

Self-Efficacy

*Feelings of Confidence + Teaching Competence =
Ability to Make a Difference with All Students*

Develop Success Expectations

*Believe in your potential as a Teacher
and
Your Students' Abilities as Learners*

Set Realistic Goals

Track the Small Steps Forward & Celebrate

"SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR NEW TEACHERS"

by Amy DePaul(May 2000)

Working with Veteran Teachers

First year teachers look to veteran teachers to

- Share lesson plans that put curriculum guides into practice.
- Support & participate in a new teachers' planning process.
- Offer tips on the practical problems new teachers didn't learn about in school – make do with fewer resources, classroom management, bureaucracy.
- Show respect & collegial support.
- Observe new teachers' classes & let them observe yours.
- Help teachers locate materials.

Tips on building a relationship with veteran teachers...

- Ask to visit colleagues' classrooms and learn about different approaches to teaching & find one you admire.
- Seek the help of a mentor who has skills & knowledge you would like to develop.
- If your assigned mentor is not helpful, seek out an informal mentor relationship that provides more support.
- Don't reinvent the wheel: before you begin developing a curriculum unit, find out if any veteran teachers have materials or insights that would jumpstart your efforts.
- Be willing to admit you have a lot to learn from experienced teachers.

Working with Parents

First Year Teachers look to parents and PTA's to...

- Show support for learning at home.
- Communicate positive feedback about a teacher's influence or performance.
- Welcome new teachers.
- Volunteer to help in the classroom.
- Support fair discipline measures that teachers impose.
 - Refrain from assuming the worst about first-year teachers.
- See that children do their homework.
- Offer the workplace for a field trip when appropriate.
- Talk to a teacher directly about a problem.
- Become active partners in education.

Tips for working with parents...

- Contact parents early - before a problem occurs, particularly when there's good news to report.
- Consider writing a weekly newsletter or report on classroom learning & activities.
- Invite parents to come into the classroom & assign them tasks if they are willing,
- Involve them in reading groups & remedial assistance when possible, being aware that all parents may not read or write English.

- Let parents know how they can reinforce classroom learning at home; consider asking them to sign a contract in which they agree to make sure children complete homework & other home learning activities.
- Visit families in their homes if possible to see firsthand how well 1 is supported there.
- Address parents' concerns head on. If you are taking a pedagogical approach that raises questions, work to show parents the benefits of your methods & explain your reasoning to them.
- Hold a parent meeting the first month of the school year/n which you talk about your expectations for student achievement & behavior, leave time for questions, & if you don't know the answer promise to call soon with one.

Working With Principals

First-year teachers look for principals to...

- Spend time with teachers, visiting their classrooms & looking at their lesson plans. Be available for individual conferences.
- Set up a mentor program & arrange meetings for first-year teachers.
- Make professional development opportunities available.
- Enable teachers to work closely with one another (e.g., meetings & team teaching assignments).
- Allow for planning time.
- Educate parents about what they can do to support their children's education.
- Avoid assigning all the most challenging children to the new teacher.
- Hold an orientation to the school.
- Provide adequate supplies, & clarify what items teachers will have to buy.
- Advocate for teachers to parents & students.
- Create a disciplined environment.
- Help teachers with difficult situations with parents.

Tips for building a relationship with principals...

- Ask for professional development opportunities.
- Seek assistance in setting up a mentor relationship if a program is not already in place.
- Request that a principal visit your classroom & give you constructive feedback prior to the formal evaluation period.
- Request time to meet with your principal.

Related information that may be of interest:

"The Induction of New Teachers" (a chapter in Promising Practices: New Way to Improve Teacher Quality. September, 1998) --

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PromPracticedechapter5.html>

The Department of Education's Teacher Quality website

Http://www.ed.gov/inits/teachers/index.html), which includes a section called "Preparing New Teachers" Http://www.ed.gov/inits/teachers/prepare.html) &

"What to Expect Your First Year of Teaching" (September 1998,

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Firstyear/>).

Tool: Self-Efficacy Assessment

Purpose: For the novice teacher. Its major purpose is to provide an opportunity for reflection to focus on personal self-efficacy as a teacher.

Reference: DiBella-McCarthy, H., McDaniel, E.A., & Miller, R. (1995). **How Efficacious Are You?** TEACHING Exceptional Children, pps., 68-71.

Do you have high hopes and positive expectations for your students, or are you discouraged by their performance?

Do you take credit for their successes and their failures?

Do you blame them for their lack of progress or make excuses for them?

How well do you know yourself as a teacher?

Are you in touch with your attitudes about the effectiveness of teaching and your own personal efficacy?

Do you know how these attitudes can influence your teaching?

Teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy are two components derived from the concept of self-efficacy originated by Bandura (1977, 1982). Ashton and Webb (1986) applied the concept to teaching, defining a sense of teaching efficacy as the set of expectations related to the impact of teaching on student performance despite variables such as student ability and family background. *A sense of personal teaching efficacy is the teacher's perception of his or her own teaching capabilities and the belief that one can employ these capabilities to bring about student learning.* These beliefs influence teacher motivation and effort, teacher-student interactions, and student achievement.

