

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

By Yiming Zhang

My name is Yiming Zhang. I wanted to be a teacher since I was in High School. My Pre-calculus teacher, Mr. Hazon, sometimes lets students explain some content to the rest of the class as a “part-time teacher”. I always volunteer to do this. It really makes me happy when my classmates learned new knowledge with the help of my explanation. From then on, I have a new understanding of a teacher: it is a job which not simply delivering knowledge to students but helping students to be successful in multiple ways. I believe there are three essential elements in teaching: UDL, students’ interests, and collaboration.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that helps give all students an equal opportunity to succeed. It is the most important thing I have learned in the STEM program. Students could not be fully engaging and benefit from the traditional way of teaching. However, if we offer opportunities and flexibility that every student can choose their most interested and comfortable ways to learn, and show what they know. For example, when doing a science project, I would offer students lots of different options to do it, such as making a video or a drama show. In this case, students will not complete the project as a boring task, but turn it into something they want to do.

And UDL connects to the second thing, students’ interests. I strongly believe that interest is the best teacher. If students study a subject with no interest, they will not only suffer a bad time but also learn nothing. So make classes fun! Learn about what are students’ interests and tactfully use them in lectures! When doing group work, I can ask their favorite song and play them; Use games such as Kahoot quiz instead of traditional assessment; Set class into groups and hold a knowledge competition... Anything as long as it gets students interested in learning.

Last but not least, collaboration. I think this is important because of two reasons. Firstly, collaboration is always very important in society. It helps us problem-solve, brings people together, helps people learn from each other. As teachers, it is our responsibility to make student experience and benefit from collaboration and be prepared for future life. Secondly, teachers cannot only teach in one way because not every student is comfortable with it. But by group work, they can share their interests in common and figure out the best way of learning. Also, each student can choose their most comfortable, interested, and confident part to contribute with.

Above are the three essential elements I think in teaching. I will keep learning and do my best to create the best study environment for students.