

Teaching Philosophy

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Teaching Philosophy

The classroom is a place where the power of a teacher's belief in their students can ignite the spark of learning – transforming not just minds, but futures. As a counselor educator, we have the important responsibility of not only teaching future counselors but directly impacting the education and mental health field.

Counselor Educator Identity

The most effective learning environment is cultivated through a relationship with mutual trust and respect, just as it is in the counseling office. I want to encourage students to approach me as a professor with their questions and concerns and teach them how to advocate for their needs in a healthy and respectful way.

Our roles as a counseling educator should encourage students to interact and reflect on the material through the lens of humanity. To quote Margaret Mead, “people must not be taught what to think, but how to think”. There is critical information necessary to learn through higher education, and yet we must also teach students how to find and learn information for themselves. To create students dependent on others for learning would be a detriment to their future, and the future clients with whom they work.

I would be amiss to not discuss the importance of recognizing and encouraging dialogue around diversity in the classroom. Remembering that each student is unique is essential to promoting a safe learning environment for each student, and it is important to consider this when developing and discussing course material.

Pedagogy

My counseling philosophy centers around the idea that all people have the ability to change with support due to innate, although likely untapped, strengths. This can also be true in the classroom – as students learn more about themselves and the world, they are able to reflect and make personal changes through the support of educators. The lived experiences of each individual influences their learning, and students can and should be encouraged to reflect on how their past experiences influence their perspectives of counseling and higher education.

My counseling philosophy also encourages autonomy, which can be an essential component of the higher learning classroom. Students can gain autonomy through choosing from a variety of topics and generate their own research question, or encouraging discussions among students with an opportunity to reflect on what was learned. My approach to the classroom encourages students to remain engaged in the classroom and with the material for the profession.

Collaboration is also important within the classroom, and I want to give students an opportunity to engage with the course material while also advocating for their personal interests. To encourage this, I provide students with opportunities to reflect on course material and what they want to learn out of class. If a student is unhappy with the way a course is designed or an assignment is graded, I want them to feel as though they can approach me and discuss this in a productive way. Although I may not be able to change the course, I want students to have an opportunity to feel heard and appropriately advocate for themselves.

Evaluation

I believe that testing does not always best assess how students are learning material. Assessment through reflective journals, presentations, larger projects, and case study development provide alternative ways for students to showcase their knowledge and gain valuable experience about the research and presentation process as a professional.

Communication skills are essential for the counseling profession, and I think higher education is an important place to further develop these skills. Providing opportunities for class discussion encourages students to practice communication skills while also providing a way to assess how successfully and respectfully the student communicates their perspective. Working as a group on larger projects encourages students to learn healthy communication skills, collaborative problem solving, and managing conflict among team members. These things are all beneficial skills as a counselor and future employee.

Standards of competence are necessary for the profession, and each course brings students closer to becoming the counselor they are meant to be. Integrating various evaluation techniques allows students to display their academic strengths while also showing that they have learned the material.

Ultimately, the role as a counselor educator is one of great responsibility and should be treated as such. As an educator, I know I will bring compassion, collaboration, and evaluation of professional standards to my classroom in a way that encourages professional and professional growth. To quote Nelson Mandela, “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

