SIMPLE YET EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR BUSY TEACHERS LIKE YOU

COMPLETE

~ CLASSROOM CONTROL ~

24 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SECRETS EVERY TEACHER SHOULD KNOW

NO CLASS IS WITHOUT PROBLEMS ALL OF THE TIME, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO LET TROUBLE RULE THE ROOST IN YOUR CLASSROOM

"...start implementing these strategies, and you will see a difference in your students before you know it."

Students come in all shapes and sizes

TIPS, TRICKS AND TEACHER-TESTED STRATEGIES FOR TAKING COMPLETE CLASSROOM CONTROL

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6 Need to Know Classroom Management Keys for ESL Teachers

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE CAN BE A CHALLENGE ON SO MANY LEVELS.

Not only do ESL teachers regularly encounter language barriers and cultural conflicts, they have to be some of the most flexible teachers on the planet. ESL teachers, more often than not, have to be prepared to teach students at any language level and ability and often have to teach multiple age levels in the same classroom. This mixture can lead to confusion and frustration for both you and your students, but keeping your classroom management in top form can make a big difference. The educators who are clear with their expectations and are supportive of their students will find that the potential stumbling blocks actually turn out to be what makes their classes special.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL TEACHING

1 GIVE REWARDS

A typical ESL class includes students studying for several different reasons. Some may hope to use English in education, some in business, and some to fulfill a school or parental requirement. When students have so many reasons for studying, some are bound to be less engaged than others. To encourage your students to engage and participate up to your standards, reward the behavior you want to see. For younger students it may be as simple as giving out stickers for good participation or test scores. For adults you may offer no homework passes, having class outside, a food day or other appealing prizes. Whatever rewards you offer, be sure to be consistent and public with the rewards you are giving, and make sure your prizes appeal to your students.

2 OFFER PRAISE

In addition to offering physical rewards for good behavior, make a point of offering verbal praise as well. When you do, be sure to focus on specific behavior rather than personality attributes. So rather than saying, “You are such a gifted language learner,” your praise should be more like, “You really focused during that exercise. You did a great job.” If you give this kind of public positive attention, you are likely to draw in a few misbehaving students who want the same type of attention. In addition, it will communicate to your class what types of behavior you are looking for.

3 ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

If you are giving your students rewards and public praise, you are already offering positive reinforcement. You can make an even bigger impact with this positive feedback by not focusing on misbehavior of your students. When students want attention, some may choose to act out or misbehave in class. After all, negative attention is still attention. Rather than giving them that negative attention, simply redirect them to the activity at hand or to the behavior you are looking for. By not making a big deal of their misdeeds, you communicate to them that only appropriate in class behavior will get them the attention they seek. This strategy will also keep classroom disruption to a minimum and allow your other students to remain focused.

4 WORK TOGETHER

Once your students know your expectations for class performance, you may just find that your class starts encouraging positive behavior in each other. You should support these efforts of your students, and you can even make classroom management a communal goal by offering rewards for group behavior or teamwork. When everyone’s rewards depend on every member of the class or their team, individuals will want all their members to act appropriately.

5 KEEP MOVING

Though it may seem too simple of a solution, sometimes all it takes to reign in misbehaving students is to get a little closer to them. Moving around the classroom during instruction as well as class activities will not only let you check in on how your students are doing, it will send the message that you are right there with your students. Standing near a student who misbehaves or joining an unfocused group for a class activity may be all you need to get the group to settle and start behaving. In addition, be strategic when you set up round table discussions. If students tend to talk too much, sit them next to you. Quieter students should be positioned directly across from you. This will encourage the shy students to speak up while the natural talkers will be less likely to take over the group discussion.

6 A MOTOWN CLASSIC

Finally, one of the biggest keys to good classroom management is respect. It is essential that you treat your students with respect and that you require them to do the same with you. Don’t limit this expectation to the student-teacher relationship, though. Expecting and requiring your students to respect one another while in your classroom will make a big difference in your class as well. When students know you won’t tolerate mocking, insults or general disrespect, the tension in your classroom will wane and your students will find it easier to focus and get the work done. They may even find a friend they never thought they would have.

NO CLASS IS WITHOUT PROBLEMS ALL OF THE TIME, BUT YOU DON’T HAVE TO LET TROUBLE RULE THE ROOST IN YOUR CLASSROOM.

