

TEACHING TIPS

Instruction

Starting Class

Start each class with a question of the day. It could be a review question, a thought-provoking question, or a funny question. The question helps to set the tone for class and get students thinking right away.

Name and chapter not given

Ending Class

Have each child fill out an "Exit card" as a way to leave a group, or for the day. They should think of one thing they learned or how they felt about the class.

Jane Landrum, Lambda

Graphic learning

Remember that children learn in different ways. Our new reading program presents six to eight new words a week related to the reading selection. For many students, these vocabulary words need more than a verbal or written definition to take on meaning. Each week I provide a packet, a page per word, for the students to draw and make a sentence. This is not only good practice, but a good way to evaluate understanding.

Priscilla Ing, Lambda

Participation

Often a few students volunteer to answer every question asked. Other students have good ideas, but they may be reluctant to volunteer. Here's a way to involve all students, give them all time to think, and provide an "out" if needed. (I used this strategy for grades 9-12, but this idea works for all levels.) You'll find other uses for the cards, besides discussions, to involve all students: Who reads the quote of the day? Who takes the class notes today? You may need different "decks" for different purposes.

Put each student's name on a 3x5 card and use the cards during class discussions. Shuffle the deck. Ask a question, give wait time to allow for thinking, and then call on the person whose card is on top. The student may pass or answer. If the student answers, put the card in a separate stack. If the student passes, the card is reinserted at random into the "deck." You may not get all the way through the deck in a given day, so be sure to keep the cards in separate stacks, to ensure that every student gets to answer a question before the stacks are combined and the deck is reshuffled. (Alternate idea: If you think students may be "tuning out" during a discussion, re-insert every card back into the stack, or appear to do so. Then every student prepares to answer.)

Yvonne Fasold, Lambda

Teaching Moments

Take the teaching moments. The children will ask about a word. Even at the K level start talking to them about "combinations" (ae, ar, ic, er, ur, th, wh, etc.) and rules such as "ci, ce, and cy made 'c' say 's'." Do not wait for the curriculum to "teach" it. The kids will pick it up if they are exposed to it. I have great readers and writers in K because I do not hold back in that teaching moment.

Marilyn Moblo, Lambda

Use Prior Knowledge

At the beginning of a new unit or lesson, tap into what students already know (access prior knowledge):

1. Give students 1-2 minutes to think and write independently what they already know. See who can write the most.
2. Then, students get 3-5 minutes to talk with as many classmates as possible and write down their information. See who can talk with the most classmates (they can keep track by tallying).
3. Students can share information with the whole class at the end and come up with questions they want answered during the unit/lesson.

To add to the fun, play classical music during Steps 1 & 3 and upbeat music for Step 2.

Dorothy Syfert, Lambda

Use comics and cartoons

Use newspaper comics or political cartoons for illustrating concepts or words you are teaching. For example, after you have taught "inference," start class every day for a week or two with a cartoon as a warm-up. In their reading journals, students write the inference that must be made to understand the humor or the cartoonist's message. Follow with a short class discussion. Many students have trouble making inferences from reading, so using cartoons first helps students develop confidence and skill.

Yvonne Fasold, Lambda

Sense of humor

My tip is to always have about 5 times more material than you think you'll ever need and throw in something to make them (and yourself) laugh!

Marilyn Williams, Lambda

Behavior

Using points

A good behavior reward tip for middle school age kids is to give points for behavior expectation, such as: Have all materials for the class, be in your seat at the bell, have all homework assignments completed by class time. When you accumulate 40 points (or whatever you have pre-established), they get a class party that they plan, with your direction. They bring the treats, music, or whatever has been approved.

The kids love the points and the party.

Becky Kelley, Gamma

Establishing expectations

Spend the first month to six weeks establishing classroom expectations (rules, if you will) along with rewards for following them and consequences for not! Be consistent and diligent and you will reap the benefits all year long.

Darby Tracy, Lambda

Use proximity

Tired of asking students, especially small clusters of students, to please stop talking? Simply stroll over to where the clique of talkers is and stand close to the main "talker." Students, especially senior high level, will do anything to have you leave - even stop talking. The next time, even a hint of the teacher moving over to the "talking group" will cause them to clam up immediately!

