



CHILDREN'S LITERATURE (EDU291)

Philosophy Essay

ASSIGNMENT

If you are a new student to CGCC's Teacher and Early Childhood Education Program, you may wish to read some background about the purpose of this philosophy assignment in the *Teacher Education Program Student Handbook* on our Blackboard site.

As they say, it's time to put your money where your mouth is How will you define/describe yourself as a literature-rich teacher and what will you do to demonstrate this? This is the heart of a philosophy essay. It is something of a professional mission statement with which you will make decisions on what and how to teach in regard to literature, reading, and the language arts.

Write a **2-4 page essay** (double-spaced) that presents your values and practices related to children's literature and literacy development. Your essay will be framed in the three-part essay structure (introduction • body • conclusion) will include all features as outlined in these directions.

PREWRITING: *Get it out!*

Pre-writing activities give your brain an opportunity to explode! This is the stage of the writing process where you are most concerned with generating as much thought as possible – without regard to whether or not you really want to use ideas or how your paper will be formed. **Keep all pre-writing exercises for submission with your final draft.**

1. For Pre-writing: Remind yourself of the “rules” of freewriting:
 - Write for the entire allotted time (time yourself!)
 - If you run out of things to write, keep writing!
 - Write anything about each topic - don't stop to judge what you are saying
 - Do not give attention to writing skills, just get the ideas out of your head on paper

Freewrite for 2 minutes on each of the following topics. The word wall can be helpful here!

- importance of literature for children and school (curriculum and teaching)
- importance of literature for children outside of school (recreational, development, etc.)
- literature-rich classroom environment
- teaching tools for using literature and/or planning literature lessons
- dispositions (qualities, attributes, talents, skills) of literature-rich teachers
- benefits and uses of read-alouds
- value of reader-response activities
- Arizona Common Core Standards for Literature

2. Using the numbers of each topic category listed here, categorize the topics above into what part they may fit. These are the [minimum] topics for the body part of your philosophy.

- Literature in the Lives of Children
- Literature-rich Classroom Environment
- Literature in the Curriculum
- Dispositions of a Literature-rich Teacher

3. For each of the four major topics listed in #2, write two “*I believe....*” statements that express the topic as a value, something you stand for. Here are examples, but you cannot use these:

I believe children benefit socially, emotionally, and intellectually from literature from an early age.

I believe a literature-rich classroom environment motivates children to want to read.

I believe literature can serve as a conduit for a variety of curriculum subjects.

I believe that exhibiting dispositions of a literature-rich teacher sends a positive message.

DRAFTING: *Get it down!*

After the prewriting exercises, your brain should be pretty full of possible content for your philosophy. Using the best of your thinking from your free-writes, compose a paper with an introduction, body, and conclusion as follows. **Save all drafts for submission with your final.**

BODY TOPICS *(Number of paragraphs is determined by you!)*

Many writers suggest beginning with the body of a piece of writing. I happen to agree.

1. **Write clear, direct, positive, convincing topic sentences to begin each paragraph.**

These topic sentences are some version of your *I believe...* statements, but without that wording. So, the statements from above would be better worded as:

Children benefit socially, emotionally, and intellectually from literature from an early age.

A literature-rich classroom environment motivates children to want to read.

*Literature can serve as a conduit for a variety of curriculum subjects.
Exhibiting dispositions of a literature-rich teacher sends a positive message.*

2. **Develop topic sentences in a S-E-X-I way.** Include 1. WHAT (a couple of sentences may be needed to elaborate or explain what exactly you mean by the point made in the topic sentence. 2. WHY this particular belief or practice is important or valuable to students. 3. HOW you will demonstrate (what you will do) the practice of your belief statement. Here is where you briefly describe your teaching practices and occasionally, provide specific children's book titles to illustrate them.

