

**THE SSTA SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR NEWLY QUALIFIED SECONDARY
TEACHERS****1. YOUR CLASSROOM – YOUR TERRITORY!**

As a novice secondary teacher, you will be nervous at the prospect of controlling, holding the attention of and maybe even educating up to 33 adolescents. Remember always that 90%+ of young people are keen to learn and come from families who want them to achieve. They expect to be instructed by adults and if you do it well, that's a bonus and they will respect you all the more for it!

You may think of yourself as a fumbling tyro but they see a teacher and an authority figure. So act like one. Your classroom is territory and pupils should never be in any doubt about this

TEACHING TIPS

- Be at your door to welcome your pupils. Greet them in a friendly fashion and (as often as possible) with a smile. Make eye contact with each of them at the earliest possible moment.
- Keep your pupils waiting at your door for a minute or so. This will allow stragglers to catch up but will also reinforce your role.
- Make sure your pupils settle quickly at the start of the lesson. A visual or audible signal can be useful. "When I switch off the OHP you should all be settled and ready for work".
- From day one, place your pupils in seats where you want them. Even if this is initially at random, you can always change your mind later. You have however made your point. You are the boss in your room. Should there be argument, simply point this out quietly and in a tone which does not invite discussion!
- Insist on eye contact and silence when you are speaking to the class.

2. BEFORE THE LESSON

You heard it many times in pre service training but it is nevertheless true that the first rule of classroom survival is to be prepared, so ...

- Familiarise yourself with your department's handbook and especially those sections dealing with curriculum, resources, teaching methodologies etc.

- Prepare your own lessons well in advance but consult with colleagues also. Reinventing the wheel is pointless. Reciprocate if you discover useful resources.
- In your first weeks, you will probably wish to stick to the tried and tested template. Introduce your lesson, get your pupils working, pull together and recapitulate near the end of the period. However, don't be afraid to experiment. Why not ask colleagues to suggest alternatives which have worked for them?
- Don't worry about the inevitable "Titanic" lessons. Do talk about your failures! Your colleagues will be delighted to tell you about their disasters and what they learned from them. Listen and learn!

TEACHING TIPS

- Start with a 'teaser': "Coming soon in a lesson near you!"
- Have workbooks etc ready for pupils to collect on their entry into the class or, if you have time, lay them out on desks for pupils to use. Saves time and hassle distributing them later.
- Use audible or visual signals to denote different parts of the lesson, e.g. calm music playing denotes quiet working. OHP on denotes teacher talking to class.

3. DURING THE LESSON

- Every lesson cannot be sparkling but try to inject variety as much as possible and show an interest in each pupil as in individual.
- Modulate your voice and moderate its volume. Noisy classes often have noisy teachers.
- Use praise judiciously. If matched to the individual child's personality it is a powerful motivator but if used wholesale, it is a turn off.
- Find other appropriate ways of showing pupils that you are interested in them as an individual ... "I hear your team beat Dotheboys High School at the weekend Jimmy?"
- Use humour positively. Laugh with pupils and never at them and never, ever use sarcasm. You will learn quickly which pupils are likely to try to get a laugh at your expense. When they do, find a way to remind them of your values and positive attitude to humour.

TEACHING TIPS

- Work out a calm routine for the first few minutes of the lesson which will allow you time to do all the things you need to do – register, receive behaviour monitor cards etc. Make sure your pupils are familiar with this routine from day one ... "While I am doing this, I'd like you all to be"

- A sudden pause and silence is a very effective way of regaining wandering attentions.
- Be positive. "I'm really pleased that nearly everyone is paying attention. Please try harder Jimmy!"
- Use body language unambiguously. Folding arms and frowning is usually a sign of
- Use territoriality. Always stand in one place when you wish to speak positively to the class and a different place when you wish to speak more negatively!
- Play spot the mistake. "Today, I'm going to make at least one outrageous mistake. Let's see if you can spot it!" (Very useful for those occasions when genuine errors occur!)
- Put pupils on the spot at the end of a lesson. "What's the most important thing you've learned today?"

4. AFTER THE LESSON

- Try to set time aside (it's not easy) to reflect on your lessons. Even 5 minutes at the end of a day is worthwhile.
- Mark homework/tests promptly and review these with pupils. Show your pupils by your actions that you value them, whatever their own "self image".
- Ask if you can sit in with more experienced staff occasionally. This might even be regularised as part of your probationary programme.

5. FINALLY, SOME GOLDEN RULES SUGGESTED BY SEVERAL LIFETIMES' EXPERIENCE AT THE CHALKFACE

- Always try to be positive with all your pupils. Never make derogatory comments about them or their families.
- Avoid confrontation. Try to downplay a challenging pupil by isolating them literally or psychologically. Offer them choices of behaviour and explain the consequences of their choice. "Look Jimmy, all the others in the class are doing their best to get their work done. Why don't you give it a try? If you don't, you'll be choosing to get into bother."
- Always ask for help if you experience difficulties with a pupil or group of pupils. No experienced teacher will ever think the less of you for this. On the contrary, they will welcome the opportunity to help a colleague.
- Make appropriate but decisive use of your department's/school's discipline system when other options have failed.
- If a pupil is abusive and tries to leave ... let them! In the long run, they have to be in school until they are 16 and this will always be on the school's terms. They have no place to run and no place to hide! Notify your P.T. as soon as possible and concentrate on the job you are paid for – educating your pupils!

- It happens very rarely but it does happen. Always complete a violent incident form and notify your SSTA representative if you feel you have suffered violent abuse (including serious verbal abuse) from a pupil.
- Keep your temper and never swear at pupils or use language which could be interpreted as verbal abuse. Sanction their behaviour not their persons. You have a future and a career. Lose your temper and you may have neither.
- Avoid physical contact with pupils and avoid being alone with a pupil if you can help it. Open doors can be very useful ...

6. PROBLEMS

If you have problems which you would rather not share with departmental colleagues, speak to your SSTA school representative or contact your SSTA district secretary. They will be able to help you or will suggest someone who can.

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