

Advice from a student teacher to other student teachers working in an urban school

- Familiarize yourself with the community and surroundings
- Respect is VERY important, remember it's a two-way street.
- Be aware of cultural identities.
- Learn to sense what's going on in the room, be astute regarding anger, frustration, fatigue, etc.
- Learn to let things go – while you can be ambitious and plan tons of curriculum, time is a major factor, most lessons will take you longer to teach than it did for your master teacher.
- Try to have a little ownership in the classroom. Develop and implement something that is entirely your own. It doesn't have to be big, but something to give yourself a little identity with the kids and also with you.
- Be consistent – especially with middle school students, fairness is a huge issue.
- Don't be afraid to explore your resources, if needed, speak with other teachers, the SST coordinator, the AP, etc.
- Be Fair, Firm and Friendly
- Consequences should immediately follow the behavior.
- Be aware and sensitive about student backgrounds, know about their home life, after-school activities, family life, etc.
- Find ways to provide resources they need for class (many will show up unprepared).
- Know that materials and equipment are limited. Make sure you beef up your skills with materials management. It can be very easy to lose one or two rulers a day and next week have none to work with.
- Maintain open contact with parents or guardians. They can be a strong ally.
- Despite working your hardest and expending all of your resources, realize that you may not be able to help all of your students, some students will fail no matter how hard you try and how easy you make it for them to pass. Some students will fail, but know that it is not your fault.
- Know that students will procrastinate and during the last couple of days before the marking period, they miraculously care about not getting an F. Anticipate this and try and find ways to help these students early on. Choose how you should deal with this, give more work, assign a project, have them face their consequences, etc.
- Learn to pick and choose your own battles.
- Learn how to explain things in at least 3 or 4 different ways. Realize that while you demand their silence and attention during instruction, you will still have students who don't know what they are doing. Find ways to build their independence from you and encourage them to look to fellow students for guidance and clarification. This also will strengthen communication skills for the class (hopefully anyways.)
- Openly disciplining a student can be both good and bad. Before you decide on reprimanding a student in front of the whole class and possibly humiliating them, know that student first. Anticipate his/her reaction to it. I found that most times it was better to deal with kids privately. They seem to appreciate it more. Then again sometimes kids will “act a fool” and you may need to make an example of them and show the rest of the class that ignorance and foolishness will not be tolerated.
- Realize that the students will find some way to blame you for everything. They may think that it is your fault that they are failing, your math is wrong, you give too much work etc. Be quick to set them straight; that their actions or lack thereof have consequences. Students can be very resentful.