

An artist by nature, I view every interaction with students as a creative and collaborative endeavor. Each student is uniquely designed, and holds individual potential that implores the instructor to recognize and cultivate. My approach to teaching recognizes each student's distinctive learning style and guides me in structuring information and delivery in such a way as to allow for recognition and improvement in every student I work alongside. I value participation and integration in the classroom, and am intentional about understanding and meeting the needs of every student who walks through my door, to the best of my ability.

Honoring differences in the classroom is key to promoting inclusivity and maintaining trusting relationships between students and educators. To achieve an unprecedented level of trust with students, I utilize a myriad of approaches. I enter initial classes with an exploratory persona and a genuine curiosity about who I will be sharing space with that semester. I also place importance on upkeep of relationships. For example, my students submit weekly journal reflections on class material and general wellbeing, and I often modify forthcoming lesson plans based on the feedback and level of understanding I receive in these weekly journal responses. I employ surveys at the end of written tests to track learning versus anxiety, and consistently modify to find an appropriate balance. These are tangible moments where students witness their voices being valued by an educator; trust and respect are visibly built over time through utilization of these practices.

The quality that sets me apart as an educator is my level of preparedness in conjunction with my willingness to modify. This has always been true, but the level of transparency required of instructors during the Covid-19 pandemic became paramount. Throughout the transitions between in-person, hybrid, and virtual leaning, I was consistently grateful to have a lesson plan and playlist prepared for every possible scenario. Once I am in the room (or virtual space), I navigate the situation and the students that are in front of me. I sometimes find that my prepared material isn't perfectly suited, and I adjust lesson plans and music choices spontaneously. I rely not only on my initial intuition based on the impulses I'm receiving from the students, but also the ease and confidence I've gained from my years in the classroom. I've learned that to flourish as an educator, I need to find the appropriate equilibrium between preparation and improvisation.

Because my curriculum heavily involves physical practice, I acknowledge the great responsibility to the health and safety of my students. Accurate anatomical comprehension and awareness of injury prevention techniques guide each moment of class, and all movement-based exercises are taught through a somatic lens. Because each student is having an internal experience that is unfamiliar to me, I must remind them to evaluate progress and understanding on more than just external results. In my somatic practice I have learned to value slow, intentional, and hyper-aware guidance through movement exercises. These students are entering my classroom and finding a moment to breathe in the midst of a fast-paced, pressure-filled society and career trajectory. A gentle reminder to slow down and listen to their bodies is almost always a welcomed gesture. The research surrounding neuroscience's relationship to somatic practice is young, yet meaningful. As I continue to read and explore how cognitive neuroscience interacts with artistic practice, I learn subtle methods of assisting my students in tension release and full embodiment.

Recently, I have begun to recognize in many students the deep desire to be involved in professional theater and dance work outside the lens of academia. Instead of resisting or redirecting this inclination, I am interested in mirroring some of the qualities of the professional artistic arena that are most intriguing to my students. This conclusion has led me to construct my classroom and rehearsal environment in a manner that is recognizable but not identical to the professional community. I approach this in a multitude of ways, and most successfully in musical theater dance. I always cast swings and understudies in productions I am involved with, and guide these students in learning and tracking their responsibilities. I

highly encourage my students to emulate this mentality in their technique and repertory classes as well; they always learn both sides, every variation, and each unique entrance and floor pattern. This is also a tool I use in mixed-level technique classes to ensure my upper-level students are consistently challenged. It provides invaluable experience that is directly transferrable to successful post-graduate auditions and employment, and I have noticed that it often helps build community in classes that have both theater and dance majors. My students flourish in this unlikely marriage of industry standards and academic articulation.

While my teaching experience is primarily technique-based, I hold strong beliefs on best practices for history, pedagogy, and critical theory courses. I am deeply committed to inclusive pedagogy, and these are the values I aim to pass along to burgeoning educators. Dance appreciation and history have relied on the “family tree” of ballet and modern dance for many years, and I find this approach problematic. Dance appreciation and dance history are better served by a survey of choreographers, practitioners, and ethnographers from across the globe and timeline, which does not fit snugly into a textbook family tree of western choreographers. I support my technique classes (particularly nonwestern forms such as jazz and tap) through video viewing, class discussion, and articles/online writing assignments. These methods directly inform my approach to teaching history and theory courses. Structurally, I rely on experienced scholars and educators to help guide my effort to decolonize dance history, critical theory, and studio technique courses. Nyama McCarthy-Brown’s guidance in her 2017 book, *Dance Pedagogy for a Diverse World: Culturally Relevant Teaching in Theory, Research, and Practice* has significantly shifted my approach to dance pedagogy. This difficult work is important to implement not only for the benefit of today’s students, but for the sake of our students’ students and for many generations to come. Whether or not they are aware, many of our students will become teachers, either as their primary profession or to supplement performance careers. Modeling inclusive pedagogy *now* is pivotal for the future of the performing arts industry.

Through the implementation of these and other strategies, I’ve found trust and respect in the classroom on unparalleled levels. This has led to students from my classes entering my rehearsal or choreographic processes, and vice versa. I am most grateful for the opportunity to work with students in more than one environment, as it exponentially expands my understanding of who they are as humans and artists. My goals as an educator stem from mutual respect and valuing the student voice. Witnessing students in multiple environments affords me an impressive insight into their developing voice and allows me to more successfully guide their educational journey. It also provides the feedback I require to inform me that my methods are fruitful in advocating for participatory education. Armed with this knowledge, I flip the classroom as often as possible. The reason for this is two-fold. I’ve witnessed immense student learning while unknowingly being taught by peers; I have also observed personal growth as an educator in moments that I allow and encourage students to temporarily step into the role of teacher and explore their budding pedagogical talents.

The more dedicated I have become to viewing students as whole individuals with past experiences and learning predilections, the more growth I have witnessed in the classroom and studio space. I endeavor to dig deeper into the pedagogical choices that have allowed my students to flourish in tangible ways, and I look forward to witnessing their continual improvement. I feel the constant need to evaluate myself as an educator, and the majority of my motivation comes from the moments when my students show human as well as artistic development. Moreover, I am constantly encouraged by my students’ hunger for knowledge and the lengths they will go to deepen their understanding of the field and of themselves. I am appreciative of my past teachers who transformed me as a student, and I am continuously grateful to my students who now transform me as an educator.