• **Encourage Teachers to Use the Quiz as Self-Reflective Tool.** One way to facilitate teacher understanding of the concepts of self-efficacy is to encourage teachers to apply the concepts to their attitudes about themselves and their students. The authors developed this quiz to focus teacher attention on these elements of their belief system. In an early step in the development of this self-reflective tool, teachers were invited to assess its value and the suggestions it implies. More than 50 practicing teachers enrolled in graduate classes at a university took the quiz, critiqued it, and evaluated the suggestions related to improving self-efficacy. Their feedback was used to revise the quiz and the suggestions.

After you take the quiz and add up your scores, you will learn more about the concept of teacher efficacy and more about yourself. Follow the directions and be as honest as you can.

• Interpret Your Score

**** If you scored 25 or above in Column A, your sense of teaching efficacy is strong and healthy.** You share Blooms view that "what any person in the world can learn, almost all persons can learn if provided with appropriate prior

and current conditions of learning" (1981, p. 132). You believe in your students and their ability to learn despite their backgrounds or disabilities. You are confident that a student from a dysfunctional family can be as successful as a student from healthy surroundings if provided with proper instruction. It is likely you believe that the girls in your class can enjoy solving mathematical equations as much as the boys, if given the right motivation. Disabilities are viewed as challenges, since you are certain that effective teaching and an accepting classroom environment can help students reach their potential.

A cooperative relationship between home and school supports your efforts as you set attainable goals for yourself and your students. You take responsibility for the success or failure of each student in your classroom. Through frequent assessment of each student, you determine which teaching strategies to use. Successful student performance maintains and strengthens your sense of teaching efficacy.

Although your score indicated that you probably have a high sense of teaching efficacy, please continue reading for suggestions to enhance your teaching efficacy further.

Altering your current beliefs about teaching and students can increase your sense of teaching efficacy. The following suggestions can help you accomplish this.

1. ***Develop a positive mindset.*** You can enhance your sense of teaching efficacy by believing in yourself. Determine where your individual talents lie and which techniques are successful with which students. Expect your students to be successful and work toward that goal. Teachers who believe that they are responsible for the quality of instruction develop momentum and enthusiasm that lead to achievement. Educators with a positive mindset and strong beliefs in themselves make sure that students learn.

2. ***Believe in the potential of your students.*** When student disabilities are viewed as challenges, not obstacles, teachers can be inspired to work harder. A little extra energy devoted to getting to know students and their needs helps teachers set more appropriate instructional goals. Taking pride, even in the smallest successes, and sharing the accomplishments with students will strengthen your belief in student potential. Verbal and nonverbal reinforcement lets students know exactly where they are in relation to instructional objectives and formal Contact with others in the organizational setting.

3. ***Establish realistic expectations for your students and yourself.*** One of the most important tasks of educators is to determine students' current level of performance

and set appropriate instructional objectives. Goals that are set too low decrease motivation for both students and teachers and provide little incentive to work hard. Goals that are out of reach decrease motivation, diminish self-esteem, and inevitably lead to a sense of failure. Some students will not even try to reach goals that seem beyond their grasp. Frequent checks of student performance allow for revision of objectives and instructional activities. Ongoing data collection allows educators to determine what is working well and what needs to be modified in the instructional program.

4. ***Actively seek support from home and school.*** A high sense of teaching efficacy can be influenced by organizational or support variables, including positive relationships with staff and administrators, the availability of resources, and frequent communication and participation by parents. Positive collegial relationships can lead to increased self-esteem and enhanced efficacy, since attitudes are shaped in part by the support received from colleagues. Empowering teachers is one way to enhance efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Teachers need to take greater control of and responsibility for their professional lives. They need to act as powerful advocates for their programs by working with administrators to make decisions regarding the allocation of resources, appropriate class size, and coordination of services for students. A higher sense of teaching efficacy will result when parents and teachers collaborate. Since ongoing communication is critical, teachers should consider individualizing their means of communication to meet parents' needs. Teachers should assess parents' expectations and goals and invite their comments and concerns regarding their children and the instructional program.

**** If you scored 20 or higher in Column C, you probably believe that your ability to effect change is limited by external factors.** You may feel that contributing variables such as family background or student characteristics are beyond your control and therefore interfere with your ability to teach. These factors decrease your motivation to search for effective teaching techniques for certain students, if your students achieve success, you often attribute it to something other than your teaching, such as an improvement in the home situation. You may feel surprised that your score indicates low teaching efficacy because you feel increases their achievement. Teachers who encourage students to be active in class, ask questions, and demonstrate their knowledge and skills can monitor and adjust lessons to meet student needs.

Your professional self-esteem is not lacking. You probably feel that no other teacher would be able to do a better job with your students.

