

My Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

My educational journey began in the pages of books. Growing up in a traditional household in very homogeneous neighborhoods, literature was my primary tool for navigating my identity as a Korean-American. Reading provided the mirrors I needed to understand my own experiences and the windows into the lives of others as well as to see the possibilities. In hindsight my early childhood through to my undergraduate studies in English Literature and Creative Writing were foundational to my prior career successes. I learned early on that the ability to analyze perspectives and communicate with empathy is the "soft skill" that drives meaningful results. As an educator, my goal is to leverage my experience to helping students understand ELA as a tool for not only self-discovery but helping them to realize their future goals.

Although I did not have a memorable secondary education, I do remember the teachers from whom I learned about empathy, kindness and feeling safe. My classroom would foster this same environment in addition to incorporating three key lessons. First, development and growth happens not only when you feel safe but when "trial and error" is promoted. My past corporate successes were achieved not because I was a subject matter expert but because of my attempts to make the subject more relatable. Finally, the facilitation was driven by my interpersonal approach in genuinely listening and treating people as individuals who were more engaged when feeling heard, respected and supported. I found in my time in student teaching this approach very applicable, and would further expand upon it.

However, the environment can only be successful with clear norms, expectations and structure. Taking a non-traditional approach to education, I found classroom management an ever evolving, and complex skill. Through my student teaching this past year, creating personal connections while establishing teacher-student boundaries is near alchemy. I've found that each class or hour will have different dynamics which can change day-to-day. What is constant is the importance in establishing consistency, repetition and patience in equal measure and dedication. The concept of the "warm demander" was taught to us, and a standard that is not too different from my past experiences. My time student teaching 8th graders at Lincoln Middle School where there is a high referral rate as well as turnover of teachers was my crucible. This is one area of continued focus that I will continue to further develop.

The other key pillar to my philosophy of teaching and learning ties with my prior point of facilitation and engagement. In enterprise-scale projects many of them fail because Brands focus on what should be foundational versus what should be localized. I took a **70/30** approach. The Brand is the Brand regardless of whether it is being marketed and sold in the U.S. or overseas – the **70**. The key to success is how to engage your local customers to the Brand – the **30**. The majority of your time should be focused on the **30**. This is not too dissimilar to my approach to the curriculum I will teach. Whether it is Shakespeare, literary devices, essay structure, these are foundational. The engagement and what makes it relatable is how I - as the teacher - add to and make it more of a meaningful experience to the students.

An example to illustrate this approach is with my self-designed unit for my student teaching at Lincoln Middle School. The unit covered the verse novel - *Inside Out & Back Again*, a beautiful, semi-autobiographical story about a 10 year old girl's journey from the end of the Vietnam War through to her journey to Alabama. To set the stage, the student body has a significant number of POCs as well as majority who qualify for free breakfast and lunch. Also there were no Asian students in the classes I taught. To make things interesting, I have never been an avid poetry reader. Like many tasks from my prior career, it's not about whether or not I am personally interested but rather about how to engage my students as well as the energy I bring to the classroom.

My mentor teacher's guidance for the unit's learning objectives were understanding, identifying and being able to apply: elements of verse poetry, symbolism, and reinforcing last semester's figurative language lessons. The **70** was straight-forward - to teach the learning objectives as well as have the students read 262 pages. I addressed each learning objective separately and tied them into the verse poems we were reading. My take in achieving the **30** was to ensure as a Korean-American, who could better relate to the main character in her experiences, to bridge the poems with my own experiences to tie into their own. Understanding not only their literacy levels but personal experiences, I selected key words to explain their meaning via images or videos trying to avoid assumptions prior to the daily reading goals. The beginning of the unit was focused on scaffolding the reading of the poems, note taking and daily recaps to ensure understanding as well as a routine and structure were established. To promote cooperative learning, engagement and learning application, I set up weekly activities via in-class games: Jeopardy, Jigsaw teaming, Blooket as well as verse poetry writing sessions. With daily reflection, I hope to teach this book again as there are refinements I'd like to make.

I recognize that although my corporate experiences will enrich my pedagogy, there is still much to learn. Even in writing this document, I see the changes from the initial draft at the beginning of my graduate program last June, and the versions through the course of the year to this point. What I will continue to do is reflect and continue to refine as every day is new even with the same students. However my goal in becoming an educator remains the same – bridge the gap between the classroom and the reality of everyday life. By using my own personal and professional experiences, and my passion to develop people, I offer students a perspective that is both global in scope and deeply personal in application. My commitment is to take English not just a subject to be studied but means to create better understanding of shared experiences and communication in achieving my students' goals.