A teaching philosophy statement is a powerful framework for exploring one’s beliefs about student learning, classroom leadership, assessment, teaching and learning styles, and programmatic development. Developing a teaching philosophy statement, however, can be a daunting task. Librarians may find that having a statement is necessary (e.g., promotion dossier) and/or desirable (e.g., personal reflection). The interactive workshop during the LOEX conference explored a structured and scaffolded approach to drafting a philosophy statement as the framework for a teaching portfolio. This chapter provides the conceptual foundation for understanding what a teaching philosophy is and its many possible roles as well as providing guidance for those who might wish to conduct a similar workshop at their own institution or assess the quality of teaching philosophy statements.

**Definition and Role of the Teaching Philosophy Statement**

Put simply – a teaching philosophy states what an individual believes about teaching and learning. Writing a teaching philosophy statement is often an exploratory process through which one comes to better understand one’s own thinking and may even discover areas of dissonance between one’s beliefs and actions. In other words, though the statement itself may appear to be a summative one, the process of writing it is often formative.

Schönwetter, Sokal, Friesen and Taylor provide a more formal definition of a teaching philosophy as “a systematic and critical rationale that focuses on the important components defining effective teaching and learning in a particular discipline and/or institutional context” (2002, p. 84). Topics included in a teaching philosophy statement typically include beliefs about student learning, classroom leadership, assessment, teaching and learning styles, and programmatic development, among others. In addition to beliefs, one might address goals, methods and processes, teaching and learning contexts, and professional growth as a teacher over time. Schönwetter, Sokal, Friesen and Taylor (2002) also present the idea of using a metaphor or a critical incident about teaching as framing devices for a teaching philosophy statement.

Librarians may find that having a teaching philosophy statement is necessary, e.g., for a promotion dossier or for a job application, and/or desirable for personal reflection and professional growth. One may also be required for certain teaching awards. Search committees looking for instruction and information literacy librarian positions may also request a statement of teaching philosophy from applicants. Often, though, librarians use teaching philosophy statements to help them focus their attention, get to know their own goals and values as teachers, and document their accomplishments, in addition to any external factors requiring them. As one participant quipped during the LOEX workshop – “maybe that I have one?” when asked what one might learn through writing a philosophy statement.

**Brainstorming: Who Inspired You?**

For librarians or new library school graduates who do not have much teaching experience, or who have not particularly thought of themselves as teachers, it can be helpful to consider...
the teaching philosophy statement from the perspective of their experiences as students and what did or did not work in those environments. Thinking about the effectiveness of the great teachers who inspired them may help in thinking about one’s personal opinions of teaching and learning. This can also be a useful creative thinking exercise for those who have a great deal of experience teaching. The LOEX workshop included an example approach to brainstorming in this way and the prompting directions and results from the discussion are included here as examples.

**Directions:** Tell a story of a teacher who influenced your thinking. What are the qualities of the teacher that inspired you?

**Qualities Mentioned:**
- passion for subject
- engaging
- relevant
- challenging
- connecting with individuals
- patience
- student-centered
- well-prepared
- has back-up plans
- encouraged discovery
- responsive
- deep subject knowledge
- involved with students outside classroom
- engagement in community
- facilitating discovering alongside
- approachable
- develops a long-term relationship
- confidence in student’s ability to learn
- presence
- adaptable
- makes connections and provides contexts for connecting local to global
- motivating

**Brainstorming: What’s Your Metaphor?**

A metaphor is a figure of speech that implies comparison between two unlike entities. The online Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines metaphor as “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them” (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphor). By using the image of something different, metaphors help us make sense of something complex through visualization and description. Since teaching is very complex, metaphors can help one create images for others of what one’s personal beliefs about teaching are. For example, Parker Palmer uses the metaphor of the teacher as a sheepdog. According to Palmer, a sheepdog has four vital functions: “It maintains a space where the sheep can graze and feed themselves; holds the sheep together in that space, constantly bringing back strays; it protects the boundaries of the space to keep dangerous predators out; and when the grazing ground is depleted, it moves with the sheep to another space where they can get the food they need” (1998, p. 148). This metaphor is incredibly rich in illuminating his beliefs about his role and responsibilities to his students in creating a safe environment for exploration of the subject.

