



TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

It's no secret that academies can be rigorous and difficult, and this is no less true for young learners in English academies. Seeing the stress that gets put on their bodies and minds to perform at a level that is beyond what they're meant to be doing at their age has permanently shaped how I view my role as a teacher—I am not only here to make sure students learn the material in the lessons, but I am also here as a caretaker, making sure they have positive classroom experiences, helping students grow into kind global citizens, and making sure they feel safe when things are stressful or difficult. As a teacher, I wear many different hats in order to play the roles that my students need me to be, changing them out daily, maybe even hourly, so that their needs are met.

Making sure students are having positive learning experiences, and that their needs are being met, is how students are able to become engaged, active learners who are interested in taking charge and develop a sense of ownership over their education.

The foundation for this is setting a positive classroom culture and climate, which really stems from the very first meeting. I find it very important to start right away on building rapport with my students, quickly and establishing boundaries within the classroom so that they feel safe, and are comfortable to explore their ideas and environment without fear of unknown repercussions.

I want my students to want to come to school each day, excited to see their teachers and their friends. Getting to know them, and integrating that into the lessons to help engage them in the content really helps them stay focused and works to build their relationship with myself and others. The more I remember about my students, the more interest I show in them, the stronger the bond builds between myself and them, which is invaluable to both of us.

To help facilitate this, I do my best to only use positive language and affirmations in the classroom, targeting and reinforcing positivity and encouragement. I want my students to know and feel that they are capable, even when they think the work is too difficult. I want them to trust me and know I am there to support them, and will be there to help them when they need it, whether it's their bookwork or putting on their jackets to go home.

On top of this foundation, setting classroom expectations, or boundaries, is really important for their safety, as well as helping develop positive choice-making skills. From the very beginning, I set behavior expectations, explaining not only the rules but the why. When I have students that make a choice that goes against class norms, we have a conversation about it. I want them to talk through it with me, so we can try to reach an understanding and work towards making positive choices going forward. I want them to be able to express themselves and explore their interests, but I also think it's essential that they know there are boundaries, and understand that there are expectations that need to be met in this environment.

The last main part of my teaching philosophy is reminding myself, and the students, to be flexible and patient. These two qualities cast a broad net, but often the classroom can be presented with a lot of unknown challenges, especially early in the year while the students (and teachers) are just starting to truly get to know one another. Being flexible, whether it's with the students as they adjust, the lessons themselves, or requests from the administration, remaining flexible and patient is crucial to keep the environment a positive space. Keeping my attitude positive helps keep my students' attitudes positive as well.

With the power of rapport, classroom boundaries and expectations, and the ability to be flexible and patient combined, I think the classroom truly has the capacity to be a positive and safe learning environment for its students and teachers. It might not always be easy, especially when the new year begins, but the effort is worth it, and can be seen in the students and how they engage with their friends, and environment.

