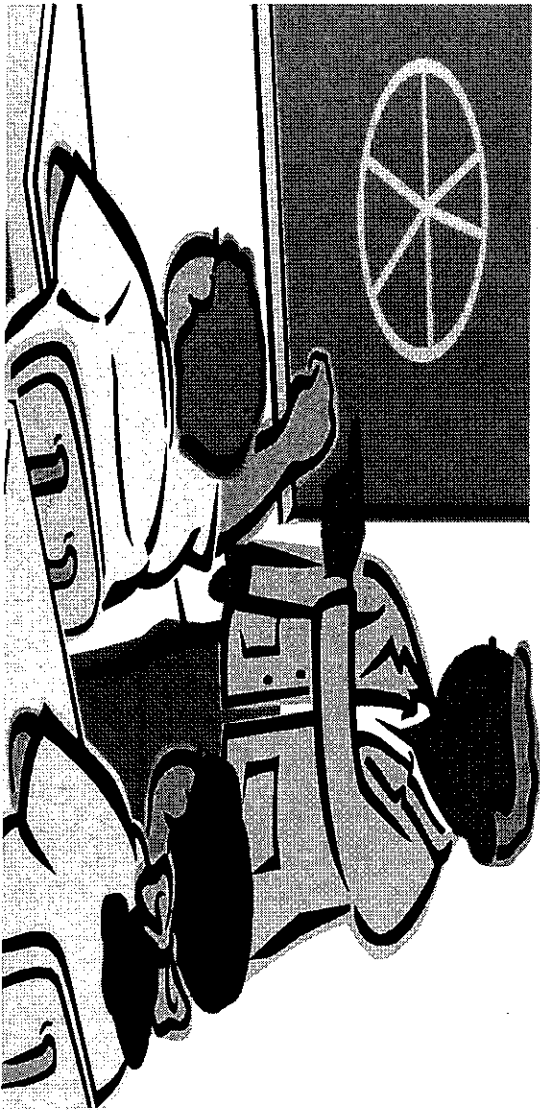


Surviving the First Year: Tips and Tricks for New Teachers



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Things to Consider:

- Communication
- Parental Expectations
- Classroom Management
- Grading
- Lesson Planning
- Assessment
- Use of the target language
- Professional Development

COMMUNICATION

Communication with parents and other staff members is a vital part of a teacher's job. It is important to document your communication with parents and other staff members. Find out if the parents are separated and if they both receive communications.

Documenting Communication

- Keep a communication log of calls/emails/letters to parents
- Keep a separate folder in your email to save emails from parents which you responded to. Delete them at the beginning of the following school year.

Methods of Communication

- Email--Always be careful with email communication since your words and the tone of your email can be misinterpreted by the reader. For sensitive situations, it is always better to call a parent.
- Phone--Keep a written log noting who you spoke to, the date, and what you discussed. When calling home, always make sure that you have permission to speak with the individual you are speaking to. Some parents do not want you sharing information about their child with relatives.
- Group messaging--Some grading programs will allow you to send out emails to groups of parents. If you do not have this capability, services such as as remind 101 allow you to send out mass emails/text messages to parents/students who register for the service using a code you provide. Check out remind 101 at www.remind101.com
- Website/Blog--Most schools provide their teachers with an area for them to create a web page. You can use your web page to host a homework calendar, let parents know a little bit about you, your grading scale, and course description. You can also use the web page to update parents as to what is going on in your class. If your school does not have a space for you to host a web page through its site, you can create your own website for free from Google Sites, Weebly, or use a Wikispaces. You can also create a digital newsletter by using a blog site such as Edublogs, Blogger, or Wordpress. These are also all free sites.

- It is also important to communicate with other staff members in your building. They may be experiencing the same issues with a student.

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS

These will differ from school to school and from parent to parent. Some parents may expect weekly or daily communication from you. These are extreme cases. However, most parents expect you to contact them when you see a change in their grades, in behavior, about behavior incidents, or cheating. In order to build a good rapport, it does not hurt to contact parents about something positive every now and then. They will also expect that you keep your grades up to date. Some parents check grades on a daily or weekly basis. Try to respond to a parent within 24 hours.

