

# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: CONSIDERING THE DIFFERENCES IN TEACHER IMMEDIACY WHEN A K-12 TEACHER TRANSITIONS TO ONLINE HIGHER EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

*Reflective practice allows for the exploration of ideas to gain new insight about something unexpected or unknown. As a former K-12 classroom teacher, I had the opportunity to transition to higher learning in an online platform, teaching adult learners. What was unexpected about this transition were the differences I noticed in immediacy between the two platforms and the types of student. Face-to-face interactions make for easy-to-build relationships, yet I did not anticipate the difficulty in achieving this type of connection in the online classroom. Using John Dewey's educational insight as a reflective lens, I identified the following three potential reasons that could have contributed to the differences I encountered: the teacher, the learner, and the learning environment. An introspective look at each led to a conceptual exploration and a telling of my story to reflect on my experiences and how they shaped not only the problem posed, but also the ultimate outcome and discoveries along the way.*

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

A casual discussion between full-time faculty colleagues about classroom management styles and the concept of immediacy in a face-to-face setting morphed into a comparison of the online teaching role and how they differ. Two colleagues and I each came from a traditional K-12 classroom setting in which effective teaching was easily facilitated through the art of immediacy, direct interaction, and observation. Building relationships with students happened organically by spending day in and day out together, and it was an instinctive part of student learning. This was a natural part of our everyday teaching practices and something classroom teachers likely take for granted without realizing what a luxury it really is.

Additionally, being an elementary school teacher requires classroom management skills, including the necessary level of discipline needed when teaching children. I taught mostly sixth grade and not surprisingly, strong classroom management

skills were a must. I tended to be on the stricter side, having high expectations of performance and good behavior. By building the relationships that happen so fluidly with students at that age, as the school year progressed, discipline became less and less necessary as students began to self-correct and adjust their own behaviors, which in turn, positively influenced learning.

In the world of online learning, the act of immediacy in teaching is not nearly as simple or clear-cut. Relationship building even less so. The ease in evaluating the impact of one's presence through immediacy in the discussion forums, and subsequently one's own teaching effectiveness, becomes less evident. While interactions and relationship building happen naturally face-to-face, however, in the online setting that process suddenly becomes much more difficult to achieve. In a traditional classroom, students learn to trust teachers through those relationships and consequently, learning is enhanced.

When I began teaching online, I thought, “I’m a teacher, I know how to teach,” and I thought those teacher-student relationships would develop just as easily, especially since I was now teaching adult learners. I assumed it would be a natural transition. Turns out, not so much. The online classroom presents its own challenges in achieving immediacy, and teacher personality and practices play into this as well. While my stricter disciplinary style worked well with sixth graders, it did not translate quite so well with adult learners. When I started teaching my online classes, I was a strict rule follower with lots of hard and fast policies in place, with little room for flexibility. My adult learners were not exactly fans of this style. The unexpected became evident; I had assumed that building and achieving immediacy with online adult students would be the same as it was in the K-12 classroom.

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

John Dewey said, “When we experience something we act upon it ...then we suffer or undergo the consequences” (as cited in Beckett, 2018, p. 382). In this sense, the need to reflect on my experiences regarding the differences between achieving immediacy in a K-12 setting versus an online classroom led me to hope there was more positive action and less suffering from consequences. As with students, teachers so too learn from the consequences of their actions. In the case of online teaching, the consequence to not getting it right is the potential to negatively impact student learning experience. Clearly, this is not an acceptable outcome and requires further reflection. With this lens, I wanted to look further into my interactions with students and how they evolved over time based on my experiences throughout the K-12 to online teaching time frame. In the end, it is my goal to digest my teaching story to better shape future interactions with students and subsequently improve student learning experience.

A key point in Dewey’s concept of education posited, “Growth is a constant reorganizing and reconstructing of experience” (as cited in Beckett, 2018, p. 381). This conceptual framework allowed me to more clearly reflect on exactly what part of my experiences I had reorganized as part of this process, as well as what further reorganization I might discover necessary. Additionally, I could look at what aspects of my teaching strategies and style

were restructured to negate potential consequences of my adaptive actions in transitioning between K-12 and online teaching. Perhaps the true consequence would be failing to recognize that reorganization and restructuring is not a one size fits all process, but rather a melting pot of ideas and practices shaped on a continuum over time.