Metaphors are richer if they examine not only one’s view of oneself as a teacher, but also explore beliefs about students, the act of teaching and the act of learning. Thinking of a metaphor is often a good start to beginning your teaching philosophy statement. The LOEX workshop also included an example approach to thinking creatively in this way and the prompting directions and results from the discussion are included here as examples.

**Directions:** Consider this question. “When you think about yourself as a teacher, what metaphor illuminates your perspective?”

**Metaphors Discussed:** Participants offered a variety of metaphors. One participant offered the metaphor of the teacher as a safari guide. Safari guides have four main major roles: to educate, to point out interesting things people might not notice, to keep the participants safe, and to protect and curate the environment.

Other metaphors and key features of the metaphor included:
- Translator - diversity of students, know their language/experience and language of Information Literacy, translate back and forth
- Bread Baker - have to take care of the yeast (student is yeast/active ingredient)
- Crutch - student does most of the work, teacher supports
- Map – provides a lot of information, need goal first to be useful
Penzeys Spice Catalog – provides what used for/recipe, don’t make it for you

Caterer - get one dish, buffet, healthy or not

Experienced co-traveler - both have some knowledge, participatory

Country doctor - faculty house calls

Fuel/Fuel pump - resources for energy, student is the engine

Other often-cited metaphors for teaching include: cooking, gardening, coaching, and directing an orchestra. A birthing coach, or doula, was an additional suggestion. Individuals interested in further exploration of the use of metaphors in teaching are encouraged to read Judith Yero’s *Teaching in Mind*, particularly chapters three and four.

**Brainstorming: What Do I Believe?**

Developing a teaching philosophy statement can be a daunting task given the number of topics to discuss and the complexity of each and their interplay. Matt Kaplan, associate director of the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan, suggests that the abstract question of “What’s my philosophy?” can be overwhelming, and suggests focusing on concrete questions (as quoted in Montell, 2003). Examples include:

- What do you believe about teaching? Why?
- What do you believe about learning? Why?
- How is that played out in your classroom?
- How does student identity and background make a difference in how you teach?
- What do you still struggle with in terms of teaching and student learning

The LOEX workshop also included an example approach to thinking in this way using a “quick-write” exercise. The “quick-write” prompts are listed below and workshop participants were given only about 15 minutes to respond to the prompts. The goal is to document as many ideas as possible in a short period of time and not become distracted by details or self-correction. After brainstorming, one can review the ideas and refine them in a more reflective way.

The “Quick-Write” prompts are as follows:

I believe that:

- as a teacher my role is to……
- knowledge is…..
- learning is…..

the role of the student is to…..

students are motivated by…..

students thinking should be…..

when students do….., I know they have learned.

my role relative to content is….

good interactions with students are…..

the best teaching strategies are….

After responding to the “quick-write” prompts, participants were eager to discuss their thoughts. Given the limited amount of time available during the workshop, the discussion was limited to three areas: student roles, student-teacher interactions, and teacher roles relative to content.

Participant ideas related to student roles included beliefs that it is the role of the student to:

- come with willingness to learn
- understand that learning is lifelong
- to do 50% of the work—active participation
- push back and question
- act on knowledge and extend knowledge gained
- let the teacher know when they are not learning
- produce content
- be creative
- contribute and create
- respect expertise
- discover how to be a critical thinker
- play with “mind tools”
- be playful
- construct knowledge

Participant ideas related to student-teacher interactions included beliefs that good interactions with students are:

- mutually beneficial
- symbiotic
- based on real dialogue
- respectful and efficient
- inclusion of shared listening
focused on student getting what they need from the teacher in order to self-generate answers

- focused on helping students hone their own ideas

Participant ideas related to teacher roles relative to content included beliefs that one’s role relative to content is:

- to raise awareness
- to provide framework/context
- evaluative/comparative
- based in a productive tension between process/content
- providing the why and how
- as a guide
- to create connection
- be a model learner
- to inspire

Somewhat surprisingly, none of the participants talked about their relationship to content as being an expert, even though deep subject knowledge and expertise in the field were noted as qualities of the teachers that inspired them.

