

### Teaching Philosophy

Students need relationships; they need to know they are loved. In 2017, I attended an educational leadership conference called [Capturing Kids' Hearts](#) put together by Flip Flippin. His big idea is "if you have a child's heart, you have a child's mind." I believe in this idea and live this lifestyle in my classroom and at home. This conference taught me several concepts I could implement into my teaching. It also reinforced some of the strategies I already practice in my classroom which build relationships with my students. Greeting students at the door is one way to build relationships with students. I believe if you asked each of my students they would tell you I try so hard to get to the classroom door every single day to greet them. If I can't make it to the door, my students know I will, at the very least, say good morning or good afternoon to each of them. It's amazing to me how this has rubbed off on some of my students. My freshmen, whom I teach all year long, try to beat me to a cheerful greeting in the morning. This is such a wonderful life skill they are developing which has nothing to do with standards or paperwork, but yet this simple gesture could be so beneficial in their future. Fast forward to the end of the day and my students will tell you that they always get told to have a great day and be kind to one another - and it's so sweet to hear these young adults say "Have a great day too, Miss Waidely." This attitude and positive relationships building warms my heart. I strive every day to build stronger relationships with my students so they feel comfortable, safe, and loved.

I believe students in my class feel safe and comfortable - especially when I don't make them sit the entire class period. They seem to love their drink and bathroom breaks. Students in my class are able to express themselves in many different ways. I've been told many times that I'm very supportive and not judgmental - once again warming my heart. My students feel that they will be successful, not only in the classroom, but in life as well.

Most importantly my students know I care. There are teachers in the world that are so extremely intelligent, then there is me, a teacher who is intelligent AND realizes my students need help developing as individuals. They need help learning skills that will assist them later in life; they need to be able to connect what I teach to real life situations. I hear the question all the time, "Miss Waidely? Why do we have to learn this?" or "Why do I have to do this?" and it is probably weird, but I love that moment. That is the moment the student will remember. In that moment, I know I have their full attention, they are testing me, they want to know if I can come up with a good enough reason for why I am making them write an essay or complete a project. In my fifth year of teaching I know I can answer those questions with confidence and in great detail of how each and every one of my students will use the information they learn in literature class to help them be successful in life, no matter what profession they may choose after they graduate high school. Again, it's about building that relationship and teaching students important life skills.

When asked to describe a "typical" day in my classroom I always smile, because I struggle to come up with the best answer because, honestly, each day is so different. If they weren't different I wouldn't have my students' attention. I park my car in the teacher parking lot, am greeted at the door by an awesome custodian, where exchanges of smiles and good news happen. I walk about 20 steps into the building, I am greeted by one or more of my first hour students eagerly awaiting to tell me all about their night. The walk to the classroom is filled with relationship building. Once all of my belongings are put away, assignments are written on the board, conversations have happened with many students, my teacher mailbox is checked, the computer is turned on, I finally make my way to the door to greet students. I love my students and their differences, I have a few who quietly slip in the room while I find some way to say hello to them and pull them out of their shell. I have others who bombard me with questions to the point where I am literally carrying on three different conversations and each one of my students thinks they have my full attention.

The thought of how many questions I answer in under a minute every single day is amazing: "Miss Waidely can I go to the bathroom?" "I need a pencil." "Can I text my mom?" "Do you have more staples?" "Can I get my missing work?" The questions are sometimes never ending. The bell rings and my students know I will be standing in front of the class ready to begin our first lesson, they scurry to find their seats. I tend to start my class with little conversations that might not be about what we are studying, but connects with my students and builds relationship. Sometimes the question is as simple as "Who is excited? It's a four day week!?!?" proceeded by "What big plans do you have?" I then move on to what we will be learning that day and how it will impact their lives in the future. Students will experience a lecture, work in groups, or work individually on projects and assignments. At the end of the class students are always released by the sound of a bell and the sound of my voice once again with positive, relationship building words.

Students notice I have a lot of energy. Students know I truly love teaching and that I adore being a Hornet again, as I graduated from Hillsdale High School in 2005. My students understand that I have been there (in high school); I get it. I get that homework sometimes lasts into late hours of the night, I get that sitting the entire class period is difficult, I get that English may not be their favorite subject, I get that a longer lunch would be nice, I get that Hornet Power (an Advanced PE class) would be more interactive, I get that it may seem like some teachers just don't "get it", but I survived and they will too. (I say with a smile on my face and my students best interest in my heart.)

The difficult days, I have those, just like any other teacher. There are days when I sit in my chair as the last bell rings, say goodbye to my students, and think, wow. Not wow I'm so awesome, but rather wow, what just happened? One quick example is when I left my students for

two days to go to a conference. Each student knew my expectations and understood the assignment - a sub really was not needed for teaching. When I returned to my classroom a note was left expressing how students were not bad, they were just not good, and that they were glued to their cell phones. The sub wasn't sure how much work the students actually accomplished. This broke my heart, which turned into an impromptu lesson about respect. I talked about their wrong doings and way they could improve, I talked about things I could do better as a teacher to show my students more respect, and ended by telling them that I loved each and every one of them and that I wanted to see them walk down the isle on graduation day and I would remember each of them for the rest of my life. At the end of class I knew I had made an impact because one of the students raised her hand and said "Miss Waidely, I really think you should be a motivational speaker." I simply smiled. The students knew that while I expected them to improve I also looked inside myself to see how I could be a better person. My goal was to build a stronger relationship with my students so the next time I was gone, the respect would shine through. These difficult days help me grow as a teacher, they remind me to confide in other teachers and administrators to gain insight, after all, we are all in this together, for the students. Teaching is about teamwork and I believe it is important to communicate with others, face areas of weakness head-on and make changes. I don't necessarily enjoy the difficult days in the moment, but rather appreciate them because they help me reflect on my job and help me improve my teaching.

Below is a bullet list of my personal feelings and beliefs about teaching and what makes an outstanding teacher. I believe I am growing stronger every day in each of these areas.

- Have first class communication skills
- Be professional
- Be thinkers, problem solvers, and creative
- Be motivational
- Be knowledgeable and have common sense
- Be trusting and trustworthy
- Give positive feedback
- Be hard working, dedicated, and have good organizational skills
- Have time management skills
- Understand assessment
- Love educating youth