INTRODUCTION

Keep in mind that readers remember what comes first and what comes last – introductions and conclusions to essays make the best impressions. This means what and how you express your introduction is crucial. You have a captured audience (other educators) for this essay, so you do not have to compete for their attention as when you write a general essay. “Assume” your reader already has interest in what you have to say, but still grab his or her attention. Create a strong opening. In which you describe the importance of producing literate students and the impact on their own education, life success, and the world at large.

CONCLUSION

The best news about this part of your essay is that it is short – perhaps only 3-4 sentences. Be careful not to introduce any new information here. You are merely re-emphasizing your commitment to being a literature-rich teacher and selling your strongest assets in regard to this. This should be a memorable, strong, positive end to your paper in which you: 1. Re-emphasize your commit to being a literature-based teacher, and 2. Identify some of the results or outcomes (think how students will benefit) of this commitment.

TITLE

A two-part title can be very effective for an essay such as this. One part is explicit and one part a little creative. The “creative” part should be addressed in your introduction and possibly, your conclusion. Be sure to return to these parts of your essay if you did not plan beforehand. Examples of two-part titles:

Oh! The Places We'll Go: A Philosophy of Literature in My Classroom
The Most Important of the Three Rs: My Philosophy of Reading and Literacy
A Philosophy of Children's Literature in My Classroom: A Road Map for Success

REVISING and EDITING: *Get it right!*

Remember: In “revision” you check that you have addressed all important content/topics in your essay. You focus on “what” you have to say. In “editing” your focus is on “how” you have said it – clarity, wording, professional vocabulary, voice, grammar and sentence structure.

1. **Spell-check, proofread, polish, produce** a clean word-processed copy of your first final draft. Bring 3 copies to class on the day of partner editing.
2. Use the **editing “tips and tricks”** handout to help you with further revision and editing. Make corrections and changes as needed. Two key features for success: Use of professional (education and literary) vocabulary and writing in the voice of a professional teacher.
3. **Spell-check, proofread, polish, produce** a clean word-processed copy of your next final draft.
4. Visit CGCC’s **Writing Center** for 10 pts. extra, if you wish. You may do this at any point in the process of completing your paper (prior to partner editing or submission). Completing the “Writing Center Plan Page” and mentally rehearsing the conversation you wish to have with the writing tutor will help you get the feedback you want. *You* should lead this conversation! Get the feedback you want by asking questions and drawing the tutor’s attention to what you want to work on. Get the Writing Center stamp and be sure to summarize on it what you will do to improve your draft.
4. Use the **instructor feedback**. Although not detailed, my comments will focus your attention on major successes or areas for improvement which will impact your grade.

FINAL DRAFTING and SUBMITTING: *Get it out there for others!*

You may choose between two formats for your final draft:

1. You may write it in continuous prose as a traditional essay.
2. You may write it as a traditional prose essay, but with added bolded subtitles introducing each body section. In this case, you would use the exact wording from #2 in Pre-writing (above).

On the due date, submit the **hard copy** (essay) of your final draft in manuscript format (word-processed in 10-12 pt font, heading, title, double-spaced) **in a folder** with the following: all prewriting activities, partner editing draft, instructor draft, Writing Center plan page and draft (if applicable), and rubric (please print).

WRITE A REFLECTIVE CAPTION

Write a 4-6 sentence reflective caption that will introduce your philosophy in your portfolio. Word-

process this on a separate page and be sure to: identify the artifact by its title, tell the importance of having a philosophy and how it impacts your teaching, identify highlights or spotlight your main points, and explain parts of your philosophy you are most satisfied with and why.

Example:

My philosophy, "Oh! The Places We'll Go," summarizes my mission to be a literature-rich teacher. In my classroom, literature will be integrated into daily routine and the curriculum. This philosophy will provide the foundation for my living up to my mission. I am looking forward to selecting appropriate quality literature and to engaging my students in a variety of reader response strategies.

GRADING CRITERIA

Prewriting: 20 pts.

Partner Editing: 20 pts.

Writing Center Visit (plus plan page and verification stamp): 10 pts. extra credit

Final Essay (folder with all process parts and rubric): 200 pts.