

Personal Teaching Philosophy and Commitment to Excellence in Education
By Leonardo Zuno

Statement on education:

Education is everyone's right and should have as its primary aim *the transformation of the person and by extension, of the culture*. Learning is much more than the exchange of facts, but reaches much deeper into the human quest to be *faithful stewards of the created order by desiring to know more about it through education*. A good educator **lights a fire of awe** into the hearts and minds of students: 1) awe for the transformation that happens between not knowing something and finally knowing the very same thing that once was unknown; 2) the awe of deepening of knowledge in an area that one already knew about; and finally, 3) the awe of finding ways to apply theoretical knowledge into practice for the common good.

As an educator, I can best express my teaching philosophy by the commitments I make:

-***Student-centered instruction***, where the classroom **environment** promotes equity, excellence, and learning, where expectations, rules, and procedures are clearly **communicated**.

-I will always ***display professionalism in every task***, however large or small it may be. I will always aim to be 'advanced competent' and even 'proficient' at all areas of my teaching.

-My students will learn with ***college readiness*** in mind, knowing that the future is what they make of it... ***starting now!***

-I will always use of helpful teaching strategies, including the ones that I, ***a professional thief of good ideas***, have learned from master teachers.

-I myself will abide by the class rules, because they are '***our rules!***'
Timeliness, Trust and respect, Team-players... all of us, Take responsibility, Truthfulness and honesty.

-I will keep up with the research and ***face the facts*** that will make me a better teacher and my students more motivated independent learners.

-I will ***keep my students' minds excited*** with novelty, intensive learning, constant movement, relevant topics, and an emotional personal connection to the subject being taught.

-I will address my students' short- and long-term memories and will give them creative ways to ***retrieve the information*** learned in class. My students will become ***professional problem-solvers*** by facing them with challenges relevant to the subject matter.

-I will always operate under ***a vision of students as life-long learners*** with great skills in problem-solving and critical thinking.

-I will search for the ***Zone of Proximal Development*** that challenges students. I will create a ***cultural/communal context*** for learning and cooperation among peers, and by means of ***scaffolding***, will gradually turn things over to students. –Mr. Lev Vygotsky gets credit for these ideas!

-I will **bridge** previously-learned material with new content and will challenge students with **inductive reasoning and critical thinking skills**.

-I will keep in mind my **students' diversity**, including the diversity of their **multiple intelligences** and all that it entails for my own teaching approach... there will always be some activity that will **engage students on their level**.

-I will teach general topics and will **address the particulars/specifics** once students **first understand the big picture**. Especially with the little ones, I will teach using **concrete** examples and models and move **toward the abstract**, higher-order thinking activities as they mature.

-I will **establish a culture of learning**, good student/teacher rapport, effective procedures, and fair rules for the good of all, with an organized physical space and a very positive and encouraging mental set.

-**High expectations will always be the constant norm**, and students will know how much I care about their success... because as I've heard: 'Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care.'

-I will be kind, professional, strict, and fun **all at once** --and will do my best to always **keep my 'with-it-ness' sharp at all times** while maintaining emotional objectivity and treating every student with the same respect that is due to his or her human dignity.

-I will always use **thorough cycles of instruction**, ensuring that I am **not only teaching until I am blue in the face**, but that my **students are actually learning and that they can demonstrate it**.

-I am committed to all of the above ways of showing excellence in the classroom, because this –I firmly believe—is good education!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leonardo Zuno". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.