

# TEACHING TEACHERS' STYLE AND PROFESSIONALISM

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## ABSTRACT

*It takes a lot of hard work and effort to be a professional teacher or educator. It requires effort to go that extra mile for the students who need it, and it takes patience to continually grow and truly understand one's craft as a teacher. That is why, to bring professionalism in teaching, a teacher is always learning and growing their craft for professional development. They are on an endless journey where they are always looking for new ideas or teaching strategies, ways to improve their skills, or new information that will help their students to succeed. Thus, they develop their professionalism and style in teachings through a set of values, behaviours and relationships that underpins the trust that the students have in their teachers. When it comes to instruction, it has been said that "hope" is not a strategy. A teacher cannot simply teach a lesson and "hope" students understand. Fortunately, there are proven and reliable instructional strategies that engage students in rigorous lessons at the same time it is important to note that there is not a "one-size-fits-all" instructional strategy. Whereas effective instructional strategies are proven ways that help students learn material and retain information. Beyond being an evaluative component, differentiation is necessary in order to maximize student success. Our students have diverse academic needs, and it is up to the teachers to ensure that each unique need is met through their teaching professionalism and style.*

**Key words:** *Teaching Strategy, Differentiation, Teaching Styles, Professionalism*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is well said that acquire new knowledge whilst thinking over the old, and you may become a teacher of others (Confucius). A professional teacher is always learning and growing their craft. They play a critical role in helping students achieve success in their career. A professional demeanor shows teachers take their responsibilities seriously. Failing to act professionally sets a negative example and may cause teacher to lose the trust and respect of students. So, demonstrate professionalism in all aspects of a teacher's career to provide their students with the best education possible. Teachers cannot simply teach a lesson and "hope" students understand instead ensure that each unique need is met through their teaching professionalism and style. Updating current with new trends in education is an excellent way to keep their students engaged. The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed how educational institutions look and feel for students, parents, and staff. Students and parents are facing the struggles that come with remote learning, parents being teachers and students needing to use more self-autonomy than ever before. Teachers find themselves needing to teach in ways they've never been trained for and must adjust to new technology that has not been previously necessary. As a remote teacher, teachers are a critical link

in ensuring students don't miss out on this vital element to their personal growth, so focusing on creating a collaborative environment is a critical component to their instructional responsibilities!

## **2. TEACHING PROFESSIONALISM AND STYLE**

Here are a few professional development tips to help a teacher continue to grow and become that professional educator/teacher that he/she deserves to be.

### **2.1. Continuing Education for Teachers**

As teachers, they instill in their students the important notion of being a lifelong learner, and there's no better way to show how this applies to the real world than by modeling it for their students. In school, opportunities for learning arise every single day, in everything the teachers do, whether it be in formal ways such as through professional development, or informally, like having a conversation with students or parents. Either way continuing education for teachers is vitally important.

### **2.2. Professional Development**

It helps provide training to teachers for new programs, develops new ways to teach concepts to students, and provides various ways to refine what it is that they are teaching. As a teacher, they want to give students the best experience possible in their classroom. Staying current with new trends in education is an excellent way to keep their students engaged.

### **2.3. Understanding Curriculum**

Understanding how curriculum is a "live document" and is continually changing can help a teacher evolve and grow as an educator. Understanding the horizontal and vertical alignment of a curriculum is beneficial, as it can help them to target areas where gaps can form. Increasing student achievement is always a main goal. Strong knowledge of what teachers are teaching can certainly help to do that.

### **2.4. Advanced Degrees**

Additionally, advancing in teachers' career or education can provide them with many new avenues for growth. They are then able to apply their knowledge and skill base to a larger population. They can help guide teachers to continue their learning. It can also help them to develop different vantage points of situations. From our personal experience, additional and advanced degrees gave us the ability to understand where many administrative decisions came from, as they need to make decisions that align with a more state, national, or global level than a classroom teacher does.

