

Teaching Statement

Annie M. Cole

The goal of my teaching is twofold: (1) to support the academic, personal, and professional development of students by engaging them in learning opportunities that encourage critical thinking and reflection, and (2) to adequately prepare students with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in their desired professional field. I view education as a means of creating a democratic society, while at the same time preparing students to meet the demands of their planned career field. These two goals come together in my classroom to manifest an environment where all students can thrive as learners and burgeoning professionals.

Teaching Strategies

To ensure that these goals are reached, I use specific teaching strategies that are informed by learning theory and psychology. I use the question, “Whose brain is doing the thinking?” to assess whether my teaching is student or teacher centered. For example, I have students engage in a variety of small group, pair-share, and reflection activities to stimulate critical thinking. To ensure that students are equipped with the necessary skills for their profession, I use the most recent national competencies as a guide for my syllabus and lesson planning. Additionally, I foster equitable access and inclusion in the classroom by providing students with multiple learning formats and activity types, discussing a range of viewpoints on each topic, and allowing ample time for student feedback and voices during class time.

Class Examples

Evidence of my teaching strategies and success can be observed in three ways. First, I always engage students in hands-on learning activities that allow students to learn from their own experience. For example, when teaching students how to carry out a semi-structured research interview, I have the students practice first with a peer, then with me. Following the practice, I engage the student in conversation to reflect on the experience. This results in self-reflection and a deeper understanding of how to carry out interviews. Second, I scaffold learning experiences across the semester to aid in long-term retention of new concepts. Lectures begin with a review of previous materials to assess gaps in learning, and new concepts are interwoven into the content of multiple meeting periods to provide multiple exposures. The outcome is that students can understand a new concept from multiple perspectives and across multiple contexts. Third, I relate classroom activities to students’ personal interests, which is especially important in the research methods classroom. When having students critique a research article, I allow students to group up and choose an article that relates to their specific interests. As a result, students are engaged in the critique process and can relate the findings to their present or future work.

Evidence of Future Success

Further evidence of my teaching strategies and success is demonstrated through my teaching portfolio, which includes sample syllabi, proposed courses to be developed, course evaluations, and reference who can speak to my teaching ability.

Conclusion

In summary, my teaching is inclusive, student-centered, and grounded in psychology and learning theory literature. I enjoy celebrating the unique perspective that each learner brings to the classroom, and I am passionate about allowing my ongoing research to inform my teaching practice.