

**Differentiating Teaching Philosophies**

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## **Introduction/Need for Innovation**

The development of a written teaching philosophy has been deemed as a “cornerstone of reflective and scholarly practice in teaching and learning” (Coppola, 2002, p. 448). Chism (1998) also recognized the importance of a teaching philosophy as a reflective tool, requiring teachers to carefully consider and articulate their professional goals, actions, and vision. Traditionally, written statements are the form in which teaching philosophies are expressed (Coppola, 2002).

Chism (1998) noted the hallmark of a teaching philosophy is its individuality and while the content may be very individualized, often the expectation of a written document does not encourage personalization. In 2015, Hock and Bradford encouraged the use of nonlinguistic representations in having students represent their interpretations of the philosophy of agricultural education. They purported that the use of such differentiated instruction and purposefully designed course assignments meets the diverse learning needs of students while encouraging them to think critically (Hock & Bradford, 2015).

## **How it Works**

In an effort to promote a more creative approach to the development of a teaching philosophy and allow for differentiated instruction and higher level thinking, the instructors of AEE 206 (Introduction to Teaching Agriculture) at NC State University opted to provide five options to articulate their philosophy beyond the traditional written linguistic format. Students were required to select two of the following five options:

### **Option #1 – Write a Thank You Letter to a Former Teacher**

Please select an influential teacher from your past and compose a letter (~1 page).

### **Option #2 – Three Minute Long Elevator Ride Speech**

Consider how you can articulate your desire to teach and beliefs about teaching in a concise timeframe. Create an audio recording (3 minutes) or write out what you would say in the 3 minutes (~540 words).

### **Option #3 – Create a Visual Representation**

This can be hand drawn, computer generated, a mix of graphics or media. Also include a short representation to explain your graphic.

### **Option #4 – Create a Graphic Organizer**

Use a graphic organizer to organize your beliefs about teaching and provide a visual representation or frame.

### **Option #5 – Review of Relevant Research**

Review a minimum of three peer-reviewed research articles, about effective agriculture teachers and/or teachers in general.

In the completion of this assignment, students were asked to articulate 1) the characteristics of an effective teacher that they embodied, 2) why they want to teach, 3) their commitment to students, and 4) how they would incorporate the total program model of agricultural education.

### **Results to Date/Implications**

The assignment was integrated into AEE 206 during Fall 2018 to encourage students to be creative in expressing their own personal philosophy of teaching. Since students were required to complete two of the options, there were 46 submissions from the class. Forty percent (n = 18) of the submissions were Option #1, in which students wrote a thank you letter to a former teacher. The rest of the submissions were equally divided between the elevator speech, the visual representation, and the graphic organizer. None of the students completed Option #5, which required a review of related research.

### **Future Plans/Advice to Others**

It is anticipated that this assignment will continue to be used in the course. Since none of the students completed Option #5, the course instructor and graduate assistant will need to determine if this option needs to be revised or should be eliminated. Also, there may be some additional options that can be included next year such as TED talks, sales/announcement poster, instagram/social media story, or film storyboard.

With such an individualized assignment, grading can become tedious. A rubric was used to grade the submissions from Fall 2018, but the continued development of a more comprehensive rubric will be helpful to create a more efficient grading process. Additionally, examples of exemplary work are being compiled and digitally archived to share with future classes.

### **Costs/Resources Needed**

There was minimal cost needed for the implementation of this innovative idea. The instructor and two graduate assistants invested time into brainstorming and creating the various options for the differentiated assignment. As well, the course instructor had to revise a rubric that had previously been used for the written teaching philosophy and the teaching assistant committed approximately four hours in grading the assignment. Students had the option of submitting either a digital or hard copy of their teaching philosophy. Any cost of supplies (paper, posterboard, markers, paint, etc.) was the responsibility of the student.

### References

Chism, N. V. N. (1998). Developing a philosophy of teaching statement. *Essays on Teaching Excellence*, 9(3), 1-2.

Coppola, B. P. (2002). Writing a statement of teaching philosophy. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 31(7), 448-453.

Hock, G., & Bradford, T.J. (2015). Nonlinguistic Representation of the Ag Ed Philosophy. *Poster Proceedings of the 2015 AAAE Conference*, San Antonio, TX.