

## My Teaching Philosophy

As an educator, the ability to impart knowledge, and inspire others surpasses my desire for recognition or wealth. In 2020, when a group of former students decided to appreciate their former teachers, I realized that my actions as an elementary teacher two decades prior still resonated with my students who now had their own families. One comment on a Facebook post honoring us read, “The red rug”. In my third-grade class as a student-teacher, a piece of carpet, the-red-rug, merely served as a place for students to read a book of their choosing. Twenty-five years later, someone remembers how she learned to read, and how reading became her passion.

This reaction and many of the other successful stories I encounter when I meet former students in places of prominence encourage me to maintain my teaching philosophy of teaching with grace, and passion.

Teaching with grace qualifies as a balancing act. It requires one to present content with pedagogical or andragogical tact while at the same time considering the stories of the learner. Utilizing a one size fits all approach to teaching comes easily, but sadly many students miss the mark of success in that modality. When I think of grace, I think of all students succeeding regardless of their learning styles or background. As a graceful teacher, I seek to impart knowledge using all possible modalities to meet the learning needs of all my students in a safe environment.

We often associate teaching with grace to grades K-12 learners, but I found out otherwise. Adult learners require equal opportunities to succeed and to feel safe. When I taught writing to non-matriculated students at the university level, I ensured that my English Language Learners (ELL) experienced equal success. I treated the inability to communicate in English as a barrier, not as an incapability. I still remember the expression of gratitude in the voices of those students, and some of those written expressions still grace my archives.

Nothing beats a safe learning environment. I allow both young and adult learners the freedom to share or not share their thoughts, and I encourage all students to embrace, respect, and protect each other’s desire to share their stories. One examples still resonates in my mind. During one of our sharing sessions, a student who had never uttered a word in class before started reading his descriptive paragraph. Before then, no one in class, including me, knew that he had recently completed time as an inmate. His story described a coming-home-party that coincided with his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Classmates reacted with silent shock and empathy. If the student had not felt safe, he would not have shared. This moment taught me the value of a safe learning environment.

In essence, for me, grace means providing clear instruction in several modalities, providing good examples, friendly rubrics, and timely feedback while at the same time providing opportunities for remediation and acceleration in a safe setting.

In addition to grace, teaching with passion comes easily for those who want to inspire; however, passion not maintained or nurtured leads to burnout. To sustain my passion for imparting knowledge and inspiring my students I remain relevant. I maintain purpose by staying abreast of

trends in both pedagogy and andragogy. I recognize the marked comparisons between teaching children and adults; as a result, I keep up with current trends in research, and continuously gain new knowledge in my field. For example, when I noticed the emergence of more contemporary writing styles, such as writing for blogs, websites, web series, podcasts, videos, and other forms of social media, I enrolled in a Master of Fine Arts for Creative Writing. I realized that obsolescence cannot sustain passion, so I decided to choose relevance while I embrace all the traditional writing forms that print and other forms of media embrace.

My greatest desire continues to resonate around improving effective oral and written communication among all students and I commit to execute this desire with continued grace and passion.