By making your expectations clear and using these tools to elicit good behavior from your students, your class will be in the right mindset to learn. If you are in the middle of a semester and are struggling with classroom management, it’s not too late. Start implementing these strategies, and you will see a difference in your students before you know it.

Address Individual Needs: Methods to Target Areas for Growth

IT PROBABLY HITS AN ESL TEACHER SEVERAL WEEKS INTO A SEMESTER: ESL STUDENTS ARE DIVERSE.

This probably seems so much a truism as to be laughable, but we sometimes forget it: even a relatively "homogeneous" class of ESL students of similar culture and level can have very different learning needs and goals. For example, some may be there for academic needs, while others -- vocational, some may want to improve speaking skills, while others -- writing, some may work better in groups and others -- individually. With all of this diversity, how does a teacher begin to pinpoint individual needs and meet them within the confines of one course? There are fortunately several general methods an instructor can call upon.

METHODS TO MEET INDIVIDUAL STUDENT GROWTH NEEDS

1 ASSESS

Do both skills and needs assessment. Spend the first couple of days in the course assessing student language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) through dictations, recorded dialogues, and short readings with written responses. Keep copies of the diagnostics to refer back to over the course of the term, to track individual student progress and remind yourself of students' needs and goals. Assess frequently throughout the term, both informally through observation and notes and more formally through quizzes, tests, and written responses to topics, again to note individual progress.

In addition to assessing language skill, also assess student need. Give out a short checklist to students for them to mark the most important skills for them to improve and for what purpose: reading and writing skills for academic purposes? Speaking and listening for improved conversation? Increased technical / academic vocabulary in the workplace? Often within a class there is a particular "demographic"— most of the students will be there for academic reading and writing, for example, or they will mostly be there for oral skills and vocational purposes.

2 VARIETY

Again, students will often be at a shared level with a shared purpose for coming to class. But there are always those "outliers," that group whose needs are different. They may make up ten to twenty percent of the class, actually, so of course they should not be ignored. One good way to address divergent student need is variety: vary materials and instruction. Include both academic and nonacademic texts to read, for example. Include both literacy and oral skills instruction within a class period. In addition, vary groupings: use whole group, small group, pair, and individual activities. In this way, individual learner need is met while at the same time students are exposed to a variety of skills and learner preferences. In this way, the instructor can meet individual learner needs and preferences while challenging students to grow.

3 OBSERVE STUDENTS IN ACTION

Who is unfailingly social? Who stays at his desk? What do students talk about during break? Do they talk about the news, sports, their families, their jobs? Informal observations like these are likely to reveal a lot about learner needs and preferences. The class where students mostly stay at their desks and talk at break, if at all, about the classes they are taking this term is very different from the class where students get up and mingle at break, discussing sports and their jobs. They will therefore have different needs and interests in learning.

4 PAY ATTENTION TO ACTUAL STUDENT PRODUCTION. CONSIDER A PORTFOLIO SYSTEM.

Often students are unaware of their true strengths as a language learner, and a teacher, or even a native speaker, has more insight. For example, I typically assess my own speaking skills in Russian and French as abysmal, my writing skills as stronger. However, my teachers and native speakers alike tell me differently — that actually my speaking skills are not at all bad while my writing lapses into incoherence at times. Such observations can lead to discussions with students in individual conferences about areas for growth to work on. In addition, portfolios, a representative collection of individual student work over the course of the term, are likely to reveal interesting patterns that may not be apparent on an assignment-by-assignment basis: with a portfolio system, for example, I'm more likely to see the repeated concerns a specific student has with word choice that I might just dismiss as inconsequential in a single assignment.

5 CONFERENCES WITH STUDENTS

Follow up on needs assessments with a face-to-face conference with each student if possible. Students sometimes don't really know what to put on a written needs assessment, or end up checking every box as every skill seems important to them, but a face-to-face and informal conference often reveal more information than a simple written survey or quiz will. Therefore, try to conference with students at least twice a semester for even a few minutes at your desk to discuss goals and progress within the class. Conferences can reveal students' real priorities with careful questioning about what students hope to get out of the class, what their future plans are, what their past experiences with language learning has been. Knowing where students have been and where they hope to go can help in tailoring curriculum and instruction.

MEETING INDIVIDUAL STUDENT NEED CAN BE A CHALLENGE -- particularly in a large, multilevel class because in such a class there is so much diverse need, and even the ESL class which on the surface seems homogeneous in level and demographics students often come from a variety of backgrounds and have very different goals. However, through a number of carefully planned steps, such as needs and skills assessment at the beginning of the term, as well as ongoing planning and assessment, informal and formal, the instructor can meet the needs of all of her students.

