



How to Write an Effective Teaching Philosophy A-State Online Writing Center

Regardless of your chosen discipline, many academic positions require you to submit a teaching philosophy during the application process. Writing this philosophy is sometimes difficult because we either add too much or too little information. A well-written philosophy is crucial because it helps convey your goals, beliefs, methodologies, and values to the administration, analyze and reflect on those standards to judge your quality of teaching and fit within their institution, and show them how effective you are while teaching. Below you will find steps, questions, and examples of what this looks like and how you can create your well-rounded teaching philosophy.

1. What is a teaching philosophy?

- a. It is a statement that shows the following:
 - Ideologies of teaching
 - Methods used to enhance learning
 - Descriptions of how you teach and why that is effective
 - Justification of your methods
 - Why these methods will work best for that institution

b. This statement is used to help university officials acknowledge the ways you **reflect** on your teaching and make purposeful decisions that will help students, **communicate** your responsibilities and student responsibilities, **outline** your goals and what actions you take to get there, and **connect** the sections of your portfolio.

2. Where can I find components of my teaching philosophy?

- a. Check your syllabus for **assignments, content, teacher/student expectations, in-class texts used, grading and assessment techniques, and class format.**
- b. For **method diversity, interactions, feedback quality, and culture inclusivity**, look to all the classrooms you've ever taught in.
- c. While researching and attempting to show how you fit in with that institution's mission and disciplinary measures, look at how you connected yourself to those in previous positions.
- d. Look at **peer reviews, syllabi, teaching activities that worked well, portfolio of previous research/lesson plans, and students' comments about your teaching methods** when providing evidence in your teaching philosophy.

3. What does a philosophy statement include?

- i. Unhighlighted examples are included in all teaching philosophies, while the highlighted examples are various documents that you could attach to your own Teaching Philosophy.
 - Your educational purposes and goals for your students
 - Your teaching methodology
 - How you plan to assess student learning
 - Your assessment of teaching

- A list of courses taught
- Course Syllabi created for those courses
- Your teacher evaluations
- Various letters of recommendation
- A teaching video (Not every university asks for this)

4. What are the writing guidelines for a teaching philosophy?

- 1-2 pages long
- Use present tense and first-person.
- Avoid unnecessary discipline-specific jargon and, when in doubt, ask someone from your discipline which jargon would be the most common for your audience to recognize.
- Include strategies and methods with examples; this helps create an idea of the teaching environment you will create.
- Avoid general statements because they make you appear close-minded to other teaching methods. Instead, discuss your beliefs centered around the experiences you've had in the classroom. This will show that you still have time to grow, adapt to new situations, and take on new methods of teaching if they prove to be better than your current methods.
- Discuss how your lessons and methods impacted and challenged your students.
- Build a section surrounding your thoughts about research, service, and teaching and how they are all connected.
- Make it creative and unique. Think about how many other people will apply for this position: What sets you apart from them? What will make you memorable to that administration? How will you show that you are committed to the best practices and your craft? How will you convey the passion you have as a teacher in your field?

5. What if I have no idea where to start?

- Brainstorm by asking yourself these questions:
 - i. What is the purpose of education, and what is your purpose in education?
 - ii. Why did you choose to teach this subject? What makes you passionate about it?
 - iii. How do the various students you have encountered learn best?
 - iv. What goals do you have for students learning this subject and the level you teach it?
 - v. What methods have you found to be the most effective with your students?
 - vi. What are the best examples of these methods in your classrooms?
 - vii. What do you find to be the most successful aspects of your teaching?

Let's put all of the components together and see what this main section looks like when it is built. (Note that this doesn't include the various documents you could attach to it. See above for the list of those):

My philosophy for education in writing is that it should be stimulating and challenging while providing the tools necessary to build up the idea of better writers instead of better writing. I've witnessed the many ways writing connects to mental, emotional, and social growth, and my goal is to find the best methods for cultivating that environment in all of my classrooms. In my classroom, students are asked to build on and share new ideas, challenge themselves, make their own authorial choices, take risks, and make mistakes and learn from them all without judgment or discrimination from their peers. From the second students walk into my class, they are treated

as equals and tasked with seeing how writing is a beautiful combination of individuality and collaboration.

I believe that there are four core elements that help build our foundation in writing. (1) As a teacher, I guide my students; however, after I have introduced the necessary writing tools, it is the students' job to utilize those tools and guide themselves through their own text. (2) Students must have a range of writing assignments that challenge them to work individually and collaboratively. (3) All of my prompts, questions, and feedback are open-ended so students can choose their own topic that they're passionate about, openly discuss all of their ideas in the classroom, and challenge themselves to find their own solutions when editing and revising. (4) While the writing process has its own general outline, all students process writing differently.

I use freewriting methods to help students brainstorm and find their own writing flow. This looks like a fifteen to twenty-minute writing session where a broad topic is introduced to them, and students think of something that fits under the category to write about without stopping. We also deconstruct our writing process by seeing how we write when we displace ourselves from a normal writing routine. Then, we analyze the ways those displacements enhanced or lowered our ability to write. Another method we use is the incorporation of peer reviews. Peer reviews allow students to see the different ways a text can be constructed by using their peers as an example. Through this method, students become better at analyzing text, understanding how arguments are built, introducing and accurately placing evidence, and self-improving their own skills through peer commentary. Lastly, for every assignment, each student consults with me. This gives me time to give them feedback on what they have already written that will guide them through the rest of what they have to write. It also gives them a guide on

what to look for when revising and editing their drafts so they can begin to challenge themselves to find these issues on their own.

I assess student learning through improvement in individual skills. Not everyone will write at the same skill level, and I have found this to be true no matter the grade level being taught. Almost all of my assignments are writing assignments, and when grading them, I leave feedback and an opportunity for students to rewrite their trouble spots to improve their grade. Their ability to rewrite it instead of taking their grade and accepting it leads to better writing skills because it allows them to reflect on their mistakes, identify a way to correct it, and show me that they know how to fix what they messed up. Other assignments in my classroom include a scavenger hunt for research where students must properly cite the information they find, an annotated bibliography where they take the information from the scavenger hunt and learn to create an annotated bibliography out of it, and article reviews, so they learn how to properly and actively analyze their research to incorporate them into the assignments they write.

I am always willing to learn and take on new methods of teaching, although I have found that these methods have proven themselves successful time and time again. Watching students grow into strong, independent writers, create and build new ideas, figure out new strategies for tackling assignments, and grow more confident in their own work makes this a worthwhile and incredibly valuable career. My goal is to have every student that walks into my classroom leave knowing that they are valued and their words and ideas have value. They are free to be who they are, and they use their writing tools to build a better world.

Works Consulted

Our tutors consulted the following sources while writing this quick guide:
<https://gradschool.cornell.edu/career-and-professional-development/pathways-to-success/prepare-for-your-career/take-action/teaching-philosophy-statement/>