

11A 5.3 The Personal Statement

PHASE OVERVIEW

This phase acts as a jump start for students on the post-secondary application process. Pairs will (1) finalize their preliminary post-secondary list (2) learn the importance and steps to acquire letters of recommendation and (3) learn the importance and basics of applying for financial aid. They will plan summer tasks to complete in order to stay on track with the post-secondary application process and draft a pair summer communication plan.



LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students will understand the importance of a personal statement and brainstorm possible topics to write about.

PURPOSE

In this lesson, students will learn how their personal statement can help admissions counselors see them as more than just their grades and test scores. Students will also learn about the importance and power of using strong narratives in their essay..

AGENDA

10 min	<i>Do Now: The Personal Statement Sample</i>
20 min	<i>Learn and Engage: Writing a Personal Statement</i>
10 min	<i>Mentor Connection</i>



KEY TAKEAWAY

Sharing a personal statement with colleges and programs can illustrate my best qualities and help admissions officers understand why I am a great candidate.

PM Notes:

Possible modifications based on whether or not students have already written a personal statement: You may have students or a portion of students in each class who have started a personal statement for English class. You should know this before implementing this lesson.

If some students have completed an essay, you can teach the whole class the lesson. Then, those who have completed the essay can reflect on how they might revise their essay based on what they have learned.

MATERIALS: [11A 5.3 Presentation](#), [Personal Statement Guide](#), [Personal Statement Sample](#)

Do Now: The Personal Statement Sample		PM Notes:
Students will read over a strong example of a personal statement and reflect on its structure.		
Slide 2: 10 min	<p>TALKING POINTS</p> <p>Today, we will be reviewing the importance of the personal statement. Read the personal statement example on your handout. You have 10 minutes to read it over.</p> <p><u>Keep these questions in mind:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How is the story organized? 2) How does the author SHOW who they are as a person? 3) What does this make you think about WHO the author is as a person? 	

Learn and Engage: Writing a Personal Statement		PM Notes:
Students will review the components that go into writing a personal statement.		
Slide 3: 1 min	<i>Have a student read the key takeaway.</i>	
Slide 4: 12 min	<p>STUDENT DISCUSSION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How is the story organized 2) How does the author SHOW who they are as a person? 3) What does this make you think about WHO the author is as a person? <p>TALKING POINTS</p> <p>As we can see, the story is broken up into different sections. The hook, the main story, and the conclusion.</p> <p>The hook serves to grab the readers' attention, so they want to read on.</p> <p>Then we go into the main story, in which the author includes all of the important details that the reader should know.</p> <p>The conclusion, at the end, ties everything together and shows that the writer has reflected on the experience and grown/ come to a new understanding.</p>	

	<p>The author chooses to write about one of their personal traits: persistence. They don't simply tell the readers that they are persistent, they demonstrate this through a story that highlights their ability to work through a difficult situation.</p> <p>What the author is able to convey through this story is that they will not allow any obstacles to stand in their way. This is definitely something that colleges/post-secondary programs would want to know about an individual applying to their program.</p>	
<p>Slide 5: 1 min</p>	<p>TALKING POINTS As we can see through this sample essay, your goal in your personal statement is to tell a meaningful story about yourself that makes the reader want to have you in their program.</p>	
<p>Slide 6-7: 2 min</p>	<p>TALKING POINTS You can really write about anything you want to, the point is to make sure that you share who you are in an impactful manner.</p> <p>There are some suggested topics; let's review them.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story. 2. The lessons we take from <i>obstacles we encounter</i> can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a <i>challenge, setback, or failure</i>. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience? 3. Reflect on a time when you <i>questioned</i> or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your <i>thinking</i>? What <i>was the outcome</i>? 4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution. 5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or <i>realization</i> that <i>sparked a period of personal growth</i> and a new understanding of yourself or others. 	

	<p>6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?</p> <p>7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice.</p>	
<p>Slide 8: 2 min</p>	<p>TALKING POINTS</p> <p>Here are some important tips to keep in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Write about yourself. Your audience wants to hear a story. ● Avoid focusing too much of the story on someone else or simply restating your resumé or application. ● Take time to brainstorm about what is important to you. ● Get lots of feedback from at least <u>three</u> different people. ● You only have 650 words! 	
<p>Slide 9: 2 min</p>	<p>TALKING POINTS</p> <p>There's a Personal Statement Guide on the Platform that you can use to help brainstorm your essay and write it in a structured manner. While we won't be working on the personal statement in class, you certainly have the option to meet with your mentor and work on it.</p>	
<p>Slide 10: Mentor Connection</p>	<p>TALKING POINTS</p> <p>Now let's write to our mentors.</p>	
<p>Slide 11: Extend</p>	<p><i>If you have additional time remaining, consider asking students what new information they have learned from their mentor's message.</i></p>	



Mentor Connection

MENTEE PROMPT

1. Respond to your mentor's message and share one high point and one low point for this week.

My high point is...

My low point is...

2. How are you feeling about writing/editing your personal statement? Ask your mentor what they wrote their personal statement about.

I have started/have yet to start my personal statement.

What did you write your personal statement about?



Mentee Connection

Overview:

The personal essay is an important part of your mentee's post-secondary program applications. It is their chance to provide the admission counselors insight into who they are and to tell their unique story. Today, your mentee learned the elements that go into writing a strong personal statement.

Your mentee may be working on drafting their personal statement in their English class or they may have yet to even start brainstorming. Regardless of where your mentee is at in the process, you should offer to support them through the task. This shows them that you are committed to their success. You can use the [Personal Statement Guide](#) as a supporting resource.

Your mentee will have until next September to finish writing their personal statement. They may put off the task because of this. Remind your mentee that the more time they spend working on the essay now, the less stressed they will be when application season arrives.

Your Response

1. Share your high point and low point for the week.
2. Share your own personal statement topic, if you can recall it. If not, share any tips or strategies you have for writing a personal statement.