

Teaching Philosophy

Halli J. Ackerman

University of Mary

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What is a great teacher, anyways? To me, a great teacher is someone who nourishes growth in all aspects of their students' well-being. These are the teachers who not only increase the student's understanding of curriculum but also the student's understanding of themselves. The "greats" of my childhood were the teachers who made me delighted to come to school each day, and they were the teachers who made me cry and cling to their comforting arms on the last day of school, when I realized I would never have them as a teacher again. I do not want to be a "teacher" as the traditional, dominant force in the classroom, but I'd rather be a leader and encourager of inquiring minds. When my students come into my classroom, I want them to feel cared for, I want them to feel confident, I want them to be accepted for everything that they are, and I want them to feel inspired. This is exactly what I intend to accomplish.

As a child, I was fortunate enough to have a close-knit, strong, supportive family. A day did not go by that I did not feel surrounded in love. However, I realize that some children do not have this luxury. In order to have a successful classroom, I believe that my students should feel like every person in the classroom, including the teacher, is a part of their family. I refuse to let my classroom be filled with acquaintances. To do this, I will create group activities that help the students get to know each other, and I will be diligent in helping the students create their own respectful environment. As the teacher, my students will know without a shadow of a doubt that I am on their team, and I am their cheerleader. I will make this happen by showing up to school each day with a clear mind and a smile on my face. I will establish trust by encouraging an open dialogue in the classroom; therefore, I will have an open-door policy, so the students will know that I am always available to talk about anything or offer help. Even though I will be the head of the classroom, I will not let my students be disrespected by me or others. I will use

appropriate, positive language that lets the students know that I respect them. In order for my students to feel like they can discuss personal issues with me, I will be open in talking to them about things that are going on in my own life. This will help the students know me on a personal level, and it will make them more comfortable coming to me with problems. A day will not go by without me telling my students how important and special they are. This is how my students will feel cared for.

For anxious students like me, school can be a very intimidating environment. This is only amplified when students are made to feel incompetent by their teachers. It is blaringly obvious when a student feels as though they are not good enough, not smart enough, or less than the other students in their class. For me, there was always one class that I dreaded going to because the teacher would randomly call us up to the board to perform math problems. I walked into the class each day feeling scared of humiliation. There were also times when I would ask a teacher a question, and they would respond by telling me how they have gone over the topic a million times and that I should know it by now. I could not help but think that teachers have a bachelor's, if not master's, degree in their subject, and I found it unfair of them to hold my intelligence of the subject to the level of intelligence that they had about a topic. My students will not be made to feel stupid in my classroom. I will appropriately and respectfully answer any questions they have. If my method of teaching something does not click with a student, I will come up with alternative methods until I find one that they can understand. I will give my students affirmation in the good work that they do and always encourage them to keep trying even when things get hard. Every student will feel equal to their peers, for I will praise each student on their accomplishments in and out of the classroom. My tactics are not to intimidate, embarrass, or put any one student on the spot, but they are to encourage speaking up through

meaningful discussion and collaboration. I will try my hardest to give my students a heads-up as to what they can expect in class the next day, so everyone feels comfortable and prepared. This is how each student in my class will feel confident and brilliant.

Part of feeling confident is knowing that who one is, is valuable and accepted. As a student, I was not exposed to diversity that I am experiencing now. I was in an average socioeconomic school where the majority of the students were Caucasian, fairly privileged, and non-disabled. Students with special needs were not integrated into the classroom to the extent that they are now, so as a result, I never got a chance to get to know these students or make friends with them. For the most part, I did not even know that disabilities or special education existed. It is my mission to create a classroom that not only respects diversity but also welcomes diversity in its many forms. Students in special education interventions will know that they are a part of the classroom in every way. They will understand that I support their needs by the way I actively accommodate their needs and persist in making education and socializing accessible to them. My classroom will represent the culture diversity that will also be present. Students will hear stories about people who look like them, speak like them, and have traditions like them. I will ask students about their families, traditions, language and culture whenever possible, and my instruction will encourage them to access their personal and prior knowledge about life and the curriculum. All students will be educated on the diversity that is present in our classroom and in the community, and they will in turn work towards becoming culturally-responsive citizens. Diversity only makes the learning environment richer. My students will see that their personal experiences, beliefs, culture, and unique abilities are welcome in my classroom, for I and the rest of the students want to learn about all the elements that make them who they are.

In addition to the teachers who make their students feel comfortable, accepted and cared for, the most memorable teachers are the ones who light a fire of learning in their students' hearts. I always wondered how those teachers had so much energy and were constantly coming up with creative teaching methods that kept me coming back for more. Each of these teachers had one thing in common: a passion to inspire. I can easily say that teaching is the one thing in this world that I am the best at and the most passionate about. I am confident that the spark and excitement I feel now will transfer nicely once I am in the classroom with young, moldable minds. My students will feel inspired to do great things in their school lives and personal lives. I will use materials and topics that are relevant not only to school but also to becoming contributing members of society. I will prepare meaningful lessons and projects that integrate core curriculum and life skills. Along with giving direct instruction, I will provide students with tools to create informed decisions which will aide them in the classroom and in society. I will be firm in teaching the curriculum that is needed to be taught, but the material will be taught using various forms of instruction to keep up morale and interest in the classroom. I plan to use multi-media techniques to stimulate students' minds and keep them guessing from day-to-day. One thing that made concentrating hard in school was when the teacher looked bored, and it was obvious he or she did not want to be there. This made me leave the class feeling drained and uninterested. My students will be able to visibly see the enthusiasm on my face and in my body when I teach; I want them to be able to see the passion that I have for the teaching profession. I could have used a little inspiration like this when I was contemplating what I wanted to do with my own life. I would also like to incorporate dance and movement into the classroom, and I want to challenge students to explore learning in physical, kinesthetic ways. Dancing and moving throughout the day is a great stress release for me, and moving increases blood flow and activity

in the brain. I plan to use this in my classroom to reduce boredom and get those endorphins flowing. My classroom should be a place of mental and emotional release, and project-based learning will assist in inspiring the students. The skills that are taught in my class will encourage students in all aspects of their lives.

My kids will be cared for, my kids will be confident, my kids will be cultured and share in diversity, and my kids will be inspired. Unfortunately, I can count on one hand the number of teachers who were able to do this for me. Though these expectations for myself are high, these are the expectations that must be set to ensure that my kids are getting a quality education. I will be a great teacher, even if it takes my whole career to get there.