My teaching philosophy is founded on two pillars: classroom community and student-to-student interaction. With these elements in place, students are best able to learn in meaningful ways. I believe the teacher should serve as a classroom facilitator guiding students to a place where they can make new insights and connections on their own, and not as an omniscient sage or authoritarian figure. Consequently, my classroom strategy is structured as a student-first environment, one where student enjoyment, engagement, and higher-order connections are prioritized.

First and foremost I believe in a positive learning environment. Once there is a feeling of safety and support in the classroom, students are able to fully engage with the educational process. Before I can ask a student to analyze the symbolic significance of Hester Prynne’s scarlet letter or write a robust thesis statement, the student must first know I value their daily presence in the class. When the classroom becomes a community of support from teacher and peers, students are willing to be vulnerable in the pursuit of greater knowledge, which translates to educational engagement.

Once this critical baseline of community is established the classroom becomes a sanctum of learning. My educational philosophy springs from John Dewey’s progressivism as well as Lev Vygotsky’s social constructivism. Accordingly, my classroom functions as a student-centered space where it is the students, not the teacher, who do the bulk of the action and discussion. I view my main teaching responsibility as creating situations where students are challenged within their zone of proximal development to attain skills and ideas nearly within their grasp. I strive to exist not as a repository of information, but as a facilitator of both communication between individual students and of relationships between students and texts. Per Pearson and Gallagher, my ultimate goal is for students to take active responsibility for their own learning and enrich themselves not only as writers and readers, but also as young adults.

Ultimately, I believe the teacher must engage the students with the work and with each other. Sometimes this process entails scaffolding in individual conferences; sometimes it takes the form of gallery walks and carousel discussions to move the students kinesthetically out of their seats. Regardless, only when these vital preconditions are met can true education occur. Throughout my time as an English instructor, both at the collegiate and secondary level, I have worked to bring these components into every classroom I have entered, with great success.