Developing and Implementing Your Teaching Philosophy for Quality Instruction

Speakers: Joseph Zeni, PT, MPT, PhD; Michael Lebec, PT, PhD; Michael Tevald, PT, MPT, PhD; Craig Wassinger, PT, PhD; Stephanie P. Kelly, PT, PhD

Moderators: Jacob Capin, PT, DPT, MS and Tarang Jain, PT, DPT, PhD
Take a moment to reflect...

- You are applying for your first PT faculty position and are instructed to submit a one page of summary describing your teaching philosophy.
- You are doing a phone interview for your first PT faculty position and asked to summarize how you create quality educational experiences based on knowledge of contemporary learning theory.
- You are applying for seed grant money from the Education Section for a scholarship of teaching and learning research project. As part of the grant application you are asked to describe your approach to entry-level physical therapy education.
Background

- What is a philosophy of teaching/teaching statement?
- Why is developing a teaching philosophy important?
  - Informs how you teach and why you use the methods you do, and ultimately enhances your effectiveness during instruction
  - Communicates these ideas during the application process
- What are the major components of a philosophy of teaching statement?
Learning Objectives

1. Compare and contrast approaches to effective instruction and comprehend the merits of each in fostering student engagement
2. Identify and apply resources for developing and articulating a teaching philosophy
3. Understand the essential features of faculty effectiveness in terms of teaching philosophy from an employer’s or administrator’s perspective
4. Learn the key elements of a teaching philosophy statement as it relates to enhanced student learning by understanding effective teaching methods
OUTLINE

• Introduction (10-15 min)
• Panelist Presentations (50-60 min)
• Summary and Resources (10-15 min)
• Open Floor and Guided Discussion (30-45 min)
Jacob J. Capin, PT, DPT, MS

- PhD Candidate and Teaching Assistant, Biomechanics and Movement Science and Department of Physical Therapy, University of Delaware, Newark, DE
- **Role**: Moderator
- **Disclosures**:
  - Recipient of Promotion of Doctoral Studies (PODS) – Level I and II Scholarships from the Foundation for Physical Therapy
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  - No relevant financial disclosures
Tarang Jain, PT, DPT, PhD

- Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ
- **Role**: Moderator
- **Disclosures**: None
Speaker Introduction

- **Michael Lebec, PT, PhD**, Professor, Department of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ
- **Joseph Zeni, PT, MPT, PhD**, Associate Professor, School of Health Professions, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ
- **Craig Wassinger, PT, PhD**, Associate Professor, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
- **Michael Tevald, PT, MPT, PhD**, Associate Professor and Director of Post-Professional Programs, Arcadia University, Glenside, PA
- **Stephanie P. Kelly, PT, PhD**, Professor and Dean of the College of Health Sciences, Krannert School of Physical Therapy, University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN
Michael Lebec, PT, PhD

- Professor, Department of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ
- **Topic**: Construction of new knowledge cannot occur without first engaging students in the learning process
- **Viewpoint**: Public institution, historically teaching-focused program but with growing research environment/agenda
- **Disclosures**:
  - None
Construction of new knowledge cannot occur without first engaging students in the learning process (Michael Lebec, PT, PhD)

- Key 1: Engagement is the ultimate precursor to learning. Without first motivating students to maximally invest themselves, it is not possible for learners to develop a proper foundation upon which they may build during future classroom and clinical experiences.

- Key 2: There are multiple strategies that enhance engagement of this generation of learners, but all are centered on a few key principles. These principles will be identified and concrete examples of how they may be implemented will be provided.
Crafting a Teaching Philosophy: How will you Engage Learners?

Michael T. Lebec, PT, Ph.D.
Professor
Dept of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training

NAU NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY
Engagement?
“Class” Participation vs. “Course” Participation

- “Class participation may not be the central issue. Course participation (speaking, thinking, reading, role taking, risk taking, and engagement one’s self and others outside the classroom” is likely) more pertinent.” (Petersen, 2001)

- “Oral participation is not a good indicator of engagement” (Frymier & Houser, 2016)

- Interaction with course content is the most important engagement-oriented goal (Hunt et. al, 2016)

- Engagement in course leads to engagement in overall education
How do you Minimize Cognitive Load?

