

THE STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

By
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A few years ago I found myself having to write a formal statement of my own educational philosophy. I have since noticed how useful the Statement of Educational Philosophy (SEP) has been in my teaching. The following has a brief discussion of an SEP's usefulness and some suggested guidelines for writing one.

The process of writing a Statement of Educational Philosophy can have several positive results. The first is that it requires a teacher to carefully consider his/her own beliefs on teaching. Secondly, it offers the opportunity to discover inconsistencies or "blind spots" in teaching philosophy. Thirdly, long-held beliefs can be challenged and reconsidered.

Music Education majors at colleges and universities can also benefit from having their own SEP. In addition to the good things mentioned above, the statement will help them prepare for student teaching, interviews, and other "on-the-spot" situations. For example, "What is your educational philosophy?" is a common question asked during a job interview. Further, I require all my Music Education students to begin one. (It's probably a good idea for all music students to write one, since almost all of them will be doing some sort of teaching.)

The following are some suggested guidelines for writing a Statement of Educational Philosophy:

1. *Principles, Not Goals.* The statement should have principles of teaching beliefs, not specific goals – for example, "Emphasis on Fundamentals," not "Memorize All Major and Minor Scales." However, the SEP is an excellent basis for goal-setting.
2. *Points, Not Prose.* Use a few points (more than two and less than ten is recommended) with short explanations instead of long paragraphs. This will make the SEP easier to follow and understand.
3. *Carefully Worded.* Carefully choose words and construct sentences to convey the desired meaning as accurately as possible.
4. *Concise.* Don't be wordy!
5. *Not Dated.* It should have principles that are not bound by time, location, or other changing circumstances.
6. *Continually Updated.* Revise, restate, and rewrite the statement whenever needed. The document should be an accurate reflection of a teacher's current thinking.

MD's Statement of Educational Philosophy

1. *Emphasis on Building People.* The molding of a student's professional and personal integrity is a primary concern.
2. *Demand of Excellence.* Students are challenged to do their best through motivation and encouragement. The use of intimidation and fear is viewed as ultimately counterproductive to learning.
3. *Priority on Fundamentals.* Important basics of good musicianship (relaxation, tone, rhythm, etc.) are continually stressed.
4. *Emphasis on Artistry.* Technique is stressed as a means, not as an end.
5. *Student-Centered.* Student understanding and development is the foremost concern.
6. *Make Student Think.* Logical and creative thinking is stressed and encouraged. Absolute conformity, or "clone-making," is viewed as an inadequate and undesirable educational goal.
7. *Reality-Based.* Practical concerns are the focus, not esoterica. Teaching should always have a view toward the future.

[NOTE: For Michael Dean's updated Statement of Educational Philosophy, click [here.](#)]
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