

# Justine Stewart

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## Teaching Philosophy

I vividly remember the day Hamilton Schools Superintendent Tom Korst asked me to develop a journalism and multimedia program at Hamilton High School. I had been working as the district's Communication Director since March 2020. I had never considered teaching. The idea was both exciting and intimidating. Sure, I have helped countless interns rise through the ranks throughout my news career. But teaching interns who already have basic knowledge versus 70 or more inexperienced teenagers is completely different.

What has given me the confidence to teach is my ability and experience in storytelling. Stories are a part of our everyday lives and what helps us form connections to our friends, family, colleagues, and society. Storytelling is how we communicate. Today, there are many ways to do this. Stories can be written; they can be visual using video or photos. Stories can be told through audio, social media posts, digital design, and more. Learning the science of storytelling benefits students greatly no matter their future career path.

As I progress in my career as an educator, I have recognized the importance of hands-on learning, demonstration, and example. Currently, I am teaching six classes at Hamilton High School which include Podcasting I, Podcasting II, Broadcast Journalism, Multimedia Storytelling, Media Law & Ethics, and Social Media Marketing. My students are a diverse group ranging from freshman to seniors. They come from different backgrounds, beliefs, gender identities, learning disabilities, and more. My job as their teacher and mentor is to meet students at their different levels of knowledge and develop techniques to help them succeed. All while meeting the learning outcomes I have for the class.

The reality is not all students learn in the same way or at the same pace. It is an educator's job to identify each student's strengths and weaknesses and find ways to encourage growth. To do this, it is important to develop a relationship with students and provide meaningful feedback on their work, thoughts, and ideas.

I believe in challenging students. I propose the “what ifs” and “why nots” so they can explore and get outside of their comfort zone. My goal is for students never to be content with work that just gets them by. Something can always be improved and made better if you challenge yourself to think outside the box. As a teacher, I have found the most rewarding experience is seeing a student’s creative vision come to life and the pride they have in that work.

Along with a teacher-student relationship, I believe in promoting open communication and discussion with classmates along with working in groups. It’s something that is beneficial for students at the high school, undergraduate, and graduate level. In today’s every evolving and diverse world, learning how to actively listen promotes inclusion and understanding of those around us. It is an important skill in the world of journalism and storytelling. In fact, I have found that just by listening to my students and the conversations they have with each other, I am able to incorporate topics they are interested in into successful educational opportunities.

To follow that, I believe educators needs to be able flexible and able to adapt. While it is important to have a curriculum and goals, as a journalism and communications educator you must be aware of current events, news, social media, emerging media trends, and the latest technology. The world we are living in today offers constant opportunities to blend traditional learning with the future.