### ACTIVITY

Teacher immediacy is defined as, “Nonverbal and verbal behaviors, which reduce psychological and/or physical distance between teachers and students” (Wendt & Courduff, 2018, p. 3). In a face-to-face classroom, a teacher is able to interact with students in real time; immediacy then, is relatively easy to achieve and evaluate. For example, a teacher can ask a student a question about content, and based on the answer, can then remain and continue to work with the student if necessary or know that it is okay to move on to other students. That direct interaction in time allows students to trust their teacher and feel more comfortable interacting.

I taught in the K-12 setting, mostly 6th grade, for over 10 years, and one of my favorite parts of teaching was getting to know my students and developing relationships. In my second year of teaching, I had the opportunity to move from 3rd to 4th grade, and essentially my whole class moved with me. As luck would have it, the same opportunity came along consecutively for the next two years, meaning I had the unique experience of teaching the same group of students four years in a row. Not only did I develop strong relationships with that group of students, I was also able to get to know their parents extremely well too. We operated together as a well-oiled machine. At the beginning of each school year there were not the usual first day jitters; we just jumped in where we left off and got to work. Students and parents knew my expectations, I knew each student’s learning style and abilities, and it just worked. Each family was able to choose to stay in my class each year, so everyone was there by choice. I was able to watch this group of kids grow from silly, adventurous third graders to quickly maturing sixth graders developing their own personalities as they became the “big kids” on campus.

One particular experience with my students comes to mind as an example of this time together. I am an avid gardener, and my students and I

gained permission from administration to create a garden just outside our classroom door. During class as I taught, different groups of students would go outside to dig up Bermuda grass and prep the soil, water the growing plants, and complete other gardening tasks as it grew over time. I am sure some shenanigans happened at times, but largely, I did not worry about discipline issues because of the relationships that developed over the years.

In hindsight, this special circumstance was truly a gift and allowed me to nurture a far greater bond than most teachers have the opportunity to experience in a single school year. It also influenced my teaching style due to the level of trust and familiarity we established together. Immediacy became a built-in feature in my classroom. When it was time for them to move on to middle school, the inevitable happened—we all cried like babies, and I had a difficult time believing it was over. After leaving my teaching career to pursue adult education, I could not have been more grateful for that special time.

In between the two different worlds of K-12 and higher education online teaching, I had the opportunity to work as a corporate trainer both in the public and private sector, as well as in management. In job training, I still had the responsibility to educate employees, but unlike students, the discipline aspect was essentially nonexistent, facilitating a friendly, light-hearted environment. Immediacy in the training world tends to be much more about determining which trainees needed the most support and direction, rather than a need for redirection of negative behaviors or disruption that can occur more often in a K-12 classroom. This in and of itself increases the bond between trainer and trainee as it instills trust and appreciation. New employees are motivated to learn the roles, responsibilities, and skills needed for their job so that little else is necessary to drive these individuals.

A management role, on the other hand, required a blend of both and was another step on my learning continuum. Immediacy as a manager can mean many things for many people and requires much relationship building to learn the needs of individuals—not always an easy task. One has to take care to avoid favoritism while simultaneously giving each individual employee the time and focus needed on any given day. Unfortunately, discipline

and/or guidance may be a necessary factor as well, where immediacy might take on a proximal characteristic in which more managerial presence is needed for particular individuals. Relationships are built, but managers continually walk a fine line in trying to maintain them in a positive and professional manner.

In my role as Online Full-Time Faculty (OFTF) at a university in Phoenix, Arizona, I teach an eight-week long Organizational Behavior and Management course in an asynchronous online platform. Generally, I have 80-100 students at a time in different classes on a rolling basis. For example, on a given Monday, I may have a class in week one, week five, week eight, and so on. A main student expectation is the requirement to actively engage in discussion forums by “posting,” answering content specific Discussion Questions (DQs) in addition to interacting with classmates and/or the instructor on a minimum of three days during each week by participating in discussions on the given topic. Students read one another’s posts and reply to those they wish to add more insight to or ask questions of; this equates to classroom participation much like raising one’s hand to earn participation in a traditional classroom setting.

Other interactive forums include the Private Forum (PF), designed as a place where teacher and student can interact about specific issues unique and/or personal in nature. Examples include problems preventing a student from participating in class, poor performance, or questions on feedback. A Questions to Instructor forum (QTI) is a public forum used by students and instructors for information that may be relevant to the class as a whole; for example, seeking clarification on the late policy or where to find particular reading materials.

