

**VAL MARGARIT**

10X YOUR TEACHING



# 7 PROVEN STEPS

to planning, teaching, empowering  
and engaging your students

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# STEP 1

## Know your Audience

What do great teachers and public speakers have in common?

They know their audience.

As a teacher, it would be impossible to have the impact you know you can have without first knowing your students. Your course design, teaching methods, activities, and assessments will be influenced by your students' needs, abilities, and aspirations. At the minimum, you should have data on these variables before you begin to plan your course:

- age
- marital and family status
- socio economics background
- race and ethnicity
- full-time or part-time employment
- campus residents vs. commuters
- native vs. international
- geographical location
- special admissions
- level of preparation and achievement

As you plan your course and write your syllabus with your students in mind, think about creating meaningful and empowering learning experiences.

# STEP 2

## Know How People Learn

Metacognition - the awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes - is at the heart of student success and effective pedagogy. As teachers, knowing how people learn is imperative to achieving one's full potential. Here are a few key points that every teacher should know:

- people are born learners
- people have a need for autonomy and self-determination
- people connect new knowledge to what they already know and believe
- people learn what is relevant to their own lives
- people learn when actively engaged with other people
- people learn when they are motivated by enthusiastic role models
- people learn when they monitor and reflect on their learning
- people learn when learning inspires and evokes an emotional response

# STEP 3

## Teach to Transform

Several teaching strategies that create lifelong learning experience and help students do more, become more and achieve more:

- Hold your students to high expectations. Students' expectations are shaped by their past learning experiences, cultural background, beliefs and values. So if your students' expectations are not aligned with your own, it will create confusion, resentment and poor learning outcomes. This is especially true for your international students and first-generation students, whose educational experiences may be different than your own or other students from your own native country.
- Your expectations about whether students can achieve success greatly influence students' performance, also known as the Pygmalion Effect. Therefore, your beliefs and expectations of your students' potential is one of the deciding factors that predict whether students succeed or not. It is imperative that you believe and expect every student to achieve success. It is also critical that you share this belief with them.

- Start where your students are. Make use of the data you collected about them at the beginning of the semester and connect what they know with what you're trying to teach.
- Make the material relevant to the students' lives, interests, future careers, and goals.
- Show passion and enthusiasm for your subject and for teaching it. These behaviors are contagious and students love it.
- Use active learning techniques and do not lecture for more than five minutes at the time.
- Model behaviors and habits you want in your students.
- Teach in various modalities.
- Motivate students to learn using real life stories, storytelling, humor, simulations, role-play, and experiential learning.
- Teach your students how to learn, and how to complete high-quality work on time.
- Teach students real world skills and offer opportunities to practice them.

# STEP 4

## Teach with Purpose

The purpose of the class is deep learning. Not to cover everything and then students learn nothing. That's why careful planning is paramount to teaching what students need to learn and then give them the time to do it. Some suggestions are:

- What students need to know most and why?
- How and where would they apply the new learning?
- Is it mandatory or optional?
- Finally, what is the purpose of teaching it?

# STEP 5

## Hands - on Activities

Experiential learning activities rank even higher than discussion as far as student engagement and motivation. The skills students learn from experiential learning are directly related to their own needs and interests and therefore applicable in the real world. Here are a few examples of activities I use in my classes that students love:

- Student presentations: debates, panel discussion, press conference, symposium, discussions, and expert teams.
- Role Playing: Students love role-playing because they get to put themselves in other people's shoes and understand different perspectives. For example, teacher vs. students, parents over discipline of children, background differences and student success, job interview vs. expectations.
- Service-Learning: Students acquire lifelong skills by working in community service.
- Problem-Based Learning: Students solve problems in groups.

# STEP 6

## Motivate Students

If you want to know what motivates students to learn, ask them. Yes, I am serious. Ask them and they'll tell you. Also, have a discussion or assign an activity to your students, if possible, about theories of motivation. I can tell you that it will be a transformational experience, perhaps for both of you. I know that many teachers think of themselves as "I teach algebra or biology". In fact we teach "students" and it means that we need to understand them first and then teach the subject matter.

Here is what students say are critical factors:

- Instructor's passion and enthusiasm for the subject matter
- Growth mindset - the belief that with effort and hard work students will achieve success
- High relevance to the material
- Clear structure of the course and lectures
- Active learning activities

- Variety in teaching methods
- Instructor's positive attitude and behaviors
- Instructor's belief in students abilities
- Instructor's interest in cultivating a growth mindset

Here are a few theories of motivation that I have been using successfully for the past ten years and will help you empower and motivate your students:

- Behaviorism
- Constructivism
- Self-determination theory- intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
- Cognitive dissonance
- Goal Orientation
- Attribution theory
- Cognitive evaluation theory

# STEP 7

## Self Reflect Every Class

Self-reflection is imperative for metacognition and improving the way we learn. When we prioritize self-reflection we intentionally think about the work we've done. Here are suggestions to implement self-reflection in your classes:

- Journals: give students time at the end of every class to write in their journals about their learnings.
- Loud reflection: Give students time to think about and share in class something they learned. This encourages learning from others, and improving communication and critical thinking skills.
- Use a hashtag with your name and lecture name ( #ProfValGlobalSolutionstoProb)
- Modeling: Students look up to their teachers and model their behaviors and attitudes. Model what reflection looks like by sharing why and how you do it.

I practice journaling in my personal life as well as in my professional life. In my teaching I use an intentional journal at the beginning of class as well. It teaches students to think about what they want to focus on and learn during that time.



## TO WRAP IT UP

I truly hope you've enjoyed these strategies and will use them in your teachings. I know students will appreciate it.

YOU will be the professor your students will always remember.

If you have any questions please do reach out and I'd be happy to help.

Best wishes,

*Val Margarit*

“I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.” - Albert Einstein

“Teaching is the highest form of understanding.” - Aristotle

“If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn.” - Ignacio 'Nacho' Estrada