

GUIDELINES FOR THE PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION STATEMENT

Definitions

A statement of personal philosophy of education is a reflective piece, generally 1-2 pages long that summarizes your core educational beliefs (your core beliefs about the purpose, process, nature, and ideals of education). Since the statement of philosophy also serves as a writing sample, it must demonstrate mastery of spelling, grammar and other rules of written English. *(For the purposes of this course, your statement will be 2-3 pages long.)*

A philosophy is not a curriculum statement or a description of your teaching style. It is a statement about the beliefs and ideals that underlie your thinking. It is a set of beliefs that regulate your actions. Your philosophy of education statement should outline your set of beliefs about the purpose, process, nature, and ideals of public education. However, the concept “education” is extremely complex. To begin with, education entails a process as well as an achievement. It encompasses various notions about the learner and the role of the teacher. And for different people it entails different ideas about the content to teach (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) and the meanings of teaching and learning. Therefore, at a minimum, your statement should clearly state your beliefs about

1. The true purpose of school.
2. The role of the teacher in learning.
3. How students best learn.
4. What it should be taught in school.

In writing your statement, use your knowledge from other educational experiences (e.g., methods classes, educational psychology, etc.) to support your beliefs with theory and sound argument. You are encouraged to use quotes by educational leaders, curriculum theorists, and philosophers, who share your approaches and views toward education, teaching, and/or learning (**but avoid any unnecessary jargon!**). In the introduction, “hook” the reader. Begin with a strong thesis statement & a brief preview of what you will be saying. Early in the statement state your area of expertise (e.g., math teacher, elementary teacher, physical education teacher, special education teacher, etc.). In the conclusion, revisit your thesis statement or story. Reiterate and summarize the main points of your philosophy. A good concluding statement or quote is necessary, if you want to “sell” your philosophy and made it memorable to the reader.

Although you may not think, you have a philosophy of education, it’s there just under the surface; unseen but affecting every decision you will make as a teacher. Do you see children as blank slates on which to write, empty cups to fill, or flames to be ignited? These tacit beliefs determine how you look at the amorphous thing we call “education.”

(NOTE: The topic is PUBLIC EDUCATION, not teaching, so make education the focus of your paper. Picture yourself talking to your future principal. Help her/him get to know you by sharing your ideas about the purpose, process, nature, and ideals of education.)

Using examples or metaphors may help your reader understand your personal philosophy of education. Be cautious, however, when using examples and metaphors.

- Use terminology that the reader will understand.
- Think about what the reader will want to discover about you, such as a sample lesson or class activity that demonstrates your teaching style.
- Develop examples and responses that are consistent with your philosophy.

Keep in mind that your personal philosophy does not change every time you have a different audience. Rather, you want to be able to provide your audience (e.g., a prospective employer) with various examples in order to explain how your philosophy applies to the needs of an institution or position. Of course, your personal philosophy will evolve over time to correspond to your developing beliefs, values, views, and approach to education and teaching.

In sum, the statement is a critical reflection that should be well written, organized, clear, and convincing. Your beliefs should relate to the quotes and philosophers that you select. When quoting, follow APA style: cite the author, date of publication and page number, etc. Connect your beliefs to the WI Standards and/or the COEHS Conceptual Framework (Caring Intellectual) when appropriate in your text. Proofread for grammar, spelling, and accuracy. Your philosophy of education statement should be concise.

Collecting ideas for your personal philosophy of education statement

The following questions will help you pull together your core educational beliefs about

1. The true purpose of school.
2. The role of the teacher in learning.
3. How students best learn.
4. What should be taught in school (knowledge, skills, and dispositions).

Try to answer all of them before you start writing your personal philosophy of education statement.

Cultural, political, and economic purposes

- 1.1. Explain what culture means to you. Are all aspects of culture worth maintaining? What is dominant culture?
- 1.2. Explain what democracy means to you. Present alternative views of democracy.
- 1.3. Explain what economic success means to you. How do you prepare for it?

Goals for students and the role of the teacher

- 2.1. What are your goals for your students? Think of these goals in terms of knowledge, skills, and dispositions – educational goals.
- 2.2. How will you achieve those goals (which methods/pedagogies to use)?
- 2.3. How do you justify educational goals and methods/pedagogies? Give reasons with a reference to what is good for an individual's happiness and fulfillment as well as for the society to which you contribute as a teacher.

The social function of the school

- 3.1. How does a teacher today help induct young people into full participation in the dominant culture while respecting the diverse origins, languages, and values of students from the wide variety of cultures and language groups who populate the schools of today?

3.2. If we assume that, by virtue of cultural and economic background, kids can and do start out at very different places, then different strategies are necessary to support the success of different types of students. How does thinking about different types of learners in this way impact your thinking about your philosophy of education?

It is important that before you start writing a final draft, (a) you have a good understanding of the differences that exist between knowledge, skills, and dispositions; (b) you are clear about pedagogies and methods of student assessment, which you have learned/discussed in other classes; (c) you can conceptualize “human happiness” and “social justice” in ways that you and others can understand and use in a conversation.

Evaluation criteria (rubric) for the educational autobiography statement

I. CONTENT & STRUCTURE

- a. Introduction (a strong thesis statement & a brief preview of what you will be saying).
- b. Explanation of your core beliefs about
 1. The true purpose of school.
 2. The role of the teacher in learning.
 3. How students best learn.
 4. What it should be taught in school (knowledge, skills, and dispositions).
- c. Conclusion (revisit your thesis statement, summarize the main points of your philosophy).
- d. Rules of written English, accuracy, length, and style.

II. MAKING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CORE EDUCATIONAL BELIEFS AND TEACHING STYLE & ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL GOALS

- e. Connection of core beliefs to theory, the WI Standards and/or the COEHS Conceptual Framework.
- f. Your strategies / methods for teaching diverse student learners.
- g. Your reasons, plans and methods for student assessment.
- h. Your strategies for creating a positive classroom environment.
- i. Your strategies for helping students develop as individuals.

For a synopsis of APA format, go to <http://www.wooster.edu/psychology/apa-crib.html>, or <http://valencia.cc.fl.us/lrcwest/apaper.html>