

### **Effective Communicators**

No matter where we go in life, we will always have to communicate with the people we encounter. Growing up in the United States, the ability to converse through words, whether written or spoken, was never a difficulty for me. Throughout my ePortfolio, I reference the time I spent as an intern in Livingston, Zambia, and, while there, I experienced the challenges that result from ineffective communication. Even a simple “hello” was difficult, so I found myself simply smiling and waving – an act that is not bound by language. Though it is likely that my students will not experience this type of language barrier in my class, they will have to learn how to communicate with those around them. I believe it is incredibly important that students leave my classroom with the ability to interact with people who are both alike and different from them, understanding how to be effective communicators. Whether it is through writing, speaking, or non-verbal actions, I want my students to be confident in their ability to converse actively and clearly with those around them. The primary way I plan to work at this is through reflective writings and class discussions. English, as a subject, tends to scare students because they think of one thing: research papers. I want to give my students ample opportunities to write honest and freely, so that when the time comes to write a formal paper, they feel more prepared and less intimidated. Writing does not come naturally to anyone; it takes practice. I want my students to recognize writing as a process and understand the importance of revision. Furthermore, authentic conversations will drive my classroom. English Language Arts presents a unique opportunity to discuss controversial themes, difficult topics, and issues that students need to understand in order to be active members of the world around them. Through daily writing activities and class discussions, I hope to equip my students with the necessary tools to communicate both in the classroom and beyond.

### **Effective Readers**

I did not always love to read. I was not the kid who stayed up late with a flashlight or had stacks of books on my shelf. In fact, I often preferred something else, or should I say *anything else*, over reading. When I was a sophomore in high school, however, that changed. I read the novel *Redeeming Love* by Francine Rivers when I was sixteen, and it revealed to me the ways in which a book could completely encapsulate you and take you into another world. This novel, which still reigns as my favorite, completely captivated me. I found myself thinking about the characters throughout the day, picturing the setting around me, and wondering what would happen next. The characters’ lives became part of mine, and I want to reveal that part of reading to my

students. I believe it is important to understand and recognize, however, that this will likely not be the result of reading Shakespeare or William Faulkner. My appreciation for such authors did not come until later as I was challenged throughout my college and masters courses. I feel that this appreciation will instead be achieved by exposing students to diverse genres and authors, setting aside time to let them explore texts of their choice. My primary goal is not that they would get an A on every test or be able to memorize notes from class. I want my students to become effective readers, listeners, and thinkers that are eager to learn more and develop an understanding and appreciation for literature. Though canonical texts are wonderful and necessary, I believe that students get more out of the texts that they can easily and directly relate to. Because of this, I hope to also incorporate various young adult literature texts into my classroom, pairing them with the classics so that my student can evaluate universal themes and ideas across time periods and genres. I am confident that there is at least one book out there for everyone, and I am ready to discover those books alongside my students.

### **Effective People**

Above all, I want my students to know they can make a difference in the world and that they always have my support. When I think back on the teachers that had the greatest impact on my life, I do not think of the books I read or the papers I wrote; I think about the way they made me feel. I believe that effective people are fair, understanding, and inspiring, and I hope to model those attributes for my students. I want my classroom to be an environment of respect and support, both in the ways that I treat my students, as well as how they treat one another. I believe that teaching English Language Arts is so much more than reading and writing, even though I want my students to enhance their abilities in both areas. To me, this subject is a gateway to topics and discussions that go beyond the classroom, and I want to have those open and difficult conversations with my students. By nurturing this type of environment, I hope to instill the necessary confidence in my students that will push them to pursue their goals. Middle school and high school are such pivotal times in adolescents' lives, and I hope to encourage my students in a way that leads to their success. If I can walk away knowing that at least one student's life was impacted or changed because of me, I call that a success.