide learners with an environment that provides genuine and novel experiences for learners of all ability levels. My philosophy is informed by my experience as a cognitive scientist as well as an educator, and can be described with three overarching principles.

1. Learning is effortful and ongoing.
2. The feedback - reflection cycle is integral to any learning experience.
3. Community is important in creating "comfortable" learners.
4. Play (or "unguided practice") not only allows for learner experimentation, but it also increases the salience of any learning experience.

While I strive to provide learners with experiences that are intrinsically motivating, it is important to prepare learners for the inevitable moment when a problem is too difficult to be solved quickly. Preparing learners to deal with frustration in the face of new experiences is key to ensuring that what could be a fulfilling experience doesn't become just another wasted moment. Keeping this in mind, I find that presenting students with situations that are full of common misconceptions and confusion can often yield some of the most satisfying results. Confusion is just another step toward understanding. It is also important as a teacher to recognize that teaching is an active field that is constantly being researched. Not only in the specific domain that is being taught, but also in fields like learning sciences, cognitive psychology, and educational psychology. It is important that teachers keep themselves informed about current best practices, and that they use these practices to improve their own. Contributing to the teaching community is also important, as it provides those working in research oriented fields with perspectives outside of planned research.

Feedback is one of the driving factors behind my positive experiences as a student. Receiving thoughtful and constructive feedback on work that I completed made the job of completing assignments to the best of my ability that much easier. I think that one of the most important strategies that teachers can use to effectively teach students is to provide them with timely and direct feedback that not only points out weaknesses in the work completed, but also points out strengths that should be developed.

Communicating the requirements of a course is key in creating a positive experience for students. A clear and concise syllabus is necessary to communicate what the instructor desires from the student and rubrics are important to provide with longer term projects. It is also important that instructors consider the needs of students when designing assignments. Beyond making clear the requirements of the course, it is important that students be aware of resources that can help them fulfill the requirements put forth in the syllabus. These resources can include but are not limited to university tutors, library resources, and information from the Internet. The instructor also has an obligation to

provide a clear schedule of availability to discuss any questions about course content or assignment requirements. This "community of experience" is key in establishing independent thought and inquiry, and allows learners to recognize that they do not stop learning about their world - but that they should continually adjust as they experience more and should use that experience to help others.

Every experience can be made into a game one way or another. Often it is only a matter of shifting perspective. We use play to test new ideas and behaviors we observe as children, and it is important to continue with that experimentation as we get older. Play is just another word for low-stakes learning, and it is important that we provide learners with opportunities to experiment and explore solutions in a space where they feel safe to falter and adjust accordingly. This is much easier in lower grades - but as we grow older it becomes more important to transition to play experiences that resemble simulations of experiences rather than just exploration. In this regard - using a constructivist philosophy becomes that much more important in that educators need to understand what learners bring to the table, and learners need assistance in relating what they learn to their experience.