

Michelle Fleming

Teaching Philosophy

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I believe that young people who feel cared for, trusted, and respected have the greatest potential to succeed in school and in life. As a teacher, it is my responsibility to foster a caring relationship that builds trust with each and every one of my students, regardless of their background. Without these relationships, students will lack the ability to connect with me and therefore will lack the ability to connect with the lessons I am trying to teach them, both socially and cognitively. I must create a stimulating educational and social environment in my classroom where students can grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially.

My goal is to use strategies that engage students' reasoning and sharing of ideas on many different levels including individual work, small group collaboration, and whole class tasks. Individual ideas will be shared through activities like Think-Pair-Shares, World Cafes, Gallery Walks, and Socratic Seminars to allow multiple access points to knowledge and various ways in which students may feel most comfortable contributing to the conversation. Emphasis will be placed on developing problem-solving skills by being appropriately challenged through work that relates to students' zone of proximal development, encouraging experimentation by creating a safe classroom environment where all ideas are investigated, and inspiring students to be brave enough to take risks by diminishing the shame of making mistakes. Mistakes will be expected, respected, and inspected, for it is through trial and error that some of the most important ideas, discoveries and products have been created.

I recognize that I need to earn the right to ask for engagement and effort. It is critical that the students see me as someone who cares for them as learners and as human beings. Without that relationship, students cannot engage fully with content and will not work hard to understand the ideas I will be teaching them. I must show the students through my actions and words that I am working hard to create interesting, relatable, challenging, and achievable learning goals that each student can use in their current lives and their future. I will hold high standards and offer emotional support and instructional scaffolding to learners in order to reach these standards. My goal is to be a "warm demander" of my students, meaning I will expect the best from them, assure them of their own brilliance, and help them realize their talents in a disciplined, structured, and caring environment. In turn, I will show the students that they can expect me to give my best and that I will uphold high standards for myself as their teacher.

My job as a teacher is a way of contributing to my community. I will be an active member in the community I share with my students by attending sporting events or theater productions they are a part of, participating in festivals or celebrations that take place in their neighborhoods, or listening to music they are currently enjoying. These are all ways to share experiences, show caring, and establish trust with students.

I would like to be a part of a school community that works diligently to find ways to honor the struggles students are facing while trying to maintain a sense of expected behavior in classrooms and shared spaces. A team that gives students voice and choice in what the students themselves think would be a reasonable way to proceed while keeping a strong stance on making sure that boundaries are respected. Students and faculty who work together to create clear classroom expectations and a strong school community are more apt to create a learning environment that benefits all students.

Teaching is a lifelong process of learning strategies, philosophies, and ideas from students, parents, fellow educators, experts in the field, and the community. My educational philosophy will grow and change as I continue to work towards being the most supportive, challenging, fun teacher that I can be through reading, attending workshops, collaborating with peers, and being taught by my students. My life is devoted to serving my community and helping raise new generations of proud, inspired, motivated community members. I look forward to sharing this experience with multitudes of learners and educators.