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Teaching Philosophy
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As a teenager, I looked forward to going to school to see my friends but what I learned inside classroom walls seemed to have no connection to "real life." Most of my school work included copying notes from the board and definitions from the glossary. School was merely a prerequisite to the rest of my life. Now, as an educator, I see high school as much more than a line item on a person's life-transcript. It is a unique and crucial time for young people to learn about themselves and their community, learn how to problem solve and uncover their own agency.

I believe that deep learning requires a strong sense of community and these communities are not guaranteed by our proximity to one another. Neurologically, humans need first to feel safe before building relationships with others. That essential sense of safety can come early on in class by asking students what *they* need to succeed and documenting "class agreements." In this way, I am not imposing my expectations on students, but instead allowing them to create a community of their own.

A strong community of learning also necessitates authentic relationships among students and teachers alike. This goes beyond the ice breakers at the beginning of the school year. By integrating meaningful identity work into weekly routines, students can explore themselves and appreciate the fascinations of their peers. This creates an opportunity for students to build empathy and accountability for one another's learning that will support them through purposeful group work.

The purpose of building such a community is to foster a sense of belonging while establishing a foundation for high expectations. However, I must be careful to avoid a solely technocratic approach to instruction. In contrast, I aspire to warmly demand the most from my students on the basis of personal regard - letting students know I care. With appropriate scaffolding I can expect all of my students to exceed and push their limits of understanding.

I believe that one of the most crucial skills I can equip my students with is the art of problem solving and the first step is finding problems that provoke a sense of wonder. I remember in 9th grade, my geometry teacher launched into a unit about proofs by proving that 0.9 repeating was equivalent to 1. He proved something seemingly impossible using mathematical rules I had been using for years. I was captivated. I wanted to learn more, and I wanted the power to do it myself. I hope to bring these aha moments into my classroom and re-engage students with mathematics in a new way. This includes exploring the rich history and amusement of its origins.

When students are in the workforce, their employers will not ask how well they can replicate the functions of a calculator. Employers will want to know if they have the skills to

solve complex problems. Can they iterate on their thinking, wrestle with productive struggle and persevere with unexpected setbacks? Can they identify patterns and reason abstractly? These are the skills that I aim to teach in my classroom and not through worksheets of identical problems. There is self-esteem to be earned by starting with a problem you've never seen before and finding your own path to solution. I firmly believe we are robbing our students of that sense of accomplishment and confrontation with reality if we only present them with the expected.

Integral to the art of problem solving and meaningful group work is clear communication. When students are "talking it out" they have the opportunity to hone the skill of asking and answering the "why" or "how" behind their thinking. If students are responsible for communicating their ideas clearly they are inadvertently learning to attend to precision and participate in effective collaboration.

I believe that if we want to prepare our students for the future, we must also empower them by treating them as young adults. In my classroom, that starts with being explicit about the skills they will need for the future and providing opportunities to question the "why" behind our everyday lives. I believe that one of the most valuable things I can offer my students is a lens into how they learn and how they are positioned in society. The ability to identify one's own strengths is the first step in advocating for one's needs and taking ownership of one's own learning.

My philosophy on teaching and learning emerges from a personal longing for a society where community is at the center of innovation and all are empowered to reimagine and recreate the future.