

Statement of Teaching.

RaviKumar Kopparapu

I perceive teaching as not only a way of educating students but also believe that it is a great opportunity for a teacher to articulate intricate concepts more clearly. Hence, making teaching a mutually beneficial factor for both student and the teacher. I realized this philosophy of 'learning through teaching' from my experiences as a teaching assistant for undergraduate physics majors and non-majors at Louisiana State University.

Being a student and an instructor simultaneously has an unique perspective on the method of teaching itself. Although the thought process leading to understanding a concept depends on the individual, I observed (and realized as a student and a teacher) that students, in general, have a problem in connecting the concepts that they are already familiar with to apply to new situations. Having faced this problem as a student, I encouraged my students to question each step of a solution to a problem, identifying the topics that they already know and slowly guiding them to the final answer. This proved effective and students enjoyed the fact that they have the ability to think on their own feet. This is a very crucial step in building their self confidence and their trust that they have full support of their teacher if they are willing to try. Of course this method has its drawbacks such as spending too much class time on too few problems, but whenever possible I followed it in the after class sessions and the purpose of it was worth the time for both of us.

Throughout my student carrier, I was taught by many teachers and some of them were simply the best. Then I started to notice what made them the best and what *I* like about them. The first and the foremost thing I realized was that they were very patient. They listened to the student's concerns carefully and tried to satisfy student's curiosity as much as possible without any complaints. This is the leading quality I try to emulate with my students when interacting with them. Some students, when they have a problem in understanding a concept or have a question, hesitate to come forth and by being patient encourages them not to inhibit their inquisitiveness. This was particularly useful in my introductory mechanics lab where the students were just trying to learn new concepts.

The second quality that influenced me the most and one that I try to implement in my class is to initiate and strenghten independent thought process. This, I believe, nicely blends with my philosophy of encouraging students to connect the concepts they are familiar with as the same technique simultaneously helps to build critical thinking. Especially in my modern physics class, which is relatively more advanced topic and a fun subject, there was a lot of room for student curiosity and in many occassions, I noticed that the students were very enthusiastic to reply when asked a question. I saw this as an excellent opportunity and in many instances when I was asked a question, I redirected to the class with the goal of increasing a lively discussion and student participation. Unfortunately, this was not possible to do more than a few times due to time constraints, but this made the students critic one another, enhancing their competitivness and at the same time it had a positive side effect of getting them genuinely involved in the class. Even though I was time-pressed during the class, I was able to exercise this technique in my tutoring sessions where I had sufficient time to spend with students.

The two characteristics of a good teacher, according to me, that I outlined above are by no means comprehensive and foolproof. Different people, according their nature, adopt different techniques. Infact, there were incidents where some students misunderstood and tried to take advantage of my teaching philosophy as they thought I was very lenient. Of course, this was not what I want to project myself and so in these situations the feedback is to demand a high quality in their work (lab work, home works, quizzes). Though my techniques were succesful in many cases, I tend to be repetitive during my lecture just to make sure that students understand the concepts. This may lead the student to think that the subject is dull and monotonous. To try and achieve a balance

between teaching concepts effectively and covering the syllabus is always a little challenge for me, but that is what I like in teaching. And I know that my students do.