

## Teaching Philosophy

*By Shawn Turner*

As an emotional support teacher, I believe that every student—regardless of their challenges—deserves to be seen, heard, and valued. My classroom is not just a place for academic growth; it's a safe haven where students can begin to heal, build trust, and rediscover their potential. I don't teach problems—I teach people. And I've found that when we shift our focus from the behavior to the human behind it, transformation begins.

I welcome challenging behaviors because they often signal unmet needs, untold stories, and unspoken pain. Rather than reacting with punishment, I respond with patience, curiosity, and compassion. I strive to understand the “why” behind the behavior and use it as a doorway to connection. My goal is to help students feel safe enough to take off their armor and show up as their authentic selves.

My teaching philosophy is grounded in these core beliefs:

- **Relationships are the foundation:** Trust and connection come before content. I invest time in building meaningful relationships with each student.
- **Behavior is communication:** I approach challenging behaviors as signals, not disruptions. Every behavior tells a story, and I listen closely.
- **Focus on the student, not the problem:** I see beyond labels and diagnoses to recognize the strengths, interests, and humanity of each learner.
- **Growth happens in safe spaces:** I create an environment where students feel emotionally secure, respected, and empowered to take risks.
- **Every student can succeed:** With the right support, encouragement, and belief, even the most discouraged learner can thrive.

Teaching in this role is not easy—but it is deeply rewarding. I am continually inspired by the resilience of my students and honored to walk beside them on their journey. My classroom is a place of second chances, fresh starts, and unwavering belief in the power of connection.