### **2.5. Formal and Informal Assessments**

There are many informal and valuable ways to continue education. A classroom teacher does formal and informal assessments, and many teachers will tell that the informal assessments help more than the formal ones in guiding instruction. Taking the time to understand the students and their needs, wants, and likes can help to understand how to better teach them. As an example, understanding the social media world and the positives and negatives of it, as well as seeing the educational benefits of it, can help teachers better relate to their students. Another valuable informal way of continuing education is by having lunch with their students to catch up with them. How about go watch the school play that the students worked so hard to put on? When the teachers make students feel confident and valued in what they do, it carries over into the classroom.

## **2.6.Promote Student Growth**

As a professional teacher, it's essential that a teacher take the time to promote student growth based on the following means:

- Set high expectations for student achievement.
- Use the most-recent educational technology.
- Plan instructional strategies.
- Apply higher-order thinking skills.
- Use cooperative learning.
- Apply classroom management techniques.

While these are a just a few examples, the point that we are trying to make is that the teachers can take the time to go a step further than just covering the basics year after year.

## **2.7.Make Use of theTime**

All too often, teachers forget how important their instructional time really is. While seven to eight hours may seem like a lot of time to get things done, it is to be remembered that a lot of that time isn't instructional. When teachers have those blocks of time with their students, they must make good use of it. Here's what the teachers should be doing.

- Focusing their students' attention.
- Using materials and technology appropriately.
- Maintaining a flow or rhythm in the classroom.
- Evaluating classroom instruction.
- Differentiating instruction according to student ability.
- Optimizing the time for the task at hand.

## **2.8.Improve Teacher'sPerformance**

The essence of a teacher is to help others. This is why it may be so hard for educators to look at themselves to see what they can improve upon. Here are a few tips that can help to improve the performance as a teacher.

- Read: Knowledge is power. Join a professional scholarly journal, go online and read educational blogs, or read some literature on education.
- Participate: Go to educational conferences or workshops, or attend online seminars. Participation in these types of events will make one a more effective teacher.
- Join a Group: There are many groups that they can join, online and off. All of these groups are a great source of information as well as inspiration. Teachers can learn a lot from other professionals who have longer years of experience.
- Observe the Peers: An effective teacher takes the time to observe other teachers. These teachers can be a great source of knowledge for other teachers. They can find a new strategy to teach or behaviour management plan to implement.
- Share: Once the performance of a teacher is improved, he/she should share the knowledge with others. That can contribute to the profession, and others will be thankful.

## **2.9. Make Use of Various Instructional Strategies**

As it is important to note that there is not a one-size-fits-for-all instructional strategy. But selecting the best and effective instructional strategies are proven ways that help students learn material and retain information. Here are a few types of instructional strategies.

- **Project-Based Learning:** For many skills, students learn best when they are able to apply what they are learning, making project-based learning perfect for them. When given a real-world problem or scenario, students learn why the skills they are learning are important and how they are applicable to real-life situations. Depending on the outcome, students may be asked to work independently or collaboratively.
- **Small Group Learning:** It utilizes collaboration to help students work on an activity. While building teamwork, the teacher is also able to work with each group and provide small group instruction to ensure learning is taking place, and to differentiate instruction as needed.
- **Active Learning:** By having students take an active part in the learning process, they develop ownership for their learning. Active learning allows the students to be engaged in an activity and reflect on what was learned.
- **Hands on Experience:** Knowledge or skill that student gets from doing something rather than just reading about it or seeing it being done: They will participate in workshops and get hands-on experience leading classes.
- **Task Cards:** Because students learn in different ways, it can be beneficial to provide a set of activities which provides the students the option of learning in a way that best suits each one. Task cards may be used to offer students a variety of activities with a similar end result, but allow students to choose if they want to work independently or in a small group, if they want to write a poem or a narrative, or create a word problem or complete a math chart. Giving options help reach each child.
- **Classroom Management:** In order for students to learn in an active classroom, there needs to be an effective classroom management system in place.

As teachers work to compete with interactive video games, cell phones and other distractions, it is important to remember that students like to be involved in the learning process. Providing a variety of strategies will keep the classroom interesting and students engaged.

