

A Pedagogy of Kindness, Inclusivity, and Joy in the Writing Classroom: A Personal Reflection Through Practice

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FIRST PUBLISHED IN
THE SANDBOX

YEAR PUBLISHED
2025

GENRE
OP-ED

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Late on a December day in Pullman, Washington, I was completing my syllabus for the “College Composition” class that I was scheduled to teach in the upcoming spring semester. As a new international graduate teaching assistant, I was reasonably nervous about embarking on unfamiliar terrain. The first thought that came to my mind was to give my students a safe space and the opportunity to find and use their voices—especially for purposes they cared about. I wasn’t trying to “give” them a voice; they already had their own. My goal was to ensure that their voices could be heard, centered, and sharpened with intention and agency. I asked myself: what could I incorporate into my pedagogy that I had not necessarily experienced myself as an undergraduate student back home in Bangladesh?

I often say that my teaching has always entailed care and hope. As an international GTA and a graduate student navigating a new educational culture, I came to pedagogy through lived tensions and dreams, often shaped by the lack of such affirming practices in my own prior classrooms.

Flash forward four years, and I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of a classroom environment rooted in kindness, inclusivity, and joy. I have come to believe that writing is not merely an academic exercise but a deeply personal journey—a means for students to discover, express, and refine their unique voices. When students feel safe, valued, and genuinely supported, they are more inclined to take risks, explore creative ideas, and ultimately grow as both writers and individuals.

As I reflect on my teaching practice, I am more convinced than ever that kindness, inclusivity, and joy are not just aspirational values—they are necessary foundations for equitable, liberatory writing instruction. When we center kindness, we make space for vulnerability; when we embrace inclusivity, we commit to justice; and when we cultivate joy, we disrupt narratives of deficit that have long defined who get to write, speak, and be heard.

Embracing Kindness in the Writing Process

Kindness, to me, is not about lowering academic standards or becoming overly permissive. Rather, kindness is about cultivating empathy and understanding in every interaction. Early in my teaching career, I encountered a student who had long suffered from writing anxiety due to harsh feedback in previous classes. They had grown reluctant to share their work, fearful of being judged. By approaching this student with genuine kindness—providing constructive, encouraging feedback and offering multiple opportunities for revision—I watched a transformation unfold. Their writing became bolder, more experimental. That student's voice emerged with clarity and conviction. Witnessing that transformation was profoundly affirming—not just as a teacher, but as someone who believes deeply in the ethical responsibility of pedagogy. It reminded me that kindness is not ancillary to rigorous instruction; it is what makes that rigor accessible. The personal reward was immense, but more importantly, it revealed a larger truth: when we lead with care, students feel

empowered to claim their voices. For writing educators broadly, this experience speaks to the necessity of compassionate pedagogy as a pathway to both personal and academic growth.

Writing apprehension can significantly hinder effective engagement. When students feel they are supported, they tend to do much better. I often imagine kindness as my pedagogical superpower. It is not just something I believe in—it is how I move through the world.

I see my students as my counterparts in a shared process of discovery. In walking alongside them as they find their voices, I am continually challenged to reflect on my own—how I listen, how I respond, how I grow. This reciprocity keeps my teaching dynamic and deeply human. Kindness is the lifeblood of my pedagogy. It is my stance, my strategy, and my everyday practices.



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