If an incident occurs in class, it is a good idea to touch base with a parent. Sometimes the student does not give the same story to their parent as what really happened. In certain cases, it is important that you document student behaviors.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- Set up routines which you practice with the students. Decide and go over how you want students to turn in work (how to collect it), where to turn it in, how you want students to turn in make up work, where and when can they get make up work.
- Attention getting signal--what signal will you use to get students' attention when you transition? Flick lights on/off, use a sound (such as a bell), have students clap, hold up their hands, etc.
- How will you arrange student desks? Be sure they can all see you and you can move freely through the room.
- How will you group students? Pairs, etc. Why are you grouping them that way? Share out? Stronger/weaker? What will you do if there is an uneven number?

Websites:

Behavior Resource--this site provides suggested interventions to common behavioral concerns. <http://wwwcsd.net/groups/behaviorresource/>

Smart Classroom Management--<http://www.smartclassroommanagement.com/>

What to Do When Students Ignore You (article from Smart Classroom Management)
<http://www.smartclassroommanagement.com/2012/02/25/what-to-do-when-students-ignore-your-instructions/>

36 Interesting Ways to Get to Know Your Students by Tom Barret--<https://docs.google.com/presentation/view?id=0AclS3JrFKCIZGhuMnZidiVNIUlwZHZ0aINkZ2s>

ClassDojo--A site which uses avatars to help manage student behavior. It is free. There is also an app for the iPad. <http://www.classdojo.com/>

Ideas for managing a large class size (from Rebecca Alber--Edutopia (www.edutopia.com))

- Use collaborative grouping. Students then get the opportunity to be heard by other students.
- Be aware and accept that activities will take longer than with smaller classes.
- Check for understanding: Use a thumbs up/thumbs down system; have students hold 1 to 3 fingers on their chest to let you know how well they understand; use exit slips.
- Figure out how to get to know your students. I use a survey to find out more about them and "Show What You Know" for students that have previously studied Spanish. Through this form, I can assess and see what they remember from previous studies before we start reviewing. (These documents are included in this packet).
- Sometimes a little extra noise is okay. If students are engaged in learning, there may be a little extra noise. Especially in a world language, we want our students speaking!

ASSESSMENT

Always check with the department to see if they want you to use common assessments.

- What types of formative assessments will you use? Exit slips, homework, class activities, etc.
- What type of summative assessments will you employ? Tests, projects, etc.
- How will you incorporate listening and speaking assessments?

Websites:

Socrative--A web-based student response system which is useful for formative assessments. www.socrative.com

CLEAR--The Center for Language Education and Research provides resources for listening and speaking activities. Teachers can create activities for their students. <http://clear.msu.edu/clear/ria.php>

Lingt Language--Another site which provides resources for designing listening and speaking activities. www.lingtlanguage.com

Google Voice--Students can call a free, local number you choose and leave you a message.

USE OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE

Use of the target language is critical.

- Have signs/bulletin board/or wall devoted to important phrases in the TL which will help students stay in the TL. Such as:
 Can I go to the bathroom?
 Can I get a drink?
 Can I go to my locker?
 Can I go to the office?
 Can I go to the nurse?
 Repeat, please.
 Slower, please.
 I need help.
 I have a question.
 I do not understand.
 How do you say...?
 What does....mean?
 How do you spell...?
- Call on different students. Are you focusing on one side of the room?
- How are you going to keep track of participation? What is your definition of participation?
- Is the use of the L1 acceptable? If so, when?

LESSON PLANNING

- When? How often? For how long? How far out?
- What will you use?
- What skills have you covered? What modes have you addressed?

Planbook Edu--Planbook Edu is an online planbook. The basic plan book is free. For more advanced features, such as uploading documents then the cost is \$25 a year. www.planbookedu.com

SAS Curriculum Pathways-- It is a free service but offers many pre-made lesson plans for Spanish. <http://www.sascurriculumpathways.com/portal/>

GRADING SYSTEM

- You should always check with your colleagues to see if there is a set grading system that the department/school uses. Especially these days, since parents will compare grades from teacher to teacher and will calculate the grades to verify what you have is correct.
- If your department or school does not recommend a system, then you need to decide if you are going to weight grades or use a total point system. If your grades are weighted, it is important to note this somewhere for parents.

- What are grading symbols that you are going to use? For example, I use “.1” as a place holder to let me know a student was absent for an assignment and can make it up for credit. Then when they complete the assignment, I change the grade. I use zeros for assignments that were not completed, receive no credit, or no name papers.
- What will you do about no name papers? Is there a penalty? I deduct 5 points. The students must look for it in the “No name” basket if they think their paper might be in there.
- Does everything need to be graded? No. After a while, the number of papers becomes overwhelming. Some teachers randomly collect students’ papers and grade just those.
- Are you going to grade an assignment for accuracy or completion?