My feedback for discussion forum work comes in the form of grading each student’s discussion question replies as well as participation. Additionally, however, I take part in the discussions myself. My posts often infuse scholarly material from the course textbooks or other relevant sources to further enhance learning and pose more in-depth, application- and critical-thinking-based questions that students can reply to, although their response is not required.

Part of the challenge I found early on as an online instructor in higher education was my classroom management style. While I had a background in

teaching, as well as experience in adult education, I found myself in a position in which I was responsible for teaching adults a curriculum with specific learning outcomes while also maintaining policies, procedures, and expectations set forth by a university. I felt an obligation to stick firmly to these rules and had little room for flexibility. I was also much more formal in my approach and interactions with students, which did not necessarily aid in developing immediacy. I am also a relatively private person and did not share much of myself or my personality as I felt the need to remain the consummate professional. I was actively engaged in the discussion forums, answered questions in the PF and QTI forums, but I think it is fair to say that warmth and grace were an underwhelming part of my demeanor.

What became apparent over time was that this formality and lack of flexibility in my engagement in these areas of the classroom seemed to spill over to the discussion forums and had an impact on immediacy and subsequent relationships with students. I am willing to say that I was stubborn in my stance for a while as I was still learning the ropes, but I started to see that perhaps my strict approach resulted in a lack of trust, and maybe even respect, that may have given students pause in replying to my DQ posts. I was present, but not emotionally present. I worked to provide relevant, interesting information that students could benefit from, yet I often did not get the replies I would have liked. As a student in an online classroom, it can be intimidating to share opinions and insight with peers and instructors on terms and concepts that are new. That feeling could be exacerbated when my actions did little to decrease the psychological distance between my students and myself.

## REASONS

### *Reason One: The Teacher*

In identifying and defining the problem, it is necessary to determine potential reasons for it. In talking about the differences in immediacy between the K-12 and higher education, online settings, one reason that can contribute to the problem is the teacher themselves. As mentioned, as a K-12 teacher, I had a stricter, authoritarian approach in my classroom management style, yet I quickly found this was not the most favorable method for use with adult learners. Immediacy

is increased or decreased by the manner in which a teacher interacts with students. As a private person in general, I also found myself to be less personable early on in my online teaching career, making it more difficult to bridge the relationship-building gap. Further, an online instructor with previous K-12 teaching experience may have different or unreasonable expectations of student engagement from adult learners in an online classroom. I frequently create new, compelling posts for students, so naturally I expect them to want to reply to such interesting material!

### *Reason Two: The Learner*

A second reason these differences in immediacy may occur is the learner. Adult learners pursue higher education for a wide variety of reasons, such as to obtain a promotion within an organization, to increase earning potential, and/or to land a position in a different field or simply for personal achievement. Unlike children, adult learners attend school while working full-time, raising families, dealing with illness, and other life circumstances. Time becomes a precious commodity, and schoolwork sometimes falls victim, affecting motivation. With this wide variation in motivation comes an equal variation in student engagement, as well as the level of student-teacher interaction.

More often than not, children seek out interaction with teachers and enjoy the attention. A level of nurturing takes place as children and teachers spend a great deal of time together for the better part of a year, in turn creating a bond benefitted by both physical and emotional presence. Adult learners, on the other hand, differ greatly in their desire for attention from teachers. There are those that thrive on attention and seek a connection and those that would rather remain under the radar.

### *Reason Three: The Learning Environment*

Lastly, the learning environment can be considered as a potential reason for differences in immediacy between teaching K-12 and online. In a traditional classroom, students can raise their hand for help from a teacher. In an online classroom, students can ask questions, yet several reasons exist that may prevent this from occurring. As previously described, there are appropriate forums where questions can be asked, such as the Private Forum or Questions to Instructor; however, it is an extra step to navigate there, possibly preventing



students from taking the time to do so. Another factor to consider if a student does in fact ask a question or seek help is the potential for a time delay between the ask and receiving a reply. In my case, instructors are expected to reply by the next business day. Assignments are due on Sundays, meaning if a student waits until late on a Friday evening to ask for help, he or she may not receive a reply until the following Monday after the deadline has passed.

