



OnPoint Prize for Excellence in Education
Educator of the Year
Statement of Educational Philosophy Samples

Statement of Educational Philosophy: A statement of educational philosophy is a self-reflective narrative of your beliefs about teaching and learning. It conveys your core ideas about being an effective educator and develops these ideas with examples of what the educator and learners will do to achieve those goals.

Congratulations on your nomination for the Educator of the Year award! The purpose of requesting a statement from you, the nominee, is to give you a voice in the nomination process and help the OnPoint Prize Selection Committee get to know your guiding principles, factors of influence and growth as an educator. The statement is meant to be open-ended; please share what you choose.

Need help writing your statement? This document provides tips and sample statements. Please note the sample statements are the work of other educators whose authorship has been cited.

Thank you for your participation in the OnPoint Prize and for all you do to support your students. We look forward to learning more about you!

Tips to get started from ThoughtCo.com:

- **Brainstorm** about your educational philosophy and your views of education, making notes on those principles you value most. This can help you articulate your philosophy as you organize your statement.
- **Demonstrate** how you have put your educational philosophy into practice in the classroom by citing specific examples and outcomes with students, parents, or fellow teachers and administrators.
- **Reflect** on your experience over your career. Most likely, your education philosophy has changed over time. Reflect on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead, and how you intend to meet them.
- **Connect** with others and talk to your peers in the field, as well as mentors. Having people who know you and your teaching style well review your work can help you craft a truly representative statement.
- **Review** sample essays to help you as you begin writing your own.

SAMPLE STATEMENT #1:

Dr. Traniece Brown-Warrens, Markham Elementary, 2024 Educator of the Year Winner (Gold Star)

I once heard a speaker say, “If you could stand atop a balcony and look down on your campus, what would you see, hear, feel, and what would you witness as your impact?” As I ponder this question today, I would say, “I see students who deserve high-quality instruction and can be pushed to view themselves as excellent. I would hear students engaged in discourse, challenging grade-level standards aligned curriculum with evidence and using restorative actions due to possible harm caused. I would feel a culture of positivity that is rooted in celebration, care, accountability, and excellence.” The impact? Well let’s take a journey so you can see what I see.

When I became the proud principal of Markham Elementary School during the 2022-2023 school year, I came in with no sense of the campus culture, but what I did know was the level of impact I wanted to have over academic excellence for students. Just the year before, I was the assistant principal at the neighborhood middle school, the school Markham students would attend after completing 5th grade. During my time at the middle school, I covered 6th grade classes on occasion and began to see a pattern with Markham students that was different from other students. For example, when I gave the directions for an assignment, I noticed the same students would stand in line for “help” because they did not know how to get started. I began asking students what elementary school they attended, and by and large, the answer was “Markham.” As I brought my findings to the middle school leadership team, no one else seemed to be as concerned as I was. Instead, someone brought up how empathic Markham students were. This sparked my passion and desire to be an elementary school principal. I felt the elementary environment was the place one could help give students the tools they need to succeed in secondary school and beyond.

Why was it important to ensure these students had the tools to be academically successful? My past experience dictates my current position. Years prior, I taught 8th grade U.S. History in Houston, Texas across campuses that were 98% Hispanic (60% spoke English as a second language). Many students lacked the motivation to thrive academically because they were undocumented and lacked hope for what their lives could be post high school. Converse to those students, I had a childhood that fostered a disposition aimed at life being better than it was for my parents – I could make a better life for myself and break a generational curse by gaining access to education at the highest level. Witnessing the barriers for my students, I insisted that they not be pushed out of my classroom. I instead leaned into my students’ lives and stories to understand how I could connect with them. My students and I shared a common love for hip-hop/rap music, memes, and the movie *The Hunger Games*. I took our commonalities and combined them to create “Hip-Hop History” and taught students how to beat the state test – just like how Katniss Everdeen won the Hunger Games in the movie.

Through these connections, students started to see the importance of learning history beyond their grade requirements and state test score. History tells us a story we can unpack and gain insight from to make a difference in our own communities and beyond. Students loved being in Ms. Brown's (my) class and walked away with a love for history and learning.

From the moment I started at Markham, I began conducting empathy interviews with key stakeholders—the former principal, staff, parents, and students—to gain an understanding of the culture, hopes, aspirations, and challenges of the school. I learned the campus experienced several years of principal turnover and substitute leaders. This revolving door caused distrust, siloed teachers, fractured teams, and left the staff and community with no thread of communication or collaboration. Educators who wanted to do right by students languished directionless in the absence of a leader. Instead of being intimidated by the picture, I leaned in and introduced a culture shift influenced by Jon Gordon's book *The Energy Bus and The Energy Bus for Kids*. We dedicated time to reading the book as a staff and with our homeroom classes to understand and adopt the concept of fueling our campus with positive energy. As a leader, I chose to focus on RULE 3: *Power Your Bus with Positive Energy* and RULE 8: *Care about Your Team* during my first year at Markham.

