

Getting Started on Your Teaching Philosophy

Generating Ideas

Teaching philosophies express your values and beliefs about teaching. They are personal statements that introduce you, as a teacher, to your reader. As such, they are written in the first person and convey a confident, professional tone. When writing a teaching philosophy, you should use specific examples to illustrate your points. You should also discuss how your values and beliefs about teaching fit into the context of your discipline. Below are categories you might address in your teaching philosophy with question prompts that may help you begin generating ideas for your draft. Work through each of the categories, spending time thinking about the prompts and writing your ideas down. Your list of ideas for each category will become the material that will comprise the first draft of your teaching philosophy.

Note your answers to the following prompts.

- 1 Your concept of learning: Ask yourself such questions as "What do I mean by learning?" and "What happens in a successful learning situation?" Make sure to note what constitutes "learning" or "mastery" in your discipline.
- 2 Your concept of teaching: Note your values, beliefs, and aspirations as a teacher. (For example, do you wish to encourage mastery, competency, transformational learning, life-long learning, general transference of skills, critical thinking, etc.) What does a perfect teaching situation look like to you? Why do you consider this "perfect"? What is your role as a teacher? Are you a coach, a general, an evangelist, an entertainer?
- 3 Your goals for students: What skills should students obtain as the result of your teaching? You may think about your ideal student and what the outcomes of your teaching would be in terms of this student's knowledge or behavior. You may address the goals you have for specific classes or curricula and the rationale behind them (i.e., critical thinking, writing, or problem solving).
- 4 What methods will you consider to reach these goals and objectives? What are your beliefs regarding learning theory and specific strategies you would use such as case studies, group work, simulations, interactive lectures, etc.? You might also include any

new ideas or strategies you have used or want to try.

5 Your interaction with students: What are your attitudes toward advising and mentoring students? How would an observer see you interact with students? Why do you want to work with students?

6 Specific examples: How are the values and beliefs noted above realized in classroom activities? You may discuss course materials, lesson plans, activities, assignments, assessment instruments, etc.

7 How will you assess student understanding? What are your beliefs about grading? Do you grade students on a percentage scale (criterion referenced) or on a curve (norm referenced)? What different types of assessment will you use: traditional tests, projects, portfolios, or presentations?

8 Professional growth: How will you continue growing as a teacher? What goals do you have for yourself and how will you reach them? How have your attitudes toward teaching and learning changed over time? How will you use your student evaluations to improve your teaching? How might you learn new skills? How do you know when you have taught effectively?