

Rachel Woodbrook
Teaching Statement

The foundation of my approach to teaching is a partnership with students in the learning process, beginning with establishing shared guidelines and expectations that foster mutual respect and responsibility.

This partnership serves to facilitate an environment offering the support and facilitation necessary for diverse groups of learners to explore and develop their grasp of disciplinary information. This exploration takes place as students exercise their creativity and critical judgment—finding and using information, receiving feedback, and developing an understanding of how to critically evaluate their own processes and results. Information literacy in particular requires a focus on sharpening students' capacities to define problems, conceptualize solutions, create plans of action and follow through with them, and utilize persistence in the face of obstacles—recognizing empowerment as a critical component of motivation.

Successful training in information literacy is not an end in itself, but seeks to equip students with skills over which they feel ownership, and which they will be able to relate to other aspects of their lives once an instruction session is over.

In reflecting on my experience as a student, there are several qualities the best teachers I have encountered shared. With this in mind, I strive to:

1. Be connected and present in an authentic way; communicate respect and truly listen to students, demonstrating an interest in them as people as well as in their classroom performance.
2. Challenge students to take responsibility, and to think beyond the classroom. Create room to explore and impetus to do so by demonstrating the use value of the material.
3. Believe in what I am teaching, and employ varying methods, illustrations and approaches to communicate with students as individuals. Remember that I am also learning, and that the students in their turn are teaching each other and me.

To this end, I believe it is important to employ a variety of methods including group work, lectures, assignments designed for student input, one-on-one interaction, and time for reflection and evaluation; and to develop my ability to respond flexibly to students' learning needs.

Challenging as it is, assessment should follow from the ultimate goal of real-world application, and seek to uncover various manifestations of successful learning. The most valuable lessons I have learned through my own teaching challenges have been the importance of continual assessment and adjustment, and of students as active partners in their own learning. Staying mindful of these ultimate goals and the responsibilities developed through the teacher-student partnership is a way to maintain the hope and drive to continue improving my own abilities.