

MY PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

1 - A classroom teacher should be able to describe the teacher's philosophy of education and demonstrate its relationship to the teacher's teaching practice

I believe that I care about my students and that I don't make judgments about them.

When a student, Alejandro, came to me saying that he was the worst one in his ESL class last year, I just told him that he had many talents. I had noticed his drawings, so I asked him to draw pictures for our dictionary entries in our weekly spelling contract. He matched a word to each picture and so he started learning vocabulary and then, his interest grew.

I believe that students learn better when their individual learning styles and needs are taken into consideration.

I often group students with similar needs together for a specific task. This combined with cooperative learning groups for more project-like tasks has helped me to build up their motivation as they are able to complete assignments at their level.

I believe that I need to be flexible and be ready for situations that require a change of plan.

When in the US, my students were under a lot of pressure being tested for three days in a row for ACCESS (a test for students with limited proficiency in English). They were tested during half of my period and then returned to class. Considering the situation, we did a lesson on cultural facts about Spain. I showed them pictures, they watched a video and we commented upon the main differences as far as culture and education is concerned. We didn't do any writing but focused on visuals and oral interaction. They felt more relaxed.

2- A classroom teacher should be able to teach students with respect for their individual and cultural characteristics

My students at East Aurora High School were primarily from different parts of Mexico. Most of them were newly arrived in the US and were going through a process of adaptation that was difficult for them.

In an attempt to help them better integrate into the new culture, I created activities that included features of their own culture and the American one.

Most of these kids could not distinguish between a state and a city at the beginning of the school year. Many of them did not feel comfortable when pledging allegiance every morning and they wanted Mexican cultural holidays to be remembered.

What I did was offer them to include this information in our calendar on the board, highlighting the days for American and Mexican festivities. They were grateful to be able to update the calendar not only with regular entries but with cultural facts too.

We also did a project on Mexico. For this project, I grouped students that were from the same counties or cities in Mexico so that they could share the same information. They featured monuments , highlights and relevant personalities among others.

3- A classroom teacher should be able to facilitate and monitor students' learning.

Although high school students, especially juniors and seniors should be more independent learners, I still believe that there are certain class routines that have to be included at this level too.

Routines are actively present in my class and they are reinforced together with beginning and ending class procedures.

- The IN tray that I keep to collect homework is something that visually reminds them of homework to be turned in.*
- At the beginning of each lesson I tell my students what they will be able to do at the end.*
- I try to write objectives on the board in an informal way, understandable to them.*

For example: Today you will learn to write a paragraph adding all the "acentos."

Today you will go home knowing where to add your "acentos."

Today you will become more confident about writing in Spanish.

- Before reading or listening to a text, I always tell them the purpose.*

*"You have to listen to tell me who was not at home today ",
"You have to read and tell me how many times the word " heart is in the text."*

I keep my students engaged simply by teaching them single concepts or skills and giving them assignments that help them succeed. Except for projects I prefer to do shorter assignments that my students are more likely to complete.

Also, the structure of objectives-task-evaluation-reflection has worked well for me.

For example, at East Aurora High School we had a student newspaper called The Auroran. Many kids just skimmed the articles so I had this idea in which I asked them to look for the "Creative Corner. " There, students usually publish their own poems or short stories. There were two poems and I grouped students in fours and asked each group to translate one verse into Spanish. When they were done, each group came to the front of the class and wrote their translation on a transparency.

I sometimes poll students informally to find out their opinions about what learning activity or strategy they enjoyed the best and they particularly liked this one.

4- A teacher should be able to draw from a wide repertoire of strategies and adapt them to fit the instructional context; and be able to connect the teacher' s subject to other subjects and to practical situations encountered outside of school

I customize a lot of the activities and I create many of my own materials using realia like store flyers and catalogues.

I strongly believe that if the materials I am using are meaningful and highly interesting, my students are more likely to understand and develop the necessary strategies they need; For example, when teaching my students about the weather, I brought to class a thermometer to teach them how to read it and later I brought in real newspapers to read the weather forecast and the temperatures.

Also when teaching them how to read prices I used flyers from a grocery store because when I was shopping there I saw these wonderful ones with colorful prices and big numbers that I could use.

At one point I brought in train timetables to prompt them into a dialogue to buy a ticket.