Examples of Extraneous Load

- Disorganized instructional design
- Unclear instructions
- Using technology with significant learning curve
- *Overwhelming PPT slides*
How will you Engage this Generation of Learners?

Five R’s for Engaging Millennial Learners

1. Relevance
2. Rationale
3. Relaxed
4. Rapport
5. Research Based Methods
Top Three Ways to Enhance Student Engagement Amongst Millennial Learners

1. **Increase Relevance**
   - Clarify / describe WHY students need to learn content for their discipline, degree, etc. (Caruth, 2014)
   - Base learning experiences on real-life situations (Case-based Learning)
   - BEGIN class with case or problem
     - Reveal information during teaching that helps answer / solve
   - Exposure to Real Live Patients !!!
How can you Engage through Memorable Learning Experiences?

Learners assign larger weight to concrete examples with greater sensory or emotional impact
(Savion & Middendorf, 1994, Wanner 2015)

Humor  Vivid Images  Emotion-Evoking Experiences

Surprise  Multi-Media
Multi-Media Example
How can you Provide Opportunities for Students to Respond?
How do flipped learning approaches enhance engagement?

• If students are engaged in the content before class they will be more engaged during class \(\text{(Wanner 2015)}\)

• Can enhance relevance if in-class time used to solve real-world problems

• Active learning activities in class reduce cognitive load
How can you spend Flipped “In-Class” Time?

• Reinforce concepts using questions/discussion
  – Clickers & other approaches that “ask students to respond”
• Expand upon complex or “Bottleneck” concepts (Diaz, 2008)
  – Lecture & Discussion OK !!!
• Assess learning transfer by having students perform a “parallel” activity
  – Present students with new problem which they must solve using principles from pre-class activity
• View online video/recording lecture and apply concepts in class
How will you Create an Engaging Learning Environment?

“I never teach my pupils, I only provide the conditions in which they can learn”

Albert Einstein
1879-1955
Learning Environment Considerations

**Instructor Characteristics**

- Interact with students before and after class
- Non-verbal communication (eye contact, smile, etc.)
- Give feedback
- Students perceive being “mentored” vs. “taught”

**Create a learning community**

- Comfort breeds engagement
- When possible, provide a “say” in the process
- Speak more of “we” and less of “I” or “you”
- When appropriate, allow students to get to know parts of you outside of the classroom
Are customers more likely to buy a product from a salesperson to whom they can relate?

Are patients more likely to comply with rehabilitation if they have a rapport with the clinician?
“It is tempting to comfort our own frustrations by simply joining the chorus of voices who bemoan the gradual decline and maturity and work ethic by the current generation of college students. Simply lamenting our students’ deficiencies really doesn’t solve the problem of incivility, any more than eating a pint of Haagen-Dazs soothes a heartache. Adopting this kind of pessimism is dangerous because it blinds us to the great potential that our students bring to the classroom.”
Integrating these principles into your Teaching Philosophy Statement …

- Reflect on what you do (or plan to do) to engage and motivate learners
- Describe WHY this is important for learning
- Articulate specific examples
- Consider demonstrable outcomes
  - Course evaluations
  - Peer review
  - Anecdotal feedback
Joseph Zeni, PT, PhD

- Associate Professor, School of Health Professions, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ
- **Topic**: Teaching foundational coursework (i.e., anatomy, biomechanics) while integrating a clinical perspective; Research perspective; development of independent studies to support research mission
- **Viewpoint**: Research intensive institution
- **Disclosures**:
  - Add here
Teaching the Foundational Coursework while Integrating a Clinical Perspective—perspective from a research institution (Joseph Zeni, PT, PhD)

• Key 1: Courses such as Gross Anatomy and Biomechanics are foundational courses in most PT programs. Unlike most other clinical courses, the content in these courses remains relatively static from year to year. Identifying strategies to integrate clinical questions, cases, and technology can improve student engagement in these courses allowing for real-world application.

