
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I became a teacher because of the impact that my first grade teacher had on me. She was full of humor, organized, bubbly, and encouraging. The most impactful memory I had from that year was how much I wrote; she had us write so many stories, from the first draft to the final draft that included pictures we drew ourselves. She had our stories published at the end of the year in a hardcover book that I still have today. She taught me the importance of learning from my mistakes, how to share, and how to be kind. Those skills and lessons transpired into the rest of the years of my schooling, into my relationships with my family and friends, and how I approach teaching as an educator today.

I believe in educating the whole student because students are bringing their whole selves into the classroom. Not every student loves to read, and they probably don't think they're the best writer. As their teacher, I hope to instill in them a passion to try new things, encouragement to never give up and to learn from their mistakes, curiosity to always ask questions, and confidence that they can achieve both their personal and academic goals.

When students attend my class, they are greeted with a personal and genuine greeting to see how they're doing today. I take the time to follow up with students who perhaps struggled with the last lesson, and I always begin my lessons by reviewing past material. It's essential to make these connections for my students so they understand how our lessons connect and how they will help them achieve the objectives for the unit and course.

My teaching approach is based on Vygotsky's belief that learning is a social construct. As an English teacher, of content and language, I design all of my lessons so my students have as much peer contact as possible. Another teacher walking into my class might only see me talk in the front of the room for a short period of time; the rest of class is spent having my students engage with one another. Negotiation for meaning of content and language is essential for the content and language acquisition process, as is the reflecting stage. At the end of each lesson, we take time as a class to metacognitively and metalinguistically reflect on the lesson and the input the students received. Without this, students run the risk of not being aware of how far they've come, and how far they still can grow, as learners.

I also believe that my contributions to the classroom have their limitations, meaning that my students also have a responsibility to their learning. As a classroom culture, it is essential that both the teacher and the students come prepared to learn, that we show respect to other people's backgrounds and cultures, that we bring a hard work ethic, and that we learn from our mistakes. As the teacher, I cannot do the learning for my students; they must come to class with an open mind, willing to take risks and trust that they will achieve their goals. My students must also come to class knowing that they will work hard, that they will receive constructive feedback on the work they produce, and that I will hold them to high, yet achievable, standards.

I try to emulate the same amazing qualities my first grade teacher had when I interact with my students. I love to bring humor into my lessons and conversations because I believe that laughter breaks down walls and shows the real person. I love to help my students learn that their choices have both positive and negative consequences, and that they can learn from those choices if they so choose. Finally, I love to see the changes and growth of my students throughout the years, and maintain those connections after they've graduated. Being able to reconnect with students over the years, across countries and continents is amazingly rewarding in the international school setting, and I feel truly blessed to call myself an international teacher.

-Katherine Foster