## **2.10. Differentiation is Important and Needed**

The students possess varying levels of academic ability, diverse life experiences, and a myriad of strengths, weaknesses, and interests. As such, it can be challenging for a teacher to give each student what he/she needs in order to exhibit growth in the classroom. Differentiation is a set of skills that allows a teacher to adequately support each student. This is important because every teacher's goal should be student success, and student needs, while abounding, can be roadblocks to success when they are not met. Differentiated instruction makes what seems impossible possible - teacher can scaffold at different levels simultaneously. As the students have diverse academic needs, and it is up to the teacher to ensure that each unique need is met. Another reason that differentiated instruction is important is its positive impact upon classroom management. A well-managed classroom requires multiple components, and differentiation is a key component. When students feel they can be successful, they are more likely to put forth effort. Furthermore, when a

teacher demonstrates a vested interest in a student's needs, a student feels valued and is more likely to meet expectations.

### **2.11. Implementation of Differentiation Strategies in the Classroom**

There are three major ways to differentiate instruction through -

- Differentiating Content: When differentiating content, teachers can utilize multiple methods to relay content to their students.
- Differentiating Process: Process is how students digest and demonstrate understanding of information.
- Differentiating Product: Differentiating product means diversifying the way that students demonstrate mastery.

Differentiated instruction is a long-standing educational buzzword that can seem cliched due to its prevalence in education. Teachers must remember that it is not just important, but crucial. Differentiation is one of the most valuable skills that a teacher can develop.

### **2.12. Utilize the Benefits of an Online Community for Teachers**

In the modern world of technology that we live in, an online community is beneficial because it connects teachers on a global level. Collaboration is an important part of being a teacher, and online communities provide a platform where a teacher can connect with other teachers and obtain advice, share ideas, partake in quality professional development, and find resources beneficial to the classroom. An online community can also provide support to teachers in handling difficult student situations that may arise. It is always important to go to administration within the academic building as a first line to deal with tough scenarios, but reflection is important, and an online community can help to do just that. Online communities are convenient, as a teacher can access them at various times and from various places. We live in a world that relies on convenience, as time is of the essence, so being able to collaborate and discuss whenever it is easiest is important to the success as an educator.

### **2.13. Apply Behaviour Management Plan**

A behaviour management plan is a plan made up of procedures that are in place to hold students accountable for their behaviour, encourage positive behaviour, and to eliminate scolding or lecturing, which is rarely, if ever, effective in changing behaviour. A behaviour management plan is not synonymous with discipline. Discipline is one aspect of a behaviour management plan. A behaviour management plan is developed long before the first student walks through the teacher's door at the beginning of the academic year. A good behaviour management plan will consist of procedures, rules, and consequences. Students must be made aware of these from the beginning of the school year. In some cases, the students can also help the teacher develop these. When they contribute to the development of the plan, they feel more ownership and are far more likely to comply. There is one prerequisite to developing that marvelously well-thought-out behaviour plan. We believe as teachers-*Develop Relationships!* Get to know the students in all aspects, not just know their names, ability level, and favorite colour. I mean try to gain some understanding of what home is like for them. Determine why they do what they do. Individual relationships with students must be developed first or there is little hope for a behaviour plan to be implemented effectively. The old saying, "Students don't care what you know, until they know you care" may sound cliché, but it really is true. Students that know you love and care for them are far more likely to respond

to correction. Although it may take quite a bit of work, establish that relationship. It will greatly increase the likelihood of a successful behaviour management plan.

#### **2.14. Use of Educational Technology**

The words “unprecedented times” cannot be over-stressing this academic year. The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed how the academics look and feel for students, parents, and staff. Students and parents are facing the struggles that come with remote learning, parents being teachers and students needing to use more self-autonomy than ever before.

Teachers find themselves needing to teach in ways they’ve never been trained for and must adjust to new technology that has not been previously necessary.

#### **2.15. Peer support**

Peer support is the way that teachers support each other. It includes how teachers collaborate, network, socialize, vent to each other, and help each other in times of need. Peer support among teachers can occur within the school building or outside of school during personal time. It can also happen face to face or virtually through social media, videos, or messaging. It is known that when teachers build relationships with students, it drastically improves student learning. Likewise, when teachers build relationships with their peers, it drastically improves teaching. It is also crucial to teacher job satisfaction. Here are some ways to provide peer support.

