

MS. HENSON CLASSROOM PHILOSOPHY

My teaching is defined by a person-first approach, where I recognize and value my students as individuals before they are learners. I believe that every teacher must possess a blend of emotional resilience, instructional agility, and an unwavering commitment to constant evolution. By prioritizing student well-being and building meaningful connections, I create a foundation for a compassionate environment where students feel safe enough to take the creative risks necessary for growth.

At the core of my practice is the belief that self-reflection is the primary engine for professional and personal growth. I do not view my teaching methods as static; instead, I approach every lesson with the mindset of evaluating the effectiveness of my instruction and the quality of my connections. This reflective approach allows me to maintain a grounded, professional temperament when navigating explosive behaviors. By viewing behavior as a communication of unfulfilled needs rather than a disruption, I utilize evidence-based de-escalation to ensure the classroom remains a predictable, stable space. My goal is always rooted in the student's long-term emotional regulation and well-being rather than short-term compliance.

Instructionally, I bridge the gap between artistic exploration and academic achievement through the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. I reject "one-size-fits-all" models in favor of providing multiple means of engagement and expression, ensuring that my classroom is equitable by giving each student the specific tools required for their unique success. This involves breaking down complex, standards-based projects into manageable, scaffolded goals that support emerging literacy and fine motor skills. Furthermore, I purposefully integrate Culturally Responsive Teaching by honoring students' lived experiences and backgrounds, fostering a deep sense of belonging that is essential for both academic confidence and personal identity.

Throughout this process, I model a journey-oriented mindset rooted in my own history as an artist. I learned early on through the critique process that high-level work is only achieved when one is willing to listen to feedback and immediately pivot. I bring this same humility to my teaching, actively seeking and applying critique from mentors and data to refine my strategies. By modeling this optimism and effort, I help my students embrace their own growth with resilience, curiosity, and the knowledge that they have the power to control their own path.