

To whom it may concern:

My teaching philosophy and curricula are based on the fundamental principles of social justice education. Through subversive pedagogies, the ELA classroom can disrupt the status quo, challenge inequities and inequalities, and prepare students to critically read and write the word and the world (Freire, 1985). I believe in a pedagogical framework of love, one that embraces students' diverse dialects, cultures, and experiences and incorporates their out-of-school textual realities in meaningful, constructive ways.

As an advocate of social justice education, I strive to reach and support each individual student. All students are unique; they bring with them their multiple intelligences, talents, struggles, and learning styles. Therefore, I incorporate a variety of purposeful activities and instructional tools in order to meet the needs of all my learners. Some of these activities include watching and taking notes on short lecture videos, participating in station exercises, performing skits and tableaux, and engaging in small group and whole class discussions. Each activity and assessment is designed with student growth in mind, and I take students' responses and results into consideration as I move forward with my practice.

All students are writers. They write each and every day through various mediums, but their texts are often unacknowledged, unappreciated, or otherwise unwelcome in schools. I seek to understand the ways in which students already read and write and offer them a more inclusive definition of academic text, one that values not only canonical literature, poetry, and informational articles but also songs, images, video games, screenplays, film, comics, advertisements, body language, etc. Students should be encouraged to expand their textual worlds and to experiment with different forms of communication and meaning making. Accordingly, through my curricula I aim to give students authentic purposes for their reading and writing, and I challenge them to think critically about their daily language choices.

Student agency and a sense of community are key in my classroom. Students and their stories should be heard, and so student self-expression and creation are emphasized and prioritized in my curricula. Furthermore, I believe that academic goals can be achieved through a variety of mediums and modes. While constructing a wide range of creative texts, students will learn important skills and strategies, and at the same time develop their voices as writers and activists within their communities. Students will also engage in community-building exercises like literature circles, poetry events, writer workshops, and collaborative research opportunities. Ideally, these activities will promote trust and enable students to learn about their peers' experiences and to develop an appreciation for cultural differences.

Although I embrace students' diverse linguistic capital within my lessons, I am also obligated to teach the codes of power (Delpit, 1988). As an English educator, it is my responsibility to guide

students in their development of literacy practices and critical thinking toolsets so that they are able to empower themselves and make deliberate choices in their textual worlds. Moreover, students should recognize the socially-constructed nature of language and the codes of power, and so my curricula enable students to not only practice their application of Standard American English conventions but also to critique this dialect's privileged status in society. As part of students' literacy instruction, I will facilitate classroom discussions regarding the politics and power dynamics that are inherent in language. Through these discussions students will work to dismantle the hierarchy of languages and texts and understand that each dialect has its place in our dynamic, multi-textual society.

Students enter the classroom with a variety of skills, interests, experiences, and knowledge. For this reason, I approach students' texts and assessments from a profit perspective. Unlike a deficit-centered approach to evaluation, which often prioritizes writing conventions and structure over deeper meaning and student intentionality, my profit perspective helps me to notice what is exceptional about students' writing and to use this as a foundation for future instruction and student growth (Simon, 2013). In other words, I strive to meet students where they are in their thinking and writing, and so my writing pedagogy prepares students for the future but also nurtures their present by starting with *what is* instead of *what isn't* (Simon, 2013).

I promote social justice principles and pedagogies because if educators do not actively challenge social inequalities and inequities in the classroom, then in essence we are choosing to uphold injustices and oppression within our society. I believe that our students deserve to live in a healthier, more loving world and that the ELA classroom is a perfect place to foster cosmopolitan practices and perspectives.

Sincerely,

Megan Kosinski

## References

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