

# MIXING IT UP: IDEAS TO DIFFERENTIATE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

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# Importance of Differentiated Instruction

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- Students across our classrooms vary greatly in background, cultures, academic aptitude, interests, and motivation (Parsons, Dodman, & Burrowbridge, 2013).
- In response, differentiated instruction can be utilized to meet unique student needs (Watts-Taffe, Laster, Broach, Marinak, Connor, Walker-Dalhouse, 2012).
- Differentiating instruction can focus on the process of learning, the products or demonstrations of learning, the environment of learning, or the content being learned (Tomlinson, 2001).



## Context of Course & Original Assignment

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- AEE 206 - Introduction to Teaching Agriculture
  - Primarily sophomore-level course
  - Introduction to educational psychology, curriculum planning, lesson planning, pedagogy, assessment, classroom management, FFA, & SAE
- Assignment - Articulate Your Teaching Philosophy

# Assignment Instructions

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Create your own personal philosophy that includes your beliefs about teaching. This does not have to have the same format as the ag teacher creed. Do not make it over one page (double-space, 12 point Times New Roman font) and make sure that it is unique to you. You can incorporate some of your Teaching Perspectives Inventory and values you identified during Agriculture Teacher Rummy.

Rubric Category	Possible Points	Earned Points
<b>Logic and Clarity</b> – The creed is clear and consistent.	10	
<b>Reasons for Wanting to Be a Teacher</b> - The creed includes thoughtful reasons why you want to become a teacher. Reasons go beyond “love of children” and express elements of professionalism.	10	
<b>Commitment to Students</b> – The creed includes your expectations of students and evidence of how you will support student learning and personal growth	10	
<b>Incorporates Total Program Model</b> – The creed discusses your beliefs about the three components of Agricultural Education	10	
<b>Life-Long Learning</b> – The creed discusses your commitment to lifelong learning and professional development.	10	
<b>Original Thought</b> – The creed demonstrates original thought and avoids relying on trite phrases or jargon.	5	
<b>Grammar and Format</b> – The creed has no grammatical or spelling errors.	5	

# Assignment Options

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Option  
1

Write a  
Thank  
You  
Letter to  
a Former  
Teacher

Option  
2

Three  
Minute  
Long  
Elevator  
Ride  
Speech

Option  
3

Create a Visual  
Representation

Option  
4

Create a  
Graphic  
Organizer

Option  
5

Review of  
Relevant  
Research

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

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Please select an influential teacher from your past and compose a letter (~1 page) that addresses the following items:

- What characteristics of effective teachers did they possess and how were they demonstrated in their teaching?
- What did you admire about their teaching philosophy?
- How did they demonstrate their commitment to students?
- As you pursue a teaching career, how will they influence your teaching philosophy and approach?



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

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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). This should address the following items:

- What characteristics of an effective teacher do you embody?
- Why do you want to teach?
- What is your commitment to students?
- How will you incorporate the total program model?



## Option #3 – Create a Visual Representation

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This can be hand drawn, computer generated, a mix of graphics or media. Also include a short representation to explain your graphic. This should address the following items:

- What characteristics of an effective teacher do you embody?
- Why do you want to teach?
- What is your commitment to students?
- How will you incorporate the total program model?





## Option #4 – Create a Graphic Organizer

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Use a graphic organizer to organize your beliefs about teaching and provide a visual representation or frame. This should address the following items:

- What characteristics of an effective teacher do you embody?
- Why do you want to teach?
- What is your commitment to students?
- How will you incorporate the total program model?



## Option #5 – Review of Relevant Research

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Review a minimum of three peer-reviewed research articles, about effective agriculture teachers and/or teachers in general. From the review of the documents provide a one-page summary that addresses the following:

- What are the characteristics of an effective agriculture teacher according to the research?
- What characteristics of an effective teacher do you embody?
- Why do you want to teach?
- What is your commitment to students?
- How will you incorporate the total program model?



