



From Classroom to Corporate: How Teaching Transformed My Approach to Innovation and Inclusion

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My transition from the classroom to the corporate world has been a transformative journey, blending continuous learning with adaptive expertise. The skills I have developed as an educator—especially in curriculum development and instructional leadership—have been incredibly valuable in my current role as a Service Manager at Evaluation Systems of Pearson.

Prior to my time at Evaluation Systems, I served as the Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction and as a Lead Kindergarten Teacher at Ignite Achievement Academy in Indianapolis, IN. I led comprehensive curriculum planning, supported a plurality of learners, and tailored instruction to meet individual student needs. This experience instilled in me the importance of addressing fundamental needs to foster a supportive learning environment.

As a recipient of the AmeriCorps Award and Teacher of the Year, education has shaped my ability to create solutions that prioritize clarity and accessibility. This approach helps me in my current role to not only drive innovation but also fosters a work environment that is as supportive as the educational environments I once was fortunate enough to grow within.

Leveraging Educational Expertise in a Corporate Setting

In the classroom, developing curriculum requires a deep understanding of how students learn and retain information. This insight is directly applicable to my current role, where I create strategies and business requirements for new features and product services. The meticulous planning and attention to detail required for curriculum development are now reflected in my approach to managing our internal processes and tools, ensuring that they address the changing needs of our internal stakeholders.

My experience leading a team of educators has equipped me with the skills to lead and engage with disparate functional teams effectively.

Communicating key messages and securing strategic buy-in from various internal teams is crucial in my role, a skill I honed extensively as an instructional leader.

Just as I had to keep instructional programs relevant and up to date, I now focus on the continuous improvement of Evaluation Systems' features and services, aligning them with the needs of the teams that support our clients.

Bridging the Gap Between Education and Corporate Innovation

Understanding the end user—whether a student or a stakeholder—is critical in both teaching and my corporate role. In the classroom, I ensured lessons were engaging, clear, and accessible to all learners. Similarly, in my current role, I draw on my classroom experience to make sure the processes and tools that we develop are user-friendly and intuitive for our internal stakeholders.

By focusing on clarity and ease of use, I help empower our teams to work more efficiently, ultimately improving their ability to serve our clients.

If you can build effective processes and structures that work for 36 kindergarteners, creating solutions for adults can sometimes be less challenging!

The Value of Patience, Empathy, and Structure

A key skill I've brought from teaching to my current role is the ability to break down complex information into manageable, digestible pieces. This skill was essential in helping students of varying abilities grasp challenging concepts. Now, I apply this skill to communicate effectively with cross-functional teams and stakeholders, ensuring alignment toward common goals.

My classroom management experience also plays a key role in my current work. The organizational and time management skills I developed while balancing the demands of a busy classroom have been essential to overseeing multiple projects, ensuring they progress smoothly and efficiently. The patience and empathy I cultivated as an educator also help me to navigate the needs and perspectives of my colleagues, fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment.

A Commitment to Inclusion

My time at Ignite Achievement Academy, particularly my work with the local community, has profoundly shaped my understanding of education. I learned that creating an effective learning environment involves more than providing the same resources to all—it requires understanding and addressing each individual's unique challenges. This principle continues to guide my approach at Evaluation Systems, where I strive to ensure the tools and processes we create are inclusive and accessible to all stakeholders, regardless of their background or experience level.

A memorable experience from my teaching days illustrates this lesson. One day a student's mother handed me a slip of paper with her phone number. She said, "Here is my phone number for when you need it, he is a bad kid."

In my experience, no child is inherently "bad." Such labels can follow children for years, shaping their self-esteem and how others perceive them. As I became familiar with the boy, his struggles became apparent. He had difficulty following instructions, frequently acted out, and seemed to live in a state of perpetual agitation. Traditional classroom management techniques failed to reach him; he disrupted lessons, resisted group activities, and isolated himself, often hiding under tables or in corners.

One day I witnessed him in a full-blown tantrum. He found an old cardboard box and was tearing it apart. I watched silently as he channeled his frustration into that box, ripping it to shreds until he was exhausted. Finally, he approached me, eyes still wet with tears, and whispered, "Can I have a hug?" I knew in that moment that this wasn't a "bad" kid, but one struggling with overwhelming emotions that he didn't know how to express.

That day, I decided to try a different approach. I borrowed a desk and placed it in the back of our classroom. I draped a blanket over it, creating a small, dark cave where he could retreat when the world became too much. I set up a clipboard and a pen inside and made a deal with him: he could use the special desk when he felt overwhelmed, as long as it didn't disrupt the class, and he didn't stay there too long.

This simple act of creating a safe space had a profound effect. Over the weeks that followed, his outbursts became less frequent, and he began participating more in class. By the end of the year, the boy once labeled "bad", was reading at a second-grade level and solving first-grade math problems—all while still in kindergarten.

This experience guides my work at Evaluation Systems. It drives my commitment to creating environments that allow all individuals to thrive, just as that young boy did when he was finally given the space and support that he needed to be successful.

My goal is to ensure that our tools and processes are designed to be as inclusive and empowering as the safe space I created for the boy.

By applying the same principles of empathy, patience, and support in our corporate setting, I strive to enhance our organizational culture and drive meaningful innovation. Just as every child deserves the opportunity to succeed, so does every team member, and it is my goal to create conditions where everyone on our team can reach their full potential.

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