

Teaching philosophy

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I have a simple creed that I follow: students first. Simple in the sense that it is two words. I believe that when you put your students first in your classroom it demonstrates patience, attentiveness, empathy and motivation. When you give priority to your content area or teaching the standards not only will your students realize where they stand on the totem pole, but burning out as a teacher seems to be much more likely. The students should be the most exciting part of your day, not the quadratic formula.

Up until this point I have worked as a private math tutor and as a Supplemental Instructor for college level classes. There would be days when you may be having a rough or stressful, day but the key to being a successful teacher is leaving those at the door. I had a two-hour session planned to help some calculus students review for their big upcoming test, and prior to planning for this session I had some of my own problems stressing me out. Once I began the session, where we were playing a review game called *trashketball*, it was easy to forget about my problems for a while and focus on the students. Selfishly putting all my positive energy into teaching was what helped me focus. This is a good habit that I have practiced repeatedly and love seeing the benefits from. Proving that this pedagogical philosophy can be equally selfish as it can be selfless.

When it comes to content in my classroom, I hold the belief that I am a teacher first who happens to specialize in mathematics. All content areas are important and I find myself just as disappointed when somebody says they hate reading as to when they say they hate math. I want to be an advocate for all subject areas and do my best to incorporate them into my classroom. Within mathematics this will be done by math journals, examining math history, and by bringing music into the math classroom. The avenue that I admire most to achieve this goal is through co-teaching. I can preach the importance of all content areas in my classroom until the cows come home, but what better way to demonstrate this by working with a non-math teacher.

Although I may think the content is exciting, whether or not the students always feel the same way is another question. The goal in my classroom is to intrinsically motivate students through their own curiosity. Mathematics is not always about numbers, it is about problem solving and it just so happens that most problems involve numbers. By giving students a situation, and by using the tools they have, I want them to ask the question “why?” Better yet, I want them to have this innate desire to question each problem. So often in the math classroom we see the same chugging through textbook problems, with teachers asking the question, how many chapters will I make it through this year? And although the textbook may provide good practice outside the classroom, it is only a way to sharpen their mathematical tools so they are ready to problem solve when the bell rings.

These ideas on my teaching philosophy are rooted in what has made math engaging to me as a student of mathematics and education. I have high expectations for my students as well as high expectations for my self. The last piece of my philosophy comes in the form of support. Through all the lessons, assignments, and homework I will have systems in place so if my students ever feel they need more help or practice they can find it when they need it. I am convinced that support is the lynchpin of keeping the students first.