

Teacher Interview: Charlene Evans

Imagine someone visited your class several times, what would they say the principal teaching strategies you use are? Could you talk about teaching strategies you use that are universal, and as well as strategies are somewhat unique to you and your personality?

If someone entered my classroom, the first thing they would notice would probably be noise, and the reason for that is because my students would be highly engaged, and they would probably be talking with one another. One of the strategies that I love to use is Think-Pair-Share, and what I do is, I teach math, and I explain it to my students and I give them problems to do, and the first thing I always ask them to do is to solve it on their own so they're not influenced by other people. After that, they usually share with a partner, and then I have them share it either in a group or with the class. That is a big thing for me. Um, another thing you may notice in my classroom is that you will see students teaching or helping other students. You will always see students going to the active board, explaining how to do something because I think that's most important

How do you organize your class to maximize learning opportunities for your students? How do you help them become better learners?

I organize my classroom...sometimes I have rows, and then I have students turn their desk and face one another when I want them to work together. I may already have them set up into groups. I let it vary. I'm never bothered by moving desk and that type of thing to fit what I need for that particular day. I maximize learning by... I let students, first of all, pick when they're working together, who they wanna work with, but if they're struggling, what I like to do is get the students that've understood a problem to go through, and they explain it to someone else because I feel like the way you truly learn is when you can explain how to do something with or to someone else.

How do you differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students with special needs (EC, ESL, AIG, etc.)?

What I do is I use Like Tiered assignments, not just...they're modified, but also let them choose which one they'd rather do, how much of it. I love to give choices. For example, on an activity, we might have to write a story, a poem, a rap, that type of thing, so that they can relate the concept, and by letting them pick what works best for them, I feel like I am differentiating. I love to give them choices in that I teach a topic two or three different ways, and then when they're solving it, I don't specify what way you have to solve it. I want you to do it the way that you're most comfortable with and how you understand.

How do you know when learning is occurring and what do you do when you question whether learning is taking place in the classroom?

Learning in my classroom obviously is formative assessment. It is the...you constantly ask questions. I believe in, I think they call it reciprocal questions. I'm a firm believer in not telling answers but constantly asking questions of my students to see if they can find a way to relate it, if they can explain it

in a different form. Another way that I make sure that they're learning is not just tests. Some people think it's tests, but it's not. It's just that...if you can go to the board again and explain to the class how to do something or to a group, then I know you're learning it. If they're not learning it, then what I need to do, when I find out...when I ask all of my questions and stuff, then I have to reteach. Another big thing I work with, I do what we call after school tutoring, and I encourage my students to come after school where I can provide extra help for them, and I have certain days set up, and their welcome to come more. I have students to come in and help me tutor, so tutoring is a big thing of mine that I'm a firm believer in and I will tutor and stay as long as my students need me.

How do you “hook” a reluctant learner to your content?

You gotta get them involved in your class; you gotta...they gotta find a way that they can go through and relate it to the real world. They gotta see a need for it. When am I gonna use this again, and my students always ask me that: “When will I ever use this again in the real world?” And you gotta find a way to do that. Another thing that you gotta do for your students is you gotta make learning in your classroom fun! You gotta do things that interest your students. If that means you're doing a technology where they end up using their cell phones or whatever, and you're doing an activity with the QR scanner or whatever, you gotta get your students involved, and you gotta find out what are the things that interest them so that you can relate your topics to that and do activities around things that that student is gonna be interested in.

If you were to give advice to a new teacher in North Carolina, what 2-3 learnings would you share?

Number one I would say have a support group. Please don't think...um...none of us know everything. Please rely on other people, especially veteran teachers; they can help you out in many situations. Another thing I would tell them is to have fun. Have fun in your classroom. Have a sense of humor. That is most important to get you through day to day and with your students. And I would also tell them all work and no play, you're not gonna survive; you need to have a fun night outside of work that you find time for yourself. I think those things are most important to surviving and being a good teacher and keeping your students interested.