

My spark of teaching comes from my martial arts background, where it was a requirement for me to teach so many hours to receive my blackbelt. I was placed to teach the three through seven-year-old group, and I fell in love. After I finished my teaching assignment and received my blackbelt, I asked if I could teach in a school setting. I was granted the opportunity to teach the Jonesboro Public Schools after school clubs, and I worked that program single-handedly. I fell in love with teaching my Kindergarteners, and at the end of the program, they had the opportunity to test for their belt alongside me and the rest of the academy. I had ten students show up and participate - I cried tears of joy - I had so many people tell me that not a single soul would show up and that because the leaders did not hear any feedback, and I assumed it must have meant I wasn't a good teacher. My students placed a smile on my face and a passion in my heart that I will never forget. I know it must sound cheesy, but those little faces taught me more than I could ever teach them. It took me forever to be able to start living my dream of becoming a teacher. I was forced to live out my mother's dreams that she had in mind for me with a career in nursing. While I played along, I did at one-point fall in love with nursing as a profession, but I did not fall in love with the political side of it. After I exhausted all of my roads to nursing school, I finally build up the courage to break free and to be my true self and place myself on a more fulfilling path. It only took a semester of being back at Arkansas State where my family finally saw me happy and started to support my dreams alongside me.

I say all the above to get to my philosophy, which is I want to educate and advocate for children that need a voice or who often times gets pushed into the shadows. I want to be able to instill leadership skills to help prepare my students for the best possible road to success.

School is a vital part of society, and learning is a vital part of life. Learning starts from within the home, and until recently (with the current pandemic) learning has not occurred in the

home as much as it should. Where some parents took a hands-off approach to their child's education, now most parents are home-schooling and teaching their children life lessons such as: cooking, cleaning, laundry, taxes, and basic skills that are needed for survival. While these are all essential life skills, school is the place for children to learn everything else. In my many years in school, my teachers provided themselves as role models and a beacon of light through my education. My teachers taught life lessons, how to be kind, and provided encouraging words when my parents often did not.

I believe education is a vital part of life. The ability to be better than your home life or your past / generational cycle is to absorb and learn all that you can so you can prosper. I want my students to crave their learning time and to enjoy going to class, I want to keep them engaged and to create a safe environment as well. I want to help the parents so that way they can help students with homework. Educators should provide a fun, new and innovating way to keep students attention during the day. Students should have learning material offered in several different ways to facilitate learning, such as tactile, visual, auditory methods, and through play.

Diversity is everywhere, ranging from socioeconomics to gender to even the state your were born in, and diversity is no longer just about the color of one's skin. Students deserve to be aware of this at some point, I believe in the younger grades, especially Kindergarten, it is the teacher's job to not directly point anything out, but to make sure all needs are met and the students have equal opportunities. Students should not have to worry about finding their next meal or having to care for a younger sibling, yet often in this country this occurs and this places a mental barrier on that child. Being burdened with extraordinary responsibilities or lacking in proper nutrition can drastically cause a child to lose focus and not want to be engaged in the classroom, ultimately leading to poor academic performance.

Teachers need to be open minded and to understand that children sometimes have to deal with things we may only see as adult issues, and that is not the child's fault.. It takes a brave soul to take on the responsibility of an educator and to shape young minds for the future. Teachers should welcome all students and should not hold prejudice over one student based off of unsubstantiated claims that may come from another educator. Lastly, educators need to support educators – this creates a wonderful environment for everyone where the students can maximize their learning potential, and this gives the ability for educators try new approaches and use new tools to help students.