

# ARAVIND KAILAS

## TEACHING AND LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

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*“The best teachers are those who are humble and want to teach from their own experience. They teach because they have compassion for others and do not want them to have to learn everything the hard way. They also have patience and are willing to endure the learning process. They teach the lesson with meekness, recognizing that the table will be turned someday and they will become the students again, and with kindness, knowing they are not superior, but equal to the student.”*

– Randy Gilbert, from the book *Success Bound - Breaking Free of Mediocrity*.

Good teaching is about the relationship between the teacher and the students; teachers get good results because they enter into that relationship. Advancing these relationships by creating an atmosphere congenial for student learning is what separates the speaker (or lecturer) from the teacher.

Not all students learn in the same way. Hence, to increase the chances that the instruction style will help a greater number of students learn more effectively, one ought to adapt the style of instruction appropriate to the audience. Also, it is vital to create an ambience where student learning is at a premium. Student-centered teaching involves considering alternative ways to present material, design assignments, and assess learning so that students can have more than one option for learning and for demonstrating what they have learned. In inclusive classrooms (student-centered classrooms), no one is stressed, the students are actively engaged, and the teacher is delighted to be there. Moreover, inclusion means providing more ways for students to learn. An inclusive-informal classroom setting enhances the relationship between the teacher and the student and fosters student learning. *A person who is good at teaching* uses this tool very effectively. The end result is that both (the teacher and the students) are on the same page; informal two-way dialogues increase and the classroom starts resembling a learning community, and I believe that students who learn together, learn to live together.

Fostering equitable class participation with regularity, goes a long way in enhancing student learning and building this learning community. In the classroom study I conducted as a Teaching Assistant, such class involvement (for example, randomly sampling the class with short questions) was welcomed by 88% of my students. Sometimes, I asked students to help me solve a numerical example on the blackboard thereby, facilitating student involvement. However, I did make my objective very clear to the students (and that it was okay to err or not know or guess) and 78% of them felt that this helped them think and even improve their presentation skills. I believe a problem-based learning (confront the students with the problem, then teach them a concept to get around it) approach is really helpful. A classroom experiment I conducted revealed that this technique helped 93% of my students grasp a concept better. Ironically, experience has taught me that there is no one best way; the key lies in knowing your audience, and connecting with them at an intellectual and emotional level.

Every teacher must be cognizant of two issues: owning responsibility for one’s teaching and knowing what students want. On a concluding note, the quote below recapitulates my philosophy on good teaching and learning.

*“We think too much about effective methods of teaching and not enough about effective methods of learning.”*

– John Carolus S. J.