

## My Philosophy of Teaching

*A skillful educator builds good relationships with her students based on mutual respect and trust and sets the tone for a classroom community.*

When I think about my role as a teacher, the one thing that I constantly have focused on is the relationships that I have built with my students. I enjoy having conversations with them on subjects and issues that are important to them, and learn how they are feeling about and experiencing the world and the material that we are studying in class. I want my own classroom to be less of a *class* and more of a *community*, where we are all sharing ideas and communicating and learning from one another at the same time. This is one of the reasons why I focused on teaching middle and high school students; the maturity level of these students gives them the ability to clearly articulate their own thoughts and feelings. I have a very firm belief that young people have the ability to make great changes in the world if they are given the right information and tools, and I want to help my English and Spanish students reach their goals in life by giving them the tools to better communicate with other citizens of their country and world.

*She provides them with the tools to be successful in an information literate society...*

I am very enthusiastic about working with middle and high school students. They are at the age when they are just starting to consider who they are and where they want to go in life, and I believe that this is one of the most important periods in personal development. Adolescent students are fragile; they thirst for acceptance, encouragement, and recognition, and their hopes can be easily dashed with a wrong word or a disappointing outcome. These characteristics bring a positive challenge to the prospect of teaching in a middle or high school; I want to be a positive role model and "cheerleader" for my students, to be a listening ear, a knowledgeable resource and a collaborator for problem solving in class. I also want to give my students some level of independence in relationship to the work that they are doing in class; at this age, the majority of students desire more responsibility and control over their own success. I want to provide opportunities for them to build these skills while they are in my class.

*...and allows them the freedom to express themselves and room to grow as human beings and learners while setting appropriate limits.*

I believe that a good relationship between a middle or high school teacher and her students is built on a strong foundation of mutual understanding, respect, and trust. In order to effectively assess students' wants and needs, the teacher must first understand her students and where they're coming from. The teacher must be the first to open the doors of good communication, as not all students and parents will show that initiative. She must also be willing to communicate her own expectations to the class; having a sincere attitude toward her students and showing a concern for both their classwork and their lives is important when doing this. When both the teacher and students understand each other's goals and points of view, the building blocks of mutual respect are developed. Both teachers and students seek and deserve respect as human beings and individuals; teachers also seek respect in the professional sense, but must be careful how they go about it. As a teacher, I will be in a position of authority, but I don't want to be an authoritarian or tyrant. I will also have the

*A skillful educator understands the importance of building a support network for students between school and home, and may have to be the first to initiate that teamwork.*

opportunity to be a friend and confidante for many of my students, but I don't want to cross the line of professionalism. The writing teacher must be especially careful to explain those situations in which she may have to break a student's trust in order to comply with the law; for example, if the students reveal through their writing that they are being abused or are an accomplice in a crime.

*She must create a welcoming, safe classroom atmosphere that is accessible to all students and that celebrates their diversity.*

The teacher must create a classroom atmosphere that is welcoming and accessible; a place that students feel comfortable coming to and where they know how to use the resources that are provided. The teacher should explain the use of these resources to her students, and make special plans for the inclusion of students with special needs and students for whom English is a second language. The classroom walls should be interestingly and usefully decorated; bulletin boards for displaying examples of students' work and interesting information about the topics the class is studying, seasonal decorations, and calendar/announcement boards help make the classroom attractive and engaging. The classroom should be kept neat and organized, and should be run in an organized fashion so that students know what to expect.

*She must conduct herself with professionalism and consistency and share her enthusiasm and passion for learning with her students each day.*

I believe that in order to foster learning in the best way possible, the teacher needs to be enthusiastic about the material being studied, even when her students aren't. She needs to be the coach and cheerleader for the class, and point out the positives about each student's work in a sincere way, alongside constructive criticism. She must be open to diversity and a wide range of opinions and ideas, and must set classroom standards so that the students can respect and trust one another. She must be willing to listen and compromise, but be firm in her decisions and promises. A "stagnant" teacher is no good to the class – a teacher is not just a teacher but a lifelong learner. Therefore, she must also continue to build her wealth of professional knowledge, taking additional courses, advancing her degree and attending workshops and conferences with fellow teachers to exchange ideas and theories and learn new things in order to give her students the most up-to-date information possible.

*She must be dedicated to lifelong learning and desire to make contributions to her team of colleagues and to the field of education.*

My philosophy of education is based on what I know and have experienced at this point in my career. I am sure that my teaching philosophy will change as I learn more as a young professional. That's one of the gifts of being human; we can make mistakes, or learn something new, and make a change for the better. I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.