

## Teacher Suggestions

1. Smile. Be happy. Enjoy your work. You have one of the most rewarding, challenging, and important jobs in the world. Remember, happiness is 99% attitude. Enjoy what you do. If there are some days you think you have it bad as a teacher because students are sometimes not paying attention, think of the plight of flight attendants and how nobody is paying attention to them on any day.
2. Video tape yourself teaching a few classes. View tapes objectively to identify strengths and weaknesses. Ask another teacher to provide constructive criticism. Consider using the Teacher Observation Survey.
3. Be directive in your teaching. Use the Components of an Effective Lesson and the *teacher expectancies*.
  - A. Begin class immediately. One approach is to begin class with a 2 to 5 minute review of recently taught material. Another technique is to begin class with a short, timed quiz displayed on the overhead as students walk in the room. These approaches help to discourage tardies.
  - B. Be sure to answer questions from the previous night's homework. Students need immediate verification they are understanding and following correct procedures.
  - C. Review facts and procedures that students need as background in order to be successful with the concept being taught that day.
  - D. To prevent confusion with variation of similar problems, stress the need to recognize appropriate strategies. For example,  $2x + 3 = 9$  and  $7 = 5 - 2n$  are problems which require a slight variation of the same strategy.
  - E. When introducing a new concept, use simple straightforward examples that clarify what you are teaching that don't bog students down in arithmetic.
  - F. Introduce topics by linking the new concept to previously learned material or outside experiences. Linking allows teachers to introduce new material in familiar language, to review and reinforce concepts and skills, to compare and contrast, as well as to teach the concept in a different context.
  - G. Emphasize vocabulary and notation. There is no more single important factor that impacts student understanding than the acquisition of vocabulary and notation.
  - H. Use oral recitation to embed new information into short term memory and learn how to communicate mathematically.
  - I. When stressing a point, take extra steps to ensure students are paying attention ("eyes and ears"). Once you have everyone's attention, use voice inflection to provide further emphasis.
  - J. Anticipate where students will experience difficulty. Help students avoid frustration by drawing their attention to common mistakes, i.e.,

- when teaching students to simplify an expression such as  $3 + 36 \div 4 \times 3$ , be sure to warn them about dividing first. Answer is 30.
- K. During note taking, make sure students have more than just problems copied off the board. Student notes should contain vocabulary and notation, conceptual and pattern development (pictures), procedures, explanations, as well as practice problems.
  - L. Display an accepting manner that encourages students to ask questions.
  - M. Have the students write about what they are learning.
  - N. Assign homework that reflects your beliefs in what students should know, recognize and be able to do – don't just assign problem sets. Make sure homework assignments are of proper length and students leave the classroom knowing what is expected of them and how to complete the homework. Reading should be part of the homework.
  - O. Encourage students to allow themselves sufficient "thought time" before asking for assistance. If they still have questions, students should be reminded to refer to their notes. They may also refer to other sources.
  - P. When a number of students have the same question, review possible strategies at the board so everyone has the benefit of your explanation. Remember, overhead projectors do not allow students to see patterns develop.
  - Q. Close instruction by restating the day's objective and emphasize the important information students will need to know to understand and complete their homework assignment.
  - R. Use the last few minutes of the class period for long term reviews, address student deficiencies, or prepare for high stakes tests.
4. Spend sufficient time in class preparation. Most district course syllabi mandate the material to be covered in each course/grade. Use the textbook as a guide, the individual teacher, preferably working with other teachers teaching the same course, determine the sequence to be followed. In preparation, create a unit outline for use during instruction (BAM). Use the format of your notes to guide students in their note-taking, stressing definitions, concept development, pattern development, theorems, procedures, and examples. Anticipate difficulties students that students might experience. Address common errors in your examples so students don't make them. Assign homework according to the arrangements of your notes as opposed to relying completely on the order of the book.
  5. Call parents in the beginning of the year to introduce yourself, to explain what you will be doing, discuss student expectations (notes, homework, etc), and tell the parents what a nice young man or lady they have. This should be a very positive call!
  6. Develop a positive working relationship with parents. Place a letter on the board each week and make an effort to call as many parents of students whose last name begins with that letter. Discuss their child's behavior, attendance, class participation, homework and finally their grade. If a problem exists in

these areas, involve the parent in finding possible solutions. Talk about solving the problem. Early intervention in the form of a phone call home may keep problems from escalating. If a student is displaying inappropriate behavior, ask the parent out of sincere consideration if there are family problems (death, divorce, etc.) that might bring about this behavior. Ask parents to talk to their child about the situation.

7. Do not get caught up in too much paperwork. Keep quizzes to ten questions or less. Also do not feel it is necessary to collect and grade every homework assignment. Visually check to see who has completed the assignment by walking around the room. Remember to address recurring difficulties so all students' benefit.
8. Be aware of your demeanor. A teacher's knowledge, enthusiasm, energy, and interest of the subject they teach will be very often translated to their students. Read the faces of the students in your classroom. Put yourself in their place. Remember to use positive reinforcement. Many students will work out of loyalty to a teacher they like and respect.
9. Use the entire instructional period – from bell to bell.
10. Talk to your students positively, rather than saying, "If you don't do your homework, you will fail." Say, "If you do your homework, that will clarify your understanding of ...." Be specific in your comments, don't just say "good work", say, "I liked your thinking in setting up and labeling the ...."
11. Don't blame school rules or policies when addressing a discipline issue. Rather, indicate that you don't like the behavior and it is unacceptable and disrespectful to you.
12. Have all tests, regardless of grade, signed by a parent or guardian and kept in the student notebook.
13. To address student deficiencies, use two strategies, linkage to introduce new material and the second review period to go over deficiencies that won't naturally come up in the regular class.