Kathryn P. Chapman
Teaching Philosophy Statement

My goal as an educator is to provide all students with high-quality interactive learning opportunities in which they will gain knowledge, challenge their thinking, and apply their newfound understanding. Following Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, I support students as they grow as learners and scholars, as individuals and as part of a greater community. I believe that educational environments, including early childhood (i.e., children ages birth through age-four) classrooms, P-12 schools, and higher education institutions, provide settings for critical and safe exploration of deep systemic issues related to race, class, gender, sexuality, and more, and the approach I take in addressing these issues may affect greater education systems. I support my students in their critiquing of inequitable educational practices and the acknowledgement of their roles of power and privilege and, in turn, acknowledge and question my role as their educator. I believe that the role of an educator is reflective, and I constantly and diligently work to increase my effectiveness and develop my teaching skills.

As an educator and professor, my role is to facilitate learning. I value helping students improve their skills, question their thinking, gain new abilities, acquire new information, and apply their knowledge to real-world situations. I strive not only to increase students' knowledge of content areas, but to also support them in constantly questioning inequitable educational practices and thinking about how their actions as educators and leaders have the potential of making a larger impact beyond their classrooms, schools, and communities. Through Socratic dialogue, class conversations, writing exercises, and online discussion boards, I encourage my students to think critically, address various questions, and synthesize information from a variety of sources. In an Introduction to Qualitative Research course and Practicum courses with pre-service early childhood teachers, Socratic dialogue was especially useful for students to process through their ideas and question their thinking as they were first learning about various qualitative research and teaching methods, respectively.

In a university environment, I believe that all students should feel comfortable and welcome to share their ideas, experiences, and understanding of the material presented, as influenced by their background knowledge. As a professor, I aim to create an inclusive classroom or online learning environment where all students feel appreciated. I have facilitated this environment by encouraging conversations, allowing students to speak honestly, and supporting them as they encounter, challenge, and work through difficult concepts. I also am vigilantly aware of the individual needs of my students and have provided alternative learning opportunities. For example, in an Early Childhood Assessment course, I encouraged the students to form study groups and create Google documents of notes from course readings, activities, and lectures. I then allowed the students to use those notes and partner together to take in-class exams. I found that the students scored higher and gave thorough written answers on their exams when they were able to think collectively about their responses.

Being an effective educator also means that the professor works to fully engage students during each class session, whether it is in a face-to-face or online environment. I encourage students to actively participate, verbally ask questions, provide input and feedback to me as their professor, and take ownership in their learning. In face-to-face Early Childhood Assessment courses and Practicum courses for pre-service early childhood teachers, I have given students opportunities for providing and receiving feedback, which included exit slips where students wrote one thing they clearly understood, addressed questions that they did not ask in class, or gave suggestions for topics they wanted to discuss during future class sessions. I have also provided online discussion boards for Design and Development of Instruction asynchronous online courses where students asked questions of their classmates and of me in order to better understand the topics that were discussed in class lecture videos or the assignments through which they were working.

Through my previous teaching experiences, I have found that students pay closer attention, ask more questions, and engage with the topics being discussed in class if I also am engaged and excited. I am always willing to work with my future faculty colleagues to learn and try new teaching techniques per their recommendations for engaging my students and receive constructive feedback from them for improving my teaching.