BUILDING A PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORK (PLN)

As a teacher it is important to network with fellow teachers. You may do so by attending conferences, but you can also do so by building an online PLN. Twitter is a great way to connect with teachers around the world. Edmodo also offers many different groups for professional development, besides being a great social learning tool for students.

Twitter:

New Teacher Chat--The hashtag is #ntchat. There is a new teacher chat every week at 7PM CST. <http://newteacherchat.wikispaces.com/>.

Langchat--The hashtag is #langchat. Langchat is for world language teachers. Chats occur every Thursday at 7PM CST.

<http://languageteacherscollaborate.pbworks.com/w/page/34831560/LangChat%20on%20Twitter>

Summaries: <http://blog.calicospanish.com/category/langchat-summaries>

Cybrary Man Student Teacher Resources--<http://cybraryman.com/studentteachers.html>

Cybrary Man New Teacher Resources--<http://cybraryman.com/newteachers.html>

Blogs:

The Creative Language Class--<http://creativelanguageclass.wordpress.com>

The Comprehensive Classroom--<http://martinabex.com/>

Free Technology for Teachers--Richard Byrne, a social studies teacher, sends out daily posts about free technology available to educators. He also examines how each site he recommends could be used for educational purposes. <http://www.freetech4teachers.com/>

FL Tech Tools--I maintain this wikispace with technology that can be used in the language classroom. <http://senoritatezuit.wikispaces.com>

Various Websites:

Class Tools-Use this site to create games and for classroom tools www.classstools.net

Super Teacher Tools--Like ClassTools, it offers game creation tools and other helpful things for managing a class. www.superteachertools.com

Listserv:

FL Teach—A listserv where you can post questions to other foreign language teachers. You can have all messages sent to you immediately or get a digest at the end of the day of all of the messages posted. This comes in just one email. It is free.
<http://www.cortland.edu/flteach/>

ACTFL Discussion Group—Similar to FL Teach. You can get one email a day also with all of the discussion threads. <http://community.actfl.org/Home/>

Here is some advice that teachers around the world wrote in and gave to the "Free Technology for Teachers" blog.

- Build relationships with your students.
- Make sure you get to know your custodians, secretaries, tech department, and librarians.
- Find something to like about every child
- Be flexible and willing to change lessons on the fly.
- Be firm but compassionate. Do not try to be friends with your students.
- Learn from lessons that do not go well and make changes for next time. (When having formal observations, if you teach more than one of a class, you might want to try the lesson with one of the classes the day before or have them observe the same class (Spanish II, etc.) later in the day. This way you can refine your lesson and may help ease your nerves.)
- If you feel there are never enough hours in the day and you feel your are drowning the first year, you are doing it right.
- Overplan. (It is important to have a back up plan. Especially when using technology. Sometimes the tech will not work or the electricity might even go out! You also need to plan on a daily basis for students that might finish early. It's always better to overplan and have to continue activities the next day.)

- Establish norms and routines at the beginning of the year. Practice them and then worry about introducing the curriculum.
- Contact parents the first week of school to establish a rapport. (Check to see if your school has a mass email option. Some grade programs offer this option.)
- Know what you want your expectations and discipline system to be before the first day. Then implement it immediately.
- Do not be afraid to ask other teachers and administrators for help.
- It's okay to not know everything. Sometimes you can say to a student, "That's a great question, why don't you research that?" Or just admit you do not know the answer.
- Assign seats
- Do not let a student draw you into an argument.

Job Search Websites:

60 Resources for Anyone Looking for a Job

<http://applicant.com/60-resources-for-anyone-looking-for-a-job/>

Dear Teacher Applicant (Blog entry)

<http://figuringitouted.blogspot.com/2012/02/dear-teacher-applicant.html?m=1>

Your questions? Advice to other beginning teachers?

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Name:

Birthday:

Which team are you on?:

What are your hobbies or interests? (Besides eating and sleeping!)

Tell me something about yourself that your teachers do not know that you would like me to know about you.

Are you involved in any after school activities? What types of activities?

What is the farthest place you have traveled to?

Why did you choose to study Spanish?

Have you studied Spanish previously? Where and for how long?

Do you have internet access at home?

Are you new to the district? If so, what school and city did you come from?

Do you or any member of your family speak a language other than English? If yes, who and what language(s) do you or they speak?

What type of activities help you learn best?

What are some things you would like to learn in this class?

Do you have any questions for me about the class?

Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about yourself?