

Teaching Philosophy  
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During Rita Pierson's TED talk she makes the statement "Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be." This quote describes the kind of influence I want to have on my students. I want my students to know that I believe in them, that regardless what happens at home, I will always be there to help them succeed in at least one area of their lives.

Growing up, my mom was a substitute teacher and I had a few cousins going to school to become teachers. I have been surrounded by teachers my entire life, so the various struggles teachers have to work with were not a foreign topic. This proved to be evident when I began working at an afterschool program in high school. Being that I was aware of some of the issues that can occur between students and with parents, I was able to recognize what was happening and I had the tools necessary to correct the issue before it got too bad. I have often been told by many people (even ones that don't know me well) that I will make a great teacher someday. For the longest time I thanked them but thought "*that's not my major though*". It wasn't until I decided to change my major that I realized they were right and knew my future profession before I did. I knew how to handle kids well, whether it be helping them with homework, playing with them or even disciplining them, but I figured it was just because I had a bunch of younger siblings and cousins so I had to know how to handle kids.

Thinking back, I have realized that I hold a special place in my heart for children; especially children with disabilities. My mother's closest friend had a son diagnosed with cerebral palsy and now has a son with Down syndrome. One of the fondest memories I have as a child is playing with her son with cerebral palsy. Our favorite game was to take toys and pile them on his wheelchair tray and watch him squeal as he shoved them all off and we would repeat the process over and over. Through playing with him and spending time around his younger brother with Down Syndrome, I learned that I absolutely love individuals with disabilities. They are some of the brightest and most kind individuals I've ever met and they aren't afraid to give you a hug in hopes of making you feel better if they think you are having a bad day. Because of the individuals I have worked with whether it be through Camp ReCreation (a camp in Richardton, ND for individuals with disabilities) or through Pride Inc. and Easter Seals Goodwill, I have determined that I want to be a special education teacher.

My philosophy for teaching my students, both with and without disabilities, is each and every student should have the privilege to participate and interact with their peers in the general education setting as much as possible. Inclusion is necessary for students that have a disability, and meets an important need of those students. Without inclusion, a student cannot learn how to interact with his or her peers and their peers cannot learn how to work with and love those that are a little different. As a teacher, I will have a goal of keeping my students in the general education setting as much as possible.

Making an attempt to meet each student's needs fully is important and crucial to his or her learning. If an attempt is not made, then the student's chance of succeeding in that area is low. I believe that each student can succeed at whatever her or she puts her mind to, disability or not. A student can achieve anything if he or she sets the right goals and have the right people to help guide him or her and as his or her teacher, it is my job to make sure that he or she sets appropriate goals and works toward achieving each one.

As a teacher, it will be my job to provide support to the child in each area that he or she needs to improve. It is also my job to work not only very closely with the student, but also his or her family members, teachers, administration and even therapists. Together, this team can create the best and most effective Individualized Educational Plan or IEP for each student with a disability to help them all succeed in not only the educational world, but also into adulthood as well. Each student is capable of learning, and with the right and necessary tools and people, each student will go much further beyond where his or her goals are than his or her team and family members could have ever hoped. As educators, we are there to help our students feel accepted and intelligent, because without self-acceptance and the ability to feel smart, our students won't reach their goals as easily, if at all. Being a teacher is an incredibly awarding job, difficult, but nonetheless rewarding and I cannot wait to be a teacher.

I am beyond excited to begin my journey in becoming a teacher. A friend pointed out to me after I had decided to change my major that she has noticed a difference in my excitement for my classes, and she's right. I love my classes now and I am constantly finding myself researching projects and strategies outside of homework. I am excited to go into the classrooms and observe the teachers and students and learn different teaching styles and techniques I can take with me and use in my own classroom someday.

I'm excited to work with kids and to have a classroom of my own, but I have realized that there is so much more to teaching than the classroom and projects and activities I will plan for my students. I will to work with kids that are both excelling at their studies, but more importantly, I will be able to work with kids struggling, in every area of life, whether it is a broken home life or having to work everything around their needs if they have a disability. I want my students to feel

comfortable coming to me for advice and some comforting and uplifting words of encouragement such as "You can do it, I know you can."

As a teacher, it will be my job to be that person my students can trust and look to as a role model. I want to make a difference in kids' lives for the better and take part in shaping the type of adults they become and helping them reach the goals and milestones they never thought possible. Teaching is so much more than teaching kids how to read, write and do arithmetic. I look forward to each and every moment, both good and bad, easy and hard. I want parents to see that I care for their children and will just about bend over backwards to ensure their children will get the best education I can provide so that they are able to attend college and get a degree doing something they love, whether it be education, mechanics, engineering or medicine.