

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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The study of English language arts has a unique role in the academic lives of students. ELA holds a place of honor as the teaching of the methods by which students will communicate the majority of what they have learned in their core classes, and they will bring these skills to the workplace and to society at large. My role as the teacher is to enable students to obtain the skills they will need to both communicate effectively, as well as to understand and appreciate the various modes of communication that they will encounter in their careers and personal lives. More importantly, students should have an arsenal of communicational abilities at their fingertips; I want them to be effective communicators, free-thinkers, and active participants in the world around them.

A key element in my teaching strategy involves construction, collaboration, and active participation. Students engage in varied activities designed to promote learning and critical thinking skills. To foster this, I implement differentiated instruction, with the purpose of encouraging a multi-faceted understanding of subjects. My students engage in problem-solving activities, with the dual purpose of empowering students to take responsibility for their own learning and instilling an analytic approach to real-world situations. Real-world applications continue to be a fundamental element of my instruction, and I strive to achieve this end by implementing real-world problems and situations into their projects. Students in my class engage in small-group instruction, compose persuasive documents, draft proposals, and engage in collaborative composition.

In addition to a Constructionist approach, working cooperatively provides a foundation for much of my instruction. Students often work in groups to complete classroom assignments, or converse with each other over topics that we address in class. My lessons provide students with a variety of avenues upon which to project their thoughts and opinions, and their peers provide an audience with whom they can continue to construct and evolve their ideas. The ability to construct understanding and put forth opinions in a democratic environment will provide my students with the discursive tools necessary to participate in democracy and effect change in their environments.

Once students have entered the workforce, however, an integral element of their professional communication will be their evaluation by peers and employers. Student progress in a university setting, then, needs to be evaluated based on real-world parameters that embolden the student to communicate in a variety of different environments. To this end, students produce writing constantly to develop confidence and to practice their art, and to achieve this, students in my classes create learning products that include essays, professional documents, and extended writing projects that continuously hone their skills as writers.

The strategies I have elaborated here have specific goals in mind. Students will actively engage with texts and use their existing schema to construct a deep and nuanced understanding of a text and its contextual moment. Students will create learning products that have real-world applications, and they will work collaboratively to engage in a responsible and responsive conversation that will prepare them to enter a larger discussion after graduation.