

Teaching: A Calling, a Craft, and a Science

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*Adonai is my strength and my shield. My heart trusts in Him, and I was helped.*

*Therefore my heart leaps for joy, and I will praise Him with my song. (Psalm 28: 7, TLV)*

I was born in Spain, and I grew up bilingual. I attended an experiential elementary school. My first language is Catalan, and I studied mainly in Catalan. I studied Spanish as a second language. When I was a teenager, we moved. I was uprooted. My friends, my school and what was familiar to me was left behind. At this point I attended a different school, I had to learn to study in Spanish. I found it difficult to acculturate. Later on, I attended university in London, U.K., where I learned a new set of cultural norms. Finally, I moved to the U.S., and I acculturated again to a different cultural landscape, including re-learning English and Spanish.

My passion for teaching comes from my personal journey. It is a journey of overcoming obstacles, the story of a road less traveled, where G-d has continually guided and helped me. From my perspective, teaching is a calling, a craft, and a science. I believe that my own experience can help me be an advocate for my students, especially ELLs.

As a Messianic/ Christian educator, I want to create a culture of caring and a culturally sensitive environment by being respectful and inclusive of all students and their cultural backgrounds; demonstrating an awareness of student backgrounds and needs. I think that student surveys at the beginning of the year are a great way to get to know the students, their interests, their learning styles, their families, and their cultural norms. This information can also help me communicate effectively with my students' families. I want my practice to be culturally and linguistically responsive to my students' needs. I can accomplish this goal by using ongoing methods to assess my students' skill levels and design instruction accordingly, as well as maintaining a system of updated student records, and incorporating any learning needs into my

lesson plans. Self-reflection also plays an important role. After each lesson, I can self-reflect on what worked, what did not work and what can be improved. In addition, it is central that I am familiar with the resources available, allowing me to consider the different learning styles in the classroom and presenting content in a variety of formats.

As part of creating a culture of caring, I usually greet students as they arrive each morning. I think this is a great way to build good relationships with my students, and it also allows me to sense where each student is at each day. I have found that monitoring learning and giving on-time feedback is essential. My teaching philosophy includes rewarding effort and promoting a “Growth Mindset” and I take this into account when I provide feedback for my students.

I want my classroom to be a safe place, accessible to all students. A literacy-rich environment that enhances the students’ ability to interact with one other through respectful discussion, collaboration, and feedback. I am a firm believer in inquiry-based learning, cooperative learning, and peer-tutoring. I love guiding my students through a process of discovery. I want my students to have meaningful learning experiences, learn to persevere and develop critical thinking skills. I can achieve this by incorporating active-learning activities, encouraging my students to take risks and participate, contextualizing instruction, making connections to real-life situations, and making cross-curricular connections.

It is my experience that teaching is most effective when classroom procedures are in place. The classroom environment, climate and behavior management are other prominent facets of teaching. My teaching philosophy includes creating an environment of respect and rapport, establishing a culture of learning, managing classroom procedures, managing student behavior

by explaining expectations, monitoring student behavior, and appropriately responding to student behavior.

I view my students as active members of the learning community. I want to see my students flourish and blossom into who G-d created them to be. My job is to help my students to become progressively more independent. Therefore, I can teach my students to set learning goals, such as reading goals, and self-assessment skills through rubrics.

As a teacher, I hold high expectations for all students. I need to meet students where they are at in order to take them where they need to go. This is where the art of differentiating instruction comes into play. My experience is that differentiated instruction is most effective when I use the data from both formative and summative assessments and use it to guide and plan instruction. The data obtained from these assessments helps me to make decisions about teaching, identify what students have learned, what I need to reteach, what I can enrich, and how I can extend my student's thinking. It is key that assessments are aligned to learning goals. I believe that being flexible and adjusting the lessons as needed is paramount.

My professional responsibility includes participating in professional development courses to enhance the content knowledge and pedagogical skill.

Finally, relationships are essential in this profession. I view myself as being part of a community and I want to be sensitive and aware of all cultures represented in my school. The best gift I can give my students is my own example. Each day I have the opportunity to be a model for my students. My goal is to walk in a culture of honor and respect, integrity, and ethical conduct. I can show professionalism by establishing good relationships and partnering with my school administrators, building principal, co-workers, teaching assistants, non-instructional staff and, of course, my students' families.