**This I Believe: Writing Guidelines**

Writing your own statement of personal belief can be a powerful tool for self-reflection. It can also be a wonderful thing to share with family and friends. Here are the specifics:

**Tell a story about you**: Be specific. Take your belief and ground it in the events that have shaped your core values. Consider moments when belief was formed, tested, or changed. Think of your own experience and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be *real*. Make sure your story ties to the shaping of your beliefs.

**Be brief**: Your script should be between 300 and 500 words. That’s about 2-3 minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.

**Name your belief**: If you can’t name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list, consider focusing on one core belief.

**Be positive**: Write about what you do believe, not what you don’t believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.

**Be personal**: Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. Avoid speaking in the editorial “we.” Tell a story from your own life; this is not an opinion piece about social ideals. Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

**Brainstorm a list of beliefs that you have:**

**Circle one that you want to write about. =)**

**This I Believe: Topic Approval**

**What is your belief?**

**How did you come to this belief? What events in your life led to this belief? Be specific and use details.**

1.
2.
3.

**How do you plan to begin your essay? What is your hook? How will you get your audience interested?**

**Give at least one example from your life that makes it obvious that you believe this or shows that this belief has made a positive impact on your life.**

**Why should the audience care about your essay? What can readers learn from your belief?**

**Teacher’s Stamp of Approval:**