

Personal Reflection – Approaches to Teaching

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Approaches to Teaching

What suggestions do you have that could improve their teaching?

I suggest that Paulette Kurzer finds a way to accept the disappointing performance of the majority while shifting her focus to those students who do want to assume a role of responsibility for their learning. This way, she might be able to discover some amount of passion for a group of students each semester and increase her job satisfaction.

I do not have clear suggestions for Tom Fleming because the documentary provided a very narrow look into his classroom and only reported positive factors. I find it hard to believe that he fully succeeded in captivating his large class, despite acknowledging characteristics about the audience and tailoring his material to their various backgrounds.

How might you integrate their strategies into your classrooms?

Kurzer's quizzes to check the completion of reading assignments are a good start to holding students accountable for completing homework, however the quizzes are failing in practice because the students are not receiving a penalty or feedback for their efforts. It would be more effective if she could give quizzes digitally and collect the results in a way like the clicker that Fleming used. I could fairly easily incorporate this through a warmup activity or an "out the door" activity through using a software called "zipgrade" that grades multiple choice answers after being scanned by a phone.

Fleming presented many strategies such as personal student engagement, live feedback via technology, and exuding charisma. Of course, these are aspirational goals that would benefit me or any teacher. Unfortunately, there are time constraints, so it is only viable to incorporate charisma and personal student engagement on an everyday basis. Incorporating new technology is engaging, but often serves as a distraction more than a benefit because technology has a way

of failing when a group of students is watching – no matter how many times you practice and prepare.

Are they instructors that you would like to emulate?

Kurzer strikes me as a teacher who has very little job satisfaction, but she seems like she used to have high satisfaction and is now upset that the quality of learning and instruction has been decreased. She is a reflection of many of my friends that are long-term teachers who have been fighting a losing battle past the point they have a fight left to give. This is reflected through her messy desk, her criticism that failing too many students would make her a “super bitch”, and her very valid criticism that students don’t read or attempt to join discussions. This being said, I liked that she scolded her students for their lack of effort and personal pride in their learning. This is something that I need to do for my students quite frequently because students often believe that if they show up for class and lose focus, it is enough to learn the subject matter. So, yes, I would like to emulate her intensity when it comes to taking responsibility for your [the student’s] role as a learner. On the other hand, I would not like to emulate her lack of passion and clear frustration.

How comfortable would you be teaching in the manner they did?

If placed in Kurzer’s position of facing students with consistently disappointing characteristics, it would be easy to adapt poor teacher characteristics and a negative attitude. I think treating my students in a way that emulates this disappointment consistently would be damaging for both of us, so I would be uncomfortable doing so.

I strive to teach the enthusiasm of Fleming so my class is conducive to making mistakes and learning through them, but it is an exhausting way to teach so I am sure I fall short on this goal. I also find enthusiasm and positivity versus being strict and demanding responsibility is a

difficult line to walk when students have external exams they must pass to qualify for university and studying abroad. Sometimes being consistently enthusiastic is misinterpreted as being satisfied with the students' performance. So, although I am more comfortable with fostering a positive environment, I must also incorporate the strictness of Kurzer. Finding a balance can be difficult.