

My Philosophy of Teaching

While my philosophy of teaching is perpetually adapting and developing, my philosophy of learning has remained fairly consistent throughout my adult life up to now: learn as much as I can and take my time doing so. I am relentlessly eager to learn and constantly re-evaluating and reflecting on my previous assumptions. This inclination influences the way I teach elementary students because I appreciate this intrinsic motivation within myself and hope for my students to ultimately possess this motivation as well. Learning can be fun, difficult, interesting, frustrating or completely inspiring. Learning can be whatever you want it to be. If I have learned anything in my 28 years, it would be that I am the only being in charge of my future, which can be fun, difficult, interesting, frustrating or completely inspiring, at times. If I can inspire my students to feel as I do and take ownership of their learning and growing, learn to think critically and question everything, then I will feel I have succeeded in educating them.

This sounds simple in theory, but through my journey to become an elementary school teacher, I have become increasingly aware that I really don't know much at all. I have also learned that this is ok. We are all lifelong learners, but we are held accountable to determine what and how much we learn. That being said, I hope to shape young minds by demonstrating strategies through curricular lessons which are useful in the classroom and in life to develop their ownership of learning. Scaffolding my lessons in such a way that my students have the support they need, but are building their knowledge independently at the same time, is my ultimate goal as a new teacher.

My travel experience and my desire for adventure have led me to understand my ardent love of learning and teaching. My philosophy of teaching is not only about motivating and inspiring students to learn, but about teaching them *how* to learn and encouraging a desire to learn more. In his book, *The Element*, Sir Ken Robinson suggests that "for most of us, the problem isn't that we aim too high and fail – it's just the opposite – we aim too low and succeed." (Robinson, 2009). I want my students to *want* to come to school Monday morning, excited to find out what fun things we will be doing that day. Having fun isn't *essential* to creative work, but I often find that we are most open-minded and engaged when we feel comfortable and are having fun. Throughout many personal reflections, I have realized that, as a learner, I highly value approachable teachers who spend time to get to know me and create a comfortable, fun environment for learning. Their interest in my life motivates me to want to learn from them. I believe this mutual respect is critical in order to find success in an educational journey; to view your teacher as a mentor and not someone who is sitting in judgment. I hope my students will have an *appreciation* of learning – who view attending school as an opportunity to learn, not as an obligation.

I always enjoyed teaching others; I taught swimming lessons as a teenager, coached soccer camps as a young adult, and tutored friends throughout university, but had not planned on becoming a school teacher until a couple years ago. I obtained my undergraduate degree in Business and had plans to become a "powerful businesswoman" until I realized that while I may have been doing well in my classes, it was not my passion. Once I graduated, I worked for a while (in positions I quite enjoyed, mind you) before growing restless, feeling there should be more inspiration coming from my profession of choice. I decided to move to South Korea to teach English and that decision has been the most influential in my life. Just as I don't want school to feel like an obligation for my students, I was dreading a career where I felt obligated to go to work each day. Teaching does not feel like an obligation to me. I

have so much fun and feel that I come alive when I spend a day with my students. Combine that with opportunities to work around the world and I can't think of a career more suited to my interests.

The teachers from my past I appreciate most were the ones who made me feel valuable *because* of my uniqueness, not in spite of it. There is greatness in everyone, but some people tragically go through their entire lives without realizing theirs. While understanding the learning material is imperative, if I do not understand how to best communicate this knowledge to my students then I believe my understanding of the material is fairly useless. I want to create a meaningful classroom environment for my students. I want my students to feel comfortable and safe in my classroom. Every student brings unique ideas, experiences, confidence levels and energy to a classroom. This should be celebrated, not denied. I will encourage their critical thinking, not just the end result. Even if the answer is undeniably wrong, I will celebrate their ability to justify their reasoning. It is my responsibility to figure out the individual needs of my students and I am up for the challenge. What works for one class may not work for another, so flexibility and creativity are crucial. I value the journey above reaching the destination.

I feel I can accomplish these career goals by effectively planning detailed unit plans, especially as a new teacher. Through my weeks of practicum I have realized the importance of thorough planning and feel much more prepared and relaxed when I have detailed lessons ready with extensions and adaptations to provide contingency activities for obstacles, should they arise. Being prepared benefits me just as much as it benefits my students; I am sure they can sense me being more laid back and I have more time to have conversations with them and give them one-on-one attention.

My goal is to develop a community of learners. I am a learner just like them, and I want my students to understand that – I want my students to be able to relate to me. A deep love of learning motivates me as a teacher and I hope to pass that love of learning on to my students. In order to produce a meaningful environment and acquire a significant learning outcome, it is important to create real world connections to material and to continually grow in my ability to plan units with intentions of students experiencing and acquiring knowledge rather than simply listening to me tell them what I think they should know. I realize that teaching is full of surprises and new situations and I must be ready to adapt, react and discover new strategies – and this is what attracts me to the profession most. I love a good adventure and I have realized that adventures are the best way to learn. I will look for what sparks interest in my students and continually aim, although it will be challenging, to relate each lesson in some way to their unique interests. So even though my philosophy of *learning* is to learn as much as I can and take my time doing so, I will also enforce my philosophy of *teaching*, in which I hope to motivate my students to take advantage of every learning opportunity, because it may not be there tomorrow.