

My educational philosophy is guided by four general questions. As such, I have structured it in a question-answer format. In doing this, I hope it helps to guide the reader in clearly understanding my perspective, shaped indirectly and directly by personal and professional experiences.

### **What is the purpose of education?**

Stated in its simplest form, the purpose of education is to transmit established knowledge and to guide students in the analysis and effective usage of that knowledge. From a wider scope, however, the purpose of education is two-fold: to teach students how to make their way in a complicated world and to teach students how to undertake such a task according to the compasses of personal interest and morality. As human beings, students both have the desire and the necessity to learn. Desire is foundational to human nature. The transition from an infant into a toddler provides a good context for curiosity of human beings. Once a baby can move around a room, more or less independently, any parent or guardian knows the pains of steering the toddler away from the dangers of its own curiosity. With that being said, curiosity and necessity go hand in hand. Human beings, unlike numerous other creatures, need to learn in order to survive. The curious toddler still lacks the know-how to keep itself warm, but it has already grasped the idea of filling its belly – cry, hold the bottle when presented, place to lips, extract. The job of the teacher is to stoke continuously the flame of curiosity and to feed systematically the flame with necessary fuel, all the while aiding the development and usage of the compasses of personal interest and morality.

### **Why do you teach your subject?**

Communication is not uniquely human, but according to current science communicating the abstract through rich language is. I teach English Language and Literature because (1) both language and literature are of deep personal interest and (2) English Language and Literature directly and indirectly enrich the human condition. Humanity needs a common language and, in terms of geographical distribution and professional demand, English is arguably the best candidate for the honor. The study of English-language literature builds valuable comprehension, creative, emotional, and analytical skills. The written word on a page which when read by the reader is, as stated by Stephen King, telepathy. Any person with adequate English skills can pick up a copy of Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life*, comprehend the social and political norms that

were the fabric of Alabama in Keller's time, imagine the isolated existence of Keller, sympathize with Anne Sullivan and her seemingly unachievable task, and analyze one's own beliefs and thoughts on the situation. With the sharpened blades of abstract thought and language mastery, students are that much closer to carving a desirable and sustainable future.

### **How do students learn best?**

Students, like professionals or parents, learn best by doing. Books are great; I can be found lugging around a few at nearly any hour except for bedtime or shower time. But when studying fiction or characterization, for example, students learn best by trying to create their own alluring world or relatable hero, by implementing a literary device which accentuates the theme or tone. Only after giving it go can they appreciate the effort and intentions of the author who is trying his hardest to communicate a message. The same goes for the language learner: after presentation and comprehension of the target knowledge and the target skill(s), repetitive action in realistic scenarios cultivate student learning. To facilitate learning, the teacher's roles are: creating a positive and comfortable atmosphere, presenting clear and concrete learning objectives, transmitting simply the knowledge and skills, and eliciting repetitively the correct usage of the knowledge and skills in realistic conditions.

### **What are the most effective methods for teaching?**

Student-centered and student-directed methods to teaching are, according to personal experience and current research, the most effective methods for teaching. It should be understood that "student-centered" means student engagement with peers and the teacher is central to the daily lesson plan. "Student-directed" can be understood in the following situation of teaching five new vocabulary words. The teacher presents the five words, along with definitions and usage examples. The students can diligently take notes, highlight the target words as they are read throughout a text, and review laboriously for an exam. This approach has its merits, its time and place. But instead, the teacher can present the target vocabulary, and then assign the students the task of researching the meanings of the new vocabulary words. After successfully checking that all target words were located and understood, the teacher then allows the students the freedom to choose their own style of assignment connected to the target vocabulary. Students could create their own worksheet or quiz and then distribute it to their peers and afterwards evaluate the work,

thus acting as the teacher. Students could write a poem, a song, or any other sort of narrative using the target vocabulary. These are only two very simple examples which indicate a student-directed approach.

My educational philosophy has developed through years of learning as a student in the United States and abroad, as well as my formative years as an educational professional. Being a self-proclaimed eternal student of life and profession, I recognize that my philosophy has served well thus far, but as the science and art of education continues to be understood and shaped by researchers and practitioners, my philosophy remains open to freshly creative approaches.