

Developing Your Teaching Statement

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Through the exercises that follow, you will develop your own, individual, teaching statement. The teaching statement is often called a statement of teaching philosophy while others describe it a statement of teaching interests. (Personally, I think that effective teaching statements incorporate elements of the author's philosophy **and** his/her interests.) Regardless of the title, it may help you to think of your teaching statement as a *persuasive essay*, the purpose of which is to persuade your readers that you are a promising teacher, and would make a valuable addition to an academic department. As with any persuasive essay, the more concrete examples and evidence you can provide to support your statements, the more effective it will be.

In preparation for writing your essay, take some time to gather your thoughts. The exercises below are designed to help you reflect on your experiences as a student as well as your experiences and aspirations as a teacher. You can work your way through them at your own pace; you may find it helpful to give yourself a few hours or days to mull over some of the questions. You may also choose to skip any questions that don't seem applicable to you and/or jot down notes about other ideas or thoughts not explicitly covered by the questions below.

Questions to help you identify key aspects of your teaching philosophy

Modified from a Workshop on Writing a Teaching Philosophy led by Phil Scuderi, former Associate Director, Washington State University Center for Teaching and Learning.

Item #1 Your overarching conceptual framework

What is knowledge? Thinking? Learning? Meaning?

How do these terms relate to one another?

Item #2: The most important things to be learned

What are the 2-3 most important things my students need to learn within my discipline?

What are the 2-3 most important things my students need to learn within the courses I teach?

What are the 2-3 most important things my students need to learn about life in general?

Item #3: How do I know that my students are learning the most important things?

What methods do I use to assess student learning in my courses? How do I know they are effective?

Item #4: Roles and responsibilities

What are my beliefs about the roles, responsibilities, and relationships of students to enhance their learning?

What are my beliefs about the roles, responsibilities, and relationships of teachers to enhance student learning?

Item #5: The look of my teaching practice

If I were teaching in a manner consistent with my philosophy, what would an observer see? Include thoughts about the physical space/environment as well as the human interactions and “culture” within the classroom.

Questions to consider about your teaching interests

What qualities describe the most effective teachers you have learned from?

Which of these qualities do you exhibit (or aspire to exhibit) in your teaching?

What excites you about being in the classroom?

What types of classes are you capable and interested in teaching? (Think about topical material, level of course (introductory, upper level, etc.) size of course, and the types of student population you would serve.)—*Note: This is a great place where you can customize your teaching statement to each institution where you apply. Do some homework on the school and the department to see what might fit with the program. If the job ad identifies specific teaching requirements for the position, you should address these in your statement!*

On to your Teaching Statement

Once you have spent some time reflecting on and responding to the above questions in writing, you are ready to construct a draft of your teaching statement. Write a persuasive essay about you **at your best**: What makes you a great teacher? Why should someone want to hire you to teach their students? Remember to *use specific examples* to illustrate your points. Illustrating some knowledge of the research on teaching and learning is helpful; loading an essay with pedagogical jargon might do more harm than good.