

25 TIPS FOR STARTING THE YEAR OFF RIGHT

Don't worry! You don't have to do them all at once 😊

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Great Public Schools for Every Student

#1 Stay organized > Start off the year by getting your personal papers organized. You never know when you may have to produce a document related to your job. Your certification, past evaluations and professional development records are very important. Set up a good recordkeeping system. Consider keeping it all in an electronic file on a flash drive.

#2 Keep tax records > During the year you may have expenditures that may be used as business deductions on your income tax return. Now is the time to set aside a place for keeping tax records and to start keeping track of them. Keep your receipts and be sure to note on the receipt the exact purchase. Those used books you buy at garage sales add up!

#3 Set goals for yourself > Set your sights on improving your professional ability in at least one area during the coming year. Then decide how best to go about it. CTA has many conferences and leadership programs to help new and experienced teachers improve their craft, such as the Good Teaching Conferences (cta.org/conferences). Ask your local president how you attend.

#4 Develop resources > Develop your own sources of information and your resource list. To help get you started, check out cta.org/ipd, educationworld.com, pinterest.com/ctaIPD, newmanagement.com, and nea.org/toolsandideas. Go to ctago.org to register for CTA conferences. For online filing consider Evernote, Diigo, Google Drive, or another online file storage system to organize lesson plans and materials. Another great resource is CTA's Institute For Teaching (IFT) site, teacherdrivenchange.org.

#5 Build relationships > Be friendly to the school secretary and the custodian. Network with your CTA site rep and colleagues.

#6 Check school policy > If you plan to do anything new or unusual this year, make certain you mention it to your principal in advance. In the classroom, keep your personal views on religion and politics to yourself. Have plans on how to deal with parental concerns about content and curriculum.

#7 Give your room some class > Check out Pinterest for organizing and decorating ideas. Put your personality into the classroom decoration to help building relationships with your students.

#8 Introduce yourself > Create a video or slide show to help students get to know you. Consider a fun true/false quiz based on you. Sometimes a student may find something in common with a teacher and is able to strike up a relationship that could be a positive learning experience.

#9 Establish the rules > Establish class rules, consequences and rewards right at the beginning and let the students have a role in establishing them. If they feel part of them, they will have a tendency to follow the rules. There should be no more than five rules posted where all students can see them. Remember to revisit the rules throughout the year, especially after breaks, as students tend to forget. Consider posting rules as memes. Check out pbisworld.com for rewards.

#10 Be realistic > Don't let your sincere concern for each child turn into a depressing experience through a fear of failure. You will not win every battle with every student. Sometimes it is months or years before our positive influence is felt.

#11 Do your best > Determine what factors may keep you from doing your job during the school year. If you're not sure how to deal with a wide range of abilities, seek out the school psych, resource specialist or special ed teacher. If you're having difficulty with disruptive students, ask a seasoned teacher for help.

#12 Get to know your site rep >

For example, our negotiated contract dictates how many students should be in k-6 classrooms, as well correct procedures if job assignments must be reconfigured due to enrollment. Ask your site representative for help!

#13 Look for some hope >

Get in the proper positive frame of mind by watching for something hopeful. It may be those students who give you an indication they learned something new. Check online forums on Twitter, for example, #edchat, #caedchat, or contact CTA's instructional staff (@ctaipd).

#14 Find a shoulder to lean on >

Every teacher needs a colleague to turn to for special advice or simply to unburden yourself about a special classroom challenge. If you don't have a "buddy," find one, or reach out and be a buddy to someone else. Ask your local chapter representative if there is a buddy system. It's ok to be assigned a buddy, regardless how long you've been teaching.

#15 Know your rights >

Read or reread your contract so that you know your rights. Study district policies to know other rights. When you have questions, ask your CTA site representative.

#16 Be ready for special needs>

You may have students with special learning problems or physical challenges. Plan from the beginning how you will deal with them in the best interests of the student, yourself and the rest of the class. Check with the special education teacher(s) if any of your students have IEPs, and if so, make sure you get a copy ASAP so you can review accommodations and instructional needs.

#17 Foster curiosity >

Keep in mind that if you want your students to be curious, you have to set an atmosphere that encourages curiosity and doesn't stifle it.

#18 Build an attitude > A smile goes a long way during the first few weeks of school. You have the opportunity to help your students determine whether school is drudgery or a serious undertaking that can have its fun moments. If you give the impression that being in class is positive, that attitude will be reflected by your students.

#19 Recognize everyone's gifts >

As you get to know your students, find something special about each one. Make a commitment to recognize and foster those talents throughout the year.

#20 Communicate early & often >

Determine how you will involve parents and guardians in your students' education during the coming year. Consider having a website so parents can easily contact you and ask questions. Elementary teachers may have a class blog to update parents that includes pictures and videos of student work. Consider a classroom notification system, such as www.classdojo.com or www.remind.com. Verify a working email address with parents; don't depend upon school records. Send home a class letter and consider a monthly email newsletter. CTA has resources to help.

#21 Share yourself carefully >

Do NOT give parents or students your cell phone number – communicate with students via email or a learning management system such as www.edmodo.com or www.schoology.com. In your initial contact to parents, you might want to introduce yourself and tell the parents a little about you, your background and family. Let parents know when you are available and the process and times for getting in touch with you. Include your policy on homework.

#22 Preview health needs > Make an early determination about how you will handle students with special health problems. Consult with your school nurse for suggestions. Some students might have a health plan, which your school nurse will contact you about. If asked to perform health related tasks, consult your site representative immediately.

#23 Support ETA >

Join your local CTA chapter for the moral support of people who understand the difficulty of your job and the valuable resources the association can provide. CTA and NEA offer a wide variety of instructional resources, websites, conferences and staff support.

#24 Set a positive tone >

Send a positive note home with every student at some time during each grading period. Catch the kids being good!

And finally...

Keep these three qualities of good teaching in mind:

Be flexible,

Be patient

&

Have a sense of humor

