



Ellen Oster
REFLECTIVE PORTFOLIO TEMPLATE

1. Define your teaching philosophy.

My teaching philosophy is to prompt students to reason and resolve the components of a project on their own. In some cases, this is easy, in others, it takes a lot of pointed questioning to assist the student to reach conclusions. I encourage trial, I encourage rejection of their work and starting over, I encourage very honest and critical evaluation. I believe, as a designer, we know what it is that we want to create, and sometimes that is not so easy to manifest. By allowing the student to delve into their mind, to find the visual expression they are envisioning, allowing them to make mistakes, allowing them to review and revise until they have evolved and are proud to present their solution.

I have had many students say, well what do you want me to do, what should I do? I will not answer them, I will ask them, what they want to do in response to a project. Some students are used to creating what their teacher wants, and the teacher wants that. Not me, I encourage them to find their “own voice”.

Yes, I encourage struggle, and if I see that a student is not challenged enough, I go in and see how I might “stir up the pot” so they dig deeper into their creative expression.

This is how I was taught, and I believe it makes me a better artist and mentor/teacher.

There are times when a student wants me to feed them a computer workflow. I have learned that they will ask for the same instruction over and over because they didn’t learn it if I just told them what to do. So, I warn them that they may feel uncomfortable for a few moments, but promise them they will never forget the process. So I start by asking what is it you want to do, then well how do you think you could do that, and if you do that then what would you need to do next...etc.

I teach computer software for the most part, and textile science at another college. These can be somewhat dry during lecture and demonstration. So I let the comedienne in me shine. I talk about my experiences in industry and life that relates to the lecture.

2. Have you ever observed a master teacher? If the answer is yes, what do you recall most from the experience?

I have in yoga, and the master teacher knew how to move a very large group through hours of instruction, carefully describing and breaking down components of philosophy, practice and meditation, with explanations that made things perfectly clear and I found that my ability to absorb the teachings, even through so much information and instruction remained strong. The teacher was able to rephrase his teaching in various ways so as to reach all the attendees in the class.

3. Give an examples of your most successful lesson. Why do you feel it was successful?

When my preparation is perfect and I practice before demonstrating, and the software cooperates (sometimes it is just that way with hi-end software) and I speak slowly and can explain the why and how of the actions to complete a task. This compounded with student involvement, questioning and interest encourages me to give more and more related information.

I also have felt in my years that sometimes it has so much to do with the audience. I can tell when the students are not paying attention, and when they are soaking up the information. When it is the latter, I so excel. The questions asked prompting further explanation and development, excites me to give all I have.

Many, many years ago, I had a very special moment in a class, while working with a student, I became that student looking at me with fear and realized her confusion as though it was mine. I felt her lost, unsure and unknowing. It summoned a very profound compassion in me and actually transformed the way I respond to students needing assistance. I have never forgotten this lesson.

4. Do you have an example of an unsuccessful lesson? How did you address the challenges?

So as I just mentioned that so much has to do with the group, when I feel I have lost the group, maybe just a few have gotten the lecture/demonstration, I stop and work individually with students. Or change the focus on the lesson to see if I can recapture their interest and attention. I realized in all my years aside from facing a group and trying to have them all understand, that people learn in a variety of ways. I do try to find a way to “get” to each student so they have a successful semester.

5. Why are you introducing and/or expanding the use of technology into your teaching?

I have been teaching technology since 1980 at FIT. So it is not new, just always changing and updating software and peripherals. Using Google drive is on the newer side for me. I use it to store all my class materials, some of which is exported into Blackboard. I use google share a lot, as well as slides and sheets. With Blackboard and Google Drive I can share images and videos freely. This has been a huge enhancement to portable drives. Also, I insist that my students save their work to some kind of cloud

location so they can't say they lost their flash drive, No Excuses anymore; "the dog cannot eat their homework!"

6. How do you feel these technology innovations will affect the student experience? How do you think it will affect your experience?

I am also using Camtasia and record most of my lessons then post them on Blackboard. This technology allows students to review demonstrations, and view them if they were out of class. I also will create spontaneous videos, if a student has a particular issue with their work and I think it would benefit the entire class. This is so amazingly responsive, especially when you see students only once a week. They can proceed that much faster which enables them to meet assignment deadlines.

7. Please describe new teaching ideas you plan to implement as a result of this technology certificate program.

My next step will be to learn Voice Thread. I think this will be really valuable in my online class. Thinking about finding relevant Ted Talks and the like and having open forums for students to comment and share thoughts.

8. How will these new technology tools/approaches contribute to your classroom practice?

Once students get used to sharing thoughts, in the privacy of their room, I hope that it will open them during class discussions and critiques.

9. How will you evaluate the success of your activities?

I might end the semester with a questionnaire, asking what they liked, or would change, what they felt was most valuable in the semester in terms of making a difference in the way they perceived things, what new tools, if any, did they gain.

Also, I think that after being an educator for 37 years, I can observe the growth in my students. I usually will give an overview of the term for each student in how I saw their development and growth.

10. What do you consider to be the bigger picture items with regard to technology and learning?

Technology has influenced every part of our lives. At times, I was a bit dismayed at the lack of students using the library for research. All they needed to do is go on google. Now I have embraced it, because I realized that the world lives in the information that can be found, in a moment, on the internet. By blogs, YouTube, Wikipedia any resource can be found. I encourage students to use the Gladys Marcus Library online database as well. We can see what is going on in the fashion world, the entire world, at any given moment and see window displays in any city, get a pulse on everything and anything. I think in the

research area this is fantastic and at time now and more in the future, I think I should assign more to the students to find the information I would normally lecture on, and let them explore and present to their classmates. It engages them differently than a lecture or textbook readings.

As the technology advances, I see more distant learning but set up with interactive capabilities, we would have a virtual classroom.