

Advice for New Teachers

Veteran Pennsylvania teacher and school administrator Larry Bricker retired last spring and has eleven nuggets for new teachers in this *Middle Ground* article:

- *Tell students what you expect.* “You can get most students to do almost anything that is reasonable if you tell them what you expect and why,” says Bricker. “Once students are in an established routine (good or bad), it is very difficult to get them to change.”

- *Plan for contingencies.* “The biggest enemy of an orderly classroom is down-time,” says Bricker. “You can never overplan.”

- *Learn students’ names quickly.* Get students working in the opening days of school and make it your business to learn all the names.

- *Be fair.* The way to do this is to see things from the students’ point of view. This will keep most of the kids on your side most of the time.

- *Build positive relationships.* Showing genuine interest in students’ hobbies, sports, and other outside activities is the best way to accomplish this.

- *Laugh with students – and at yourself.* “If you do these things, students will be much more likely to forgive you when you mess up,” says Bricker. “And at times, you will mess up.”

- *Never pass up an opportunity to be kind.* “If you want a kinder world, you need to show a kinder world to your students,” he says.

- *Try to learn at least one new thing each year.* Not everything will work out, but keep trying new stuff.

- *Accept the fact that if too many of your students are failing, you are failing too.* If this happens, look at your teaching and at yourself and reach out to colleagues for help, he advises. “If you fail to act positively, you will leave teaching very tired and very bitter.”

- *Understand that parents are sending us the best children they have.* “If they had students who were smarter or had better manners or who had more charming personalities, they would send them to us,” he quips.

- *Never underestimate the power of motivation.* Bricker learned this when he saw underachieving sixteen-year-olds rapidly learn lots of information and get their drivers’ licenses. “The point is, when students are truly motivated, they can overcome almost any obstacle,” he says. Curriculum discussions should devote just as much time to motivation as to content.

“The Good Old Days Are Now!” by Larry Bricker in *Middle Ground*, April 2010 (Vol. 13, #4, p. 21-22), no e-link available; Bricker can be reached at