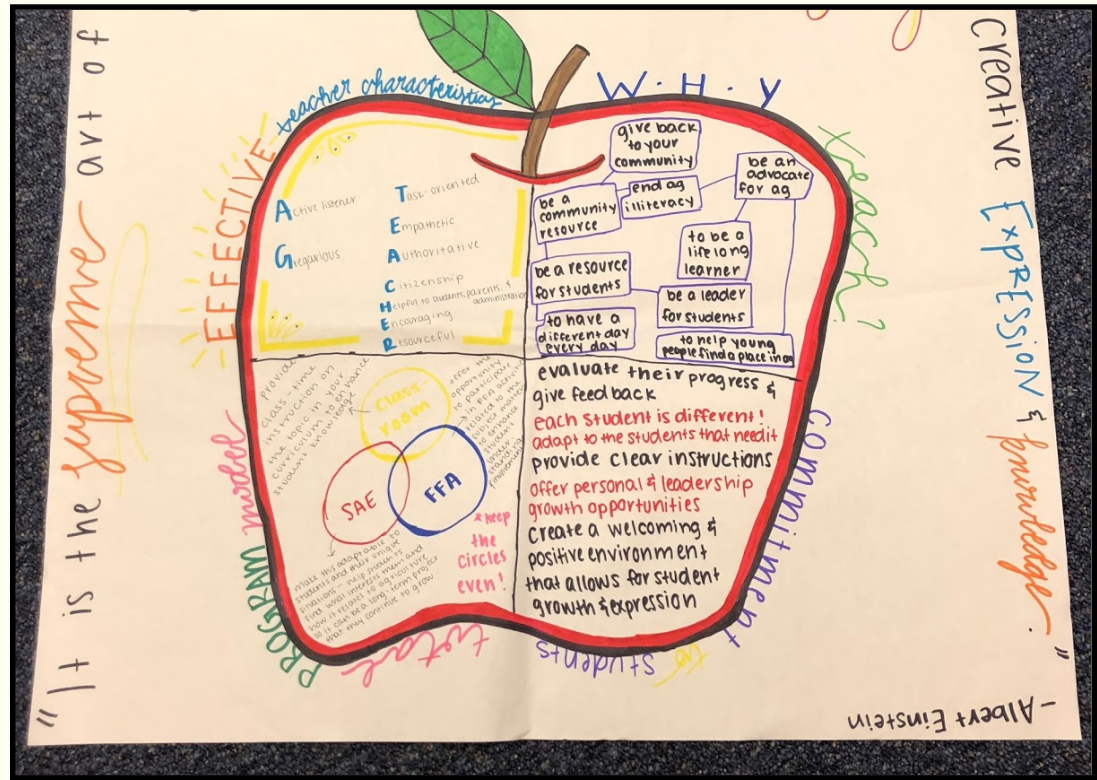
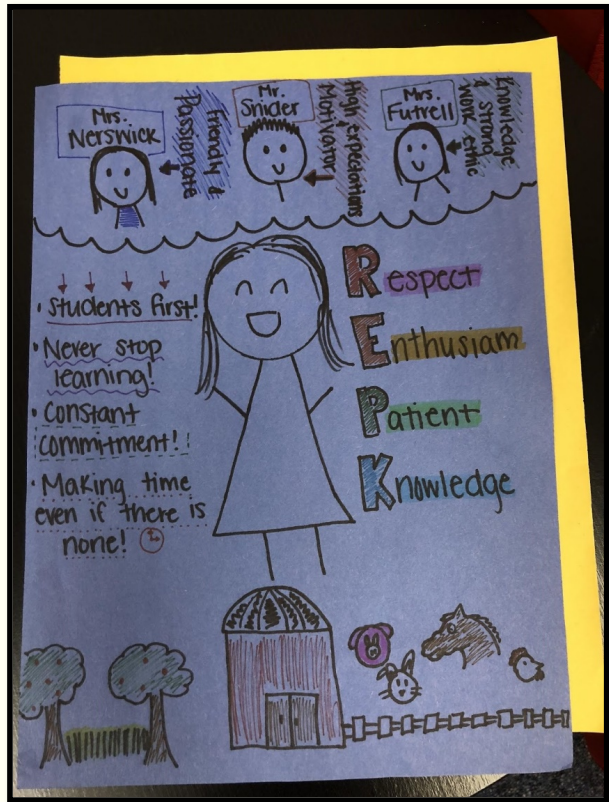
## Results from Fall 2018

