

## **Personal Statement and Philosophy of Teaching**

For almost eight years, I journeyed into ancient times by studying and working in the field of archeology as a student, an excavator, a researcher, and a field supervisor. These endeavors allowed me to touch history with my own hands and to participate in the past in a very real way. As a graduate student, I gave many presentations for my archeology and history classes and discovered that I really enjoyed sharing my knowledge and explaining new content to people in ways that could be easily understood. I began to consider combining my passions of history and archeology with pursuing a career in teaching. Rather than just dealing with the past, I realized that I wanted to bring history to the present as an educator.

Fast forward several years, and I have met my goal of becoming a teacher. I have been working at Rodeph Sholom School as a middle school history teacher for almost three years. My knowledge of content material is vast, and at first it was difficult for me to tailor lessons that met age appropriate learning abilities. Through trial and error and a great deal of perseverance, by the end of my first year I had discovered how to design lessons that were both exciting and accessible.

The history classroom I find most effective combines inquiry-based learning with hands-on activities. I develop hands-on learning assignments to stimulate curiosity and foster critical thinking and creativity. Activities such as an excavation simulation, writing in cuneiform, or creating a rap about Greek mythology, make history tangible and exciting. I also use the inquiry-based model to challenge students to think like historians by having them question, interpret, and reflect upon material, allowing them to make informed and thoughtful conclusions. This approach makes use of primary source documents, art, and artifacts as evidence, debates as a means to engage with content on a deeper level, and classroom discussion as a platform for investigation. In this manner students become active participants in history rather than passive bystanders.

Students learn the best when they feel engaged and when they have a positive relationship with the instructor. Such a setting fosters a safe learning environment, which promotes risk taking in the learning process. As such, I work hard to promote a classroom culture that encourages honest communication and independent thinking in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. I share anecdotal stories about my experiences in the field, and it doesn't take long for students to latch onto my enthusiasm for the subject and look up to me as a role model. They know that I genuinely care about them as individuals and they seek me out for advice or just to catch up and joke around. My positive relationships with the students along with my passion for history shines through all of my lessons and creates a history classroom in which students are eager to participate.