Name:

Period:

1. How much has the expectation changed for you in school during the Covid break?
2. Do you think what is being asked of you is realistic, why/whynot?
3. What would you change if you were in charge?
4. What should be expected of elementary aged students?

# Revising Your Teaching Philosophy for This Crisis

For many teachers, their statement of teaching beliefs no longer matches their work. Revisiting and simplifying it can help chart a path forward.

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May 18, 2020



Dan Page Collection / The iSpot

Like many teachers around the nation, I recently went from face-to-face teaching to online teaching with little time to prep. I first tried to emulate my normal daily procedures virtually—I thought the consistency and familiarity would be beneficial. I was wrong: Although I was doing what I thought was my best for students, there was an overall lack of engagement, even with these familiar procedures in place.

I was discouraged. I knew where I needed to go, but I couldn’t see how to get there. When we received confirmation that we would not return to school for the rest of the school year, I took a weekend to reflect. If I was lost during this time, my students surely were too.

I was trying to engage my students in a manner similar to what I had used under typical circumstances. But the reality was that these were not typical circumstances. This was a crisis, and attempts to stay on the same path were futile. To help me chart my path forward, I needed to revisit my teaching philosophy and apply that philosophy to the new situation.

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### THE TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The teaching philosophy is a statement of one’s beliefs and thoughts about what’s important in teaching and learning. It’s often a one- to two-page written description of how and why one teaches the way one does. It transcends every decision and directs the course of learning in the classroom.

Some typical statements found in a teaching philosophy are “Differentiation in the classroom helps every student to succeed” and “Lesson pacing minimizes student behavior issues.” These types of statements are often embedded in a larger context that explains the rationale behind the philosophy and how the teacher will exemplify it.

When faced with a crisis, is it possible to recall every facet of one’s teaching philosophy in a way that’s useful? Probably not. That’s why I shortened my philosophy in a way that was easy to remember. This helped bring clarity to it and allowed for quicker recall.

### CONDENSING MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My philosophy was originally five paragraphs long. The beginning had many general “I believe” statements. My first main point was about understanding concepts. One sentence in this section was: “Being able to produce something is important, but understanding why it’s important is crucial to the success of my students.” To summarize the paragraph, I wrote, “Concepts are crucial.”

Second, I discussed processes. One sentence read, “The path that directs them to the product is just as important as the product itself, if not more so.” I shortened that to “Process over product.”

The final paragraph dealt with relationships. I had written, “Despite my best efforts, if students are not connected with the school, each other, and their teacher, they may have difficulty learning.” I condensed that to: “Relationships rule.”

My revisited philosophy consists of three short phrases that use the mnemonic CPR:

* Concepts are crucial.
* Process over product.
* Relationships rule.

I’ve always been guided by these beliefs. Now I can recall them quickly, and I’ve found that this has helped me immensely in this moment.

### USING MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY IN A CRISIS

Once I condensed my teaching philosophy, I realized where I’d gone wrong: I’d been reacting to the crisis, rather than responding proactively using my philosophy.

As you revise your teaching philosophy, you might ask yourself the following questions, which are outlined below using the mnemonic CRISIS:

* **Capability:**What are the capabilities of your learning platform, yourself, and students?
* **Reliability:**Are your plans and software reliable?
* **Inability:**What are you not able to do in this situation?
* **Suitability:**Are your plans suitable for the current situation?
* **Ingenuity:**How can you be ingenious and still hold true to your philosophy?
* **Sustainability:** Is what you’re doing sustainable in the long term?

Applying this framework to my own revised teaching philosophy was simple. I took the first word in my revised teaching philosophy—capability—and asked myself which concepts were crucial to the success of my students with our current capabilities. When considering the second part, the process, I kept students’ current capabilities in mind while creating assignments in which they worked through a process of evaluation.

I continued in this way for every component of CRISIS.

Keeping a clear head during a crisis is difficult, but drawing on our beliefs can guide us through. Condensing your teaching philosophy to short statements will help you recall what is important in these moments and will help keep you centered and clear—and applying it to your work will help you chart a path forward for everyone.