- **Collaboration:** Teacher collaboration can help reduce this time greatly when the work is split up among the group.
- **Social Support:** There is a special bond that is formed through the camaraderie that is shared from teaching. Spending time supporting each who understands your successes and struggles is comforting and uplifting. Teachers can relate to each other and they have more in common than not. Teacher social support has traditionally happened at happy hours after work, holiday gatherings. Now, those groups are meeting virtually over Zoom/Webinar for happy hour. They can also happen through social media and group messaging.
- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** They encompass a process through which educators work together collaboratively on various topics and subjects, conduct collective inquiry and action research, and share and learn from one another. Through PLCs, teachers can find and share great resources, lesson plans, and conferences, find inspiration, learn the latest trends in education, make international connections, find emotional support, and get connected to the work of other great educators. PLCs provide an opportunity for teachers to network virtually and get connected with teachers that they don’t see every day.

#### **2.16. Utilize Art in Student Learning**

Art enhances student learning in the classroom. Teachers should integrate art as often as possible in order to better engage students in learning, increase excitement in the classroom, and keep them focused on the task at hand. Art provides numerous benefits to students.

- Focus and Problem Solving
- Intrinsic Motivation
- Self-Expression and Creativity
- Confidence
- Promotes Engagement

- Determination and Perseverance
- Cooperation and Collaboration
- Higher Academics

### **2.17. Utilize Synchronous Vs. Asynchronous Online Instruction**

Teachers are experiencing a new wave in the educational institution pertaining to new forms of instruction. The frenzy of training on new technology, surveying communities for internet connectivity, maintaining mental health for themselves and their students, and protecting their own families certainly increased the anxiety in teachers' lives.

- Synchronous Learning Model: It provides powerful opportunities for students and teachers to maneuver through content collaboratively, similar to being in a physical classroom; ensuring the ability to ask in-depth questions and provide feedback instantaneously; assessing the audience appropriately, whether formatively or summatively; and possibly re-teaching curriculum when it is necessary to further the educational learning.
- Asynchronous Learning Model: It does not require a certain meeting time; no instructor is present, though they may offer specific office hours at certain points so students can connect with them; and it provides ultimate flexibility in work schedules. Students can access it at any point. They are not tethered to a fixed schedule so their time and pacing is adjustable. It's a consistent form of instruction, often fixed, in which students can process, move ahead, or take time to review when it is needed.

While the synchronous learning time is very beneficial, it is necessary to have some activities that students will complete outside of this time. Asynchronous learning allows for individualized pacing, saves time, and allows for customized lessons. Ideas for at-home activities and asynchronous learning include:

- Watching videos: Assign educational videos for students to watch on their own.
- Creating videos: Have students demonstrate learning by creating their own video or slide show.
- Hands-on activities: Science experiments with household items, math measurement activities with household items, exploratory outdoor activities with observations recorded in a science journal.
- Group projects: Students can work with other students on projects by creating collaborative documents.
- Traditional homework: completed either online or printed out and completed.

Another thing you can do outside of regular "class" time is to schedule meetings with students individually. For example, a teacher might have a lesson with the whole class and then meet later with students individually or in small groups to help those that are struggling or to provide enrichment as needed.

### **2.18. Use Assessments to Promote Higher-Level Thinking**

One of the toughest components to handle in education is the ability to utilize assessments in the most appropriate ways. With the rapid evolution of technology, the fluctuations in the world economies and job markets, and the requirements to challenge students in thought processes, Teachers no longer can follow the traditional route of teaching a unit and giving an exam just to

get a grade. Assessments must be designed with objectives that promote varying levels of cognition, while tying in real-life experiences.

But how do educators achieve these types of objectives with assessments? How do they elevate students' understanding beyond the rote memory and simple multiple-choice questioning patterns? How do they prepare their students to problem-solve, to apply their experiences to obtain answers, and to reflect on their lifelong learning opportunities? One of the newest models promoting higher-level thinking is embedded in the 21st-Century Skills category, wherein critical thinking skills are connected to literacy skills (technology, media, etc.) and life skills (leadership, social, etc.). This not only moves away from the standard rote memory, simple questioning patterns, but also provides hands-on skills pertaining to necessary character traits required to be successful in a selected career.

