



Teaching Philosophies: Your Teaching Soul in Document Form

A teaching philosophy is so much more than a requirement for employment in education. It can be the lifeblood of your education career. There are three acknowledgements about teaching philosophies that characterize the enduring importance of these ideologies that we often **overlooked**.

1. A teaching philosophy is a live, evolving document that reflects your thoughts and beliefs about being an educator. Your teaching philosophy will change as your career path moves forward. Each course you teach, each article you read, and each conversation you have with your peers will shape how you approach your next course, research topic, or conversation. Thus, what you write in your first draft, may look different than what your philosophy becomes over the years.
2. Your teaching philosophy provides a snapshot of your teaching beliefs and passions to others. You may be asked to provide a teaching philosophy for new faculty appointments, new non-teaching employment, and community involvement. Creating the foundation of your philosophy now, will save you some grief in the future as you steadily move forward in your career. Your philosophy should represent you so that when someone reads your thoughts they are transported to your classroom (on-ground or online) and feel the energy that drives your students to learn. This isn't to say that your classroom is always exciting and fun, but your reader should know what you strive for and what is important to you in each interaction with your students (in person or in planning).

3. Maybe the most important thing to remember about your teaching philosophy is that it is a terrific reminder to yourself about why you have chosen to do what you do! Your goals, passions, ideal classroom, and personal quests are all motivators that, when visited often, can prevent you from becoming discouraged, stagnant, or complacent in the classroom, not to mention in your own mind. As an educator, you will have ups and downs. When the downs come, having the ability to pull up your teaching philosophy and remember what is important to you about teaching can provide the boost you will need to push past the frustration, discouragement, or exhaustion that can sometimes appear during a teaching career. Additionally, reviewing your teaching philosophy can also remind you of the growth you have made throughout your career.

As you can see, there is much more to a teaching philosophy than just an application requirement. While it can be painful to write that first teaching philosophy (believe me, I have been there in the muck of not knowing how to even begin) or weave in time to review and revise your existing philosophy, this document deserves your effort. After all, it is effectively your teaching soul in document form. It may not be poetry or the great American novel, but it is a glimpse at what drives you every...single...time you open your computer to work on class prep, step into a classroom, or meet with a student.

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