



Reflections of a Practitioner

My Teaching Philosophy

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PHOTO BY KEVIN RAJARAM

How would you describe yourself as a teacher?

I strive to create an open, interactive and engaging classroom environment that rewards critical thinking, application of knowledge and supports intellectual curiosity. Upon completion of the Associate Degree program in the department of Dental Hygiene and passage of their licensing exams our students will be licensed professionals in New York State. It is up to us-their faculty-to ensure they have the necessary tools, skills, knowledge and behaviors to be an essential component of the oral health care team. Many dentists rely on their hygienists to provide, in addition to routine dental hygiene care, oral cancer screenings, community outreach and individualized patient care.

Why is academic service learning so much a part of your work?

Students transition from learning theory to applying theory in the Dental Hygiene Clinic. Every student must provide an intra-oral extra-oral exam and an oral cancer screening on every

new and recall patient. And we have had the opportunity to provide free oral cancer screenings to the Brooklyn community. The students and faculty have generously donated their time to see patients through the oral cancer screenings and all have benefited greatly from the process.

Our students learn that they have both the power and responsibility to save lives. They graduate knowing that they are professionals capable of positively impacting their patient's lives and that their approach to patient care, their affect, will directly affect their capacity to provide proactive appropriate oral health care to their community. Students take ownership of this responsibility and long after they graduate they continue to apply what they have learned in our classrooms and clinics in private practice.

What is your teaching philosophy and who and what have shaped it?

I have had the opportunity to work with some amazing professors during my undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate education. Simply I looked at

the most effective professors I have had and tried to emulate their style. I also looked at my least favorite professors and decided that the 'Socratic' method of teaching was not for me.

I believe that effective teachers:

- Are always learning and encourage a love of learning
- Are prompt, organized, and prepared
- Teach to Learn – not to Memorize
- Create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect – teach with humor and understanding
- Serve as a mentor and role model
- Promote cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity

Sharing my knowledge and expertise with students is fundamental to effective teaching; doing so in a non-threatening positive manner is essential to their learning.