

APRIL SANDERS

Philosophy of Teaching

My teaching philosophy is based in creating a syllabus and classroom environment that is appropriately aligned with the standards set for the course. I believe in establishing organization by setting and following a reasonable timeline. Additionally, clear expectations for the whole course as well as individual assignments is of great importance to the success of my students.

When I begin a semester, my course timeline and major tests have been developed. I go into the course knowing exactly what students will be assessed on and to what depth they should learn the concepts. I believe my classroom should align with the strategies, techniques, and theories I am teaching. My classes include a variety of whole group discussion, small group (or partner) discussion, individual reflection time, practice/application, and mini-lectures. When at all possible, I try to divide my class into 15-minute segments, meaning we move from one activity to another about every 15 minutes. I want my students to not only understand that teaching should contain a variety of strategies, but also actually do that while learning. In order to drive home that point, I often stop at the end of a class and ask my students to explain to me how they learned during that class time. Diversity is of great importance to my curriculum.

The makeup of the modern K-12 classroom is quite diverse including various cultures, languages, and abilities. My job is to help shape practitioners who are open to such diversity, prepared to teach in such an environment, and willing to learn how to improve their weaknesses. In the modern public school classroom, teachers work with inclusion students, English language learners, and gifted students – often all in the same classroom. I work to help them identify and diminish their bias and stereotypes regarding these differences in students so that they may attempt to know the best way to teach them. My lessons often contain time to discuss and explore how our content and strategies can be applied to special populations. The days of the K-12 classroom containing students who all look alike and learn the same is long gone; as a result, my classroom must recognize that change and challenge preservice teachers to think critically about reaching such students.

Engagement is critical to my classes, and I want my students to begin developing themselves as professionals. I always refer to them as preservice teachers instead of students because they must begin to take on the identity of a professional and that begins with a name. I want them to move out of thinking like a student and begin thinking like a teacher. It is my responsibility to maintain engagement through activities and discussions that provide them content knowledge, and I work to lead them in the direction of understanding the significance of that knowledge and how to apply it. I cannot simply lecture and deliver content; I must go beyond that and create professionals who are thinking critically about being an

educator. My assignments are developed to help preservice teachers think like a professional and function as one. We do group collaboration that moves them out of their comfort zones because K-12 teachers are required to collaborate with a team or department and rarely are able to choose with whom they will work. In the same vein, my classroom policies also expect professionalism. For example, quality of work, late assignments, absences/tardies, and being prepared for class are all areas where I set high expectations. Principals will not want to hire teachers who cannot be prepared, be on time, etc... My classroom is the training ground for a professional, and it must be an environment that has similar expectations of the workplace.

My ability to become a productive and successful educator stems from something more than degrees or certifications. I have always walked into my classroom each day understanding the potential I have as a teacher to help create a love of learning. On any given day in the classroom, I have the opportunity to inspire my students to do more – read further, think differently, apply a strategy. Serving my students well is my top priority. In understanding that, I believe firmly in the strength of a teacher. I take the strength of a teacher very seriously when I teach. I know the preservice teachers I teach will go out and teach hundreds of students in their career; if I do not prepare MY students then I have done a disservice to THEIR students. My courses are challenging, and I have high expectations, but at the end of the day, I have absolutely no choice because their future students are depending on me to shape quality teachers.