

What is a Teaching Philosophy?

A teaching philosophy is a statement of the core beliefs and values that guide your professional practice. It can be a great tool for teachers at all levels of experience. It is, nevertheless, an ongoing and evolving work. It is rare for a teacher who has painstakingly written a teaching philosophy to never change it. As we grow as professionals, our values will also grow and change. Although this may not mean a complete reversal in motivation or personal beliefs, self-reflection will result in greater insight into one's teaching.

In framing and writing your teaching philosophy, keep the following questions in mind:

- Why do I teach?
- How do students learn? Teaching
- What advice would I give to a beginning teacher regarding teaching philosophy?
- What should the relationship between teacher and student be like?
- What motivates students to learn and improve?
- What is the primary goal I have for my students?
- What role should parents play in the education of their children?
- What is the most important thing that every classroom should have?
- Under what circumstances would I ever leave this profession?
- Am I the best teacher I can be?
- Who is the best teacher I have ever seen and what made him/her so special?
- As a teacher, what is the most important thing I do every day?

A statement of teaching philosophy can be in any format you wish. It should absolutely reflect the personal style of the author. Some teachers prefer to write an essay, some prefer to write a numbered outline of personal beliefs and methods, and others will prefer to write a personal vignette that communicates their teaching philosophy. Above all, please remember that these are your values. They should be expressed in any manner that you wish.

In closing, I would like to mention a teaching philosophy statement story that I read and that left a very powerful impression on me.

"I (the writer) was still an undergraduate when I met a teacher from a nearby town who was completing her Masters degree in special education. She had been teaching art in a small elementary school for almost fifteen years. She showed me her portfolio and I was drawn to her teaching philosophy. It was a beautiful picture she had drawn in pen and ink—actually, it was a collage of nearly a dozen pictures of a teacher in different situations: reading children a story, holding detention, comforting a crying student, grading assignments as the clock neared 5:00, bringing a student to the nurse, etc. At the bottom of the drawing, there was a simple caption: *TUESDAY*. I do not think I have ever seen a more vivid or clear portrayal of the many roles a teacher must assume on a daily basis. To her, the picture was a complex reply to every question outlined above. She chose to express her teaching philosophy through the medium with which she felt most comfortable."

I hope that all who read this are able to do the same.

Good Luck!