

My Teaching Philosophy

Humanistic theory will be much of the basis for my teaching philosophy. Whenever I think of this theory I think of Mr. Rogers, who is one of my role models in education. Though not technically an educator, he provides a beautiful example of someone genuinely striving to help children – and adults – to learn and grow as whole people. He saw each person as a unique and inherently good gift to the world. This kind of attitude aligns well with humanistic theory and is one that I want to base my classroom off of. I want to be sure each student feels like a valued member of the class with a unique perspective on things that no one else in the class – or in the world for that matter – could provide in exactly the same way. Luckily for me, I really believe that the study of English provides a unique opportunity to approach this really well. I can encourage my students to view the world through other lenses through literature and I can also encourage them to use their own lens in writing about their world. I can give them lots of choice in how they want to present their ideas, so that hopefully the learning becomes very little about extrinsic motivators at this point, I hope, and moves students to want to participate in their learning for its own sake.

As time moves on, it is becoming more and more necessary to prepare students for the particular world they are entering into. It is very nearly imperative for every teacher to accept at least pieces of the 21st century skills theory into his or her teaching philosophy. Though all four C's (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity) definitely have their place in the English classroom, the one that seems the most readily applicable is communication. Perhaps one of the most practically beneficial things I can do for my students in my content area is helping them to communicate appropriately and effectively. Even further than that, though, I can

help them to use their voice to become active members of their community who can bring into effect actual change. If I do my job really well, I can help them to learn the skills and gain the confidence to move into the world ready to use their own unique voice to say things only they can say, helping the world to gain a perspective on the world only those students can give. It is no small task, surely, but it makes what I will do worthwhile, and I will do my very best to recognize and accept that task as gift every day.

If teaching is an art, then we should never stop growing in our technique and never stop striving to be even better tomorrow than we are today. One way to do that is to consider what the best are already doing. Delving deeply into existing learning theories has already helped me to envision what mine will look like. Below is a list and explanation of some of my core tenants of my teaching philosophy. Obviously, these will grow and change as I do as a teacher, but this is where I begin – and I'm excited to begin.

I Believe that Every Student Should Feel Safe in the Classroom

This is especially important in an English classroom, because the things I'll be teaching are inherently subjective and personal. The safer they feel, the more open they'll be to learn and to express their thoughts to me and to each other. This comes from the kindness and respect that they show each other, me, our resources, and the world around us.

I Believe in Authenticity for Myself and for My Students

I know much of the time that I will be learning from my students, and I have to accept that with humility and gratitude. I don't know all the answers, and it's okay that my students know that.

They can also know that I will be doing their assignments along with them, and I want them to be honest with me when things are too difficult or not difficult enough, so that I can change them.

I Believe in the Value of Student Choice and Student Voice

A major part of my educational philosophy, in teaching English, will be that students should not lose their own voice, especially in writing. A major issue I've found with high school and especially college students' writing is that they tend to write to impress their teacher; they write what they think the teacher wants to hear and try to make themselves sound intelligent, instead of simply showing their intelligence through their own voice. This kind of writing isn't fun and it isn't really worth much, because anybody can write the same thing doing that. If it's instilled in them young enough – 5th, 6th, 7th, or even 8th grade – I think I can teach them to use their own voice to bring something unique to the world. In a bigger way, I guess, my philosophy will be that every student has something special to bring, no matter their struggles or talents. I want to help them see that and help them use it.

I Believe that Students Should Feel Comfortable Taking Risks

Taking risks is what leads to breakthroughs and exceptional work. In order to foster this, I'm going to give students opportunities to write and work without a grade on some work. I know students often stick to their comfort zones when writing for a grade, not trying to rock the boat too much so that they don't get a poor grade. This kind of thinking often takes away from creating works that are unique and groundbreaking. This comfortability goes hand in hand with feeling safe in the classroom.