Other writing exercises are described in the “Developers’ Diary: Developing Fractal Patterns III,” which includes 25 items for self-reflection (Nuhfer, Krest, & Handelsman, 2003). Grundman (2006) includes five sequential exercises intended to provide an organized process for writing a teaching philosophy statement. Additionally, five excellent exercises, namely the four-paragraph model, the critical moments exercise, the self-reflective interview exercise, the teaching cube, and the teaching philosophy matrix are available from the Center for Teaching Excellence at Duquesne University (2009).

**Assessing the Teaching Philosophy Statement**

Brainstorming exercises provide information with which to compose a teaching philosophy statement in a more formal narrative format. The limited time in the workshop did not allow for the construction of personal narratives and instead the final part of the workshop discussed the iterative process of writing the philosophy statement in that it may never truly be finalized. As one grows and develops as a teacher, one will revise, expand and edit the statement to reflect current and evolving thinking and beliefs. Participants also reviewed a rubric that can assist in assessing the quality of a teaching philosophy statement. The rubric (Appendix 1) is based on the work of Schönwetter, Sokal, Friesen and Taylor and is intended to be a starting point to help teachers developing philosophy statements to identify ideas that should be included in statements and the degree to which these ideas should be developed.

**Conducting This Workshop**

Many participants requested permission to repeat the LOEX workshop at their own institutions. Permission is granted to use these materials with attributions and a suggested outline is included in this chapter (Appendix 2).

**Selected Resources**


## Appendix 1: Rubric for Assessing the Teaching Philosophy Statement


### Definitions of Teaching and Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Successful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition of Teaching</strong></td>
<td>Does not define or discuss the term <em>teaching</em></td>
<td>Defines and discusses the term <em>teaching</em></td>
<td>Clearly and personally defines and discusses the term <em>teaching</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition of Learning</strong></td>
<td>Does not define or discuss the term <em>learning</em></td>
<td>Defines and discusses the term <em>learning</em></td>
<td>clearly and personally defines and discusses the term <em>learning</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship between teaching and learning</strong></td>
<td>Does not discuss the relationship between <em>teaching</em> and <em>learning</em>.</td>
<td>Discusses the relationship between <em>teaching</em> and <em>learning</em>.</td>
<td>Clearly discusses the relationship between teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of literature</strong></td>
<td>Does not ground the discussion within knowledge of literature.</td>
<td>Grounds the discussion within some knowledge of literature.</td>
<td>Grounds the discussion within an extensive knowledge of literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of Examples</strong></td>
<td>Examples and reflection on experiences with others are missing or irrelevant.</td>
<td>Some relevant examples and reflection on experiences with others are discussed</td>
<td>Extensive and relevant examples and reflection on experiences with others are discussed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### View of the Learner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Successful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Articulation of the view of the learner</strong></td>
<td>Fails to articulate view of the learner within the classroom or other learning environment.</td>
<td>Articulates view of the learner within the classroom or other learning environment.</td>
<td>Clearly articulates view of the learner within the classroom or other learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of literature</strong></td>
<td>View shows little or no knowledge of literature.</td>
<td>View is grounded within some knowledge of literature.</td>
<td>Grounded view within an extensive knowledge of literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of learner characteristics</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates no understanding of the learners' characteristics and their influence on success in the learning environment.</td>
<td>Demonstrates some understanding of the learners' characteristics and their influence on success in the learning environment.</td>
<td>Demonstrates extensive understanding of the learners’ characteristics and their influence on success in the learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals and expectations of the student – teacher relationship</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship between teachers and students</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion shows no consistency with definitions of teaching</td>
<td>Discussion shows some consistency with definitions of teaching and learning and view of the learner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and learning and view of the learner.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion is consistent with definitions of teaching and learning and view of the learner.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples and reflections</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples and reflections are not used to illustrate the nature of the student/teacher interactions nor the critical elements of the relationship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples and reflections illustrate either the nature of the student/teacher interactions or the identified critical elements of the relationship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples and reflections strongly illustrate both the nature of the student-teacher interactions as well as the identified critical elements of the relationship.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of literature</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows no grounding in literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded in some knowledge of literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded in an extensive knowledge of literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching methods and evaluation</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ability to use variety of teaching and assessment strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No evidence of consideration for discipline-specific expectations and learner characteristics and fails to demonstrate evidence of ability to use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulates discipline-specific expectations and learner characteristics, and demonstrates evidence of ability to use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulates discipline-specific expectations and learner characteristics, and clearly demonstrates evidence of ability to use a wide variety of teaching and assessment strategies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of literature</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows no knowledge of the literature on teaching methods and assessment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows knowledge of either literature on teaching methods or assessment, but not both.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows extensive knowledge of both literature on teaching methods and assessment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ties strategies to definitions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of specific strategies are not tied to definitions of teaching and learning, views of the learner and understanding of the student-teacher relationship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of specific strategies are inconsistent with definitions of teaching and learning, views of the learner and understanding of the student-teacher relationship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of specific strategies are consistent with definitions of teaching and learning, views of the learner and understanding of the student-teacher relationship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal context of teaching</strong></td>
<td><strong>Institutional climate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Illustrates no knowledge of general or specific institutional climates and fails to articulate how teaching fits into these types of settings.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Illustrates both his and her knowledge of general institutional climates and articulates how teaching fits into these types of settings.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context of teaching addressed</strong></td>
<td><strong>Consideration of the context of teaching is not evident.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Consideration of the context of teaching is evident in some of the components of the teaching philosophy statement.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Considerations are evident in all components of the teaching philosophy statement.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance between personal and institutional goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Does not address any balance of personal vs. institutional goals and style.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflects some balance of personal vs. institutional goals and style.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflects an appropriate balance of personal vs. institutional goals and style.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Organization</strong></th>
<th><strong>Use of metaphor</strong></th>
<th><strong>Has not framed the statement within a metaphor or critical incident that demonstrates links to the various components.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Has framed the statement within a metaphor or critical incident that demonstrates some links to the various components of the teaching philosophy statement.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Has framed the statement within a highly illustrative metaphor or critical incident that demonstrates many links to the various components of the teaching philosophy statement.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Progression through beliefs, actions and goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fails to present a consistent progression throughout beliefs, actions and goal dimensions.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Presents a consistent progression throughout beliefs, practice, and goal dimensions.</strong></td>
<td><strong>For each component of the model, presents a consistent progression throughout beliefs, practice, and goal dimensions.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflection as well as examples are lacking in articulation of beliefs, actions and goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflection as well as some examples are in evidence in articulation of beliefs, actions and goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Critical and reflective thinking as well as specific examples are in evidence in articulation of beliefs, actions and goals</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX 2: A SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR CONDUCTING A TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT WORKSHOP**

