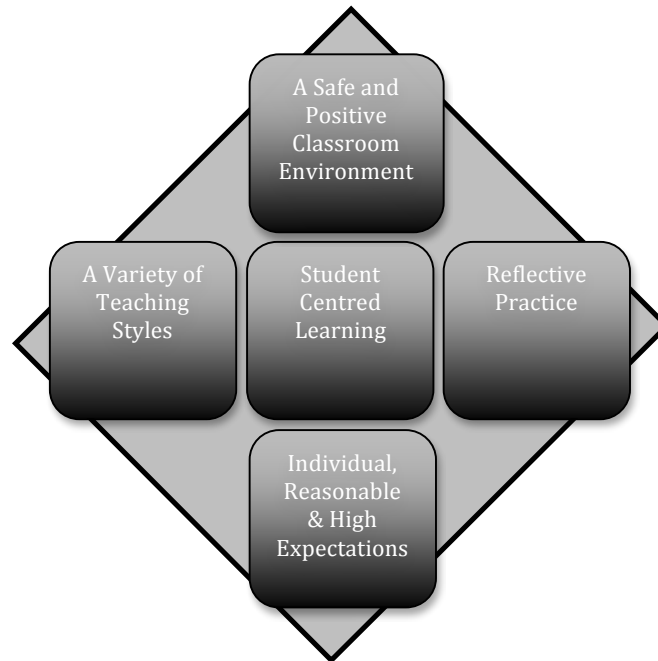


MY EMERGING TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I have considered my emerging teaching philosophy as a combination of the following five key areas:



A Safe and Positive Classroom:

I strongly believe that this is one of the key components to successful teaching. I aim to ensure each student feels a valued member of the class, that they feel safe, and comfortable enough to take the necessary risks with their learning. I encourage teamwork, whilst recognising the importance of individual personalities and learning styles. A class where, irrespective of our background and our individual learning requirements across the spectrum, we function as a supportive and empathetic group, using the Curriculum's Values (Ministry of Education, 2007 p. 10) to guide our expectations of one another. It should be a place where students value their own, and each other's work, where work is displayed with a sense of pride. One in which I enjoy knowing my students not just as learners, but also as people with interests and lives beyond school. I am also passionate that it should be an environment in which both whānau and community feel welcomed, their contribution is both valued and sought after, one where the door is always open.

Not only is it a safe and positive environment that the students themselves contribute to but, as importantly, one they help to create, empowering them to make an important contribution to society as they continue their journey through life.

A Variety of Teaching Styles:

In addition to the Effective Pedagogy section of the Curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 2007 p. 34-35) which highlights a wide range of teacher actions that have a positive impact on a student's learning, I am also a firm believer in the merits of a constructivist approach to teaching. One which encourages students to become active participants in the learning process, incorporating new information, ideas, and experiences alongside prior knowledge. My role very much to act as a guide, providing the necessary scaffolding along the way.

"Constructivist learning is in the learner, the teacher acting as a facilitator of learning, providing experiences which challenge and extend understanding rather than an instructor." (Littledyke & Huxford, 1998, p. 14).

I also see how this relates closely to the teaching style of ako. My classroom experience to date has clearly shown me how new knowledge and understanding so often comes from a shared learning experience between students, as well as between teacher and student.

Within both of these approaches I see the opportunities for introducing a whole host of teaching tools that include visual, aural and kinaesthetic aspects to appeal to a wide range of learning styles. I am also very excited by the huge potential modern technology offers across the curriculum, an area that is still very much in its infancy.

Individual, Reasonable, High Expectations:

I feel my own journey through life, as well as that during my recent practice, has taught me that rather than expecting, somewhat unreasonably, each student to aim for the same level of expectation, it is important that we recognise their own unique and individual qualities. In doing so we work with them to set an appropriately high and reasonable level of learning expectation. These expectations should largely reflect the five key competencies as set out in the Curriculum Document (Ministry of Education, 2007 p. 12-13). It is then the teacher's role to provide the challenges and guidance necessary to extend their learning, to foster the self-belief that each student can reach, and surpass their expectations, whilst helping to build the necessary level of resilience required to overcome the inevitable setbacks along the way.

However, unlike their individual learning goals, I expect all my students to embody a universal standard of behaviour. A standard set by myself and the students, everyone being expected to take responsibility for their own actions.

Reflective Practice:

I believe that intuition usually tells us when we are doing the right thing (if not always how), and it is one of the most rewarding highlights of teaching to be able to wonder, often in awe, as a classroom explodes in a sea of learning. But as

importantly are those inevitable days when it just doesn't happen. As Fraser (2012 p. 62) points out:

"To teach is to come face to face with failure and set backs on a regular basis".

And as she further highlights, one of the main reasons for a personal philosophy, such as this, is to provide a foundation to fall back upon during such moments.

I firmly believe that reflection is key to an ever-evolving teaching practice, whether it be on curriculum content, the learning/teaching process, a certain lesson, or a certain student. Reflection helps us inform both teacher and students' next steps, ensuring we never stand still, and continually strive to improve, hone our pedagogical practice.

I also see the importance of reflective practice as an important tool for students, for example, in the form of self-assessment. A key tool in promoting metacognition, self-assessment, empowers students to consider how it is they learn, and ways to improve and refine that process.

Student Centred Learning:

I wholeheartedly believe that this is the king pin of all the above areas. This is the one that provides the opportunity to ensure students become increasingly self-motivated, and in doing so, eases the implementation of the other areas.

Central to my understanding of what it implies when we talk about student centred is that it is vital that they understand what, why and how we will be doing an activity, the learning intentions and outcomes, and what, why and how assessment will be carried out.

I see ongoing formative assessment as key to helping me to identify individual, and group needs within the classroom, which I can then feedback into the planning stage. The point of difference formative assessment provides is that it happens continually throughout the learning process, that goals are not simply set as mid or end-of-term milestones (though still important) but moreover are a flexible, ongoing tool to promote learning. Evaluating the assessment is the next step, followed by feedback, which without, assessment and evaluation are almost superfluous.

John Hattie's (Hattie 2009) Table of Effects Sizes places feedback as the most critical influence on a students learning. In their 2007 paper Hattie and Timperley examined in great detail the complex nature of feedback, crudely explaining it as "Where am I going? How am I going? Where to next?", whilst highlighting the importance of bridging the gaps between these questions.