## EVALUATION

Possible reasons contributing to the unexpected differences in immediacy between the online and K-12 classrooms, the teacher, the learner, and the learning environment should be evaluated to determine the most likely culprit. Additionally, it is important explain the progression of trial and error on my part in regard to each. There was no proverbial path to follow in my attempts to improve immediacy and strengthen relationships between myself and my online adult students; I adjusted my style and approach over time as I learned what worked and did not.

### *Reason One: The Teacher*

The first proposed reason for the problem related to myself as a teacher and how I may have contributed to the differences in achieving immediacy once I transitioned to teaching in an online setting with adult learners as opposed to K-12 students. While student-to-content and student-to-student interactions play an important role in the student's successful learning environment, interaction with the instructor is key in establishing the learning environment as a positive experience that supports enhanced learning and appeals to adult students (as cited in Jackson, 2019, p. 2). When I began teaching online, I did so in the same manner I had in the K-12 classroom, and it did not occur to me that this may have detracted from immediacy rather than enhancing it. My early attempts at maintaining a stricter approach and a less personable demeanor may have decreased the positive aspect of the student learning experience; I was aware that it did not appeal to some students. While it did potentially create psychological distance between students and myself, I believe it was a necessary part of my own education in learning how to manage an online classroom. It provided me with structure and allowed me to apply university policies in

a fair, equitable manner. Interestingly, research conducted on beginning teachers showed that with training, they quickly learned the importance of establishing positive interpersonal relationships with students and embraced specific strategies to develop them (Baker, Gentry, & Larmer, 2016). Conversely, when I became more comfortable with overall classroom management, including how to best meet the requirements of my role, I began to slowly alter my approach with students. It was a humbling experience to admit that being a teacher by training did not magically translate into being the best online teacher I could be.

I shared before that early on most of my DQ posts consisted of scholarly material with relevant follow-up questions for students to consider. While I still maintain this practice often as a means to solidify course concepts, I began to add posts that were less scholarly and focused more on personal or real-life experiences. Dickinson (2017) discovered that her written communication style failed to break down psychological distance between herself and students; she adapted her writing style to add personal touches and reported a positive response from students. Similarly, I also stepped out of my comfort zone and started to share my own personal experiences and write in my own voice rather than maintain a strictly academic tone. I quickly saw a change in both the frequency and tone in student replies; they seemed to enjoy the opportunity to lighten the mood a bit while still having relevant, meaningful conversations.

Another area in which I made changes to better meet the needs of adult students is in regard to my late policy. Nicholas (2019) demonstrates the importance of recognizing the struggles and aspirations of non-traditional students in order to facilitate student success. While students have up to nine days beyond the due date to submit late assignments per the University late policy, the deduction of 10% can add up quickly. To help when students are in a bind, I changed my own practice and deduct 5% per day instead.

### *Reason Two: The Learner*

Dewey stated about learning, "Students should be active, not passive, and have compelling and relevant projects, not lectures. Interest, not fear, should motivate them" (as cited in Beckett, p. 57). As previously discussed, motivation in adult

learners varies widely and subsequently affects what different individuals find compelling and/or relevant at any given time. Currently, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is having a drastic impact on student motivation and participation. Stress is a common concern in adult students in general, but added worry and fear have exacerbated the problem recently. Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) noted the wide variety of reasons undergraduate student stress occurs, including failure in academic work, financial and/or health problems, death of family members, or other social problems. I have students working in the healthcare field, as first responders and in roles tasked with managing public response that are each having difficulty finding time for schoolwork due to required overtime hours. Other students have suffered job loss and have children at home due to widespread school closures, while others have become ill from the virus themselves. Finding motivation to log in and engage with others can be difficult at best.

I have found myself adjusting in two ways to alleviate stress and motivate my students during this time. First, I have begun to incorporate COVID-19 into my discussion forum posts at times when it relates to the course concepts; with the widespread impact it is having on our economy, jobs, and organizations, it has become an easy fit in my Organizational Behavior and Management course. Infusing socially relevant topics allows students and instructors to relate on a different level, particularly valuable during a time such as this. Kilis and Yildirim (2019) discussed the importance of social presence as it affects learning through social interaction. At first, I was hesitant to talk about it because of the brevity of the situation; however, as we move further into this new way of life, I believe it has been healing and cathartic to address it openly. My students seem to agree, and it has generated heart-felt, worthy conversations.

