

More Tips for New Teachers

Beginning teachers need to do well if they want to get a permanent position. You don't learn how to be a teacher in college. In college you learn all about what you'll have to do as a teacher, and how to do it, and you'll get a little practice. But you really learn to be a teacher after you get your first job and are teaching every day. In fact, the first two years of teaching are like an apprenticeship, where you learn by doing and by getting help from others. You may have to teach successfully for two years before you are offered a permanent contract as a teacher.

Classroom Management

A lot of thought and planning needs to go into this before you ever set foot in a classroom. You may have an entire college course dedicated to just this skill.

Discipline problems are not often caused by bad kids, but by kids who have no guidelines for acceptable behaviour, or who have nothing to do. Routines and procedures need to be set from the first day and practiced, so that students know what is expected of them. Your classes will run smoothly.

Tell your students how you want them to do things. Model it for them. Let them practice it. Have clearly defined consequences, developed by the class, for when some students don't follow the rules. *A good resource for helping with this is the book 'The First Days of School' by Harry and Rosemary Wong.*

Teachers need to quickly master the skill of being aware of what all students in the room are doing while you are teaching or helping a small group, and have procedures in place for dealing with students who are off-task. This is a very difficult skill to master, especially when you are already concentrating on your lesson and all the questions you have to ask ... it takes lots of practice and guidance.

Proximity

You shouldn't teach from the front of the room. Instead, move around. Get close to students as you're talking. After you've learned who has trouble staying on task, spend more time next to *them*.

Elementary teachers know this. Because they don't do a lot of blackboard instruction, or give a lot of notes. They also know instinctively that teaching 'up close' works best. They will often have students sit in a circle, and will sit with them to teach. They may take students in small groups to a corner of the room to teach a lesson. When students have to do work at their desks, they will spend most of the time moving from student to student, monitoring and helping.

Plan Effective Lessons

This is very important for beginning teacher. It's also something you probably learned to do thoroughly in your education courses at college, in all subjects.

A written plan for a lesson has many parts to it. It should begin with an activity that gets the students interested. You should clearly explain what the lesson will be about, and how it relates to what they've already learned. If a new skill is involved, they will need built-in time to practice it. It should end with a summary of what they've learned.

But for new teachers, there is so much more that needs to go into your plan. You need to write out the questions you will ask, and even who you will ask them to. You will need to write reminders to yourself, such as 'remember to wait for an answer', 'remember to give positive feedback', or 'make eye contact'. You will want to plan out carefully any activities so that your instructions will be clear.

Be Organized and Prepared

An experienced teacher can walk into a class and teach a good lesson without preparation, if they have to. But they won't.

You will need to plan your lessons well in advance. Find all the resources and materials you will need, and have them out and ready. Students need a structured, ordered welcoming environment. In the classroom, have everything stored or filed where you can easily find it. Have set places for

materials that students will use, and make sure they know where they are and what to do.

If procedures are established, everything is in its place, materials are ready, and you have a thorough lesson plan, your classes will go smoothly. When teachers are organized and prepared, there is little or no time for students to go 'off task' and cause problems.

Have a plan for the bright students who manage to finish their work early. Their lack of something to do may lead them to misbehave, or make other students who aren't yet done, lose focus.

Know the Curriculum

The curriculum and learning objectives are set out by the Alberta government, and are available on-line for all grades and subjects. You will need to know the curriculum for the subjects and grades you teach inside out and backwards. It's also a good idea to be familiar with what's being learned in grades below and above yours.

This is a lot of work, especially for elementary teachers who teach all the subjects. Don't wait ... start now! It's especially helpful for new teachers to know where what you're teaching 'fits in'.

A common PD activity for all teachers is to make their own timeline of curricular objectives for each topic, and then to join them together. This way, all involved teachers can see at a glance where individual skills are learned ... for example, in grades 9 through 12 Language Arts.

Below is an image from a Classroom Climate checklist you can use to make sure you're doing many of the things mentioned above, correctly. Beginning teachers can also use parts of it to see what sorts of things they'll be evaluated on. Your principal will give you something similar if you ask.

Variables	In place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
Classroom Expectations			
There are 3-5 positively stated classroom expectations visibly displayed in the classroom			
The teacher periodically reviews and reminds students of the expectations			
The teacher anticipates errors and pre-corrects by stating the expected student performance for the situation			
Students are acknowledged for following expectations			
Instructional Practices			
Students are actively engaged during the majority of instruction			
Instructional pacing is well timed (i.e., not too fast, not too slow)			
Instructional approaches and techniques are differentiated and varied during lessons			
The teacher uses practices that achieve a high rate of accurate student responding			
Student attention is secured and maintained during activities			
The teacher checks for understanding across students and provides frequent and immediate feedback			