

Abigail Gogan

Belief Statement

The single most substantial of my beliefs which make up the foundation for my approach to teaching is that all students *can*. Frequently, students have preconceived expectations and beliefs about what they can and cannot learn or “do”, though my fundamental belief is that they can almost always do the things they think they are incapable of if they want to and have the necessary resources. I believe that it is my job as an educator to change these mindsets and provide students with the support and opportunities they need in order to learn to their full potential—regardless of where they think that potential ends.

I strongly believe in student-centered, inquiry-based, and flexible teaching and learning styles because I think that students are more often successful when they are invested and proactive in their learning. I believe the key to ensuring that students are engaged in their learning is to give them power in things like expectations, goals, learning environment, and personalization of their curricula. I aim to leave behind the narrow-minded traditional approaches to education which suppress individual experiences, neglect diverse needs, and force sameness onto classrooms as though they are not made up of unique individuals with varied backgrounds and strengths.

In conjunction with the movement beyond traditional approaches to education is the recognition and addressment of the uniformity for and upon which the vast majority of our Western systems are built. It is imperative that educators stop teaching and teaching *to* the neurotypical, colonialist, cis-heteropatriarchal standard and recognize the very individuals in front of them. I will always be reflecting, unlearning, discovering, and committed to being an informed and positive influence in the lives of all students I will meet in my career.

As a teacher, I believe a fundamental aspect of my role is to foster a safe environment for every one of my students; the basis for which must begin with the relationships that develop in the classroom. In my opinion, both teacher-student and student-student relationships greatly influence how valued and understood a student feels in the classroom, which then dictates their ability to engage in learning. Not only is it important to provide the guidance and support a student needs to learn, but it is no less important to ensure that they feel physically and emotionally comfortable, safe, supported, and confident that they can ask for help or support—and will be helped or supported—as often as they need. In short, we must simultaneously recognize the potential in each learner and recognize the human in each student and fulfill the needs of both of these aspects.