

My Teaching Philosophy

One of the moments that marked me was my first time in a preschool classroom as a teacher assistant after I graduated from college. There was a boy who needed more support to learn classroom routines and norms. He decided on his own when it was time to complete assigned tasks or activities, when to join the class for circle time, and when to be nice to his peers. The lead teacher and director all battled with him on a daily basis. I decided one day I would sit with him and just talk to him, with no agenda in mind and no specific way the conversation should go. I found out he liked cars, especially red cars and he missed his dad. We had paper and crayons so we collaborated on drawing a red car. From this day forward, he became excited to go to school, he would talk to me about exciting plans for a camping trip with his dad and he began to join circle time when it was time. He just needed someone to listen to him for some time and he needed to feel validated, cared for, and appreciated for who he is.

My first priority in the classroom, before teaching phonemes, addition, and spelling, is to co-create an environment that feels safe, warm, and welcoming. The students in my class and I build norms that will help us throughout the year not only be great learners but also humans to each other. Teaching can be quite challenging especially considering how a diverse group of people come together to one place each day with very different morning experiences. It is in this space where we should feel thrilled to have the opportunity to learn from each other and celebrate how different we can be yet, very connected.

I believe every student should have the opportunity to learn, no matter the language barriers or the neurological diversity. This is why I work on implementing Universal Design for Learning strategies. This means technical vocabulary is explained before a lesson, we make connections to prior knowledge, and we have clear goals and expectations outlined. I also vary different methods for a response like writing, speaking, drawing so students can shine brightly through their strengths. I believe students should also have agency and choice of what they learn. For example, projects are purposely left open-ended for students to explore and research topics they are interested in. I also have students fill out a survey where they can express their interests and what their class should focus on. Students can practice their voice and begin to feel empowered when they are given the opportunity to learn about their own history or background. I hope my students will be eager to go to school to think critically of the world around them, while they are also appreciating the distinct dish the peer has also brought to class with them.

I believe it is important to read books together from different voices like, the Ojibwe tribe, Dolores Huerta, LeDerick Horne. I believe we should engage in projects that make learning fun, attainable, and analytical. As a Latina educator, I am aware of the systems of oppression that are intertwined into the classroom. I am aware of my biases and work hard to make sure as a community we are working towards dismantling the systems of oppression. I believe in creating a safe dialogue in the classroom by acknowledging white supremacy culture and working against it. Defiance looks like allowing students to do things in more than one way, allowing ample time for students to complete work, and sharing the power in the classroom. I believe I can learn just as much from my students as they can from me, I invite them to be confident in sharing their thoughts and ideas with the class. Defiance looks like working as a community to

resolve conflicts without fear. I believe in social-emotional learning, fostering empathy, and creating positive relationships with one another. *Educación es el camino, no el objetivo.*