*The **lesson plan** that I have been using in this course is the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol). This is designed for students with limited English Proficiency and it incorporates content and language objectives. I strongly believe in incorporating content area vocabulary when teaching a second language as well as teaching students the functional part of it , its most practical nature.*

I must say that I am teaching a foreign language and incorporating content too as I feel my students will learn concepts more quickly if they see some practical uses in daily life. For example, if I teach a unit on weather, it will help them to know the difference between Fahrenheit and Centigrade or when teaching them how to spell and pronounce numbers they can also learn how to write a check or read a bank statement.

5- A classroom teacher should be able to use technology as an educational tool.

Trying to keep up with technology has always been very important to me, but it was not until my first year in the United States that I came to realize the endless library of information and resources that the Internet is.

Back in 1996 I took my first course in computers applied to the teaching of foreign languages, and since then I have attended a wide range of workshops. I do it not only for myself, but mostly to be able to cope with a situation in which I have to run a program or device, wireless or interactive. Also, I have experienced how my students enjoy themselves while they are actually doing work and how the computer holds their attention so that they don' t just rush to the door when the bell rings at the end of class.

Quia.com has worked pretty well for me to get students to take quizzes online and other sites such as united streaming have also been useful in many different ways:

- *When my ESL 3 reading class had to read a text about giant clams, sea horses and humming birds, I browsed different sites to find pictures of these animals. I printed these out on a transparency and I used them to activate prior knowledge and create interest for the reading.*

- *While I was surveying my students to know what parts of Mexico they were from, I realized they did not know the difference between the words “ state “ and city .“ I quickly used the computer in my classroom to find a map of Mexico with states and I printed it out in color on a transparency and taught them these concept words that later helped them in their social studies class, too.*

For some of them it was the first time they knew that California was a state and Chicago a city.

- *When I need to organize information about students, there are several programs that I use. Excel spreadsheets are useful to combine different classes , add or remove students and easily select and print out individual reports. With Excel I can easily show a student how many days he’ s been absent or color different rows for specific information.*
- *I have also been using the AS 400 for taking attendance and tracking information and Grade Machine to maintain my grades , attendance and create roll books and student reports.*

Printing pictures on a transparency and gradually uncovering them has proven to be an effective way for me to create interest and anticipate content.

6- My thoughts about discipline..

Students may think that there is nothing fair in being disciplined but throughout the years I have found my own ways of making them understand that there is a lesson to learn in each of their behaviors, good or bad.

It is precisely because my few rules are clearly stated at the beginning of the school year and reinforced that I guess I don’ t find myself having to use discipline very much.

When I ask students not to chew gum in class I tell them it will make it more difficult when reading out loud or answering my questions in a language they are learning when they already don’ t feel confident enough. So, when I have had to discipline a student, he has realized himself that I was right and accepted the consequence.

Javier was disengaged in my 10th period Spanish Speakers class. He had his arms folded and was lying on the desk. After a warning I realized that maybe the room was too hot for him because he was sitting next to the heater, so I moved him and warned him.

I try not to get too nit picky but just when he did it the next day, I pulled him out of class and talked to him about what was going on. I showed myself concerned about him. Maybe he was choosing to misbehave because he was seeking more attention from me.

His behavior didn’ t improve much, and I had to work together with his dean to solve this situation.

Different situations cannot be dealt in the same way and what I often do is speak to other teachers to share information about whether the student is misbehaving in my class only. I keep documentation of incidents on a calendar, interruptions, tardies, absences, etc and later show the student in particular how many times he or she acted that way.

My class routine

- *I greet the students.*
- *I give them general information about the school's day.*
- *I give them an overview of the week ahead, we check the calendar.*
- *We orally review what we did the previous class.*
- *I explain what we will do this day, explain why ? objectives.*
- *I give them a routine task , like correcting or expanding sentences.(While they do this I take attendance and check who ' s done the homework.*
- *If I am to take the homework home to correct, one of the students who finishes the routine task earlier collects the homework.*
- *We go through the lesson.*
- *Ten minutes before the end of the period I give them the reflection sheet and students complete it. At this time I make a record of what went well or bad in the lesson.*

My ideal classroom

Bulletin board with :

- *Class rules with the student's signatures agreeing to comply.*
- *Samples of the students awards that they will receive.*
- *A list with the names of students who have earned awards.*
- *Grades displayed when convenient (protecting students identities).*
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Board with students work samples.

White board with :

Calendar with main events (every morning we go through it and review assignments due or cultural events)

Grade scores as a reminder for them to check their scores.

Objectives , written every day.

calendar	Main Board		Grade scores
			Date
			Objectives
			Homework