

Beverly Myer's Statement of Teaching Philosophy

"We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men; and among those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects."

— Herman Melville

Growing up in rural North Dakota, my childhood was isolated as I did not have access to many books or the media that today's students do. I did not know what I did not know. However, once I entered junior high school, my English and history teachers became windows to an exciting, dramatic world of incredible stories; stories that made me hungry to hear and read more. Nevertheless, they did not just share stories; they challenged me to think about the cause and effect and how they influence current society. These stories continued into high school, college, and even my work. They also resonated an underlying theme of how the past is connected to everything that we see occurring or, re-occurring today.

As a teacher, I take the opportunity to help students discover these connections regardless of the subject area I teach. Unfortunately, I believe that the contemporary student is overwhelmed with information and, therefore, shuts down because he or she does not know how to sift through the ever-present media bombardment. They become disconnected.

Thus, when I start a class, I *begin with the end in mind* (Covey, [The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People](#)). I ask, "What are the most important goals I want my students to achieve?" They are:

1. To critically process various media content through reading/watching/hearing
2. To analytically write and/or talk about various media content
3. To personally connect and/or apply what they've discovered

I begin by engaging students by conducting activities that are for not only me, but also the students to get to know each other. I start with a large group meeting in which we establish the ground rule of mutual acceptance of each other. We do not have to agree, but should have an awareness of the life journey each classmate has taken to this point. This sometimes begins with students identifying and understanding their individual and group biases. Thus, I have woven the initial thread in the garment of connections.

Then, through small group discussions, I hope to unite to them through relationship. From my experience, this helps each class takes on its own personality which also develops the climate of the class. So, once a supportive environment is established the group will feel safe in their voyage of learning and sharing.

Next, it is important to validate the knowledge that they are learning, so, I invite guests to share relevant experiences and stories. I combine this with a myriad of reading and video to give students a broad source of information from which to draw. From there, I assign writings that begin to synthesize their knowledge into a concise, final project. Often students are excited to complete the final project because they see it as an opportunity to gain a better understanding of themselves while discovering the labyrinth of connections.

In my observations of effective teachers and research on best practices of instruction, I have noted that initially assessing individual learner's academic levels and planning are key elements in a facilitating student achievement. Additionally, I have videotaped face-to-face classes and discovered high student engagement when I chunk (for example) sixty-minute segments into four sections that offers differentiated instruction. Thus, I derive many of my strategies and techniques from that knowledge. My approach to instruction is effective during face-to-face instruction as well as blended or completely online formats.

As I grow as an educator, I know that my educational philosophy and pedagogy will continue to evolve to meet the needs of my students. I will continue to be reflective in practice and grounded in theory while motivating students to be lifelong learning because of the connections that they are continually discovering.