### **2.19. Bring 21st-century Learning into the class**

Much of what constitutes high-quality instruction is timeless. The curriculum must be relevant and purposeful. Also, the teacher must have presence in the classroom and use his or her presence to establish positive relationships with students. Building a positive climate and culture is essential to all high-quality learning experiences. With these foundational pieces in mind, it is clear that the framework of 21st-century learning consists of some supports that have remained constant. Yet, a complete analysis of 21st-century learning must include those elements that differentiate 21st-century classrooms from those of the past.

- Creativity: It is an essential component of 21st-century learning. Education must be innovative to prepare students to be successful in an ever-changing innovative, global society.
- Collaboration: Individuals need to understand the need to contribute to the group and develop a sense of accountability to other group members. The goal should be to cover the same required standards, but in a more holistic manner.
- Critical Thinking: Work in a 21st-century classroom should require critical thinking and innovation. Gone are the days when preparation for the future could mainly centre on absorbing factual information. Our global society is constantly changing and students should be encouraged in thinking out of the box.
- Communication: Finally, effective, timely, and precise communication must be modeled in any classroom. In a 21st-century classroom, students must learn how to effectively communicate through written forms (both traditional and online). Students need to learn how to present themselves in a professional and polished manner through spoken and written communication. Further, 21st-century classrooms should include debate with order and courtesy. Active listening and follow up should be given focus as an assessment. This instruction will prepare students to become contributing members of the workforce and global society.

### **2.20. Adopt Strategies for Fostering a Collaborative Classroom Virtually**

- Start with Community Connection: At the onset of the remote instruction, creating time for students to discuss and contribute to a list of expectations for how they want to be treated and treat one another establishes the understanding that community and collaboration are important, even if online.
- Facilitate Meaningful Discourse: Opportunities for discourse and discussion are more available than we may have originally thought when embarking on remote learning early in 2020.

- **Make Time for Fun:** The piece that gets lost the most in remote learning is the natural opportunity to see a student's personality in an authentic way beyond the learning task. Carving out time to play games or share about personal topics contributes significantly to a productive collaborative environment.
- **Make it a Goal:** Like a regular classroom, having behavioural learning targets alongside content-based learning targets is important, since educational institution is for learning about behaviours, too! Having a behavioural goal for students related to participation, asking questions, giving feedback to peers, or active listening keeps the importance of a collaborative environment at the center of your instruction. Having students work towards and reflect on success with these collaborative behaviours will help foster connection and cooperation despite being remote.
- **Celebrate:** Create routines of celebration within a teachers agenda of instructions and especially at the closure so that students develop the habit of recognizing and celebrating one another's achievements and efforts. It could look like sharing gratitude for one another, sharing "put-ups" instead of "put-downs", doing a class cheer for someone's achievement, or using an e-platform like Padlet or Flipgrid to create compliment boards for each other. Making these celebrations a part of the learning routine demonstrates to learners its importance and supports their emotional well-being during the challenge of learning from home.

### **2.21. Establish Student Expectation Strategies**

- **Online Etiquette:** Have a conversation with students about raising their hand, or other agreed upon hand signal if they have something to say. Teachers should also discuss with students what it would not be appropriate to discuss online. They should also learn to mute and unmute when speaking so that everyone can hear the teacher or speaker.
- **Participation:** Students should also be guided to discuss why it is important to participate in "class discussions" or answering questions during an online lesson. This helps the teacher know what they understand and what they need help with. Students can also learn how to use the chat feature to answer questions by typing their response - even privately to the teacher if they are nervous about getting something wrong in front of their classmates.
- **Completion of Work:** It should be established that students need to complete their assignments - whether it is during the time with their teacher or afterwards and turn it in via email, Google Classroom, Zoom, etc.

Teachers should be responsive to work that is turned in by giving students feedback on what they did well and what they need to work on. They should also let them know that they are there to help them with anything they might be struggling with and even offer individual times for students to sign up for personalized instruction. We have to make the most out of online instruction to ensure our students are learning, whether we can be with them in the classroom or virtually. Hopefully some of these ideas on expectations will assist the teacher while planning for online learning.

### **2.22. Connect with Reluctant Students During Remote Learning**

Students are reluctant to engage in instruction for a multitude of reasons. While teachers should strive to have all students engaged in instructional activities, teachers have more direct ownership of some of these reasons for students not being engaged. For a student to be engaged, instruction must be relevant, purposeful, and authentic. In addition, online classrooms need to be streamlined and organized. Also, it is crucial that each assignment has purpose in an online environment.

