

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of education is to aid students gather, form, and understand new knowledge. Its ability to open doors and pathways holds the possibility to find greater connection and mastery of countless facets of life. The educator is one of the main guiding forces in this journey, one that offers context, assists in holding and stretching boundaries, and challenges students to push past their current base of understanding to one that is deeper.

As a dance and theatre teaching artist, I have various goals and methods I employ in my teaching practice. My main goals from my work in dance and theatre practicum to theory based courses to my more community-focused classes often centers around developing and supporting the student's artistic voice and abilities. This is true for my students as young as seven years old to those who have matured to adulthood. I ask myself to examine where a student is at: what is their past training; what they want to express. It is then my job to expand upon this with new tools, techniques, ideas that will best support them and the institutional standards they are being held to. To me students are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge, but highly adaptable beings capable of dynamic transformation.

My most effective methods in facilitating these goals to fruition are ones based in constructivism, safety, and accessibility. The learning process is often combative by nature as it constantly challenges a student's past knowledge and understanding. Because of this students can engage more effectively with the learning process when they feel safe: with good boundaries, norms, and other tools, classroom disagreements and difficult subject matter are seen as issues which can be easily faced as a willing and ready group, imbuing every student with renewed agency. Likewise, students will participate more when material is presented in an accessible and relevant way: this does not mean that content should be "dumbed-down" or that the subjects need to be presented in a "cool" or "hip" manner. Instead it is the educator's job to acknowledge multiple entry points to a lesson and to find the most suitable pathway from which to navigate. Whether this means using movement modifications with injured dancers during technique practicum or planning my

introductory theatre theory course to include playwrights with intersectional (diverse race, class, orientation, etc.) backgrounds, accessibility takes various forms. At the same time, constructivist principles such as creating/gathering knowledge through group settings (dialogues and other activities) allows for better critical thinking whilst not permitting information to become some static unchanging entity, but a more fluid one. I have seen time and again that these methods empower students to participate more fully, take responsibility for and find commitment to their education, and to grow as individuals.

I love being a dance and theatre teaching artist. Both fields are highly interdisciplinary, welcoming innovation and celebrating various avenues of research. To teach within these arenas is to ask students to be vulnerable, courageous, and expansive. And to see students achieve these things and more is beyond rewarding.