7 Most Common Behavior Problems And How to Deal with Them

ESL STUDENTS COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES.

They come into your classroom with varying degrees of motivation and even different skill levels. Most are well-behaved. And some are terribly ill-behaved. As an ESL teacher, you can handle students that are less motivated than most, even those that need a little extra help from you to get that particular task done. But we all know that handling unacceptable behavior is hard and can take its toll if it is something you have to deal with on a daily basis.

The way we handle the day-to-day problems will determine whether the same problems will keep cropping up. So here are the most common behavior problems in the ESL class and how you can effectively nip them in the bud.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR: 7 PROBLEMS AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM

1 STUDENTS ARE RESTLESS/ GET OUT OF SEAT

EXAMPLE: You're having an animated discussion about ways to help the environment and a student gets up to look out the window.

Always give clear instructions, and make sure everyone understands and is engaged in the task. As soon as a student gets up to do something completely unrelated, walk over to the child, gently take their hand and walk them back to their seat – without interrupting the lesson. If this behavior continues, talk to them about the importance of paying attention, participating in the activity at hand and controlling the urge to do something else.

2 PLAYING WITH TOYS DURING CLASS

EXAMPLE: Students are quietly completing a worksheet about parts of the body when you see a student playing with a doll.

Gently take the toy, and place it on your desk or a shelf. Tell the child that they can share it with the others during the break. Make it a habit of encouraging them to bring toys related to something you're talking about in class (like animals). If there are certain things they are allowed to bring, they might not feel tempted to bring other toys.

3 NAME CALLING

EXAMPLE: You're playing Bingo when you hear a student call a redheaded child "Carrot Top".

Stop what you're doing and have the child that has called out the offending name tell the class what the other student's name actually is. Discuss with the class the importance of treating each other with respect and kindness and why name calling is unacceptable in your classroom and everywhere else, for that matter.

4 TEASING/FIGHTING/ BICKERING

EXAMPLE: You have two students who can't say two words to each other without starting a fight. Class began five minutes ago, and they're already at each other's throats.

Make sure the students who don't get along are sitting as far apart as possible. Discuss with the class the importance of ignoring teasing remarks. Talk about how arguing all the time is tiresome, and we should accept differences in points of view. On the other hand, stress the importance of being considerate towards each other and listening to what the other has to say.

5 THROWING THINGS

EXAMPLE: You're writing something on the whiteboard and a pencil flies across the room.

Tell the student that this kind of behavior is completely unacceptable. Go over the possible dangers of tossing objects around. Find out if they are doing what they're supposed to be doing and redirect their efforts to the task at hand.

6 YELLING/SHOUTING OUT ANSWERS

EXAMPLE: You ask Tom a question, and Lucy yells out the answer.

Tell the student that they're not being courteous – they did not give the other student a chance to answer. Remind students they should raise their hands if they want to speak. On the other hand, remind them that it is not necessary to yell – if they wait their turn to speak, you will hear them perfectly.

7 HAVING PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS

EXAMPLE: You're asking students comprehension questions about a text they've just read, and you see three students in the back of the class holding a conversation.

Ask the students if they are talking about the task at hand. Ask them to share their interesting conversation with the rest of the class, or tell them they can tell the others all about it during the break. Discuss why it is not appropriate to have conversations during class.

WHEN TO TALK TO PARENTS

As a good rule of thumb, I recommend contacting parents when a specific problem seems to be recurring (happens every day or several times a week). Depending on the gravity of the matter, you can either send a note or schedule a meeting. I'd save meetings for things that put the children's well-being at risk, for instance violent behavior, verbal abuse or bullying.

There's a line between being mischievous and being outright malicious, and we can tell the difference. You can deal with mischievous behavior in class – malicious behavior should be discussed with parents.

PREVENTION IS THE BEST MEDICINE

Most of these problems will be avoided if you set clear rules from the start. Work together to establish your rules based on how you all want to be treated. Discuss the importance of treating others with respect, as well as the fact there is a time and place for everything and that some things simply can't be done in class. Don't forget to establish what rewards they will receive for good behavior, as well as the consequences of inappropriate behavior.

