

I graduated from the University with my Bachelor's Degree nine years ago. And three years ago I first applied for a teaching job. Each of these events required a written teaching philosophy and it is interesting to note as I have gone back to review these older versions that a teaching philosophy is not a onetime self reflection meant to represent my views for my entire life. Even so, it is also just as interesting to note that my own views haven't changed drastically and instead have undergone a fairly moderate evolution in the last decade.

Benjamin Franklin is quoted as saying "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." This approach was the foundation for training team members in my career as a retail manager and continues to be a strong principle in my philosophy of teaching. Hands on, self-discovery type activities not only have high engagement, they are memorable and impactful to student learning.

I am a huge fan of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his character Sherlock Holmes. In "A Study in Scarlet", Holmes tells Watson "a man should keep his little brain-attic stocked with all the furniture that he is likely to use, and the rest he can put away in the lumber-room of his library, where he can get it if he wants it." I reference this quote whenever I begin a self discovery task in the classroom. I remind students that I could tell them the end result of the activity, give them a formula and throw a bunch of practice problems at them, but to do so would be to fill their brain attic with useless furniture. Instead I give them the tools they need, a goal, some guidance, and enough time to let them work until the end. The result is a memorable process and a solid understanding of new mathematics instead of an easily forgotten formula. When students are engaged in the learning process, the learning endures.

It is my duty, as a teacher, to provide a safe environment. Students need to feel comfortable in my classroom, safe from physical harm and safe from mental and emotional distress. Classrooms should be neat and orderly and inviting, creating a safe physical space for students. And classroom norms should facilitate a positive and respectful environment where mistakes are celebrated and contribute to learning.

Teachers have a lasting impact on student's lives, and it isn't just about the content. As their teacher, I am part of my student's lives. They want to share the excitement of their newborn niece, the worry about their grandpa's failing health, the triumph of their aced geography test, and the joy of their near homerun in their softball game last night. They invite me to see their performance in the school play, share in the accomplishment of their graduation, and even attend their mission farewell. I am a teacher, and as such I am a role model, a respected adult, and a confidant. The way teachers interact with their students has a lasting impact, so every interaction should be positive and respectful.

Human nature is to learn. It is the teacher's job to capitalize on that innate characteristic. To do so, teachers provide a safe and respectful environment, be a good leader and role model, and creatively pursue opportunities in which students can be engaged in their learning. Teachers have a lasting impression on their students, and doing these things will ensure that impression is positive.