

# TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

## HOLLY FIOCK BROWN

Teaching is a lifelong and reflective journey—one that continuously evolves as I engage with individuals and deepen my understanding of what constitutes effective and meaningful educational experiences. I intentionally use the term "individuals" rather than "learners" because teaching and learning do not happen solely within the confines of a classroom. They unfold through everyday experiences that reshape my understanding of how learning transcends traditional boundaries.

My passion for teaching stems from my philosophy that learning is a reciprocal and ongoing process that fuels both personal and professional growth. I view teaching as more than delivering content; it involves mentoring, guiding individuals to discover their passions, and empowering them with the tools and resources they need to thrive. Central to this philosophy is the understanding that autonomy plays a crucial role in fostering authentic metacognition and self-driven learning. When learners have the freedom to explore their own paths, reflect on their thought processes, and make meaningful connections, they develop a deeper sense of ownership over their education. This autonomy enhances their ability to self-regulate and encourages critical and creative engagement with the content.

I apply this philosophy both in the classroom and in my role as a Senior Instructional Design Manager. Each day, I teach and mentor my team—modeling research-based instructional design principles, coaching project management strategies, and encouraging professional development. These interactions embody the collaborative and relational nature of teaching, which I view as essential to creating meaningful and impactful learning experiences.

As an educator, I cultivate environments where individuals feel empowered to think critically, solve problems, and collaborate effectively. I inspire confidence and curiosity, encouraging learners to challenge assumptions and embrace new opportunities. To achieve this, I use methods such as reflective discussions, active learning techniques, and project-based approaches that promote deep engagement with both content and personal experiences. For example, in EDCI 52001 Seminar 1, I designed a position statement assignment where students research a topic, develop an argument, and tailor their final submission to a specific audience of their choice, such as parents, a school board, or a professional organization. This approach fosters autonomy, critical thinking, and practical application by encouraging students to engage deeply with the content and consider its relevance in real-world contexts. By using these methods, I create a safe and dynamic space where individuals feel supported as they navigate uncertainty and take meaningful risks.

This commitment comes from a pivotal moment in my own learning journey when one of my mentors used Socratic questioning to challenge my understanding. When I asked, “What is instructional design theory?” my instructor replied, “I don’t know. What do you think instructional design theory is?” This unexpected response pushed me—and my peers—to wrestle with uncertainty. While our confusion deepened initially, it eventually led to clarity, sparking ongoing discussions that continue to resonate with me today. This experience inspired me to create learning environments where individuals feel safe to explore uncertainty, think critically, and discover their own pathways to understanding.

I also view teaching as inherently collaborative, thriving on mutual respect and a shared commitment to growth. My role as an educator goes beyond imparting knowledge; it involves inspiring curiosity, critical thinking, and a lifelong love of learning. By fostering these values, I equip students with the skills and confidence they need to succeed in their educational and professional journeys. At the heart of my

teaching philosophy is inclusivity, where I respect and celebrate the diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and learning experiences that individuals bring to the table. I foster this by encouraging a growth mindset and emphasizing that learning is an iterative process. In EDCI 575, Foundations of Online and Blended Learning, I allow students to resubmit assignments after receiving feedback, giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and growth. This approach reinforces mastery of the material and cultivates a supportive environment where mistakes are valuable steps in the learning journey. By creating an environment where everyone feels valued and supported, I ensure that all individuals have an equitable opportunity to succeed.

Ultimately, teaching is both a privilege and a responsibility. It offers the chance to make a lasting impact on the lives of others while continuously learning and growing alongside them. Through these shared experiences, I find purpose and fulfillment, contributing to a world where knowledge empowers individuals to achieve their full potential.