

Our 30 Best Tips for Student Teachers



- **Take Pictures of Everything**—not just in your room but around the school. Get pictures of bulletin boards, how classrooms are set up, classroom libraries and special projects you see around the school. You'll be happy to have these when it's time to set your own classroom.
- **Ask for Constructive Criticism:** Don't let advice and criticism hurt your feelings, use it as a tool to grow professionally. The best teachers are always trying to learn and improve.
- **Be Genuine:** Show your students kindness and respect and you will get more out of them. Treat your class like a family.
- **Collaborate:** It is very important to network with all teachers, staff members, and administrators within the school community. The teachers who go the extra mile to collaborate are the ones remembered down the road when teaching positions become available.
- **Be Dedicated:** Always show a passion for what you do. Get involved with activities inside and outside of school whenever possible. Schools appreciate the efforts of someone who always is willing to go above and beyond.
- **Be Early, Not on Time:** Punctuality is extremely important as teacher. When you're early, you're on time; when you're on time, you're late. Show your mentor teacher your level of commitment to the job. Arrive early to get organized and greet the students as they enter.
- **Smile:** A lot. At everyone. Others will react to you in a more positive way if you appear friendly and approachable. Smile at your students, other teachers, parents, office staff, and the principal.
- **Be Prepared:** Always be prepared for the next day when you leave the night before. You never know what may happen or come up that keeps you from making copies or finalizing plans in the morning.
- **Ask Questions:** Don't be afraid to ask questions. Write down questions you may have as they come up so you don't forget to ask your mentor teacher. We want to help you!
- **Respect Confidentiality:** Don't use student names in public conversations or in emails. When you need to discuss a student, seek out the person you need to talk with and have a private face to face conversation.
- **Create a Regular or Digital Binder:** Store all of the hand-outs, projects, and ideas offered by your cooperating teacher and the school staff.

- **Show Initiative:** If you see something that needs to be done, do it! Don't wait to be asked. Help students immediately, this shows you are ready and willing to be a teacher. Kids don't always raise their hands. Look for children who need help.
- **Get to Know Your Parents:** Parents don't want to hear from you only when there is a problem. Call when good things happen to. Introduce yourself to all the parents by the end of the first week with a phone call or email. Attend conferences and evening school functions that parents attend. Getting to know parents makes making that phone call about naughty behavior much easier should the time come.
- **Be Proactive:** If you have an idea for a lesson and want to try something, let your mentor teacher know! We love when you want to try something new. We want to learn too!
- **Treat Every Day Like a Job Interview:** You are on and being informally evaluated from the second you walk through the door. As the time draws near for real interviews, meet with your principal and others for mock interviews.
- **Be Prepared to Make Mistakes:** You're learning and mistakes will happen. You can burst into tears or take it in stride but take note of what went wrong, why it went wrong, and how you might improve things for the next time.
- **Offer Choices and be Flexible:** Understand that students have different learning styles and they all learn at different speeds. Get to know your students and how they learn. Meet them at their level to move them forward.
- **Be a Professional:** Act like a professional. Never gossip about students or other teachers. You never know whose friend or relative you may be sitting by at the lounge table. What happens in the classroom, stays in the classroom!
- **Dress Like a Professional:** Be the best dressed one there! Low cut tops and short skirts aren't for teaching. A good rule of thumb is, if your undergarments risk even the slightest chance of making an appearance, change your clothes. Treat Fridays like any other day—just because the teachers wear jeans does not mean you have to
- **Build Relationships Through Collaboration:** Remember you are part of a system. Get to know everyone in your school and build relationships with them. Work hard and be the person every teacher wants to recommend for the next open position in their building.
- **Become One With the Students:** Some of the best teachers are the ones that you can't find when you walk in their door. They are actively engaged with students, down at their level and they blend right into the "crowd."
- **Integrate the Arts:** Students have many skills and talents. Integrating the arts is one way to reach all students while fostering a love and appreciation for the performing and visual arts.

- **Take Notes and Reflect:** Take notes on your lessons and write down what went right and what didn't. Always think about what you would change and do differently next time. Also note what worked and went really well so you can build off that the next time.
- **Use the School Library:** Build a relationship with your school's media specialist. She can not only help you get the resources you need for a unit or lesson, she can often help you know the best resources to use.
- **Watch Your Students Interact Outside of the Classroom:** Don't just drop your students off at the door for gym or recess. Stay every now and then to watch how they interact with each other. You can learn a lot about your students by the way they play a game or react to a win or loss.
- **Befriend the Office Staff:** Their opinions of you may have an impact on whether or not you are hired. We can also make your time during student teaching much easier to handle. Remember, however, we are the school secretaries, *not* your personal secretary.
- **Get to Know the Custodian:** When you have a mess that needs cleaning up, you want to be on the custodian's good side.
- **Make a Folder of Pick-Me-Ups:** Keep those special notes that come from parents or students in a file or folder. When you are having a bad day, read through a few of them to remind you that you do make a difference!
- **Enjoy the Experience:** Enjoy your students; they will make you smile every day. Enjoy your colleagues; they are wonderful role models. Enjoy the experience; it is something you'll remember your entire teaching career.
- **Take Care of Yourself:** Make sure that you are getting enough rest, eating well, and exercising. Wash your hands more often because you will be coming into contact with more people (and germs!) than you are used to. Once you have been teaching awhile, your immunities seem to build up. Before then, don't let the stress of student teaching wear you down!