

Sunday, September 30, 2007

Teacher Survival Strategies

Teacher Survival: Advice to New Teachers Here is a summary of teacher survival strategies... Root out Stress: Relax and Trust your Abilities First, get your stress level under control. When under stress, your thinking is less than it should be because the stress somehow causes you to use your least-preferred, least effective (of your Multiple Intelligences) for planning, problem-solving and decision-making.

Sidebar While limiting and decreasing your stress, be sure to do the same favor for your students. It's the System, Darling! Second, when confronted with the "craziness" about you, tell yourself, "I am capable and developing skills as a Master Teacher. I am fine. It is the system that is 'out of whack,'" And, be careful who you share your thoughts with. Exercise analysis and judgment in your decision to ask for help. Be "super, extra careful who you engage as your "mentor." Sidebar Inspect your mentor candidate. Look for results, not "big, brave talk." Avoid the seduction of "classroom control" and "test score reputation" as mentor selection criteria. Some of the absolute worst teachers are "subversive, hate and manipulate students, brainwashing technicians." These colleagues treat their students in the same way that enemy armies treat "prisoners of war." (POWs) Students in these classes seem to "love their teacher," but this is love in a distorted sense of affection and admiration... similar to the twisted feelings that POWs seem to have developed for the captors who were torturing them. Beware any learning that you receive from members of this group. They are poison to your relationship with students, and to your long-term career. Take care of Yourself Third, take care of yourself, and treat yourself well. Treat yourself as kindly as you would your most cherished student. (In fact, you are learning, and you are your most important student.)

You need to remain healthy and strong so you are in the best possible condition to help your students. Planning: Think Ahead, Way Ahead

As for planning, plan for the year. Map our large blocks... for grading periods, then for each week. Use this map to guide yourself past the tendency to be activity driven, i.e., scurrying to find enough to do for your class tomorrow. Sidebar Classroom Toolkit provides loads of tools for planning and classroom project management. Explore the site. There is no cost for any of the resources and materials you find there. You should find enough materials to keep you busy for quite a while. Modular Approach to Materials Handling A strategic, modular approach streamlines daily lesson management. Build a reusable library of generic materials such as Graphic Organizers. That way, you will be ready for learning opportunities that present themselves; and you can avoid the "What am I going to do tomorrow?" rat race. The Graphic Organizers on this site forms a foundation that you can use for a long time. Train your Students for Success Train your students, step by step, with what you want them to do. Show them one step at a time, then add to their repertoire. You will be amazed at how their ability to complete complicated tasks increases over six weeks. Use your Intuition College coursework, professional jargon are fine when discussing issues with colleagues. These benchmark communication skills provide a shorthand method for streamlining professional conversation.

But, for real progress, trust your intuition, your hunches, your "gut feelings." Only, be sure to test your interpretation of every one of these hunches, flashes of insight and bright ideas. Sometimes, your hunch is right, but your analysis is defective. Test everything in small doses and tiny trials before rolling out major initiatives in your classroom. Teachers who test the waters before leaping in gain the admiration of their students, but teachers with "egg on their face" gain little. Trust your Students' Abilities Your students have talents, abilities, and capacities that stretch beyond the narrow confines of our industrial age curriculum.

These abilities spectacular, and we miss them. Our expectations for our students are almost like taking a picture of a sunset with a camera that is loaded with "black and white" film.

Open your eyes to the melodies and music that your students sing, and see your students' talents with your heart. (Excuse the mixed metaphor) Survival Skill Summary Take care of yourself and take care of your students. Do what you have to to help everyone "Live long and prosper."

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