

Philosophy of Teaching Writing

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First, I believe that all students can learn. They can learn to write, to read, to express themselves, to see life through different eyes, to transcend their backgrounds, and to reach for their goals.

Students can learn to write. They can learn the mechanics, the grammar, the spelling, and the punctuation. They can also learn how to express their feelings, to write within conventional rules and yet to break those boundaries, and to use different types of writing to convey different meanings.

Students can express themselves, and can benefit from self-expression through writing. For some, it may mean a novel, while for others, it may be a simple free-verse poem or a journal entry.

Students have different processes of writing. Some may sit down and write from the soul with little reflection beforehand; others may require careful thought for several days; still others may need to map out their thoughts before beginning to write. The process may depend upon the student as much as the type of writing that is being produced. There is no wrong way to write, as long as the product is intelligible, purposeful, and conveys the meaning for which it was intended.

Students can use writing to express beliefs, give instruction, persuade others, share their own experiences, and anything else they desire.

Students can write. But first, students must see why they *should* write. Before the rules of how to structure a sentence and what to say, the student must see that writing will positively influence his or her life. And once the student can understand that, through traditional or non-traditional lessons, through self-discovery or group investigations, the student will write.

Rationale for My Philosophy of Teaching Writing

I began my philosophy saying that all students can learn, and that learning can take them other places. Writing is only one part, albeit an important one, of the learning that students will have in and out of school. All students can learn, and they can use that learning to go places and do things they might never have dreamed before. Writing can take a person beyond his or her circumstances and help him or her to see the world in a different light.

I believe the mechanics of writing, the rules and grammar, are important. I like the structure that grammar provides to writing. Grammar sets needed boundaries in place, boundaries that can be helpful tools from which to expand writing. There is a time and place for breaking the rules, but even the breaking of the rules acknowledges their existence and purpose. When a poet ignores the rules of syntax, punctuation, or grammar in writing, I believe he or she is making a statement through them that could not have been recognized if there were no rules.

I have always enjoyed writing, as long as it had a purpose that I could see. To me, the purpose of a paper is to show what I have learned, and how well I have understood and internalized that learning. The purpose of a poem, or a free-write journal entry, is to put my feelings on paper and then be able to read the words months or years later and see what God did in my life and what changes have come in the time in between.

I do not, however, see a purpose in writing to fill up space, or to use my spelling words, or to produce something to enter in a competition. Writing must come with purpose, and I must have something to say. I know that I am not alone in this sentiment; countless students feel that the writing which they are forced to do is not meaningful to them. I want to impress upon my students the importance of writing in context, and also the freedom that it can bring them. I know that writing is hard for some people for a variety of reasons, but I will do my best to help my students write, and enjoy

writing, and come to a point where they want to write for no other reason than the fact that it gives them satisfaction. However, since writing is often for purposes that are not chosen and without a great deal of personal meaning, such as a research paper, I want my students to be able to write and know the mechanics of writing, so that they have the necessary skill of writing when it is needed. Whenever it is in my power, I will encourage my students to write about things that interest them. I will make writing topics broad and always encourage them to delve deeper, so that they are able to write about things that are important or useful to them.

As I indicated in my philosophy, I also believe that each writer has his or her own process, and no one can be expected to follow the process of others. I will encourage my students to use free writing techniques and explore the writings of a variety of writers, so that they can see how writing can and should differ from person to person. I will present my students with different options of organizing ideas, from webs to brainstorming charts to color-coding notes; I have written in all of these ways in the past, and I think it was much more beneficial to me to find out what worked best for me than to be told by a teacher how I had to write. Additionally, although the five paragraph essay model can be useful and has its place, I will not teach my students that there is no other way to write. I will show them, through examples and my encouragement, that writing can come in many different shapes, styles, and formats, and I will give them the tools they need to be able to make their own decisions about how to write in different contexts.

I feel it is necessary to add a disclaimer of sorts to this philosophy. As a pre-service teacher, I have difficulty expressing my philosophy when it is not fully developed and yet untested. As an idealistic education student, these are my beliefs about teaching writing. I do not expect to completely change them, but I do think I will adapt them as I gain experience and context because, just as writing needs context to have importance, so, I believe, my philosophy needs context to have be taken seriously.