



June 11, 2015

Teachers' Corner

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Developing a Statement of Educational Philosophy



I'm often found writing a great deal about what it means to be an educator. There are times when specific curricular topics or themes are discussed, social and emotional behaviors covered or a favorite conversation starter in the classroom is introduced. I have often told stories of countless students, shared parts of their work and analyzed the many interactions that can take place, both in and out of the classroom. I have made pleas for advocacy, requests for ideas and opinions, and in some cases, stood on my figurative soapbox in order to get my point across. However, there is another piece of writing to share with you and that is my statement of educational philosophy. Apart from being a requirement for most educational career positions, the development and revision of a personal educational philosophy can provide direction, clarity, and at times, reassurance.

Writing a statement of educational philosophy provides a great way to reflectively understand and internalize your strongest beliefs and feelings about what the field of education means to you, much like a mission statement written for a school or educational framework. This educational philosophy statement is not a description of your personal teaching style, best curricular topic, or anecdotal solution. Instead, it presents your overall beliefs and ideals that motivate and inspires your thinking as it relates to what you do. It also presents attitudes and viewpoints that direct your daily actions. The field of education involves a wide range of roles and a variety of responsibilities; personal reflections similarly conjure an array of interpretations about what it means to be a part of the "system."

As you begin to craft your philosophy statement, keep in mind that although there are countless articles and websites offering assistance in the writing process, your statement will belong to you, and should be original and unique. While following a mold or template is often helpful at the onset of writing, letting go of convention and digging deep to uncover your motivation and inspiration as it relates to education allows for personalization. A few of my favorite guides come via the [University of Minnesota's Writing Your Teaching Philosophy webpage](#), [Oregon State's Suggestions for Writing and Educational Philosophy Statement](#), and Gabriela Montell's piece, [How to Write a Statement of Teaching Philosophy](#). All provide great suggestions and pointers for crafting your statement of educational philosophy.

Whether you are a seasoned veteran of the profession, an educator with a few years under your belt, or just starting off in the classroom, drafting a statement of educational philosophy can help you focus on what is important to you (and not) about teaching and learning. Revisiting and revising it over time will reflect changes in your relationship to the classroom and your students and will trace your personal journey. I share my philosophy as it appears today.

Education is about understanding. I am not merely speaking knowledge related to a specific discipline, but an understanding of the immense variation of our student's social, emotional, educational, and economic backgrounds which demand individualized acceptance and consideration. Those of us involved in education must understand the strategies, practices, tools, and resources available to us, and possess an understanding that we are not simply providers of information; rather we are providers of experience. It is the educator's responsibility to continuously learn and be educated as well. We must seek out new and innovative ideas found in the pages of texts and journals. We should seek out professional development opportunities and connect with others in the profession. We must advocate for our students and their best interests. We must come to know who we are as members of the educational community. Most importantly, we need to expose our students to the global community, which is quite larger than the neighborhoods, the towns, or even the states where our students live. The development of higher order thinking skills, problem solving techniques, creativity, and autonomous learning should serve as the foundation for many of the lessons developed by educators, for they are the foundation of the characteristics which drive our high ability students. It will take time to instill these traits in our students. One thing is for certain; we need to start now.