

Mallory Sharp: Teaching Philosophy

Teachers are more than educators who teach necessary content; teachers are cheerleaders, visionaries, creators, and hope for a lot of kids. It is not enough for me to say that I want to be decent at all of these jobs, because to be honest, I think that would be a shame. I plan on being a compassionate, resilient, and patient teacher who puts her students before herself. I hope I can one day embody these characteristics and follow in the footsteps of the teachers who once taught me. The ones who fostered dreams of mine and told me that I can be anything I want to be, something that I think is more important than any lesson.

One thing most professions are missing in the modern world is compassion and genuine concern for others. I think that the rise of social media and technological advances has also led to the rise of isolation and despair, especially for kids. As mentioned before, I strongly believe that teachers are more than people who teach the lesson for the day and go home. Good teachers need to *care* about their students, and that means their successes, their failures, their dreams, and their struggles. I know the teachers that I connected with most as a student were people who embodied this. Teachers like my Aunt Elena, who worked as a special educator in an urban, public school in downtown Minneapolis. She worked with students who had emotional trauma and many did not have basic necessities like food, water, warm clothing, and many were homeless. She brought kids extra food and clothing to take home and worked with them on an individual basis to try and improve their academics. *That* is the kind of teacher I want to be. Someone that kids can look up to if they do not have someone at home who can do that for them. I want to relate to kids and try my best to go out of my way to be kind, and maybe they will see that and be encouraged to do the same to others in their life.

Many kids often feel that they are just not good in school, and often just give up because of this. Coming from a middle-class family where both of my parents have college degrees, this was not really a problem for me because I had (and still have) my own personal cheerleaders at home. However, I realize this is not the case for a lot of students, and I want to be someone that pushes my students academically to be the best to their ability. I know that the teaching experience is not always sweet all the time. I know that there are going to be times that my students will fail, and in that, I will fail as well. I know that kids can be disrespectful sometimes. I know that there are going to be people that tell me that I cannot succeed. But, I am prepared for this, and I also know that resilience is needed in order to be the teacher I think I need to be. Students need to be pushed by someone who does not give up; staying after school and coming before to offer help, being willing to work one-on-one with kids who are struggling, and sometimes having to change my plan and/or strategy in order to get students to understand. All of this will let my students know that my goal is to help them succeed, and in doing that, I think that they will want to do the same.

All of us have had teachers who we were afraid to approach, people that seemed cold and often were hard to talk to when you needed help. It almost seemed like you were a burden to them when you asked a question, and when you did, they grew impatient and confused as to why you did not understand. Patience and humility is needed in order to get down on kid's levels; to let them know that you have been there, and that even though it is hard, they can do it, and you'll help them! I think that a lot of teachers forget what it was like as a student, and they grow impatient with their own students and don't understand how they "just don't get it." I do not want to be that kind of teacher. I want to be the kind of teacher that tries new ways to approach

the subject and works with the student until they are back on track. Patience is not only needed from an academic standpoint, but within the daily classroom as well. There are going to be students who are not respectful, kind, or understanding, but they are the kids and I am the adult. I need to be that example of patience, and always remember to remain calm, respectful, and professional, even when times are hard.

Although literature and English are two of my greatest passions, I know that students have so much more to learn than just the main themes of *The Great Gatsby*. I want to teach my students how to learn, question, and understand. I want to teach them *how* to read and write, not just *what*. The 21st century skills of communication and collaboration are something I want deeply integrated into my classroom. Meeting standards will be the minimum for me because it should not stop there. I want the students I teach to walk away from my classroom knowing they are seen and cared about, and I hope they will be inspired to do the same to others.

Teachers have so many different roles in the classroom, and that means that they must have a lot of great characteristics, three of those being compassion, resilience, and patience. Although academics are important, we all know that the teachers we remember years later were not the ones that solely focused on content, but the ones that encouraged and inspired us to be better people and students. That is why my teaching philosophy is one of focusing on the whole person, and not just academics.