

# My Teaching Philosophy [Mitch S.]

Students, no matter what stage of their educational journey, want to be engaged in learning experiences that are relevant to their lives, meaningful beyond a grade, and translatable beyond a paycheck. Meeting the needs of today's diverse learners takes a comprehensive, proactive approach. Balancing differing education policies and environments as well as the individual needs of diverse learners is challenging, even for exceptional educators. It requires a belief in high expectations for all students, a strong understanding of research-based educator principles, embracing a collaborative community approach, and continuing professional development and shared knowledge. Above all, it requires a relentless passion for innovative student learning.

At the heart of my teaching philosophy is the desire to develop self-confident, well-adjusted, life-long learners through high expectations, intrinsic motivation, and community-based project learning. I believe poverty is our biggest challenge and that education is the truest way to address multi-generational poverty and empower individuals and communities. While poverty and external circumstances are strong factors, high expectations, innovation, and a teacher's passion for meeting individuals' diverse learning needs are the greatest factors in student achievement.

Regardless of the stakeholder's role (parent, teacher, administrator), at the heart of efficacy is transformative leadership. A transformative leader has a great understanding of people and their talents, motivations, and interests and can help align them with the greater vision and mission. They understand leadership and management principles, core values and belief systems, and their own strengths and weaknesses and continue to enhance their skillsets and knowledge. They lead by example; they are committed to the vision and their team; and they deliver measurable, impactful value in a transparent, collaborative manner.

I believe students are our learning partners. Every student has the right and ability to achieve success. While I support a context-based, no-excuse philosophy, I balance that with the social-emotional (SEL) needs of learners. I believe strongly in supporting our digital natives with supportive, integrated, adaptive education technology. I am especially adept at personalized, individualized, and differentiated learning strategies. I believe in constantly validating our approach through research and feedback and making micro-pivots to enhance efficacy.

I want to leverage technology as a transformative tool, not just an engagement or replacement tool. I want to ensure that technology is leveraged effectively and that the negative effects of technology (lowering of EQ, increased social isolation, increased extrinsic motivation through gamification, etc.) are being mitigated. Intersecting SEL/psychology + technology + design will literally reshape edTech and digital learning, with the potential for dozens of new topics that are not just tangential but absolutely critical for future learning. We know the academic gains that can be achieved through technology. Now, we need to understand these gains at the cost of emotional intelligence and, more importantly, how to have gains in both academic and emotional intelligence without tradeoffs. It truly is amazing what can be accomplished.

My aim is to bring my passion for the notable advancements in education, sustainability, and community-building to assist in creating innovative frameworks, practices, tools and environments for accelerated lifelong learning. These goals are ambitious, but I want and need to make a difference.