The second change has come in the form of grace. We are all impacted by this virus and its effects in one way or another, so I would be remiss as a teacher, and a human being, if I did not exercise empathy and grace in trying to help students when possible. Social empathy is “the ability to understand people by perceiving or experiencing their lived situations and as a result gain insight into structural inequalities and disparities” (Meyers, Rowell, Wells, & Smith, 2019, para. 6). Personal

experiences are greatly affecting students’ lives and subsequently, classwork, which calls for the ability to adjust. For example, if a student posts the required number of participation replies, but is unable to do so on three days of the week, I have made the effort to acknowledge the effort and award full points.

Not surprisingly, student communication about difficulties associated with COVID-19 have increased drastically, and I converse with students about it in the Private forum on a daily basis. My tone has changed over time with students to be more personable, yet recently I connect on a personal level with students more than ever due to this common bond we now all share. While it has caused tragedy, loss, and death, this virus has played a role in bringing people together too, and my classroom has not been an exception.

### *Reason Three: The Learning Environment*

In a study by Charbonneau-Gowdy (2018), online instructors reported feeling empowered as 21st-century educators with emerging expertise to affect change in an innovative setting. I am fortunate that the university I teach for has invested heavily in online education, so our online platform is a leader in the field, yet some students still face difficulties at times, while others do not take full advantage of its features leading to a missed opportunity for immediacy. As described, the Questions to Instructor forum and Private forum are available to facilitate a means for students to seek help; however, not all students take advantage of this when having difficulty in class. It does take extra steps to navigate to this forum, which may prevent some students from using it due to the extra time needed.

One step I began practicing to draw students to engage in the Private forum is a welcome video (using an application called Loom) that I provide of myself giving them tips on how to be successful in class. Online adult learners were asked to rate the use of teacher-created videos and an overall student satisfaction was reported for their positive perceptions in relation to learning (Rajadell and Garriga-Garzón, 2017). Being in front of the camera, especially video format, is out of my comfort zone, but I regularly receive positive feedback from students thankful for the personal touch and the ability to “put a face to the name.”

The other factor to consider in relation to the learning environment is the potential for delay between when a student reaches out and when I reply. While I check for questions throughout each weekday and my replies come within the allowed time frame of the next business day, students can still experience frustration while waiting. Gradually, I have developed a range of resources designed to address many of the frequent common issues, concerns, or questions that may come up. I am fortunate to work with a collaborative group of colleagues who also teach the same course; when changes occur in our class, we come together and divide the workload to develop and share materials for consistency across our classes. The weekly announcements have evolved to be informative, yet concise and easy to read. Martin and Bolliger (2018) found that adult students in an online environment rated regular announcements as a “very important” teacher engagement strategy.

To further improve immediacy in my classrooms, I now make videos for visual learners, as well as APA formatted assignment templates that describe how to meet grading rubric requirements for each written assignment. Additional DQ posts with assignment details and guidance are provided as well. These nonverbal actions decrease psychological distance between students and myself, even in an asynchronous environment. Bialowas and Steimel (2019) noted, “Instructors who have greater immediacy behaviors will lead to greater success and satisfaction in the classroom while creating an environment where student motivation, engagement, and learning can flourish” (p. 355).

## DECISION

To review, three distinct reasons were outlined as potential factors for the unexpected differences in immediacy between the K-12 classroom setting and the online environment. First, my role as a teacher and what part I played in those differences was investigated. Second, the learner was investigated, and third the learning environment was investigated. Each of these factors were implicitly connected in contributing to the differences I experienced related to a lack of immediacy in the online classroom, yet ultimately, myself as the teacher is the most plausible explanation as to why these differences occurred.

Mentioned was the consideration of student-content and student-student interactions, but student-teacher interactions remained the more central and impactful of the three in regard to immediacy. In exploring the learner and the learning environment, it was clear that as the teacher, I was the common thread in each. As the teacher, I am also the one that has the most control to affect the other two variables. In hindsight, this seems apparent, but I do not believe I had a clear idea of the scope of influence until engaging in this reflective exploration. It became evident, however, as I continued to write about my journey that I needed to adapt and adjust to improve the psychological, if not physical, distance for individual students and the class as a whole.

My transition from the K-12 setting to an online format, and moving from educating children to adult learners, changed how I interacted with students as well. Working in a face-to-face setting allows for physical proximity, and all participants reap the rewards of that familiarity. The challenge of duplicating that in the online classroom is not something I anticipated, and it proved to be a struggle. To complicate things, I also did not immediately understand the need to alter my demeanor to meet the needs of adult learners as opposed to K-12 students.

