

## Shannon Godfrey

### Question 1

Well, I think first of all, if someone were to walk into my classroom, I think they would probably say that my teaching style is a discussion based style. I teach US history, AP US history and American History I, and so we do a lot of discussion about the facts going on. They will be assigned documents that they may have to read, or something like that, and then we'll come back and compare those documents and look at how they are applicable to present day versus the times when they were written. So we do a lot of that. We do a lot of current events and things of that nature. And I think that's a pretty universal style for most teachers, particularly language arts and social studies teachers. So I think that's something that's universal, discussion-based.

I think as far as things that are unique to myself and my personality, I am a firm believer that sometimes you have to get in there and sometimes you have to be a little ridiculous. And you have to use humor to get kids involved. I also think that I really work hard on that personal relationship with students, and so I get to know them so that we can have conversations. So I think as far as for me that's unique to myself, using humor, using... when I do lectures, which I usually present the material in a lecture format, and then we do activities with it. But when I do lectures I try to be fun and entertaining and walk around the room and do crazy things, just to keep their attention. So being energetic, I guess.

### Question 2

I think a key to teaching is you have to have routine. So kids have to know every day what they're going to be doing. So for me to organize my classroom, make it efficient, I have a calendar on the back wall that tells everything that they're going to do. Then I have a calendar that they have in their possession that says, here's what we're going to be doing today. Then I have a website, Edmodo site, where they can go and find information for the day, so they — nothing's ever a surprise. When they come in they tend to do similar things each day, so nothing's ever throwing them for a loop. And I think that's important. They need to know that when I come in there's something for me to work on, and I'm going to work until I leave. Definitely a bell to bell type person, where they have to know that they're always doing something, and whatever they're doing has something to do with the class, with the course, with the curriculum. And there's—I always tell them there's never free days, there's never down time, you've got to maximize that instruction that you have.

I think to help students become better learners you have to put some of the responsibility on them. It can't always be on you. I think lots of times we tend to... we want to help so much that we also have to give them a little room to make decisions for themselves and to learn on their own. So for example when I give them a document and they don't understand the words, you know, instead of me telling them what every word means... let's go through this, let's talk about it. Having that guided practice versus “here, I'm just going to tell you.” I think that's really important, is to help them to know how to learn for

themselves, to look at things and bring it all together on their own.

### Question 3

I think particularly in social studies classes we do not have... there's no resource social studies class. So in high school, we have kids with... you'll run the gamut. You'll have the AIG kid who just didn't want to take an honors class, you'll have students with special needs, you'll have your ESL learners. And so I think one of the things I try to do is constant change. Constantly something different. So whether that be presenting the material directly, whether that be video clips, song clips, let's perform a song, let's draw something, let's read something. I'm trying to get all different types of learners. And then I think especially having one-on-one individual attention, especially for exceptional children who may need that personal attention to "explain this to me." We also use peer tutoring a lot and we'll use peer tutors who will help students with special needs to learn the material as well. And our school particularly just started what we call "power block" where we have 40 minutes during the day where we can tutor students who have special needs or are just struggling in the class, whatever the case may be. I also think that for you AIG students lots of times we kind of don't challenge them as much as they need to be challenged, and I am a full believer in high expectations and rigor for all my students. I'm not going to lower those; I'm going to raise them to meet that challenge. So with my AIG students I'm constantly coming up with more challenging activities for them to do. I'm not going to accept just average. I want you to work to your potential.

### Question 4

I think when learning is occurring, when the students are actually understanding the material and are able to talk about it, not just in the context where you have placed it... for history, they're not just able to regurgitate facts to me, they're able to say "Oh, this is why this happened," and they make the connections... it's all about connections. And they can understand when they're watching the news at night, they'll say "Oh, Ms. Godfrey, I was watching the news, and I found out... you know, that's what you were talking about all that time." And you see that they're making the connections and it makes sense to them, and seeing the usefulness of it.

I think you know it's not occurring when... well, you obviously know it's not occurring when they're falling asleep and they're not paying any attention. But I think you know it's not occurring too when it's just standalone information, when they really don't see how one thing connects to something else, and they really don't understand the importance of what they're learning. So I think you know learning's occurring when they're making those connections and they're able to apply [the] real world to their own lives.

### Question 5

One of the things I try to do is find out what they're interested in. And so when I'm teaching my content

I try to include stories or examples that bring in those things. Likewise I try to find out what they like to do. For example, if I have a student who loves to sing, that's what they like to do, they could care less about history but they want to sing—all right, let's make history a song, here we go, let's start. And find things that they're interested in to hook them. And once you can get them hooked, they don't really think that they're learning, then you can get them to learn the material. So I think, find out what they like, and use it to your advantage.

#### Question 6

The first think I think I would share is expect more than a 7:30 to 2:30 day. I think as a new teacher you have to understand that you're going to have to put in a massive amount of hours in order for your students to learn properly. You're going to have to put in those extra hours, you're going to have to be creative and come up with assignments for that child that didn't understand it, think about how he or she can understand this material.

I also think for a new teacher, I would tell them, use your resources. Other teachers are your greatest assets, and you really need to use them. My first or second year I was trying to be a one-woman show, and that just doesn't work. You can't stand alone. You've got to have that help. So use your resources, use your colleagues. Develop ideas and together and collaborate, and you'll have a much better lesson. And also when you're using your colleagues, other colleagues in the building have taught those same students. Find out what they did that worked. Because often you'll have a kid and you just can't do anything with them. But this other teacher can. So use your colleagues and find out, ok, how did that work for you? What do you need to do?

And the third thing I would say is work on those relationships with your students. If you can develop a personal relationship with a student, life will go so much more smoothly. They will work harder, and they will try harder for you. Whereas they might not for anyone else, but if you develop that personal relationship and they know that you care, and you know what's going on in their lives, they will succeed.