**New Teachers: How to Start Your First Year With Confidence**

**NEW TEACHERS**

# New Teachers: How to Start Your First Year With Confidence

A set of strategies ranging from the simple—like organizing your desk and room every afternoon—to more complex ideas like turning your teaching philosophy into actions.

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Stepping into the classroom of your first teaching job is the most joyful yet sobering point in your teaching career. It’s the moment when you realize that every decision you make, big and small, will have a real impact on the lives of other humans. You’ve spent years learning how to teach, and now it’s time to teach your students how to learn.

Feeling the gravity of this responsibility can be daunting, but focusing on a few simple principles will ease the stress of adjusting to your new role and ensure that you teach confidently from the start.

### TURN YOUR PEDAGOGICAL CREED INTO ACTIONABLE STEPS

You may remember learning about a pedagogical creed in one of your college courses—that seemingly esoteric declaration made by all the great educators throughout history. Simply put, your pedagogical creed is your core belief as an educator. Think of it as your mission statement.

What is your role as the teacher? What do you believe education should accomplish for students? What are important components in a classroom environment?

Before you plan your first lesson or think about how to arrange seating, write your educational mission statement; it will be the guiding force behind everything you do. For each belief you list, consider what it would look and sound like in the classroom, as these will become the steps you take as a teacher in your daily work.

Let’s take a look at one belief from John Dewey—notable philosopher, educator, and creator of the first pedagogical creed: Education is a social process and represents present life.

There are many actionable ways this belief could show itself in the classroom:

* Creating pod seating arrangements of small groups to facilitate discussions.
* Planning frequent opportunities for partner and group work.
* Incorporating project-based learning where students use the curriculum in authentic ways to add value to their school community and world.
* Facilitating Socratic seminars where students express their ideas openly and learn from the viewpoints of their peers.
* Creating frequent opportunities to go out into the world and bring the world into the classroom.

These are just a few examples of ways to honor the social process in the classroom regularly and make connections between what students are learning and its authentic applications in the world. By no means does your creed have to be as exhaustive as Dewey’s, but putting your educational beliefs into writing will guide you in the many decisions you will have to make as a new educator.

Place your teaching mission statement and list of actions somewhere you will see it often. This will ensure that you are living out your values as an educator from the start and incorporating these important values into your daily lesson plans.

### PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR TEACHING

In your early years in the classroom, capitalizing on the knowledge of fellow teachers and setting up systems for all tasks—large and small—will be extremely helpful.

The most valuable way to spend your prep time is in collaborative planning sessions. Seeking connections with colleagues will have a huge impact on your success in those initial years as an educator.

**Plan with your PLC team or science department faculty as much as possible:** Frequent collaboration will spark ideas for strategies to try in your own classroom.

**Seek out teachers who have taught your grade before**(even if they aren’t currently teaching it): Ask if they have any advice or previously created materials you can use for a specific unit or subject.

**Understand the progression of learning for the students you teach:** If you teach third grade, meet with teachers in second and fourth grades to understand the foundation your students should have and the next step in their learning trajectory.

As educators, most of your day involves engaging students, with only small pockets of time set aside for planning and preparation. Being highly efficient with your time can mean the difference between checking important tasks off of your to-do list and regularly taking your work home for stressful late-night planning and grading.

These next tips for keeping yourself on track are straightforward, even easy.

**Take 10 minutes to organize your desk and classroom at the end of the day:** Set up your morning message or objective on the board, and pull the materials you will need for the next day’s activities. This will ensure that your first few minutes of school are spent welcoming your students and not frantically setting up.

**Set up systems for seemingly simple tasks:**For example, having a copy basket on your desk in which to drop materials and designating a specific time for copying materials will mitigate frequent time-wasting treks to the copier.

Developing a protocol for student assessment can seem like an overwhelming task, but creating a simple assessment plan in your daily routine will ensure that you are highly responsive to students’ needs.

**Quickly assess every lesson you teach:** Think about what worked well, what didn’t go as planned, and what could have made it better. Allow yourself the flexibility to make tweaks to future lessons. Additionally, try collecting exit tickets to see how your students perceived a particular lesson.

**Incorporate informal conferences regularly:**Create a one-page document extrapolating the strategies and skills you expect students to master across a unit. On this sheet you can jot down notes when meeting with students. Not only does it cut back on paperwork, but also it ensures that you are focused in your meetings with students and give the most relevant feedback.

**Have students grade their own quizzes:**Not only will this help students strengthen their ability to self-assess their understanding, but also it is efficient and adds more value to your quiz by empowering students. Self-assessment is a skill that students need to be taught, but putting in the practice as well as creating clear, student-friendly rubrics and checklists will be a benefit to both you and your students.