**Statement of Teaching Philosophy**

**1200-1500 words**

**General Information**

A teaching philosophy “conveys your teaching values, beliefs, and goals to a broader audience, provides a set of criteria and/or standards to judge the quality of your teaching [and] provides evidence of your teaching effectiveness.” Components include purpose, learning goals, teaching methods, assessment and reflection.[[1]](#endnote-1) Your **statement of teaching philosophy** should be derived from the perspective of a high school Social Studies teacher. This piece of writing is an expression of your teaching experiences, values, training, and pedagogical methods. The genre that this type of assignment fits into is best described as **creative nonfiction**.

**Audience**

As with any writing assignment, it is important to first consider your audience. For simplicity’s sake, your audience is twofold. You should write your philosophy not only to the rubric (found on the class webpage) but also a school who is considering hiring you.

**Purpose of Teaching Philosophy**

It is an opportunity to communicate both your teaching style and your teaching values. Last but not least, this statement also serves as a sample of your **effective written communication skills**. Be sure that there are **no mistakes** in your teaching philosophy! Finally, your philosophy should be **positive**. While there are definitely problems in our educational systems, a prospective employer does not really want to hear how bad things are. Instead, a prospective employer is interested in what you are going to do to make the classroom experience a better one for the students. This is not a critique, but a personal philosophy. Consider the following questions in your response:

1. What roles do state and national standards play in your discipline? How will you use state and national standards when you are a teacher?
2. Why is disciplinary content knowledge important for teachers? How will you maintain and enhance your disciplinary content knowledge when you are a teacher?
3. What 21st century skills can be integrated into your discipline? How would you describe the relationship between 21st century skills and disciplinary content knowledge?
4. What instructional methods and materials will you use as a teacher? How will you ensure your curriculum and classroom are inclusive and culturally relevant?
5. What are your goals for students in social studies? What role do students play?
6. What does critical thinking and problem solving look like in your discipline?
7. How will you assess student learning?
8. Why is it important to use research-based approaches to teaching and learning in your classroom?
9. How will you continue to grow professionally when you are a teacher?

**Format**

Here are some components that are commonly included in a **Statement of Teaching Philosophy:**

1. Introduction—you may choose to give a straightforward introduction or you may choose to begin with a metaphor. You might also reference how/why you chose teaching. Or you could talk about your teaching experiences. You could also write about how your philosophy has evolved.
2. Sprinkle some of these terms in your philosophy: assessment, standards, differentiation, 21st century skills and content, backward planning, meeting the needs of diverse students, classroom management, parent and community involvement, instructional strategies, curriculum design, global awareness, common core, essential standards, etc.

**Pointers**

1. Once you have a draft in hand, be sure to get feedback. Be sure to have someone carefully proofread for minor errors.
2. Make sure you use **first person narrative**.
3. When you use terminology, include an example so it is clear you know what you’re talking about and your reader is not confused or inundated with buzz words.
   1. Example
      1. Bad: “I strongly believe in **inclusion.**”
      2. Better: “I believe that the practice of inclusion is essential, and I support inclusion by using alternative assessments and preparing lessons that appeal to different learning styles.”
4. A teaching philosophy is not a one-size-fits-all document. As you move through your career, you will often update this document. One way to customize it is to look at the mission statement of the school you are applying to and see what their core values are. If they mention small class size or hands-on learning and that is also important to you, be sure to include it in your document.
5. Be confident in what you say.
6. Be humble (teachers typically are anyway; a degree of humility lets the institution know that you know that you are not perfect and that you always seek to improve your practice)
7. Teaching is about the students and their learning, so make sure that you are clear about this.
8. Your philosophy, along with your letter of interest and resume, are among the first things a prospective employer will see. The appearance of these documents is important.
9. Avoid broad generalizations such as: “I believe all children can learn.” This statement is relatively meaningless without examples of how you have put this statement in action.
10. Avoid overly complex sentences and sweeping generalizations.
11. “I believe” is more forceful than “My belief is…”
12. Rather than “In school students should experience…” use “In my classroom students will experience…”
13. Instead of “Teachers will…” write “I will….” Or “I have…”
14. Aim for clarity above all else.

Sources:

*Writing you own educational philosophy* by Jurgen Combs

*How to write a statement of teaching philosophy* by Heather Doherty

1. Cornell University [↑](#endnote-ref-1)