

# Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

In my research and practice of teaching and learning in higher education, I ground my work in three broad principles related to *who learners are*, *what teachers do*, and *how teachers know what learners know*.

## Who Learners Are

Those who seek to learn to improve themselves and the world around them have inherent dignity and value.

This principle is expanded in the 5 Rs of Indigenous education (Tessaro et al. 2018): respect, responsibility, relevance, reciprocity, and relationships. The 5 Rs serve as a set of values grounded in the inherent value of all people and the importance of intentional work to foreground the perspectives of equity-deserving groups. When diversity, equity, and inclusion are prioritized and co-created, the entire community of learners benefits from working in an environment where it is safe to be different or wrong. The ultimate goal of education is to empower learners to fully realize *their* purpose and to flourish in *their* efforts to improve the world around *them*.

This principle is reflected in the structure of my courses where learners are always able to make meaningful choices about how their learning will be demonstrated. For example, assignments are always grounded in the course learning outcomes, and they require learners to apply the concepts of the course to their own context. It is the learner who determines relevance, and it is through the relationships developed in the context of the course community that relevant learning is expressed. Respect and reciprocity are demonstrated in the process of co-creating a community of inquiry where all members share the responsibility for the safety and well-being of others. The key to making this all happen is that I host assessment conversations with learners where we meet to discuss their work and come to a mutually agreeable assessment of the quality of their work in light of the course outcomes.

One learner in my class reflected on their experience during LDRS 663 in their final paper (some details are omitted for anonymity):

Reflecting on these experiences, I've come to realize that transformational learning through coaching and facilitation is not simply a collection of tools; it is a deeply transformative mindset rooted in empathy, openness, and a commitment to critically engaging with deeply held beliefs. This mindset has profoundly reshaped my ... identity, broadening my understanding of what it means to lead a ... community. It challenges the notion of ... authority as merely instructive, moving it instead toward a collaborative, relational approach that invites people into a shared journey of growth and exploration. Through this lens, my purpose has evolved into guiding our [community] toward a new understanding of inclusivity—not as a trend,