

Marium Yousuf | Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is rooted in promoting a positive mindset around the learning experience. I am deeply influenced by the work of Carol Dweck, particularly her framework of fixed and growth mindsets. As someone who once struggled to stay engaged in traditional classrooms, I relate closely to students who feel disconnected or discouraged. My own transformation, from a distracted student to a passionate learner, began when I discovered that intelligence and ability are not fixed traits, but can be cultivated through effort and reflection.

This realization drives my approach to teaching. My goal is to create a classroom environment where students view challenges as opportunities for growth and understand that struggle does not reflect inherent limitations. I emphasize persistence, resilience, and progress over perfection. In lectures, I build on prior knowledge, clearly state learning objectives, and contextualize new material to help students see its relevance. I often start with a basic example, then ask students to attempt similar problems before walking through full solutions. This encourages active thinking, helps me identify common sticking points, and makes learning more collaborative.

My commitment to evidence-based teaching deepened through the CIRTl program, through which I completed a teaching-as-research project in Spring 2025. I investigated whether introducing test-taking strategies in a College Algebra course could improve students' confidence and performance. The results were encouraging; the students reported higher confidence and showed improved results on assessments. This affirmed my belief in coupling skill-building strategies with the content instruction to support student success.

I also strive to make my courses inclusive and supportive of all learners. I maintain high expectations for every student while fostering a sense of belonging in the classroom. I believe diverse perspectives enrich learning, and I work to reflect that belief in my course materials, examples, and interactions.

Ultimately, my passion for teaching is inseparable from my passion for learning. I come from a family where access to education was limited yet deeply valued. That legacy continues to remind me why I teach: to inspire curiosity, encourage growth, and help students recognize their own potential. I believe that with the right mindset and support, every student can succeed.