Sheila Sundahl, Lambda

Be consistent and personal

Be consistent in following class or school policies and procedures, even if you don't personally agree with them.

If there is a behavior problem, deal with the student privately, not in front of an entire class.

Chris Luehring, Alpha Sigma

Classroom Environment

Using Names

Self esteem and confidence are built by simply speaking to each child as students arrive and leave. Be sure to use his or her name.

Kathy Howard, Gamma

Value

Make each day count. Be prepared. The student you have today, may not be here tomorrow.

Carol Adams, Lambda

Individual Connections

Start every class with a 5-10 minute warm-up that gets kids thinking and allows you a quiet space to take attendance and get your head around the lesson plan. During this time I meet with kids who have been absent (I put post-its on my seating chart so I remember to check in with them and ensure I give them any handout they missed, schedule quiz make-up times, etc.) I also use this time to pick up homework. I stop at each student's desk and pick up the homework, which gives me a chance to talk with kids who did not complete the homework. Usually the ones who didn't complete the assignment had questions or problems and would not ask them otherwise and just fall further behind. It really helps me connect with each student and give them time to ask questions.

Clair Wiles, Lambda

Learning Names

Learning names quickly is vital. I found repeating the name as I call on each person—and thanking them for their comments again using their name—gives me more repetitions and helps me focus on name and face. Keeping the roll sheet in front of you during class also really helps—seeing names and connecting with faces.

Name and chapter not given

Fairness

I always told my 2nd/3rd graders (although it would be appropriate for any level):

"I will always treat each of you fairly, but NOT always the same."

With our children having so many different needs, this is a wonderful goal.

Sandra Luks, Gamma

Smile

Smile every day at all students, those you know and those you don't; those who are good and those who make inappropriate choices. It may be the only smile they get during the day.

Rae LaMarche, Gamma

Communication

Practice Non-Violent Communication with students and staff.

(See NVC.com or Google "Nonviolent communication")

Terrye Eames, Gamma

Ideas for Grouping

Need: 1 3x5 card for each child and a number of highlighters

1. Write name of each child in center - 1 per card
2. On each corner identify an attribute you'd like to use to sort/place children.

(Table seating, grouping for...)

- gender -social style -math group -reading group
- good friends -your attribute -pet ownership -wearing...
- hobby -children to avoid placing together

"Deal" and sort by whatever attribute or attributes are needed for the task or purpose.

Katie Stocks, Gamma

Bulletin Boards

The Easiest Bulletin Boards:

1. Consist of student work (priceless for building self esteem).
2. Are assembled without rulers!
 - a. use 3 or 5 items
 - b. put center one up first
 - c. eyeball the rest making spaces about equal
3. Do not contain commercial art! (Don't make the kids compete with highly paid commercial artists.)
4. Simple titles in your best printing or handwriting on construction paper or sentence strips.
5. Use construction paper to add color.
6. Use black backgrounds for art work. (White frames dilute the colors.)

Janet Walsh, Gamma

Communicate with students and parents

Sometimes my high school students fall behind and I need to talk to them right away.

(For example, I may correct essays on Saturday and discover that a student did not turn one in.) Sunday night seems to work well for phone calls. When I call, I ask to talk to the student. We discuss the situation, what can be done, and that the student will meet with me Monday morning. (Usually the student comes Monday morning with the homework completed and ready to give me.) If the student is not available, or if the problem happens more than once, I ask to speak to the parent. Wording is important: Tell the parent you are concerned about their child. Be prepared to offer positive solutions and schedule a time for the student to come in for a meeting. (Parent, too, for serious difficulties.) After the homework is completed, or the problem is resolved, be sure to call or e-mail the parent. Be sure to say something positive about the student.

Yvonne Fasold, Lambda

Life-long learner

While training in the Los Angeles City Schools, my supervisor from U.S.C. said to me remember project your voice/bounce your voice off of the back of the wall in the classroom. That year USC awarded me the educational award of the year for student teaching in middle school and high school art classes. Most of the students were African American and they enjoyed music and art. I felt fortunate to be their teacher even though I felt insecure when I started teaching the first day. Teaching is fun and one grows and grows with each additional year you teach.

Mina Dickson, Lambda

Lane County Chapters: Gamma, Lambda and Alpha Sigma - 2008
The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International
To Stimulate Personal and Professional Growth of Key Women Educators