

After graduating from Mizzou I made the decision to go out and explore the art of teaching in careers outside of the classroom teacher role; and, I'll be honest in saying I was a bit scared. I didn't want to lose all of the theory and practical experience I had just worked four years building into an Education degree. However, I knew as long as I kept the goal in mind to focus on continuing to learn about myself as a teacher and how students learn best, I was not wasting my skill set. In fact, because of the experiences I have explored, I have new confidence in my teaching philosophy. Therefore, in regard to *how best to put into practice my beliefs and knowledge about areas, such as learners and learning, diversity, instruction, classroom management, assessment and human learning theories*, I believe applications of respect, cooperation and flexibility, and creativity within my teaching philosophy are most essential.

From day one my teaching philosophy has been rooted in respect, and that has never waivered. When respect is at the forefront, expectations for teachers, students, and parents create themselves and are more meaningful to those involved in upholding such expectations. However, it is important to keep in mind that respect looks different from person to person. With my experiences working alongside a wide range of learners from varying socio economic backgrounds, cultures, religions and belief systems, I feel prepared to work as a team with my students (and parents of students) to promote a respectful classroom environment that reflects all students' understanding of respect. In all of my teaching experiences I have learned what kids want most is to feel like they have a voice. The challenging task then becomes listening to students and helping students find their voice, while also guiding them toward the decisions you as the teacher feel are going to set them up for success. This is common in all age levels of students. Working in a Montessori program at Children's House Montessori was the career building experience that gave me the language I needed to help students feel accountable and responsible for decisions they make. Helping students learn to harness these skills is beneficial to promoting successful classroom management strategies (establishing expectations, routines and procedures) a positive learning environment, and inclusion for all students.

Another essential application in my teaching philosophy is cooperation and flexibility—two qualities that serve as a teacher's best friend. Teachers assume roles in teams on many levels: with students, parents, colleagues, administrators, etc. I have learned from working as an educator on all of these teams that the more flexible and cooperative I am, the more successful I feel at the end of the day. I cannot even begin to count the number of times I have needed to change and adapt throughout a school day. To name a few: the lesson (expanding on an idea that works or tweaking an idea that has fallen flat), my attitude (adding a little more pep and positivity when needed), mistakes (acknowledging my own and working to correct them). Teaching is not a cut and dry institution. There are people and opportunities to learn from everywhere you turn. As a teacher, I want to welcome change, such as evolving educational theories and new teaching professionals with fresh ideas. With this attitude, I believe I can create more successful instruction, forms of assessment, and logical classroom management.

The final essential piece in my teaching philosophy is the application of creativity. With the instruction provided by my methods courses from the College of Education combined with

the theories I put into practice during student teaching, I have established a positive belief in the success of a constructivist approach to teaching. For me, this means giving the students the power to drive their own learning and create outcomes meaningful to them, with the teacher in the role of a guide and to facilitate additional learning. My belief in this approach has only been furthered through my outside the classroom teaching experiences—especially through my teaching artist positions. These positions have allowed me to assume a more artistic role in education by creating lessons that allow students to explore learning through hands on, very physical activities. At Actors Theatre, our mission is to help students “see plays and make plays.” I have used many varying artistic means of instruction in the past, prior to my teaching artist internships. However, learning alongside professionals within the theatre world has opened me up to exploring more ways to make learning engaging beyond just a page, a PowerPoint, or a project. All students are capable of producing work that is representative of their learning. It’s the creative freedoms teachers provide students that determines how successful they can be in producing meaningful outcomes.