

Laura Smith Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is built on the foundation of positivity and empowerment. I will strive to provide all students a fair educational opportunity, fostering a learning environment that is inclusive of all types of individuals and learners.

My objective as an educator is to provide students with the knowledge and skills they will need to be successful in obtaining dental hygiene licensure, and work as dental hygienist with the highest level of professionalism and at the cutting edge of the dental profession. Leading by example, I hope to empower students to always follow dental hygiene ethics, and treat their patients with compassion. Through my own professional association membership and enthusiasm for dental hygiene, I will inspire students to be engaged in the dental hygiene profession during their time as a student and throughout their career. I plan to instill the value of lifelong learning, staying current in the art and science of the dental hygiene field, and will always support students continuing their education to a bachelor's degree or higher.

I will challenge my students to always think critically. I will encourage them to use evidence based decision making when they are in a clinical setting, and always treat each patient as an individual, tailoring care to their specific needs.

I will facilitate learning by setting clear expectations, and communicating objectives and goals. I will use active learning strategies, and give feedback to students as soon as I can. I will make sure my feedback includes both positive and constructive negative feedback. My expectations of students is that they come to lecture and clinic sessions with an open mind, and prepared to learn. This relies on the student's own responsibility to stay organized, read their textbooks before lecture, and to be engaged in learning activities.

I guide students by giving examples, building in study tips, and providing time for questions. Examples of previous assignments along with rubrics help a student know their expectations. Also, I understand the importance of a well developed syllabus, as it is the guiding document for learning.

A portion of class time is spent reflecting on what has been learned previously, forecasting ahead to what will be learned in the future, and giving personal case studies to how the topic is used in the real world. I try to incorporate into my lectures concepts that were previously lectured on. For example, when teaching local anesthesia, I like to encourage students to recall their dental anatomy knowledge. I build in "board exam pop quizzes" to help students retain key information, as well as boost their confidence, because students often know more than they think they do. I also like to give hints or teasers of what will be covered in future modules, courses, or semesters. I think this helps students keep engaged and motivated. Lastly, it is important for me to relate the content of a lecture to real world scenarios. I try as best as I can to give examples of my own clinical practice experiences. This helps make the content more relatable, and hopefully more memorable for students. In the classroom, I also embrace

technology, and try to incorporate it into my lessons. I will also strive to continue to learn new technologies, and be flexible to meet the needs and requests of my students and their learning preferences.

My teaching goals for the upcoming academic year includes motivating and encouraging my students. In this era of the COVID19 pandemic, I have witnessed student moral and enthusiasm decline. Understandably, this is a difficult time for students for a variety of reasons. However, I hope to be a role model of positivity and resilience. I will help encourage students to continue using their infection control knowledge which is integral to the field of dental hygiene, and extremely important in this global pandemic. Giving a student perspective on how far they have come in their studies, and to encourage focusing on one small goal at a time will also help empower students.

I attended a Faculty Professional Learning Community at my institution which was based on the book “Small Teaching” by James Lang. This book gave me great small tips on how to easily improve my teaching, without overhauling my entire lesson. I also continue to take workshops and continuing education courses that are aimed toward the dental hygiene educator. I usually exceed the minimum requirement of professional development or continuing education credits because I genuinely love to learn and improve myself. I also enjoy sharing with other educators what methods have worked well or not, and getting ideas from colleagues.

In an effort to support the growth and development of my didactic teaching abilities, I plan to complete my masters degree program. Also, I will always consider the feedback of my teaching evaluations. It is important for me to meet the needs of my students, not just simply fulfill milestones in my career. I will also continue to revise my presentations and enhance them with more activities to help engage the learner, and build upon higher levels of learning.

I never want to forget what it was like to me a dental hygiene student myself. I strive to be an educator who is empathetic about the stress of dental hygiene education. I want to be approachable and kind. I never want my students to feel intimidated or confused. Yet, I want my students to meet their educational objectives. Even though I desire to have a warm relationship with students, I will still expect a high level of knowledge and professionalism. I believe that mutual respect among instructors and students results in the best educational experience.