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While I wear a lot of hats in my role at the library, I believe my core function is that of an educator. One of the thinkers who has most informed my teaching philosophy is bell hooks. A quote I think of often comes from her 1994 book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. She talks about the sacred act of teaching, writing that educators “believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.”¹ I try to let respect and care guide each learning interaction, emphasizing the humanity of each student, whether that means always explaining where the library bathrooms are located, or making space for students to discuss a difficult event that occurred in the world that day. I try to remain flexible, letting students guide their own learning as much as possible.

I feel empowered knowing that the skills I help students cultivate will be useful to them regardless of what path they take during or after college. I believe that information literacy is a skillset that allows learners to participate more fully in the world, both inside and beyond academia. I am grateful that my teaching rarely focuses on content as much as developing a mindset of critical inquiry that can be applied to all of their consumption of information, whether that’s writing an essay or binging a tv show. This sometimes leads to uncomfortable interactions, as students face paper deadlines and strict requirements for finding peer-reviewed sources. I strive to challenge students to confront the ambiguity of doing research, while also being a supportive partner who can help them find what they need.

I am curious about ways to be more authentic and vulnerable in my teaching. For example, when librarians visit a class to lead a workshop on research techniques, we often pre-select topics that we know will retrieve good search results in a database. While this may allow us to demonstrate various aspects of the database more efficiently, it makes invisible the challenging process of experimentation and trial and error that comes along with selecting a good research topic. One small step toward greater authenticity would be occasionally pushing myself to surrender that control and let student ideas guide the conversation, even if it means potentially looking imperfect in front of students. I seek to find balance between demonstrating my expertise and creating opportunities to work through something together.

In terms of assessment, I am interested in strategies to involve students in defining what success means to them. I tend to employ assessment strategies that allow for some aspect of reflection, in addition to knowledge and recall checks. I am interested in scientific approaches to understanding learning, but I am wary of systems that sacrifice student privacy and autonomy in favor of so-called

¹ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 13.

learning analytics. I see my role as a librarian to advocate for students' control over their own personal data, even when the promise of that data collection claims to be more personalized learning experiences.

I believe that in order to be an effective educator I must be a continuous learner myself, to experience all the joy but also discomfort that comes with learning. I must remain open to feedback that generates growth, and willing to persist when challenges arise. Being a teaching librarian puts me in a unique place within the university, where I often find myself as an invited guest speaker in an unfamiliar classroom, without the advantage of regular, prolonged opportunities to get to know the students in front of me. I commit to exploring how to be the best teacher I can within this imperfect system. Turning to bell hooks again, she writes, "The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created."² I see my role as a teaching librarian as a guide, bringing myself and my students together in that place.

² hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 207.