My Teaching Philosophy

The foundation of my teaching philosophy lies in a quote often attributed to Theodore Roosevelt: "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." I believe that imparting knowledge is only a fraction of what a teacher does. A teacher's concern should be for the development of the whole child. However, the child must be willing to receive, which begins with building rapport. Seemingly small acts like being quick to learn student names, likes, and dislikes are critical to fostering relationships. When children feel seen by their teacher, they begin to choose to open the channels of communication, and learning follows.

The goal of education is to foster an independent curiosity in students. Students should emerge as lifelong learners and adept problem-solvers. A strategy I've used with great success to reduce reliance on the teacher is redirecting questions. For instance, if a student were to ask for today's date, I'd ask, "Where can you look to find the answer?" A student should leave my teaching space as someone who is constantly inquisitive, capable of solving most problems independently, yet aware of when to seek assistance and unafraid to do so. This approach empowers students to function as productive, ethical citizens in an ever-changing world, preserving democracy, equity, and human rights as our founding fathers envisioned.

I believe that questioning is the cornerstone of the learning process. From peer-reviewed processes in academia to establishing laws or marketing strategies, our society is built on the ability to think critically. Benjamin Franklin once said, "It is the responsibility of every citizen to question authority." It's okay not to know or make a mistake. Questioning helps us identify gaps in our understanding and decide whether to stay on course or adjust as a society. I embrace honest communication, transparency, and effective listening. I not only welcome students' questions but also actively encourage them. Students should understand that no one is infallible, and there is a

respectful and tactful way to approach mistakes that benefits everyone. If a teacher is questioned about a mistake, they will be rescued from passing along incorrect information, and students will improve their metacognition and self-efficacy. If a student makes a mistake, it can be used as an opportunity to curb perfectionism and open a discussion on common errors and possible approaches to a solution. In this way, mistakes become growth opportunities both personally and professionally.

Nowhere is this more important than in the library. Information overload creates a situation rife with opportunities for mistakes in credibility and character. At the same time, we don't want students to stop at guessing. Informed citizens look up answers using an efficient, ethical approach. The teacher-librarian arms students with the tools and strategies necessary to find solutions in a technological age. Information overload paralyzes a student's ability to evaluate information and arrive at a decision confidently. Education safeguards against the negative emotions and outcomes tied to information overload.

As a teacher-librarian, I facilitate and create a safe and accepting environment where students feel courageous enough to question and grow without fear of reprisal. Everyone has something valuable to contribute. I want students to find their voice and respect others. Each child is unique in their motivations, what interests them, what intellectual and physical abilities they come with, their home environment, and support levels. Their voices need to be heard, and sometimes, school is the only place that happens. Empathy can drive learning once students feel free to share their experiences, talents, and opinions. Towards this end, I frequently employ group work and discussion at varying lesson stages.

At every opportunity, I strive to demonstrate to students how the material is valuable and relevant to their lives. I firmly believe that what's learned at school doesn't just stay at school but

has real world applications. However, the current curriculum often fails to make this connection apparent. For me, the best way to bridge this gap is to infuse relevance into the lesson plan every time. There are numerous ways to build relevance, whether tying a lesson to the local community, culture, technology, or even the next lesson. When students engage with the material in a meaningful way, it leads to deeper engagement and a desire to learn more.