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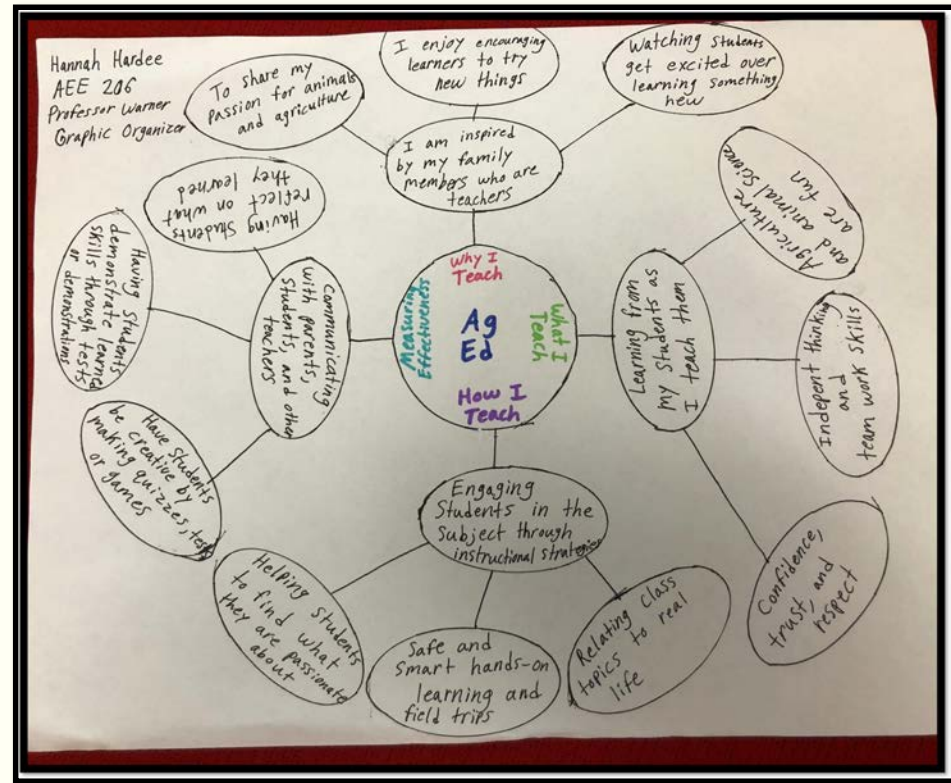
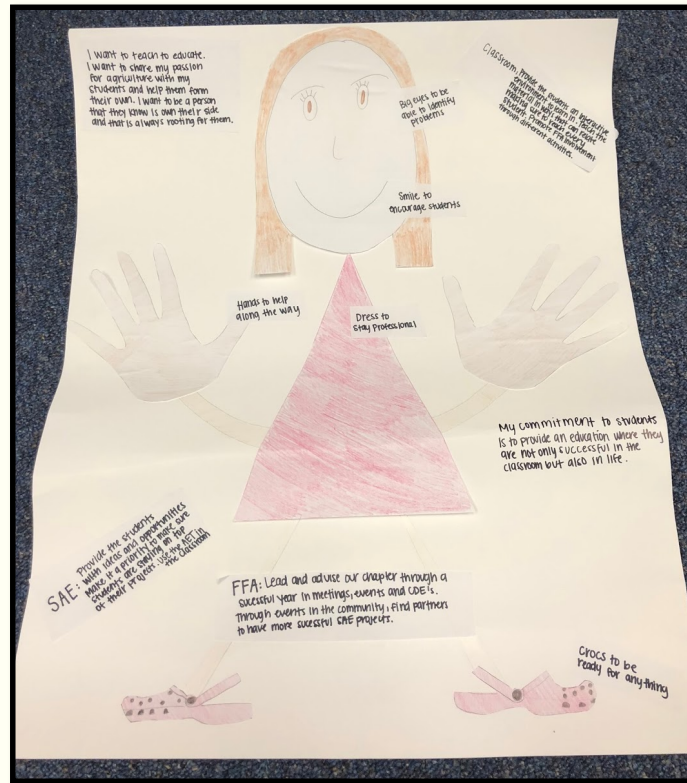
- Students were required to complete two of the options.
- 46 submissions from the class.
- Forty percent (n=18) completed Option #1 - Write a Thank You Letter to a Former Teacher.
- Remainder of submissions were equally divided between the elevator speech, the visual representation, and the graphic organizer.
- None of the students completed Option #5, which required a review of related research.

# Examples from Fall 2018





# Examples from Fall 2018



## Lessons Learned / Advice to Others

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- Does Option #5 (Review of Research) need to be revised or eliminated?
- Are there additional options to be included such as a TED talk, sales/announcement poster, instagram/social media story, or film storyboard?
- Do students like having multiple options?
- 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.
- Examples of exemplary work are being compiled and digitally archived to share with future classes.

THANK YOU!

Are there any questions?

