

My Teaching Philosophy

When I graduated from UCF and stepped into the classroom the first time, it was not as all as I had expected. I did not realize that to be a teacher meant that you also had to be a counselor, nurse, cheerleader, coach, manager and sometimes the only constant in the lives of your students. This has been both challenging and rewarding. It was within those first few weeks of teaching that I realized that learning is a lifelong process that occurs outside of the classroom just as much, if not more so, than inside the classroom and that the basic foundation of this learning is literacy.

I wasn't supposed to have my own classroom. I was the ESE/ESOL Coordinator, so I was supposed to just co-teach and make sure that the staff was kept up to date on student data and strategies to use with their students. It was my first day of pre-planning that I learned I would be teaching reading. There was no curriculum and no expectations that the students would learn. There was no expectation that they would even stay in the classroom. The reading class, according to others who had taught it, was more of a holding cell for students who didn't fit into the schedule during that period. (This was before the state mandated reading courses based on FCAT scores.) I wondered what I had gotten myself into.

I took everything I had learned in my internships and at school to develop my own curriculum. I wasn't allowed to order textbooks, because they were too expensive but I could get a class set of workbooks and a class set of one novel. I did the best with what I had and not only did my students "stay in the classroom", but the lowest 25% of the students made learning gains in reading! Although I had never considered teaching reading before and didn't even realize how important it was past elementary school, I knew I was teaching what I needed to teach. I understood better that without fundamental literacy skills, students struggle in school and in life. I also realized that, though they are often recognized and receive the help at attention they need, some students still manage to "fall through the cracks" of the system.

My role as a teacher with a degree and background in both Educational Leadership and Exceptional Child Education has remained the same - to identify the topics in which students need additional support and to do everything I can to ensure their needs are met! I also feel a responsibility to educate other teachers and staff members on how they may be able to identify struggling students and what strategies they can use to help the students become more successful in their courses and thus in life.