Teaching Philosophy
By: Lynsey Saunders

“Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

Having the opportunity to spend a greater part of my life around salt water, I have learned a thing or two about fishing – it may take a while to hook the big one, and the fish tastes better when you catch it. Spending time out on the water and earning my “sea legs”, while fishing with my family gave me the opportunity to learn some lessons that have affected every aspect of my life and has even trickled over in to how I teach.

Hook and bait the rod yourself. You have to get your hands dirty.
I believe in having a hands-on approach with the students I teach. This hands-on approach involves me interacting with the students both in the classroom while I teach, and beyond the classroom, where I am available to answer any questions the students may have. I try my best to incorporate diverse, interactive learning into my curriculum, which encourages the students to apply their critical-thinking skills to real-life scenarios. This is so that my students remember that with any skill or craft, practice makes perfect.

There are plenty fish in that sea, eventually you will catch one. Be patient.
Letting my students know that they may not get an idea or concept on the first try is crucial to me. Not to tear them down, but to build them up by teaching them realistic outcomes. I think it is important to remind the students that perfection on the first try is not necessary. What is necessary, is trying your best, because eventually (usually sooner than you think), the fish will bite.

While you have your feet up and rod in the water waiting for a bite, take some time to reflect.
Looking at the ‘big picture’ helps the students keep their learning in perspective. I believe that in order to be a well-rounded student (and teacher), it is necessary to reflect upon the work that you do or the craft you are learning. I like to get the students to start thinking about questions that put their work in perspective. I want my students to think about making their work meaningful. Every student should know that the work that they do, or the skill that they learn will contribute one way or another to the society they live in. Reflection also promotes problem-solving and finding ways to improve their work.

Don’t let the fish pull you in!
I like to let me students know that the work they do now is only a means to an end, or the piece of a puzzle. They should never let their work get the best of them.

You caught the fish! Now what?
Learning that catching that fish is only the beginning was crucial for me. I caught the first one, but it wasn’t time to go. I had to bait the hook, and start all over. We continued to catch fish and headed home before the sun went down. Once back at the dock, it was time to clean the boat, take the fish home clean them, and then prepare the fish to cook. If I wanted more fish when I cook and ate the ones I caught, I had to go out and catch some more.
I want my students to know that their work and their learning extends beyond the classroom. The real responsibility begins once you “catch the fish”. It is important my
students know that following through, learning to work together to get the job done, and learning how to complete a project from start to finish is necessary when it comes to learning. I like to let my students know that the learning that happens in the classroom is only the beginning. I teach them how to “catch the fish”, and they are responsible for going home and continuing their learning by finding creative, productive, and fruitful ways to apply their learning beyond the classroom.