• Key 2: Foundational coursework in an entry-level PT program often coincides with novel learning experiences in a graduate program environment. Understanding how to identify and manage non-academic red-flags is essential to teaching and developing successful students in professional programs.
Learning concepts introduced on Day 1

“In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.”

-- Eric Hoffer
Learning concepts introduced on Day 1

“The whole is greater than the sum of its parts”

-- Aristotle
“House Analogy”
Myth: The only thing to update in my Anatomy course each year are pictures of my children

Anatomy doesn’t change, but everything else does

- How we apply our anatomy knowledge to patient care
- Technology for learning anatomy
- Rules and regulations for imaging anatomical structures
- Considerations for palpation in present day and age
How does course content fit into the bigger picture of Physical Therapy Practice?

- Provide students with open-ended cases
- Foster discussion
  - When to refer, when to image, what are the limitations of your palpation skills?
  - Cases and answers change as evidence and rules and regulations change
Tools for real-time student engagement

- Real time knowledge of student perceptions
- Identification of weaknesses or points of confusion
- Assessment of baseline
- Anonymous vs identifiable
The world is changing even if the core content is not

- Measurement in biomechanics and kinesiology
Real-world examples of changing teaching methods

• Student projects in Advanced Regional Anatomy
  – Images, videos, connections to clinical concepts
• Group project in Functional Anatomy
  – Use “pocket-technology” to quantify movement
• Relegate static content to video format
  – Use class for discussion, lab, and application
• Integrating independent study on teaching into PhD
  – Advocate as part of curriculum
Foundational coursework: being perceptive of barriers to learning and engagement

• Dealing with in-class and out-of-class barriers
  – As a teacher, you are not expected to serve role as a counselor, but you need to know when and where to refer
• Factors that will impede a student in future courses and clinical experiences
Summary

• Complacency is the death knell of productive teaching
• Students are eager for clinical application in foundational coursework, even if it is not a large component of assessment (grading)
• Be aware of red-flag signs early in the student’s curriculum. Generic ability forms may be useful.
  – This ain’t undergrad anymore
  – Students are often unaware
Craig Wassinger, PT, PhD

- Associate Professor, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
- **Topic:** Flipped classroom/andragogy
- **Viewpoint:** Setting expectations is key to promoting student learning
- **Disclosures:**
  - None to declare

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Andragogy and the Flipped Classroom Perspective
(Craig Wassinger PT, PhD)

• Key 1: First year DPT students often struggle with the transition to graduate course learning requirements, PT curriculum content volume and being “average” in a group of high achievers
  • Grades don’t matter

• Key 2: Learning occurs as a result of taking on, considering, refining, analyzing and ultimately applying information
  • A flipped classroom can create time and opportunities to apply and contextualize information

• Through my teaching statement I attempt to:
  • promote self-efficacy toward learning as graduate and professional students
  • contextualize learning versus exam performance
  • provide my belief that a thorough understanding of foundational material allows for critical assimilation of new information
  • highlight the importance of critical thinking and understanding mechanisms for interventions as opposed to simply performing interventions
Grades Don’t Matter

- Graduate course learning requirements
- PT curriculum content volume
- Being “average” in a group of high achievers
Flipped Classroom

• Introduce concepts and realities of flipped classroom before classes start
  – Rationale behind use
    • Educational research
    • Student feedback
  – Outline student responsibilities
    • Home and in class
  – Iterate students role in their learning
    • My role in facilitating student learning
Teaching Philosophy

• Open letter to students
• Review on first day of class in first semester of program
• Post on LMS for review
• Providing my thoughts on student learning
• Seek feedback

Teaching Philosophy:
Craig Wassinger

I believe that my teaching philosophy should be rooted in student learning as opposed to my thoughts and philosophy about teaching. As such, below I will outline the underlying principles that I endeavor to use to engage students and help students learn. This document was created to give to students at the beginning of my courses to give them an understanding of where I am coming from as an instructor and what they can expect from me as well as what I am looking for from them.

