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Teaching philosophy & student work samples.

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By their nature, teaching and learning are inexorably connected. On the face of it, this would seem to be clear, perhaps even too obvious. Too often though it seems accepted that instead it goes: Teachers teach students, students learn from teachers--the cycle continues. I think that while there is truth to this explanation of teaching, it is not a holistic picture, and it neglects the importance of the idea that while as a teacher i am certainly responsible for sharing knowledge and creating situations that foster critical thinking among my students, there is also a responsibility of the teacher to learn from my students. It is this kind of "open channel" that I believe allows for me to not only create the situation I described above, but also to observe the students as they learn and grow, and to adapt my methods in response to these changes. When this happens, teaching styles move away from rigid methods, and engage the fluidity of a variety of learning styles and processes making it easier for students with a diverse variety of needs, backgrounds, and learning styles to grasp material, and grow their ability to think critically and independently.

These roles can be summed up somewhat hyperbolically, if not poetically, by John Cage in his "Some Rules for Teachers and Students", rules 2 & 3.

RULE TWO: General duties of a student - pull everything out of your teacher; pull everything out of your fellow students.

RULE THREE: General duties of a teacher - pull everything out of your students.

In order to do this, it is essential that students understand that while you are an authority of sorts on the subject that you are teaching, the ways in which you deliver the material and consider it are fluid and open to change. By creating this expectation and keeping it at the forefront, students have the opportunity to analyze and challenge both the methods and material presented. In doing this, the idea of the nature of authority is something that stems from knowledge is open to change and growth provides both a model for their own critical thought as well as a delivery system for knowledge, skills, and ideas that doesn't simply demand trust, but earns it through rigorous investigation, honesty, and evaluation.

By offering not just knowledge, ideas, and skill in teaching, but providing this structure for learning critical thought itself, the evaluation of both teacher and student become closely tied. Both can be looked at in terms of the growth of the students' abilities to form critical thought, which will inevitably be reflected in the degree to which they choose to engage and challenge the ideas that are presented. By looking for these indicators of critical thought in a group of students, the effectiveness of this teaching style makes itself evident as they appear.