

Teachable Moments:

9 Steps to Starting the School Year Right

Whether it's your first year teaching or you have been doing it for years, here are the top nine ways you can get started on the right foot!



A new school year has begun and K-12 educators are entering this school year with mixed feelings. Some teachers are happy to put the last school year behind and eagerly look forward to a new year with new students. Others are wondering whether they have made the right decision to continue on in the teaching profession. Whatever mindset you are in, Here are nine items to consider seriously at the beginning of this new school year:

1) Allow yourself to have a new beginning.

Try the best to put the past behind you. Whatever bad experiences you have had or failures you have experienced should not define your present or your future. Some of the most successful and productive people have learned that the best way to live life is to live it in "water tight" compartments. When a large boat starts to take in water after having been torpedoed, there are mechanisms down in the hull of the boat that close off all the compartments taking in water so that the rest of the boat does not take in water. Productive people know how to close off the past, forget about the future, and focus on today's tasks. Tell yourself that each new day is a "new beginning" with new opportunities and then give full focus to those new opportunities at hand. Set a goal to complete only 3 to 4 tasks. Having too many goals in one day will deplete your energy and exhaust your resources.

2) Help your students bring a new attitude to the classroom and have a new start.

Tell every student that they get an opportunity to have a clean slate with you. Whatever they did in the past and whatever image they have built up with other educators in the past are worth nothing at this very movement. You may not know them and they may not know you which means each student can have a fresh beginning in their relationship with you. Tell them that no mishap or trial in their past needs to determine their future. A+ students are not born with capabilities that other kids don't have. Rather they are people who put in a little effort each day and have a growth mindset. (See this YouTube video: [Developing a Growth Mindset with Carol Dweck](#))

3) Build a community circle.

Some teachers have a revolutionary practice at the beginning of the day (mainly in elementary) where they gather all their students in a circle and allow them to share thoughts and challenges they are facing in their life. (See this YouTube video: [Advisory and Community Building Circles](#))

4) Establish good rapport with parents.

For elementary students, make it a goal to call all the parents and say something positive about their child. For middle school and high school - look for the influencers in your classes and send a positive note home. You will be surprised how much help you will receive from the parents during this new year.

5) End each week with a gratitude moment.

At the end of each week, on a Friday, go around and give everyone the opportunity to express what they appreciate in another person.

6) Aim for relevance.

No matter what topic you are teaching, try to make the topic relevant to your students. For instance, if you are teaching $E=mc^2$, ask your students where they see this in action. They see this whenever two objects collide - either in a car crash or in two football players hitting one another. If you are teaching history, rather than just having them memorize dates, show them how different dates were the result of tough decisions people had to make. Bring your class into this decision making process and help them see daily scenarios where they need to choose to do the right thing.

7) Determine to have fun.

Some teachers have saved their entire career by learning to make certain problems and tasks in the classroom enjoyable and fun.

8) Limit your reading of the news and minimize your intake of any negative speaking.

The news is full of disappointing and disheartening news. Limit the amount you listen to colleagues who are pessimistic about life and limit the amount of your reading the news which uses sensationalism to target people's emotions and give them a poor view of life.

9) Make it a goal to read one new inspiring book each year.

We would suggest you go to Amazon and read "[Extinguishing Teacher Burnout](#)".

Do these nine things and we believe you will have a great new year!