Teachers must invest and have high expectations. Students will normally rise to meet those expectations. To foster engagement, teachers must post instructional videos, offer live meetings, continue making student/parent contact calls, and offer substantive feedback on student assignments. These actions are investments.

- Build Meaningful, Authentic Relationships
- Create Authentic and Relevant Assignments
- Utilize Student Interest and Choice
- Bring Excitement to the Online Classroom

### **2.23. Using Games to Build a Virtual Classroom Community**

In these times that are like none the teachers have experienced before virtual classrooms became the norm. While it can be grateful for the technology needed to continue teaching and learning during this time, unfortunately it can be very difficult to create a sense of community in a virtual classroom. It is so easy in this kind of environment for students to feel disconnected and isolated. However, as we are all learning together, teachers are discovering ways that they can create community even in the virtual classrooms. There are many benefits to using games in virtual classroom. Games improve and increase student engagement, boost critical-thinking, strengthen memory, and provide opportunity for cooperation and collaboration. Most importantly, when the teacher play games that allow students to get to know each other better, a sense of community is built. This is more important than ever before because students attending school virtually do not have the same social interaction that they would have if attending school in person. When students are having fun and laughing together, they begin to bond and enjoy their time together so much more. Some ideas for movement and fun in the virtual classroom:

- Daily routines: Choose a different question or activity every day for attendance to make each day starts off on a fun and exciting note.
- Exercise breaks: Much like teacher would in the classroom, give students exercise breaks. They could do 15 jumping jacks, burpees, sit-ups or run in place. Any movement is good!
- Special/Festival day celebrations
- Social time: In most online classroom platforms, there is an option for some type of chat or discussion board. Allow students time each day to access this area to talk with each other, share ideas, and ask questions. Another idea is to allow students to have some time before class starts to join the meeting (or to stay on after class is over) and talk amongst themselves without direct teacher involvement.
- Dress-up days: There are many ways to incorporate dress-up days for both younger and older students. For older students, favourite team days, favourite star day (e.g. Diego Maradona) and so on.
- Virtual show and tell: Give each student a different day to share something that they treasure – maybe a toy, a talent, or a pet.
- Virtual field trip: There are some great options online for virtual field trips. Take a “trip” together as a class as an extension to learning or just for fun.

Another thing teachers can do outside of regular “class” time is to schedule meetings with students individually. For example, a teacher might have a lesson with the whole class and then meet later

with students individually or in small groups to help those that are struggling or to provide enrichment as needed.

### 2.24. Don't be Afraid to Take Risks

Oftentimes, teachers get so comfortable in their daily lives that they forget to take risks. A risk may be trying that teaching strategy that teachers have always wanted to try or implementing that piece of educational technology that they have heard so much about. Before they try something new in their classroom, make sure that they do research about it. This will help them to take that risk. Try observing other teachers who may have already implemented that strategy or piece of technology. An effective teacher isn't afraid to talk to other educators and learn from them. They are willing to continue to learn their craft and take risks. They take the time to promote student growth as well as improve their own performance. They are always learning and always growing.

## 3. CONCLUSION

A shocking statistic in education reveals that 70% of teachers work under chronic stress (Michelle Kinder, 2020). This statistic was published before COVID-19 changed everything. Teachers are now faced with the additional stress and anxiety of being concerned for their family's safety and their own. Balancing between being a teacher in the best way they know how while maintaining safety protocols and little or no time face to face with their students puts everyone in need of higher levels of support than before. Teachers supporting each other are one of the best ways to start refilling some very dry buckets of support. Teaching is a humanistic profession. Evidence shows that the greatest impact on student success is the teacher in the classroom. With that knowledge, it is important that we recognize that teacher peer support is the humanistic way of coping with the stress that comes from this incredibly rewarding profession. While teachers would all prefer to return to our normal and be with their students face-to-face, it may not be possible during this difficult time. However, with these ideas and activities, teachers can create an atmosphere of community and cooperation that can make virtual classroom successful through their professional teaching and style.

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