**** If you scored above 25 in Column D, you probably have high personal teaching efficacy. This means you feel confident in your teaching and your**

difference with your students. You feel you know your subject and have positive relationships with your students. You have the necessary skills to teach all your students, even those from disadvantaged or dysfunctional families, those whose parents are seemingly uninterested in school, and those who might have low motivation or skills. You put forth the effort to overcome negative home, community, or student factors because you feel you make a difference in the lives of students, and their learning proves it.

**** If you scored above 20 in Column B, you probably have low personal teaching efficacy.** You appear to lack self-confidence about your competence as a teacher and your ability to overcome student disabilities or home and community disadvantages. Self-evaluation reveals a significant discrepancy between your current level of satisfaction with your performance as a teacher and your ideal. Since you are not seeing the desired positive outcomes, you are probably wondering why you try so hard, or whether it is worth it.

The following suggestions will help you address your sense of low personal Teaching Efficacy:

1. Identify and adapt your skills to meet student needs. Match your skills and talents to the needs of individual students. Know what you do well, and look for the learning outcomes that justify your effort. Recognize where and when you need to put forth extra effort, and when the extra effort has positive results, praise yourself and keep at it.

2. Provide more direct instruction to groups of students and maintain high rates of student engagement. Use effective direct instruction in group settings as a vehicle for providing students with content and demonstration, prompting and practice, monitoring student learning, and maintaining engagement throughout the lesson. Teachers with high efficacy spend more time on group instruction, elicit correct responses through questioning, monitor student performance, and check seatwork (Crawford & Stallings, 1978; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Kounin, 1970). High-efficacy teachers maintain high academic standards, convey clear expectations, and concentrate on academic instruction (Ashton, Webb, & Doda, 1983).

3. Keep an eye out for trouble spots. Look for "red flags," stop to pinpoint trouble spots, and consciously seek ways to intervene and correct problems before you move on. Student assessment data can keep you on track in meeting students' changing needs. By soliciting and responding to student feedback, you can continuously adjust the lessons in response to student performance. Giving explicit academic feedback to students regarding their performance keeps them on task and reduces the potential for behavior problems.

4. Initiate and maintain a program of student assessment. Collect data on student performance to assess students' progress toward clearly stated objectives. These data will help you determine whether to reteach to the current objective, rethink the instructional methods, or move on to the next objective. Frequent data collection also makes it possible for you to assess your performance as a teacher. Collect data to validate the appropriateness of the instructional programs you have designed and implemented. Without data, teachers and students are contributing time and effort, but they cannot be sure whether progress is being made or time and effort are wasted. Feedback can reward both students and teachers for their hard work and motivate them to continue their efforts.

During direct instruction, the teacher can collect student data by checking for understanding throughout the lesson. By providing frequent opportunities for students to respond, the teacher can actively engage students in the lesson to verify their understanding. Unison responding, both motor and verbal, can indicate how the class and particular students are learning. These data might inform the teacher of the need to reexplain or give more examples or practice to some or all the students.

- Self-assessment instruments of teacher efficacy such as this one can heighten awareness and empower teachers to take more control of and responsibility for their professional lives. For further exploration of this subject, refer to *Making a Difference: Teachers' Sense of Efficacy and Student Achievement* (Ashton & Webb, 1986) and articles that explain the concepts and their implications (Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; McDaniel & DiBella-McCarthy, 1989; Miller & McDaniel, 1989).

Possible Mentoring Activities

PERSONAL

- Provide file folders and help the novice organize all the TIPS he/she will acquire. Help them develop a workable system so that all the good ideas are not lost.
- Keep a Success Book for the novice. Weekly record any of those small steps forward or accomplishments made by the novice. Capturing "quotable quotes" from the novice or the students would be fun to share at a later point. Include photos of the class as they are engaged in various activities. Help the novice identify samples of their work that might become part of a professional portfolio.
- Celebrate success! Monthly is not too often.
- Periodically provide reflective prompts such as
 - "This week, I am most proud of... "
 - "This week, I noticed by students..."
 - "The most important lesson I've learned this week is ..."
 - "In thinking about other colleagues I'd like to work with, I'd like to work with _____ on _____."

An additional idea is that the mentor could also respond to the prompts so that reactions could be shared.

- Encourage the novice to ask for student input about the effectiveness of their learning. Provide the Classroom Climate Questionnaire* and decide on the best way to use it. It could be that the mentor is the one who gives the questionnaire to the novice's students. The students may feel more comfortable sharing their true opinions. Help the novice interpret the responses and develop any needed strategies to attend to areas of concern.
- Talk with the novice about the power of teacher efficacy. When a teacher feels able and capable of making a difference with students--they generally do. Use the *How Efficacious Are You?** questionnaire as a starting point for your discussions.
- Engage in goal setting conferences with the novice at appropriate points during the year--at the end of each grading period would be good and definitely at the end of the first semester. Modeling the process for the novice would be especially helpful.
- Provide articles of professional interest. Check back to talk with the novice about the ideas they gained from the reading.
- Suggest websites and other online resources* that provide additional mentoring opportunities.