Timeframe: 1 hour (fast-paced)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Welcome and introductions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5 minutes   | The Teaching Philosophy  
What is a teaching philosophy?  
Why would you want to create a teaching philosophy statement?  
Mini-lecture and/or discussion |
| 10 minutes  | Who Inspired You?  
Ask participants “Think of a story of a teacher who inspired you.” Pair up and share this story with another person. Think about the qualities in these stories, and share these qualities with the group. The facilitator records these on a flip chart or white board. |
| 10 minutes  | What’s your metaphor?  
Ask participants “When you think about yourself as a teacher, what metaphor illuminates your perspective?” Give them 5 minutes to think on their own.  
Ask participants to share their own metaphors. The facilitator records these on a flip chart or white board. |
| 20 minutes  | Developing the Teaching Philosophy Statement  
Using the “I believe…” quick write exercise, participants jot down immediate responses to the prompts. Encourage individuals to jot down their fleeting thoughts and not worry too much about complete thoughts or even sentences. Leave enough time to discuss a few of the prompts as a group, as this may help someone to expand their view, or go in another direction.  
Alternatively, ask participants to complete the quick write or other more complicated writing prompts ahead of time and use the time for further discussion. |
| 10 minutes  | Rubrics/Resources  
Congratulate participants on completing the first (very) rough draft of their teaching philosophy through the quick write and talk about the iterative process of writing the statement. Refer to either the rubric in Appendix 1 or similar materials in the resources. If this is the first of several workshops aimed at developing a teaching portfolio, it may be useful to talk about how the teaching statement is used in the portfolio. |