Amanda B. Albert Teaching Philosophy Statement

When I started graduate school I knew that I was not going to be a teacher. Public speaking for a living was the furthest thing from any career goals I had for myself. The universe had other plans in mind. Over the course of a semester, one professor guided us through creating a lesson plan and conducting a mock class. She created a safe space in the class, fostered comradery, and encouraged us with compassion. Through this authentic learning experience, I was empowered to explore and experiment with ideas. I was hooked. I loved learning about pedagogy, educational theories, and how to create an inclusive classroom. This class was the catalyst that set me on my current career trajectory of teaching for a living.

When students enter into my classroom, I want them to know that it is a participatory, supportive space. Constructivist theory is the foundation upon which my classroom is built. Students are actively engaged, solving problems in real-world scenarios, and learning through authentic experiences just as I did in my graduate school classroom. I believe hands-on learning is challenging, but honors students' knowledge and experiences by asking them to draw on their strengths to find solutions. We are partners in learning, and my role is that of facilitator. I have done my job if we have discovered new ideas together and I have fostered confidence in the students' ability to learn.

Teaching in the library means I am working to ensure students have the skills they need to not only succeed in completing their assignments, but they have skills that are transferable and enable them to be life-long learners. As a librarian, I am uniquely situated in the academy in that I bring expertise to the educational scenario, but I am often not the only expert in the room. This means I can empower students who may know more about the content they want to research, but I understand the iterative process of research as well as the socio-economic, political, and cultural structures of information; and its creation, dissemination, and use. I can teach students the best questions the ask in order to get to the answers they seek, and help to cultivate a practice of inquiry in which they may make mistakes, but can fail without fear. Being wrong is not wrong in my classroom, being inquisitive and experimental is how we learn.

Finally, I place a high value on reflective practices in the classroom. By engaging students' metacognitive processes, we can focus on the journey rather than the destination. Students are often so worried about the end grade, that they forget that the real reward is the learning they do on their way to the grade. In my classroom, students are asked to reflect on their prior knowledge, drawing connections between ideas, sharing their process with me and their classmates. The richest discussions arise out of a mutual sharing of our struggles and successes.

Over the past seven years, I have built experience in instruction by examining learning theory, planning lessons, teaching, and assessing student learning. I have grown from a shy beginner, scared of trying different and challenging lessons, to one that is not afraid of taking risks in the classroom. Failure has played a part in my success, and I see it as an opportunity for growth. I realize that it is not about having all the answers, but learning as I go. My goals are to continue to practice trying new things. I am going to continue to take risks and learn from my mistakes. I will be a role model to my students by showing them that when we take risks, we can grow from the experience and be better people for it.