

## Teaching Philosophy

There is one moment in my experiences that was the turning point for me to pursue a career in teaching. As a volunteer in a grade 9 instrumental music classroom, I was given the liberty to lead the class through their repertoire for that lesson. Although I had only planned for a 10-minute block, it quickly became a 20-minute rehearsal block, because I found everyone in the classroom so engaged in the moment. The classroom was in a state of optimal experience, a state of flow, which is defined by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, as a mental state where all participants are immersed into the activity, feeling energized by the challenge, while enjoying the success that they find.

In my teaching practice, I challenge myself everyday to engage in such flow experiences with all my students in every class. The goal is to be so invested in the learning moment that the time gets away from us and class is over before we know it. I believe that this is the optimal learning environment for my students to have a positive learning experience that sticks with them even after the bell has rung at the end of the day. They are appropriately challenged in the task while finding enough success that will motivate them to continue and to be inspired to learn more. This in turn creates a challenge for me as their teacher to know the needs, interests, and learning profiles of every individual student so that I can appropriately differentiate instruction so that each student is challenged according to their readiness to learn. Through daily check-in conversations and observations, entrance and exit cards, I will collect as much information as possible to better tailor my class in order to provide everyone with a challenging enough experience so that we can enter a flow state.

With this being my goal, I understand that one of the greatest challenges is to put in energy to be able to inspire all the students to actively take part in the classroom. Flow does not come from a teacher who “mails in” her work. I am someone who is 110% committed to anything that I do, and my students and I will learn and teach each other in the same way. I want every class to be an engaging and exciting class for us. I want our classroom to be a place where the time just seems to get away from us and no one is counting down the minutes or seconds until it is over.

On the other hand, I acknowledge that there will be days where this will not be achievable. However, I want to focus on my efforts each day to create an engaging learning experience. There will be many days where the class does not reach this optimal experience, however the focus in our classroom will always be how much effort we have put in. If we have put in 110% of our effort to create the best environment for learning, then I believe that is all we can do. Similarly, there are students in the classroom where achieving a 90% is just not possible. To each of my students, I want to commend their best effort, and help them to realize that if they put in their best effort and they achieved what they achieved, then that is all anyone can ever ask for. My classroom will be a classroom where effort is far more valuable than a perfect mark.

My students must find relevance in the work that we do in our class. I believe that my students will produce work of much higher quality if they find their personal connection to what they are doing. For my students, I wish to provide them with the reason that they are doing every piece of work they are doing, so that all students are “bought-in” to everything that we do. In doing so, I believe that my students will be more invested in their work and put more effort into it which will in turn lead to greater success. My hope is for my students to not have to struggle with want to put in 110% of their efforts. This in turn is a challenge for myself to appeal to the interests and learning profiles of the individual students in my class. In this way I can incorporate differentiated instruction to create an engaging, challenging, and positive learning environment where students want to put in 100% of their efforts.