

Personal Statements, Part 2: Outlines

SUBMITTED BY: Kathryn McGinn

SUBJECT(S): Career Development

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

This is the second lesson in a series about writing personal statements. During this lesson, students will think about their plans for the future and begin crafting personal statements that outline their goals and qualifications. They will continue to work on it for the rest of the module.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Career Development, IV. Career Strategy

≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Would You Bypass College for Real-world Learning?”](#)
- [“Student Essay: The Power of Stories to Inspire Strong Leaders”](#)
- [“Providing Guidance to Others Could Boost Your Own Success”](#)
- [“One House, Three Seniors and Lots of College Essays”](#)
- [“How to Reflect on What Matters to You as You Begin the College Search”](#)
- [“Apple Peach Greenleaf Smoothies Can Help You Unlock Your True Potential”](#)

Common Core Standard(s):

- ELA CCR Writing 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- ELA CCR Writing 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task, purpose and audience.
- ELA CCR Writing 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- ELA CCR Writing 10: Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes and audiences.
- ELA CCR Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Objectives/Purposes:

- Students will read/discuss the article about success in the workplace.
- Students will continue brainstorming about their future goals and how they plan to achieve them.
- Students will start outlining their personal statements.

Wharton Global Youth Program Article:

- [“Building a Work Brand that People Will Brag About”](#)

Other Resources/Materials:

- Personal statement assignment ([Handout A](#))
- Personal statement outline ([Handout B](#))

Activities:

1. Explain that as students think about their future plans, it is important to seek advice along the way. Have students read the Knowledge@Wharton article. Tell students that when they finish reading, they will participate in a “text rendering” activity. As such, they must note the following as they read:

1. Underline a sentence that stands out.
2. Circle a phrase (more than one word, less than a sentence) that stands out.

3. Put a star next to a word that stands out.
4. Write their own word that describes the article and/or their feelings about the article.

To “text render,” have the students sit in a circle. Go around the circle and have each student read their sentence, then their phrase, then their word, and then their own word. The goal is to go around the circle without stopping. Explain that if you have the same sentence or word as someone else, that’s okay. It will help the class to see which parts of the article resonated with a lot of people.

When you finish with text rendering, discuss the words and phrases that came up the most. What advice did students most take to heart? (10 mins)

2. Tell students that as they consider their future plans, it is useful to have a concise statement of their goals and how they intend to reach them. In fact, employers and colleges often ask for personal statements as part of the application process. Therefore, students will work on their own personal statements throughout the rest of this module.

A fun way to get started is to complete a madlib of sorts. Put the following statement on the board/overhead:

I am a(n) (adjective) and (adjective) (noun) , who is seeking a career in the field of (noun) so that I may use my (adjective) and (adjective) skills in order to (phrase) .

It is helpful to go over what adjectives and nouns are with students, and it is also helpful to provide an example of a completed madlib. You can make a madlib that suits your own experiences. I shared the following statement with students:

I am a creative and thoughtful student and teacher, who is seeking a career in the field of education so that I may use my interpersonal and critical-thinking skills in order to improve urban schools and to increase community engagement in urban education.

Give students time to complete their madlibs and then have them share it with the class. (10 mins)

- The task of the personal statement is to develop this concise sentence into an essay that elaborates the students goals and qualifications. Hand out the Personal Statement assignment ([Handout A](#)) and go over it with the students. There is an empty rubric at the bottom of the assignment. Go over all the criteria with the students, and have them take notes in the chart about what each term means (e.g., What would a well-organized paper look like? How can you tell if a paper is focused? etc.).

While criteria may vary according to teacher preference, I generally define each element as follows:

Criteria	Description
Content	The author talks in specifics about his/her goals and provides detailed examples about his/her experiences that make him/her particularly qualified for his/her chosen path.
Organization	The paper consists of a clear beginning, middle and end, and is divided into paragraphs that have a strong topic and concluding sentences.
Focus	The author develops one (possibly two) main idea(s) throughout the paper, and each paragraph contributes to the development of the overall theme.
Mechanics	The paper is free of spelling and grammatical errors. The writing is clear and easy to read.
Style	The author's voice comes through in his/her writing. The essay conveys the author's personality in addition to his/her goals.
Presentation	The final essay is typed in an appropriate font (Cambria or Times New Roman), is double-spaced, and printed on quality paper.

(5 minutes)

- Hand out the Personal Statement outline (see end of lesson). Go over what each paragraph of their personal statements should include:
 - Introduction:** Start with an anecdote, detail, or example that will get your readers attention while introducing them to your future goals.
 - Body Paragraph 1:** Describe your educational/career goals. Explain why these goals are important to you, and consider what experiences have led you to these goals.
 - Body Paragraph 2:** Outline your plan to achieve your goals. Be as specific as possible.

- **Body Paragraph 3:** Write about any skills/talents you have that will help you reach your goals. Include examples that demonstrate how you have utilized your talents in the past.
- **Conclusion:** Summarize your key points and end with an image, an idea, or a statement that will help your readers remember you.

Address any questions that students have, then give them the remainder of class to brainstorm ideas and fill in the outline. Advise students to refer to their roadmaps if they need ideas. Stress that this is simply an opportunity to start putting ideas on paper. We will look at an example of a personal statement in the next lesson if students need help in envisioning how to put all their ideas together. (15 mins)

Tying It All Together:

Save five minutes at the end of class to check in with students. How are they doing with their outlines? What (if anything) is giving them trouble? What questions do they have?

(5 mins)

Practice Outside of the Classroom:

- Students may choose to take their outlines home with them and continue working outside of class.

What Worked and What I Would Do Differently:

I wasn't sure about the madlib activity, but both times I taught this lesson, students loved it. I think students had a hard time knowing where to start with their personal statements, and the structure of the madlib gave them a concrete starting point.