I have decided upon my classroom philosophy, expectations, management plan etc. because of the many events in my life that have brought me to where I am today.

Growing up, I had very strict parents that modeled an authoritarian parenting style. While I am very close with my parents and feel that this style did not hurt my relationship with them, I know that this style will not work for me as a teacher and parent. The part that hurt me was the fact that I have trouble at times making decisions. My parents’ control on my decisions and lack of letting me experience failure for myself is something that I do not agree with. I know that my philosophy of teaching needed to focus on choice and allowing students to fail at times.

Many of the math classes that I have taken at GVSU allowed for a lot of choice and promoted internal motivation. While that is hard to get used to at first, I feel that I am a stronger student because of the freedom that my professors have given me. Grades were not the emphasis but instead, the class was focused on learning. While it was hard to stay motivated at first, I feel I learned a lot more from those classes in the end. I knew I wanted my future classroom to follow that model as well. I would have loved it if my earlier education teachers had exposed me to this learning model.

Over the last decade, I have been a babysitter/nanny for over 40 families and worked at a daycare center. I have been a huge part of many children’s lives, many of which I am still very close to today. I have seen parenting and teaching styles that these children have experienced first hand and have been able to reflect on the practices that seem to work and those that don’t. What I have come to find is that children need autonomy at an early age in life. Children need adults in their lives that believe in them and trust them. Children want choice and they want to be heard.

My teacher-assisting placement was in an urban school setting, which was a new experience for me. I learned a lot about myself as a person and feel the students taught me more than I could have ever taught them. I learned a lot about different cultures and about the importance of a healthy classroom culture. The experience taught me to emphasize with my students and to focus on students’ individual needs. It is important to be tolerant and culturally aware when creating your classroom and this experience was truly life changing for me.

For over a year, I have been a substitute teacher for many school districts in West Michigan. This experience has given me the opportunity to see many different classrooms of all grade levels and experience first hand different behavior management strategies, expectations and more. This experience allowed me to see a variety of different teaching methods first hand and to see how students react to these varying classroom environments. Classroom competition, rewards and incentives play huge roles and many classrooms. What I have found is that it takes away from learning and doesn’t create an inclusive classroom culture but instead leaves students disengaged, upset and unmotivated at times. I know this is not the way I want my classroom to run.

All of these life experiences have helped me to become better prepared as a teacher and have helped me to understand my perspective on teaching and learning.