We were on a roll with our campus climate shifts, when the current academic year brought a teacher strike. During this challenging time, I attempted to embody Energy Bus RULE 7: *Be Enthusiastic: It Attracts and Energizes Others*. My enthusiasm for my students led me to make inspirational videos during the strike; I trained to be a reading coach for students, and I organized food and book pick-ups. Overall, students and families felt connected, informed, and able to support our educators.

My enthusiastic flame torched us through the [ice storm that shut down Markham](#). Upon learning our building was damaged and we would be unable to return, I started to create an instructionally focused plan that would put students in buildings instead of online. My plan first centered around getting our Intensive Skills special education students into an instructional space immediately. Then I collaborated with our IT department to set up a technology and book pick-up. During this time, I developed and proposed a plan that would put us at four different campuses on the Southwest Portland side; while the plan was not ideal, it was better than the alternative of remote learning.

Once the students were placed, I crafted a schedule that ensured every student received their daily 45 minutes of reading, music, visual arts, library, English as a second language, and special education services. We also created a schedule that centers culture building and allows our counselor and climate specialist time to check-in with students, maintain our Eagle awards system, and do fun, engaging activities. The next big piece was putting transportation together. Our neighborhood buses, walkers, and parent drop are at Jackson Middle School; from there we ensure students get on the shuttle bus going to their host school. The students who used to walk to Markham did not have a regular bus to ride, so the climate specialist and I

would meet those students near Markham and walk them to and from Jackson in the morning and afternoon. This walk was 20 minutes each way. Within the last two weeks, I was able to secure a bus for these students so that they no longer have to walk.

What has been the most impressive about this tumultuous and unexpected transition is that we have been able to stay connected, we've continued to center instruction and social emotional learning (SEL), and students have been able to make new friends at the host schools. The Energy Bus News has continued; 4th and 5th grade students were able to participate in their host school's book fair, where I was able to ensure that each Markham student received at least one book regardless of their ability to pay; and in the midst of everything, our student leaders made videos, such as *We Are Still Markham Strong* and *Student Perspectives on Ramadan*, and provided gifts for our host schools.

SAMPLE STATEMENT #2

Sherry Reeder, Molalla River Middle School, 2024 Educator of the Year Winner (6-8)

Education is more than the transmission of knowledge; it is the cultivation of minds and the nurturing of souls. My philosophy of education is that every child will, if every child can. I advocate for a student-centered approach that prioritizes the holistic development of every learner, embraces the diversity of each individual, and fosters an inclusive environment where every voice is heard and valued.

At the heart of my philosophy lies the principle of student-centered teaching. Students are not passive recipients of information but active participants in their own learning journey. As educators, it is our duty to create an environment that empowers students to explore, question, and construct meaning for themselves. This involves moving away from traditional didactic methods towards more interactive, inquiry-based approaches that encourage critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. By placing students at the center of the learning process, we honor their unique perspectives, interests, and learning styles, thereby unlocking their full potential.

Education must go beyond the mere accumulation of academic knowledge; it must encompass the holistic development of the whole child. This means attending to not only cognitive growth but also social, emotional, physical, and moral dimensions. In our classrooms, we must recognize and nurture the multifaceted nature of human beings, helping students develop resilience, empathy, and a sense of purpose. By providing opportunities for experiential learning, artistic expression, physical activity, and ethical reflection, we support students in becoming well-rounded individuals who are equipped to navigate the complexities of the world with integrity and compassion.

Inclusion lies at the core of my educational philosophy. Every student, regardless of their background, abilities, or differences, deserves to feel welcomed, accepted, and

valued within the learning community. Inclusive education is not merely about integration; it is about creating a culture of belonging where diversity is celebrated and accommodations are made to meet the needs of all learners. This requires us to be proactive in removing barriers to learning, whether they are physical, cognitive, linguistic, or socio-economic. By embracing diversity as a strength and fostering a culture of mutual respect and understanding, we create an environment where every student can thrive and contribute their unique gifts to the collective tapestry of humanity. A parent of one of my students wrote a letter of support for my nomination for Oregon Teacher of The Year. In it, she wrote "I specifically recall a time when she (Ms. Reeder) said, "some students just need to do things a little differently to get things done, and I want to make sure they have the space to be able to do that." My philosophy of education is creating space so every student can.

In conclusion, my philosophy of education is rooted in the belief that every student is a unique individual deserving of respect, support, and opportunities for growth. By centering our teaching around the needs and interests of students, nurturing their holistic development, and fostering an inclusive learning environment, we empower them to become lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and compassionate members of society. In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Let us wield this weapon wisely, with a deep commitment to nurturing minds and empowering souls, so every student can.