



Informing & Inspiring New Teachers

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7 TIPS FOR SURVIVING YOUR FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE

By Vincent Laverick

Congratulations! You survived a COVID-19 student teaching experience that may have been cut short or completely altered. Also, you have landed your first teaching position in the fall, and you are eager to get prepared after having an interview conducted through videoconferencing and a digital introduction to the school.

The first year of teaching is a steep learning curve for all teachers, but this year it will likely cause a few more sleepless nights, because no one knows exactly what the school year will look like or how it will be delivered (face-to-face, hybrid, or digital).

Here are a few ideas to help you begin to prepare for any teaching experience ahead.

1. Create a digital introduction of yourself.

There is nothing more fun than welcoming your students to your classroom. Developing a digital introduction will allow you to send it to students and caregivers prior to the first day, regardless of the delivery method of instruction at your school. Consider a program like Scratch to develop an engaging introduction.

2. Develop “how-to” videos of your planned technologies.

Not all caregivers and students are tech savvy, so a how-to video or a link to a video of the technologies you will be using in the school year is helpful. This will help you in face-to-face scenarios when students may need to access something at home or have forgotten how to use a program. In addition, in a possible digital school setting, caregivers and at-home educational support will be able to guide students to correctly utilize the technology to enhance learning. If you can't make or borrow a simple video, it may not be the best choice to use in your first year of teaching.

3. Keep instructions and communications simple.

Much like this article, you can communicate important items in just a few words. When communicating instructions in writing, use bulleted lists instead of long-winded paragraphs. No one needs to know you were an English minor and have the ability to write a four-page, perfectly punctuated email to explain the activities of the day. Break the text into



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two- to three-sentence sections to help the audience read the material efficiently. Use clear rubrics that students and caregivers can understand and self-assess prior to submitting completed assignments without you providing additional instructions.

4. **Create student-centered assignments and projects.**

Because students may be feeling a loss of personal connections with outsiders due to long periods of social distancing, assignments and projects developed by teachers and students in collaboration creates an opportunity for you to get to know your students while also allowing students to demonstrate a depth of knowledge well beyond what you may have in mind. Also, by allowing students to be a part of the learning process, they will be more likely to develop a passion for the topic.

5. **Be creative!**

COVID-19 has created a teaching environment where some of the previous practices used in a school classroom—either face-to-face, hybrid, or digital—simply will not work. Look to these challenges as opportunities to find better methods to be an effective educator. Tasks like having a student pass out physical papers may not be possible due to social distancing. Each setting will allow for different solutions and possibly make you develop a new approach to use once social distancing requirements relax.

6. **Use all your available resources for support.**

Asking a veteran colleague for help on how to teach a specific item or for an idea to teach a challenging math section is good practice. Asking for help or ideas is a technique that veteran teachers use on a regular basis. Being vulnerable and asking for help will likely endear you to your fellow teachers, and they will soon be coming to you for ideas that worked well. Again, no one has taught in the situation we are moving toward this fall, and all will be teaching, assessing, and communicating in different methods than they previously used.

7. **Accept that you will make mistakes.**

Mistakes will be made—by you, students, caregivers, and administrators. Use each mistake you make as an opportunity to effectively model how to learn from mistakes and take corrective action. Students who see you are willing to talk about your mistakes and demonstrate a growth mentality will be more willing to take risks and learn from their mistakes in your classroom.

Without a doubt, you have been well prepared to be an effective teacher. The seven ideas above should help you survive the beginning months as you effectively teach and make a difference in the lives of your students. Be positive, smile, and enjoy what likely will be a memorable year for you in the teaching profession! 🍏

Resources

- **Scratch**
scratch.mit.edu
- **Preparing Your School's Apple Devices for Remote Learning**
bit.ly/DevRem
- **35 Useful Remote Learning Resources**
bit.ly/35Remote
- **Best Tools for Virtual and Distance Learning**
bit.ly/BestVirtual
- **Resources for Teaching Remotely**
bit.ly/TeachRem



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