

My Teaching Philosophy

Throughout my college career, I had no plans of becoming a teacher. As graduation neared, I began preparing for law school. Before I sent off all of my application materials, I spent two months trying to envision my life as an attorney. I thought of the things that made me the most happy, and I thought of the things that I considered most valuable in this life. When I tried to align those things with my future as an attorney, the pieces did not fit, and my vision for the future began to change. The most rewarding job I had ever held was a coaching position, while my minor in college had been non-profit studies. At that point I realized that my strong love for mentoring and my inclination toward philanthropy would never allow for me a fulfilled life as an attorney.

Immediately, I began applying for teaching positions overseas. I soon found myself in South Korea teaching elementary students English as a foreign language. Over the next three years of teaching, I came to several conclusions. First, I loved my job as a teacher. Second, I had a lot to learn. Finally, I began to define my teaching philosophy.

I have come to understand the harsh truth that as a teacher, I may be the only person in a child's life to support, encourage, or even pay attention to them. Therefore, it is imperative that I do everything in my power to give each student hope by providing a safe, compassionate, structured, and unbiased environment. Not only does an optimistic classroom advance young people as citizens and individuals, but it also provides an environment conducive to learning. Being positive doesn't always mean being "the nice teacher," however. Students need structure and direction to provide them with a pathway to success. Effective classroom guidelines and procedures should not only be in place, but should be consistently reinforced from day one.

There are many strategies a teacher can employ to stimulate student success. Teaching in a student's zone of proximal development is one practical way teachers can gently guide students to new levels of understanding. Using differentiated instruction to reach all the learning styles in a classroom ensures all students have a fair advantage. The use of engaging exercises to demonstrate the practical application of knowledge can help students commit lessons to long-term memory.

Supporting students means seeing and encouraging the greatest possible potential in each one. Realistically, one hundred percent of my students will not reach their full potential. It is nevertheless, essential for a teacher to be hopeful and expectant of each youth. If we assume that a child will never be all they can be, then we aren't going to fully give that child the resources for or the chance they deserve at success. Consequently, this can hinder and even disable the learning process. Each child needs to be expected to achieve high academic standards, and then given the resources to do so.

A famous Chinese proverb says, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." My job as a teacher is to provide my students with the means to develop on their own; it is to guide them in the process of self-discovery. The child must learn managing strategies for their own lives in order to become happy, successful, empowered individuals

Creating a sense of responsibility and trust among students, and between students and teacher is a great place to start. Relevantly incorporating concepts into the classroom is one way to facilitate students making their own connections between learning and life. Operantly conditioning our class with positive reinforcement can result in more respectful and harmonious classroom behavior. Using classroom strategies that demonstrate fair rewards and consequences,

Sarah K. Jones

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while also facilitating egalitarian principles, can create a model of a societal community. This is important because education is not only about preparing students to provide for themselves in the future, but to be responsible, contributing citizens in our society.

I love to teach, but even more than that, I love to watch my students become confident, capable individuals. As long as I can believe in them, provide them with a safe environment for learning, implement engaging lessons, and enable them to think for themselves, my students will have the tools for achieving greatness.