Dear Student:
Below, I have included a statement on my teaching philosophy. This is commonly used by educators to assess a faculty member before hiring and for promotion as a teacher. Generally, this is never seen by students or other teachers. I believe that since I have been employed to teach you, this is something you may want to be aware of. Please consider the information below as a guide on what I feel is important and how I plan to teach. Feel free to refer to this as the semester moves on and let me know if I am remaining true to my philosophy.

Given that this is a graduate level course, I subscribe to a teaching philosophy based on andragogy, which is teaching strategies focused on adults. Andragogy emphasizes the value of the process of learning. It uses approaches to learning that are problem-based and collaborative rather than didactic, and also emphasizes more equality between the teacher and learner. Realize that my overall aim for all courses is to help you become a safe and competent physical therapist. Below are several of my thoughts about teaching that I want to achieve.

Belief 1: “Interest is Different than Investment”

One of the great things about being a physical therapist is getting to help people realize their physical potential. In fact, the Vision Statement of the American Physical Therapy Association is “Transforming society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience.” This is done through a process of guiding patients on what they should and should not do as well as instructing them how to reach their goals. As your teacher, I will provide many opportunities for you to reach your educational potential. You are here because of your interest in the field; it is your decision on how much you invest in your opportunities. My patients are unlikely to get better if I am doing their physical therapy for them. Similarly, I will provide the resources, tools and counsel for your learning. What you take out of my courses will be largely based on you actively taking control of the opportunities made available to you. I’m here to guide your learning process not push it upon you.
Tenets of my Teaching Philosophy

Students Role

• Student learning is largely dependent on their investment in their education
  • Facilitated by faculty

• Exam performance and grades are far less important than understanding and utilizing information in the future

Educators Role

• Provide a baseline level of content which provides a thorough understanding and allows consideration of new information

• Focus on *why* assessment and interventions are performed versus indiscriminate application
Expectation Setting

How are you doing on your unspoken objectives?

My what?

I’m referring to the goals I have in my mind that I’ve never mentioned.

How are those going?

I’m totally nailing them.
Michael Tevald, PT, PhD

- Associate Professor and Director of Post-Professional Programs, Arcadia University, Glenside, PA
- **Topic**: Crafting a statement for a teaching-focused institution
- **Viewpoint**: Small, private (and mid-sized state) teaching-focused institution; experience as search committee chair
- **Disclosures**: None
Crafting a Statement for a Teaching-Focused Institution—View from a Search Committee Chair (Michael Tevald PT, MPT, PhD)

• Key 1: Although most graduate students receive little to no training in teaching pedagogy, a teaching statement is often a requirement for those seeking academic positions.

• Key 2: By reflecting on your own experiences and focusing on key examples that illustrate the core principles that guide your teaching, you can craft a teaching statement that is memorable and useful for your own professional development.
Where are you?

I think I had to write one for a job interview once. I may still have it.

Of course! It is posted on my web page!

Do I have a teaching philosophy?
Your Teaching Statement

• What it is …
  – A SHORT, personal statement of your beliefs about teaching
  – A window into your classroom

• What it is NOT …
  – A rehash of your CV
  – A collection of buzzwords and jargon
  – A dry, abstract thesis

• What it could be …
  – A tool for reflecting on and improving your teaching
Writing Your Statement: Getting Started

• My most memorable learning experiences are ...
  – What made them effective/ineffective was ...
    • What was the teacher doing? What was the learner doing? How did the environment contribute?

