

# Blackburn COLLEGE

Dr. John Essington  
Professor of Education

## Philosophy of Education

Being an education professor is a unique experience because we are not teaching a specific content area, but rather teaching others how to teach content. The field of education revolves around two different types of courses: methodologies and pedagogies. The intriguing part of this divide is that the two areas tend to be taught in two different ways. Methodology courses are very active and hands-on for the students, whereas the pedagogical classes tend to be more lecture-based and passive.

I see this distinction between the two teaching methods to be unnecessary and contradictory to the goals of our profession. My goal as an instructor is to create future educators that become extraordinary teachers. The students in my classroom need to grow and develop confidence and experience. The passive method of teaching primarily through lectures promotes a theory of teaching which I stress for them not to utilize. Therefore, I utilize the active-learning techniques within my own courses that I support them using when they enter their own classrooms.

In order to achieve these goals, I utilize the principles of understanding by design (UbD) and the concept of backward planning. The goals and outcomes of a course are the priority for me as that is what the students need to master. I measure the attainment of course objectives and learning outcomes through performance assessments. I want to measure student achievement through the creation of artifacts by the students and their ability to share with me what they have learned and understood, rather than a measure of what they have not learned.

The reasoning behind my usage of a more performance method of assessment is that I am a firm believer in the constructivist approach. One of the best ways to drive constructivist learning is through the implementation of active-learning techniques. Rather than learning about lesson plans and teaching techniques, I prefer to have the teacher education majors create their own lesson plans and practice techniques with their classmates.

The last aspect of the student experience that promotes learning is the quality of feedback shared between students and instructors. Not only do the students learn better through qualitative feedback that highlights the strengths and areas of growth for students, but feedback provided to the instructor can help improve teaching and thus future student achievement. Feedback can be a sensitive topic for both students and instructors. I view feedback as constructive criticism and opportunities to improve my practice.

Although I feel that my interactive and personable courses are strengths of my teaching, I always want to find ways to improve. I do not believe there is a perfect lesson or a flawless course. One of the main goals that I have for the future will be to create a teaching center at my college to help other professors improve their teaching abilities and research higher education best practices. A teaching center focused on our school's professoriate would lead to increased student achievement, which should always be an educator's main goal.