

Philosophy of Education

Andrew Levin

Today, young people face the toughest economic doldrums in decades. It is not good enough to teach just facts and figures. Remembering is necessary but not sufficient. Rather we must teach towards professional skills. More specifically, any student finishing one of my classes will be able to write brief essays with clarity on the subject, to discuss the subject in a public forum, and to utilize technology to spread their impact.

For the vast majority of students (and teachers), writing is a learned skill. To promote the learning process, my written assignments are a four-step process. They first write a draft. Then, the essays are exchanged and reviewed by their peers. Subsequently, I review this draft using specific criteria and then discuss with each student how best to improve their second and final draft. Only then do they write that final essay. It is only then that I grade. Even the best public relations experts, marketing professionals, and journalists go through this reiterative process. Thus, it is much more important to have a great second draft than a good first draft.

Secondly, public speaking is an incredibly important skill that I emphasize in my classes. I usually begin with a student presentation on topics related to the day's lecture. But rather than reiterating the readings, I ask them to analyze and apply them. I encourage other students to ask questions and add to the discussion. I also utilize simulations. These class activities require students to not only understand but also evaluate the material through another person's shoes. Even when I am lecturing or showing short clips, I am also asking questions to provoke higher-level thinking and response from the students. No student is left out of this process, because I differentiate the assignments to make sure each student can build from their unique starting point.

Finally, technology is critical in almost all jobs and must become second nature to our students. At minimum, I ask students to interact with me via Blackboard and email. More recently, I have been working with Harper on expanding my classes' technology skills through a class blog. In this way, my students' works will reach and impact a wider audience. Their families and friends can see and interact with them. Down the road when they start applying for jobs and hiring managers ask for technology/social media experience, my students can have real, meaningful examples.

Together with interactive, engaging lectures, these skills encompass my teaching philosophy. I look beyond remembering and towards a constructivist model of education. Furthermore, I am constantly adapting my teaching in order to ensure our students are learning the skills that they need most to be college and career ready.