Dr. Cheryl Cottle

Teaching Statement

As an educator, I embrace teaching as an opportunity to inspire and empower my students to become self-directed and independent learners. I believe that a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning is the most effective way to meet the needs of the learner. A user-participatory, proactive approach to the analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum, should be utilized. It is also my belief that teaching as a learner-centered activity should be relevant, authentic and meaningful to the learner. I therefore approach teaching with a constructivist approach, one that provides my students with the academic focus in addition to an enriched learning experience that is situated in real-life experiences. This pedagogy is based upon the premise that learning activities are anchored and situated in real world situations and includes context, construction, collaboration, and conversation. In this learning environment the learner is an active participant in his or her learning, and engages in the construction of his or her knowledge-building and understanding. Subsequently, learning is maximized along with the student's ability to transfer their knowledge and skills in the work environment.

To facilitate an individualized approach to teaching and learning I conduct a needs assessment. The needs assessment provides me with a multi-focused analysis that takes into account the skills, knowledge, and psycho-social issues that affect my student's learning. The information gathered helps me to identify the baseline knowledge of each student, it also helps in identifying their learning style and processing inclination. This also aids me in the selection of appropriate informational material, teaching method(s), media selection, strategies and techniques to meet individual differences.

As an educator, I also believe that the informational material presented should meet the student's level of cognition, and should be meaningful, relevant, authentic, transferable and applicable. The material should also be engaging, memorable and situated in the real-world. In addition, I also believe that an interdisciplinary approach to curriculum design should also be adopted. This approach allows the learner to make connection to diverse ideas and therefore strengthens his or her knowledge base. I also adhere to a student-centered curriculum, regardless
of race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, ability, age and sexual orientation. I therefore believe in utilizing an inclusive, multicultural approach to curriculum development and implementation.

With the introduction of technology in the curriculum, I also advocate for a socio-technical, socio-cultural, proactive approach to curriculum design and implementation. I am interested in using technology to advance my teaching skills as well as facilitate learning in and out of the classroom. Having explored the role of computer technology in our environment through my research, I believe that it is critical for me to keep abreast with the changing role of computers in our lives. The development of computer-mediated environments (CMC) has provided me with the skills and forum to further develop my ideas, knowledge and skills. It facilitates the creation of a classroom environment that is flexible enough to accommodate the needs of students and can be a valuable tool in creating an open environment. On-line discussions has the potential to allow students who are not comfortable with voicing their opinions orally in the classroom to think through their responses and contribute to the overall class discussion. I look forward to continued advancement of my expertise in this area.

My philosophy of teaching is that learning is best facilitated by an instructor who balances sound theory with effective pedagogy. The methods I use in my classroom must be informed by current research in the field. I actively seek to create a student-centered classroom where students participate in directing their objectives, and I act as a guide, working with my students to meet their objectives. I strive to integrate several different methods in my classroom that accommodate my students' various learning needs. As an educator, I create an open environment for my students to foster their learning. This environment therefore encourages the sharing of information, and engenders listening. This is a safe space where trust and respect exist; an environment where everyone is seen as equals and is recognized for their contribution.

My role as an educator is that of facilitator who guides the learning process. The learners are regarded as a source of knowledge which contributes to the knowledge building environment. I also believe that as an educator I should present my students with clear objectives to guide lessons and assignments. Students should be aware of the objectives and be able to determine when they have mastered them. In addition, I believe in administering assessment that is in keeping with the instructional material presented.