

**Teaching Portfolio**  
**Instructional Strategies in Adult Education**  
**East Carolina University**  
**Colleen Johnson**

**TEACHING PHILOSOPHY**  
**PART ONE: Personal Philosophy of Education**

**PHILOSOPHICAL BELIEFS**

**My Philosophical System:** I do not subscribe to just one philosophical system when it comes to my role as a teacher or even as a human. I do draw from liberal, behavioral and progressive philosophies not only when teaching, but also when interacting with all people. From a liberal standpoint I still appreciate the view that the educator is more of the expert helping the learner to comprehend the content and I have always respected those that have blazed the trail before me. However, I realize that the behavioral and progressive philosophies offer a learner centered approach that can result in a more valuable experience for the individual. Facilitating a systematic approach to problem solving via trial and error allows the learner to gain knowledge from experience but in a controlled atmosphere under the guidance of the instructor or mentor.

**Meaning:** I believe the relationship between concrete facts, ones experiences, and an impartial, observant mind is what allows true education to occur for both instructor and learner. It is these interactions that can create significant connections for each other's development. The saying "No man is an island" seems to illustrate the meaning of my philosophical system best. We need each other to challenge our truth, offer insight or just an alternative perspective in order to grow.

**What is Reality?** My understanding of reality is in that it lies in the eye of the beholder. My reality is changing as my knowledge, comprehension and relationships evolve, and is not perceived the same by any given person at any given time. By understanding this, we can be open to learning by our experiences and accepting the change that comes from this growth.

**Nature of Being Human:** It is not for me to judge someone else's reality, but to respect their journey and allow them take the course needed to arrive at their truth. It is not our job to agree or even comprehend each other's reality but to empathize with an individual's position and offer assistance when needed. By learning from those that have come before us and helping those that come after us we each evolve into something better.

**PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE VALUES**

**Educational Aims:** My educational aim is to create an atmosphere for learning that is stimulating, as well as providing a foundation of knowledge thus allowing the learners to critically but creatively apply this knowledge to ever-changing situations. I want to facilitate a "thinking outside the box" approach so the student can adapt to their environment and to the perceived reality of those around them.

**Educational Methods:** Provide the foundational knowledge through the liberalism philosophy of teacher based instruction but then turn toward a learner centered approach

in the application of the knowledge. I will utilize role-playing, small group discussions, case studies, as well as peer evaluations to problem solve and strategize. This learner-centered approach will provide the experiences necessary to develop their critical thinking and foster a deeper understanding to apply the basic knowledge. I would like to offer a variety of learning experiences to allow the student to follow their path of interest while not losing the foundational basis for the experience.

**Educational Content:** I must provide instruction on the subject matter in order for the students to have a foundation to build their experience but I will incorporate a variety of styles to teach the material to cater towards all types of learners. Once this foundational knowledge has been established, I will ask for individual feedback so I can gear the content towards each learner's expectations. I can develop the learner-centered activities based upon student's desires. At some points, grouping those with similar interests will prove beneficial while at other times integrating students with what may be differing views would best serve the experience.

## **PART TWO: Teaching Philosophy Statement**

### **Why Do You Teach?**

I teach because I truly love the profession of physical therapy and I want to be a part of creating the next generation of physical therapists. Selfishly, I teach because I get to learn not just from the preparation of it all, but also from the students. Observing the students learn not only from myself but also from each other, makes me a better instructor and clinician. I teach because the reward of watching a student have that "light bulb" moment because of something I did, and to see their passion for the profession develop is incomparable to any other professional experience I have had and that feeling never grows old.

Teaching is more challenging than I could have ever imagined, but to do something that is very difficult, and to do it well, is the only goal worth having, and that is what teaching is for me.

### **What Do You Teach?**

I am qualified to teach a variety of courses within a physical therapy program. I can teach on the subjects of modalities, interventions, exercise foundations, as well as subjects within the framework of orthopedic physical therapy. I have taught physical therapy students in a variety of settings. For example, I have taught first year DPT students on shoulder pathology. This section was a combination of both lecture and lab-based learning. I have also assisted in the instruction of third year DPT students in a three-week long advance patient management course on the spine. This was offered exclusively online. I have also had the opportunity on several occasions to be a clinical instructor to physical therapy students on their internships.

Although specific objectives vary depending on the course, generally speaking, my objective for student learning in a physical therapy program is that they will implement critical thinking by utilizing current evidence, clinical experience and patient needs to provide optimum care. The student will be able to demonstrate safe and effective assessments and interventions for a patient while being able to justify the

rationale for their selection. On a more global scale, I want to inspire students to work collaboratively with other professions in research, public health and policy to continue to advance healthcare for the population.

### **How Do You Measure Effectiveness?**

I measure course effectiveness primarily by how the students perform on assignments and exams. My objectives align with my content, which align with my assessments. For the classes I have taught thus far, the students have very little prior experience with the course content. Therefore to see them first grasp the basic concepts is great, but to then see them begin to think critically, problem solve and develop creative solutions throughout the semester goes back to the reason I teach.

I take student evaluations and feedback very seriously. They have worked very hard to get into the program and have a strong desire to learn so it is my responsibility to make their experience the best it can be. I appreciate specific examples and suggestions and try to incorporate that not only into that class but into other classes as well. For example, I was told students had expressed that they wanted more hands on feedback during the lab portion of class. I completely agree, and the school is now reaching out to trying to find experienced physical therapists willing to volunteer their time help with all the lab based learning.

I also cherish feedback from other faculty members. I have been observed and evaluated several times and take their suggestions as ways to better myself. Sometimes the advice is as simple as walk around the room more or has been as big as changing some content around to better facilitate learning. As a new instructor I appreciate all feedback from students, faculty and peers, as I know it is given with the intention of improving the experience for all.

## **PART THREE: Course Reflection**

Having come into this course with little formal education on the topic of education, I am astounded by how much there is to know. By no means did I underestimate what it took to be an effective educator, but for lack of better phrasing, I did not even know how much I did not know. I believe this course has given me an excellent starting foundation for my pursuit into adult education, and I am excited to learn more.

There have been several assignments that have opened my eyes to how to become a better teacher. The first project, *Instructional Activities*, taught me so much about just how many ways one can teach. Although we only had to pick four, I read about nearly all of the methods just to gain insight. Most importantly, I can see myself using several of these methods that just a few months ago I did not even know existed. Secondly, the second project of *Instructor Observation and Interview*, allowed me to get to know a professor I admire and “pick his brain” which served to be invaluable. He has now offered me the opportunity to assist him in the future, which could be an opportunity for more teaching opportunities. Finally, I found this last week’s module challenging but rewarding. I took an introduction to philosophy class as an undergraduate and absolutely loved it so I enjoyed this week’s discussion board trying to identify how my experiences

and values shape my philosophy and thus my teaching style. It never dawned on me how the two were so connected.

I found this course challenging as I am new instructor and therefore have very few experiences to pull from. For example, this paper was very difficult to write as I found myself not having a clear vision of my philosophy as I could convince myself of several ways of thinking. I found the weekly modules discussion boards challenging but extremely beneficial. To be able to ask questions, read about the experiences and gain insight into the thought processes of so many educators from such a wide variety of fields each week was valuable. I have learned I need more education and teaching experiences to really understand my place in academia, but again, this course has provided me foundation in which to grow and continue to learn about adult education.