

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING YOUR PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION (TEACHING PHILOSOPHY)

In deciding to become a teacher, you must ask yourself a critical question: What is your personal philosophy about your role as a teacher in the educational system? In other words, what is your **teaching philosophy**? Applicants for teaching positions are often asked about their philosophy of teaching during the face-to-face interview, on the application, or both. Be prepared.

What is a Philosophy of Education/Teaching Philosophy?

In short, your philosophy of education is what you believe to be the purpose of education. Your teaching philosophy is what you believe is the best way to reach that purpose, and why.

Your ideas about education and teaching should come from reflecting on your past experiences with education and the educational theories you have learned in your education courses. Beliefs, attitudes, values, and experiences influence a person's personal philosophy of education. Your reflection on the purpose of education and how to reach that purpose will become your teaching philosophy!

Keep in mind that it is rare to find someone who subscribes "purely" to one orientation or perspective. Your teaching philosophy will likely borrow from many theories. Moreover, philosophies are not fixed entities, and yours may change proportionately to how you change as a person.

What should be included in my Teaching Philosophy?

Your teaching philosophy should be 2-3 pages in length and written in first person and in present tense. It should state your goal of education and several ideas you have about how to reach that goal. You will want to include examples and descriptions so your reader can "see" you in your classroom—these may be specific teaching strategies you use, assignments you integrate, discussions you have with students, or the physical environment you create.

- Ideally, your first paragraph should include why you feel that education is important and what you feel is the true goal of education.
- Your body paragraphs will show your reader the way that you teach and why you teach this way.
- Your conclusion paragraph can do a number of things-- reiterate your passion for teaching, state how you continue to improve as an educator, or discuss your positive relationships with your students.

What are tips to writing a Teaching Philosophy?

- Begin by making a list of what you feel education should do—what is the purpose of education or what are the goals of education? Are there specific educational theories that you believe in strongly?
- Make another list of teaching methods you feel best help you to reach this purpose. How do you interact with students? What does your classroom look and feel like? What kind of assignments do you believe are best? How do you support your students? How do you assess learning has taken place? What kind of strategies do you use to teach your specific discipline?
- Jot down two to three specific examples of your teaching methods and describe how you apply these in the classroom. What does this specifically look like?
- Also, write a justification of how you feel that your particular teaching methods help your students to reach your chosen goals of education. Why do you feel these are the best strategies for reaching the ideal education?

Once you have these portions written, go through these and select the teaching methods and the examples of these that you feel most fully convey your style of teaching. Outline your draft by determining what you want to share first, second, third, and fourth in your body paragraphs.

SAMPLE STATEMENT

Ultimately, education is of dire importance. We are a democratic society in which everyone counts and we are all dependent on one another. ¹ By focusing our energy and resources on building effective education systems, we strengthen our communities to create a pathway to social change. A big reason I want to teach is to motivate students to want to obtain new knowledge, and to help young people believe in themselves so they may take a bigger role in our democratic society. ² I want to create in my students a thirst for knowledge instead of merely a requirement that must be met. I will show them the joy, the fun, in learning new concepts and information by engaging all of my students in the learning process and showing them what they can do with this knowledge. They will see the big picture and they will know what education can provide for them.

In my classroom I seek to show students that the critical reading, writing, and thinking skills they are honing will help them to build their academic abilities, but also to show they are transportable to life beyond academics as well. To engage students in what they all too often see as tedious and meaningless tasks assigned by their instructor, I feel it is critical to highlight the real-world context and application of every assignment. Students, like anyone, value their time and should always understand how each and every assignment will shape their learning and how the skills they are practicing have significance in their lives beyond the classroom—³ to their professional, personal, and eventually, civic lives.

⁴ To engage and strengthen my students I use a variety of teaching strategies. To engage my students in lessons, one technique I find useful is “Everybody Writes.” In my classroom, I ask demanding and thought-provoking questions, but these often require time and real reflection on the question to generate the kind of responses I want. Therefore, I ask the question, but ⁵ I have everyone write down their thoughts on it. ⁶ Educational theory teaches us that through writing, thinking about one’s own thoughts takes place. This technique of everybody writes

1. In your introduction, state what you feel is the **purpose** of education.

2. First -person and present tense are used.

3. Within each paragraph, there is a refocus on the teacher’s purpose of education. Your idea about the purpose of education should be a theme that runs through your teaching philosophy statement.

4. Establish a central point for each paragraph like you see here.

5. Use specific examples of what you do in the classroom.

6. Refer to educational theories that you use to help you develop your teaching practices.

allows the students to reflect on their ideas and internal questions and gives them time to explore the question before answering with their first thought. Another technique that I use to build character and trust in my students is “Normalizing Error.” I want my students to know that the classroom is a safe place for exploration of thought. Therefore, I treat wrong answers in the same way I do right answers. Wrong answers are an opportunity for revision rather than a moment to be ashamed or chastised. ⁷ This allows students to try out answers and engage in learning, not simply knowing. I treat right answers with praise for engaging and understanding the material, but not with flattery. Both right and wrong answers are a part of learning and engaging with those around us. Being right is not as important as engaging in the learning process and engaging with the ideas of others.

7. Don't just state what you do. Be sure to also justify why you use a particular teaching technique, like you see here.

⁸ In my classroom, I see my students grow academically, socially, and emotionally. I see them engage with me and their fellow classmates to build a space where all ideas are valid and where we can explore ideas and knowledge both privately and as a group. My hope is that my students take what they see, hear, and share in my classroom into their communities. This is what drives my teaching style and my passion for teaching.

8. In this conclusion, we can see that the writer has included a statement about the growth of the students, his/her hopes for the students, and his/her passion for teaching.