DON'T YELL, SCREAM OR SHOUT. THE BEST WAY TO TEACH STUDENTS TO BEHAVE NICELY IS TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

7 Simple Ways to Make Classroom Time Management Work

Time management is an issue that comes up in all kinds of work environments, so it shouldn't be a surprise that teachers have to think about time management in their classrooms.

In fact, time management can be even more important for teachers since they have a classroom full of students to direct and educate, and how they spend their time in class is just as important to them as it is to you. But the idea of time management can be off putting to some. As teachers we are more familiar with learning styles and comprehension checks than we are business concepts about how to beat the clock. Luckily, time management in the ESL classroom is easier than many people might think. With a few tips and tools, you can make time management work to your advantage in the classroom. You might even find that good time management makes you a better teacher and your students better learners. Here are some tips and tools for implementing time management in your classroom that you can use starting today.

WHAT IS IN TIME MANAGEMENT FOR YOU

1 THINK ABOUT PACE

What will your students be doing? How long will it take them to complete a task? These are things you should determine before you and your students enter the classroom. As you make your lesson plans, be realistic about how long each activity will take to complete, and mark it down in your notes. In my own lesson plans, I often list the activities I would like to accomplish during a class period in one column, any information I need about that activity in a second column, and then use two additional columns to note the materials I will need and the time I expect each activity to take. (You can use my template or create your own.) If you do note estimated times for activities in your lesson plans, you will be able to better determine what you will be able to cover each class period.

2 TELL THEM ABOUT IT

Communicate your goals to your students at the start of class. Not only will this give your students an idea of where you intend to go in the class period, it will also help motivate them to concentrate and focus on each activity as you do them. Write your goals on the board along with the amount of time you expect to spend on each step, and make sure your students can refer to it throughout the class period.

3 BE PREPARED

Because in class activities often do not take the amount of time you expect (even when you do your best to make realistic predictions), be prepared to either fill in a few minutes at the end of class or cut an activity out of your plans and shift it to your next class period. If you need ideas for short in class activities, check out these Top Ten Time Fillers for your ESL classroom (busyteacher.org/7081-top-10-time-fillers-for-your-classroom.html). When you are prepared with these activities, your students will never feel like you are wasting their time (or money) by throwing away class time.

4 HOLD THE QUESTIONS

Tell your students to save their questions until the end of class. Though it may feel like you are denying your students answers to their questions, you are not. By keeping all the questions until the end of class, you make sure your time is focused and your students are concentrating on the activity at hand. You may want to give each student several post-it notes to stick on their desks for jotting down questions they have during class. That way, when you are ready to take their questions at the end they will not have forgotten them.

5 GIVE DIRECTIONS

Give your students instructions at the start of each activity, and make sure your instructions are brief but clear. Make sure they know what your expectations are for both their actions and the time it should take. If your students are unclear about what they should be doing, do answer clarification questions before starting the activity. Taking these steps at the start of an activity can only make your class move smoother. After all, if you students are confused about what they will be doing, it will only waste time

6 ENCOURAGE COMPETITION

Competition can be useful for motivating students in the classroom. Whether you award points for an activity or name the winner the first to finish, sometimes a little healthy competition can be just what your students need to put a fire in their bellies for in class activities. Be careful not to overuse this strategy, though, or you may find that the quality of your students' work begins to deteriorate. Use your best judgment when deciding how much competition to include in class.

7 DON'T GET PIN HOLED IN A CLASS PERIOD

Many class periods limit you to 40 or 60 minutes, but you don't have to let that limit what you choose to do with your students. Think of your lesson plan as spanning over several class periods. Make logical divisions in your plan for each class period, and fill in any extra minutes with purposeful fillers. Once you have your plans assigned to the appropriate days, think about the pace for each class period. When you plan this way, you will find a classroom bell does not determine how much or deeply you cover a topic or how much your students are able to learn.

TIME MANAGEMENT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE INTIMIDATING. WITH A LITTLE PREPLANNING AND PREPARATION, YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS WILL FIND CLASS MOVES SMOOTHLY, HOLDS THEIR INTERESTS, AND PROMOTES AN ENVIRONMENT PERFECT FOR LEARNING.

Why You Need Good Classroom Management

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT MAY NOT BE A TERM YOU HEAR VERY OFTEN IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS.

Though many programs do offer some instruction on the subject, most people, myself included, find that not enough time has been given to the subject before graduation. Learning to manage a group of students is challenging, and many teachers find that when they really begin to learn it is after they walk into the classroom. But if our educational programs aren't stressing classroom management, is it really important? The truth is, teachers with good have many unique advantages, and so do their students.

