

Keys to Success for New Teachers

Be Reasonable



☒ You probably went into education because you care about kids and you want to make a difference in their lives. However, be reasonable. ***You will not save them all.*** Your first year you'll be doing good if you can just stay positive and have lessons ready every hour of every day. You will not be able to make every student leave your class feeling like that was the most worthwhile class they will have all day.

☒ Don't expect lots of positive feedback from students. ***Students complain*** no matter what effort you put into your lessons. Just be sure to have an educational objective/reason to back up everything you do in class. And don't expect students to jump for joy at your efforts to make class more interesting. However, during your second year, students will come back and compliment you, but not usually at the time you have them in class.

☒ ***Teach what you are comfortable teaching.*** This advice was given to me by a faculty member. It was nice knowing that this was acceptable. In high school you are handed a curriculum and set free to run your class. I liked having the freedom to teach what I knew. New teachers have enough to learn -- about school administrative routines, which forms to fill out, and so on -- without having to learn a new content.

☒ You have many great ideas for your classroom that you'd like to be able to do. ***But you can't do it all your first year.*** Or any year for that matter. There are always better ways of doing what you're doing. Don't let that frustrate you.

☒ Teaching is an art, not a science. It will take time for you to find a comfortable teaching style, and it will change a little every year. Methods that work for some will not work for

others. There is no “right” way to teach. You must *find the way that works for you*.

Organize Your Life

✘ Although this sounds harsh, *don't expect to have much of a life* outside of student teaching or your first year of teaching. Beginning teachers need almost every waking moment to be prepared for the classroom. Say good-bye to television for a while, say good-bye to late-night chats with friends. You need to prepare and you need sleep. That is all you have time for!

✘ Do as much ahead of time as you can to get ready for school. *Find a lesson plan format* you can use. Find a method of keeping grades that will help you keep your sanity. (I have to turn in grades for athletic and other extra-curricular eligibility every single week.) That is what computers are for!

✘ After you complete a unit, take a few minutes to jot down some impressions about how the unit worked. *List changes* that you should make before teaching it again. This will save you the heartache of making the same mistakes twice, and it makes the second year easier to look forward to.

✘ *It is OK if you are only a day or two ahead in your lessons.* Many veteran teachers will be at least a week ahead, and will have good ideas of what they will be teaching next month. Don't worry, I've never met a new teacher who was able to do this. Have assurance that you

are not alone in the desperate grasp for ideas for a unit you start in two days.

Reflect

✘ Although the first years of teaching seem to consume you, you do need to stop to reflect on how you are doing. *Make short notes* about how policies work, how units went, and think about how you treat your students. After all, we are there for the students, and there is more than content to teaching. However, this is difficult to see the first years.

✘ *Take compliments seriously and criticism lightly.* I feel like I make more mistakes than I do good. But we can't let this get us down. Mistakes are how we learn.

Take the compliments you get and put them in a “warm fuzzy” file to pull out on a rainy day.

☒ ***Share, share and share!*** You must have someone to confide in. A spouse or significant other is fine, but it really ought to be someone in the teaching field -- a mentor teacher, or even a new or student teacher. Many times just talking about frustrations and joys gives you insight about the situation that you hadn't seen before.

☒ ***Share materials.*** Most teachers take it as a compliment that you want to copy their units. It is much easier having something to work from, something to build on, upon which you can make changes that will fit your teaching style.

☒ ***Write out your philosophy*** and have it handy. On days you wonder why you went into the profession of education, pull it out and remember your reasons for becoming a teacher.

☒ ***Have ways of encouraging yourself.*** Maybe it is a favorite poem, story or audio/video tape. Mine is a audio tape of Guy Doud that came from a Dr. Dobson's Focus on the Family radio show. Guy Doud was Teacher of the Year, 1986-1987. He entertains, encourages and reminds me that I am in the right profession.

☒ ***Take time for non-education reflection.*** You need to remain sane for your sake and for your student's sake. It will be difficult to do this many times, but I found that when I was stressed the most, I wasn't giving myself time to be “off-duty.” Enjoy music, quiet time in prayer and/or moments just to be thankful for what you have.

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