• To be successful, students must develop ...
  – Examples of how I help students develop include ...
    • Expectations/environment/student interactions
    • The way I structure learning experiences and student responses

• I know I’m being effective as a teacher when ...
The First Draft

- Evaluate your responses
- Develop a draft
  - Start with a hook
  - Tell your story
  - Consider a metaphor


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Evaluate and Revise

• Does your draft …
  • Convey your personal beliefs and values?
  • Provide specific examples that put the reader in your classroom?
  • **Demonstrate** that you are student-centered?
  • Engage the reader and read well?
  • Reflect the mission/values of the institution, if for hiring/promotion?
Reflecting on Your Philosophy

“In preparing a statement of teaching philosophy, professors assess and examine themselves to articulate the goals they wish to achieve in teaching. . . . A clear vision of a teaching philosophy provides stability, continuity, and long-term guidance. . . . A well-defined philosophy can help them remain focused on their teaching goals and to appreciate the personal and professional rewards of teaching.”

Stephanie P. Kelly, PT, PhD

• Professor and Dean of the College of Health Sciences, Krannert School of Physical Therapy, University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN

• Topic: Success in teaching from an institutional perspective

• Viewpoint: Dean from a small, private institution; PT professor and clinical educator

• Disclosures:
  • No relevant disclosures
My Teaching Philosophy

My mission as a teacher is to contribute to the development of expert clinicians who demonstrate the knowledge and skills for **clinical reasoning, reflective practice, and provision of patient-centered care**. This mission is consistent with the mission and values of the University of Indianapolis, which places emphasis on development of intellect, thought, judgment, communication, and concern for diverse others. I believe that to achieve this mission, **students must be active participants in acquiring knowledge**. My strengths as a teacher relate to my ability to make material relevant to students and to actively engage students in the learning process.
Institutional Fit

Building your philosophy as a ‘fit’ to:
- Department
- School
- Institution
Provide the Evidence

Syllabus
Classroom Activities
Assignments
Evaluation Methods
Class Assessments
Use your Resources

- Center for Teaching & Learning
- Peer Feedback (Teaching Squares)
- Mid-course assessments
- Ongoing reflection
Success in Teaching from an Institutional Perspective—View from a Dean
(Stephanie P. Kelly, PT, PhD)

• Key 1: Consider how to articulate the ‘fit’ between your philosophy and the mission of the institution.
• Key 2: Be able to ‘translate’ your teaching philosophy to others, including those outside your discipline.
• Key 3: It is important to build in teaching strategies, assessment and reflection that represent your philosophy and will speak to others across these disciplinary lines.
• Key 4: Maximize institutional resources to assist with developing and enriching your teaching.
Summary

– Limitless successful strategies
– Key principles
– Many resources:
  • Mentors (successful faculty)
  • Most colleges and universities
  • Online
Resources for Writing a Teaching Statement/Philosophy

- Writing a Teaching Philosophy. University of Minnesota: Center for Educational Innovation. https://cei.umn.edu/writing-your-teaching-philosophy
- Writing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement. The Ohio State University: University Center for the Advancement of Teaching. http://ucat.osu.edu/professional-development/teaching-portfolio/philosophy/
THANK YOU!

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Potential Guided Discussion Questions (Tarang and Jacob)

• When writing a teaching statement for a faculty position, should the statement be drafted in relation to the University’s vision and mission or rather a reflection of your own personal teaching philosophy?
• How much should I tailor the teaching statement? In other words, should it be tailored to a course or program, or on a broader level?
• Do we need to be specific about what classes we intend to teach in the statement?
• Do you cater to students’ “learning styles”? Please share tips on creating an inclusive learning environment that meets the needs of diverse learners. Do you have any tips for an applicant who does not have much teaching experience?
• What are the biggest challenges that PT professors face currently?
• What are the biggest challenges that PT professors will face in the next 5-10 years?
• Should a variety of instructional methods be used both within a class and across classes? Why?
• How do you balance between traditional teaching methods versus other innovative teaching methods?
• How do you use the last 5 minutes of class optimally?
References


