

Over time, my teaching philosophy changes and grows, though certain traits take prominence. In addition to the combination of predictability and creativity in the classroom, I believe that community is vital for effective learning.

Building community in the classroom matters from the start and throughout the semester. On the first day of class, my students and I introduce ourselves, including one talent at which we excel, in order to begin fostering a sense of community (and to remind students who feel intimidated by math that they are skilled individuals). I usually learn everyone's names within the first two weeks of class, and, later, at least one aspect of the student's life. On review days, my students do a group assignment during class. I carefully organize groups of students with complementary strengths and who might not normally work together in order to facilitate both diverse relationships and exposure to different ways of understanding mathematics. Other times, I ask students to work on a problem either individually or in a group of their choosing, since I understand that people may need to process new information in unique ways. A classroom community develops with a combination of orchestration and freedom.

Predictability, while often overlooked in teaching discussions, is quite necessary. From the start, I explain expectations of study time and how I grade assignments, and I provide guided class notes and practice tests. I have learned that guided notes are not crutches, but they enhance both students' and my ability to maintain calmness rather than anxiety at the pace of a college class. Students can focus, listen, and ask questions rather than racing to write everything, while still needing to write some information so they remain active participants. Also, I plan the semester's assignments and deadlines in advance so that students know when to prepare. Flexibility, of course, comes into play, but an overall plan often prevents unwanted surprises for students.

Creativity effectively balances out predictability and promotes interest in the material. On the simple end, an occasional video introduces real-life applications of mathematics, a fun yet instructive song, or an interesting presentation of study tips. The students' favorites, however, are the concrete visual aids or manipulatives, such as pin-the-tail (confidence interval) on-the-donkey (population mean), and paper airplanes and folder-created wind to represent addition of vectors. An entertaining math class is not an everyday experience, but math jokes are now an essential part of my classroom creativity. Of course, not every math joke is both amusing *and* instructive, such as "You have to be odd to be number one," but even the cheesier ones serve to support good teacher-student relationships and improve the learning environment.

Every technique I employ as a teacher comes from learning small steps that add up over time. Most of all, I aim for consistency, clear expectations, learning about both teaching strategies and my students, connecting students with each other and college resources, and keeping a sense of humor. I look forward to continuing to do what I love: interact with and help other people to succeed, especially in the area of mathematics.