Demeanor and personality play a large role in interpersonal relationships, which can be difficult to demonstrate in an online setting, but again, in the outcome of potential reasons for changes in immediacy, this was my responsibility to adjust and adapt. Effective communication is more than clearly relaying information; it includes the ability to allow personality to show through as well. I believe I am an effective communicator, but I did learn over time that tone sets the mood in an online class for each student I speak with, and that mood is my obligation to cultivate. If it is going to be positive, it is up to me. Personality began to be a recurring theme in the reflection, not only in how I directly communicate with students, but with the way I engage in classroom discussions, whether or not I share personal stories or relevant experiences, policy adaptations, and even the level of enthusiasm I show in class communications such as announcements.

Ultimately, the teacher, whether in an online platform or face-to-face learning environment,



and regardless of student demographics, is the central component that makes or breaks the relationships built. He or she is the proverbial glue that strengthens the bond between teacher and student. The gravity of this responsibility cannot be ignored. Allowing myself the vulnerability to complete this reflection and look inward proved to be an invaluable introspective opportunity to realize the benefit of continual change and growth.

## REFLECTIVE CRITIQUE

The experience of this reflective practice has been insightful, yet humbling. When I began the process, I consulted with a colleague familiar with this practice, and the advice given was to be vulnerable. Generally speaking, vulnerability is not something one tends to strive for, and it was a difficult concept to embrace. Surprisingly though, that single piece of guidance alone was probably the most meaningful and significant. It shifted my thought process and allowed me to open up and be real about my experience. As I wrote several times above, I am a private person so initially this was a challenge, but I found myself free from the confines of more traditional academic writing.

I was a confident classroom teacher in the K-12 setting and carried that confidence into my online teaching career, only to find out it was not quite as easy as I had anticipated. Clearly, there are differences between children and adult learners, as well as the traditional classroom setting as opposed to an online platform, yet I assumed that my teaching skills and demeanor would easily translate, but I was wrong. I had the foundation for being a good online teacher, but it turned out to be a longer work in progress than I had anticipated.

Practitioners seeking to explore similar issues among teachers transitioning between different learning environments and/or different student populations may find this reflection beneficial in decreasing the transition time for teachers in the future. One of my reasons considered for the differences in immediacy between the two teaching environments was the learning environment itself. While the university I teach for has an innovative, easy-to-use learning platform, further insight may be useful for those teaching in a less desirable or effective online classroom. Seeking and evaluating student perception of teacher immediacy would provide beneficial, as well as learning from other

faculty experiences as well. I wrote this reflection solely from my perspective; however, facilitating a focus group or other means to explore differing views and experiences would be advantageous. Personality differences in comparing introverts' and extroverts' ability to establish immediacy would be a valuable topic in helping individuals learn how to best leverage their personality style in the online classroom. Lastly, course content was not explored here, yet could be responsible for either increasing or decreasing immediacy and is worthy of further discovery.

Recommendations for further research or inquiry in this area are boundless, yet key areas stand out. In my case, a rather informal training period was provided, largely centered around university policies and Online Full-Time Faculty (OFTF) expectations; however, no specific training was in place in regard to teaching, classroom management, interpersonal communication, or interacting with students in the online platform. Research into the benefits of a structured training program to identify the benefits to new online faculty, even those with prior teaching experience, could provide a framework for best practices in this regard.

Exploration into defined mentorship opportunities is another area of focus future practitioners may consider. Arguably, the best resource and support I received as a new OFTF was help from a seasoned colleague who operated as an informal mentor. Not only did I have the opportunity to sit with a colleague and observe in real time how classroom activities occurred and expectations were met, I was also the recipient of materials used by a veteran faculty member who was generous enough to share. While I am indebted to my colleague, I feel that the implementation of a more formalized mentor program is worth consideration. The benefit extends not only to new faculty, but to potential mentors as well. Mentorship requires a great deal from an individual, as the onus is great in aiding the professional development of a new employee.

Research further exploring the differences between teaching modalities and student populations would be of benefit to those considering a change in practice or those responsible for developing training or curriculum for new employees. Creating an effective training program requires in-depth knowledge of both hard and soft skills needed for a



position, but possessing research-based knowledge drawing connections between past, present and future experiences could elevate the transition and become a positive feature in every new faculty member's tool belt.

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