

Teaching Philosophy

"The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts."

C.S. Lewis

My teaching philosophy is inspired by a vision to change as many students' lives as possible through education. In teaching working adult online students, I use every possible means to communicate, such as LMS messaging, e-mail, course announcements, and the course forum through the "Ask Your Professor" prompt I create for my students. I never miss an opportunity to communicate with my students; it is through this personal engagement that I equip them with the information they need to succeed, such as announcements on college success strategies, APA formatting tips, and business lectures related to topics in discussion posts, such as vision and mission statements and disruptive innovation.

Also, I understand that my learners hail from diverse backgrounds, with various values and learning styles. For instance, some adult learners grasp concepts quickly, while others struggle to perform at their full capacity. To accommodate this diversity, I focus on engaging students, keeping them actively involved in their learning, or, conversely, pulling them back if they stray from the learning path. To do this, I leverage the tools available in the learning management system (LMS). For instance, I have found that using the gradebook function helps identify missing assignments. This indicates that the student may be struggling, and a simple message to the student can help bring them back into the asynchronous learning environment.

My philosophy also revolves around feedback. Feedback should not only focus on the execution of a specific assignment but also help students succeed as online college students. This begins at the beginning of the course, providing them with information through course announcements on how to accomplish this, and continues throughout the course. I understand the importance of providing feedback not only on content but also on communication style and structure, such as proper APA formatting, which will be expected of them throughout their degree program. I apply this engagement strategy to other aspects of the virtual classroom, too. For instance, I leverage the discussion forum to keep students engaged during class by responding to posts with valuable information on the subject and posing questions, thereby enhancing the value of online discussions. For example, providing lessons on the Big Five personality traits of team members, 14 principles of management, and team effectiveness helps my students understand these and other business concepts.

However, the most important tool I use is not LMS; it is my *presence* as an online facilitator. Students cannot learn in an asynchronous learning environment without a facilitator present. If a facilitator is not present, that's merely a self-study; online education is so much more than "self-study". It is and should always be a full-service experience. Whether it is responding frequently to students in discussion posts, providing timely feedback on assignments, returning messages and emails promptly, or posting announcements frequently, I'm as active a member of the class as I expect any student to be, and then some. My joy as an educator comes from interactions with my students. A virtual "pat on the back", a friendly correction in response to assignment feedback, or providing answers to questions in the course forum are all opportunities not only to teach and facilitate but also to connect in a meaningful way, inspiring adult learners to continue pursuing their degree in higher education.

FURMAN H. LEOPARD, ED.D.
FURMAN.LEOPARDIII@GMAIL.COM

[LINKEDIN PROFILE](#)

In sum, my teaching philosophy is designed to help my adult learners succeed, reach their full potential, and perhaps change lives for the better. This is accomplished through the pillars of my teaching philosophy: utilizing constructive communication strategies; helping struggling students stay the course; providing content and structured feedback; engaging in every corner of the virtual classroom; and facilitating by being present. Ultimately, asynchronous online education isn't about teaching to a computer screen; it's about opening a door for adult learners who never thought they'd get the chance to walk through it.