

My passion for teaching is driven by my students' understanding of what I convey. Nothing is more thrilling than pushing myself to better someone else and to witness a transformation. Recently, I presented at our company's yearly conference. Attended by teachers from all around the world, I was lecturing on key applications and approaches to better aid our students in the classroom. At the beginning, it was a struggle for listeners to be interactive and communicative. But I had planned for such challenges. I succeeded in presenting questions and opened the door for critical thinking and interaction. I would tell personal stories of teaching life which educators could relate to. This broke the ice and colleagues participated throughout the lecture. I was proud of myself. I had taken a challenge head on, planned for bumps, but knew through my delivery and the passion I exerted, would create a teachable moment.

Over the past eight years I have been an ESL instructor to students ranging from 4 to 40 years of age. My goal is always the same regardless: for students to make connections not only with the subject studied (in this case a language), but with one another-working to find the solution. Learning a language can be incredibly stressful and intimidating-demanding patience and self-discipline, especially when comparing their personal achievement and progress to each other. Using teaching tools to better convey the final goal is best; whether through diagrams, charts, hands-on activities, and interactive computer lessons. Engaging students through visuals, words, and even sounds can be beneficial. Everyone learns differently, so why keep the teaching tools the same? Different teaching methods allow for a better understanding.

Teachers should not only focus on answers. Any person can stand in front of a group and tell an answer-this is not teaching. It takes real ambition and drive to present it so it impacts others. Students should be given opportunities to relate personally to each lesson. This can be relating a lesson for younger students with children's activities versus a lesson involving family or business for university or older students. I believe it is just as important to know the reasons why we speak the way we do, as much as it is to write it. Conversational English is a key goal which goes hand-in-hand with grammar and sentence structure. More importantly, as educators we try to embed goals and lessons into our students' heads, while simultaneously making them overburdened with too much information. The educator should know when less is more. Students should be pushed to their limits but borders should be respected. When this is implemented, everyone succeeds.

I seek to discover ways to implement critical thinking in my lessons. As educators, we should focus outside the box and relate the current lesson with past lessons. This allows for a comprehension of how they relate with one another. Questions which challenge awareness may look like, "Who are the main characters in this story?" "How are they different from one another?" and to connect with past lessons, "How does character A from this story differ from character B we read from the previous story?" These simple yet thought provoking questions provide connection to how students may relate to the subject. If I am able to have students put themselves in place of their character or subjects studied, this is a success.

With my experience, I have learned key traits to becoming a successful teacher. This does not mean it still doesn't come as a challenge. At this most recent conference I was apprehensive and concerned about the final outcome. This is why teaching is exciting. Using different techniques to convey a lesson provides for various conversations and learning comprehension. It allows for the right questions to be asked, hard work, and careful organization on the educator's part to create a successful class. It makes me excited to teach knowing I can challenge a student's thought process and have a direct influence on how people learn today.