Teaching Philosophy

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The first time I watched *Akeelah and the Bee*, I recognized something familiar. It wasn't the spelling competitions or the applause that captured my attention. It was a young girl whose intellectual curiosity sometimes made her feel out of place in the very community she called home. I recognized the isolation of being academically ambitious in an environment where ambition did not always feel understood. More importantly, I recognized the transformative power of having someone believe in your potential before you fully understood it yourself.

Years later, I encountered my own version of that mentorship in a community college chemistry classroom. My instructor, a young Black woman who shared aspects of my background, did more than teach me chemistry. She challenged my thinking, encouraged my curiosity, and demonstrated that my circumstances did not have to define the boundaries of my ambition. Her influence shaped my belief that meaningful education does more than expand what someone knows. It expands what they believe they can accomplish.

What made her instruction so impactful was not simply the information she shared, but the curiosity she encouraged me to pursue. I learned to appreciate the satisfaction of working through a difficult concept, questioning my understanding, and discovering how seemingly unrelated ideas fit together. That experience continues to influence how I approach education today. I believe meaningful learning occurs when students actively engage with information rather than simply receiving it. This belief is central to my commitment to deep learning, an approach that emphasizes conceptual understanding, recognizing relationships, and integrating new information with existing knowledge rather than relying on memorization alone.

I view learning as a continuous process of self-assessment, inquiry, integration, application, and reflection. Learners must first recognize what they know and identify gaps in their understanding. Through independent investigation, they gather and critically evaluate information, connecting new concepts to established knowledge. Application then challenges them to transfer that understanding to unfamiliar circumstances, while reflection encourages them to evaluate their reasoning and refine their approach to future problems.

I believe this process produces knowledge that is both meaningful and adaptable. An individual who memorizes a recommendation may recognize when to use it, but a learner who understands the principles supporting that recommendation is better equipped to recognize when it may not apply. My role as an educator is to facilitate these connections through purposeful questioning, individualized instruction, and opportunities for progressively greater independence. I strive to create an environment where uncertainty invites investigation rather than embarrassment and where intellectual curiosity is met with both encouragement and accountability.

In clinical education, I translate these principles into interactive chalk talks, drug information responses, patient case presentations, and independent patient workups. These activities strengthen foundational understanding, encourage critical evaluation of evidence, and develop the ability to apply knowledge to individual patients. Beyond clinical competency, I seek to expose learners to the breadth of opportunities available throughout healthcare. My own curiosity has led me toward research, healthcare operations, informatics, and technology, reinforcing my belief that education should inspire exploration beyond familiar professional boundaries.

I recognize that effective teaching requires continuous reflection on my own methods. Just as I expect learners to question assumptions, welcome feedback, and refine their understanding, I must remain willing to adapt my instructional approach to meet their evolving needs.

When I reflect on the educators who shaped my life, I remember less about the assignments they gave and more about the possibilities they helped me envision. Years ago, a chemistry instructor helped me recognize where my curiosity could lead. Today, I hope to offer others that same opportunity: to think deeply, learn independently, and discover possibilities they may not yet have imagined.