WHY IS CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT ESSENTIAL FOR EDUCATORS

1 EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Effective teaching is the first result of good classroom management. Good classroom management can't ensure effective teaching but will create the environment where good and effective teaching can happen. Imagine a classroom where students are talking, acting out or failing to pay attention. Just how much can those students be expected to learn? But with good classroom management, those same students would be paying attention, engaging in activities, and making efforts to absorb the information the teacher presents. When that happens, we teachers are more effective. Students learn better and learn more, and it's all because of the way we run our class.

2 BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

Like effective teaching, good classroom management won't eliminate behavioral problems, but it will significantly decrease them. Fewer students will act out or fail to engage in class. And when students are engaged and interested, the feeling is contagious. Your students will feed off one another's energy and will find themselves engaged and learning because their classmates are. In addition to this contagious desire to learn, good classroom management, which decreases misbehavior in students, also reduces the number of distractions that result from that misbehavior. The positive circle of contagious behavior will increase and the negative cycle of contagious distraction and misbehavior will decrease. It's the best of both worlds.

3 BURN OUT

Even the best of teachers find themselves frustrated and short of patience at times. Teachers new to the classroom can find themselves feeling that way even more frequently. With good classroom management, your own feelings and attitudes about work in the class improve along with your students'. You are less likely to suffer from frustration and burn out when your students are engaged and behaved. As a result, you will be a better communicator and teacher, and this is another way that your teaching effectiveness will increase.

4 FEWER LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Studies have shown that teachers with good classroom management will be more effective in teaching students with learning difficulties. Most obviously, these difficulties stem from learning disabilities and behavioral problems. But don't forget that language barriers are a type of difficulty for students. If you teach ESL students in a mainstream class, having good classroom management will help them overcome the special difficulties that come from the language barrier. Even if your class is entirely made up of ESL students, having good classroom management in an English only classroom will diffuse the difficulties associated with learning in another language. Therefore, the better your classroom management, the better your ESL students will learn. And when your students are learning more easily, your teaching effectiveness will again increase.

YOU MAY NOT HAVE HAD MUCH EDUCATION IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT, SO IT'S UP TO YOU TO MAKE EFFORTS TO LEARN HOW TO IMPLEMENT IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM.

If you do, it will make you a better teacher and help your students learn more effectively. Even if you did receive instruction in classroom management before you had your own class, this is one area where you can't know too much. Since classroom management directly affects student behavior and as a result performance, your success as a teacher will in part be determined by how well you approach and apply classroom management.

Six Survival Tips for Multi-Level Classes

Some of the most difficult classes I have taught in my ESL career are those with students at multiple levels.

I have taught conversation classes, vocabulary classes, TOEFL prep classes, movie classes and several others that are made up of students from beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels and even beyond. I'm sure you have found like me that it can be tough to be in charge of one of these multi-level classes. When one part of your class can't order a meal at a restaurant and another part of your class is taking community college classes in English, meeting everyone's needs is tough. It's not impossible, though, to have a good class when your students are all over the spectrum. Here are some tips to help you through.

TRY THESE 6 SURVIVAL TIPS FOR MULTI-LEVEL CLASSES

1 FACE REALITY

Multi-level classes are hard. Nobody wants to hear that, but the truth remains the same. Teachers have to think about all of the skill levels that are in their class. When you plan, you have to try to meet the needs and expectations of each skill level, but you should also remember that you cannot please all of the people all of the time. You cannot expect daily perfection from yourself in classrooms like these. Your students know it, and they will probably be understanding. Mine always were.

2 KEEP IT LEVEL

Often, a mixed-level class has actually been advertised at a specific level. For example, your course catalog may have offered an intermediate vocabulary class, but you may have students enrolled who are actually beginning level. You might also have advanced students who have signed up for their own reasons. If this is the case, keep in mind when you plan that you are teaching an intermediate class. Because of this, your material and activities should generally aim for intermediate level. If your beginners are struggling, you can offer additional help or answer questions after class or during office hours. For your advanced students, offer additional challenges related to the curriculum. But any mandatory material and assessments should be at that intermediate level.

3 TAKE TIME TO ASK

When your students hit every point in the fluency spectrum, it is even more important for you, their teacher, to know what they expect and need from your class. Though you have a teaching plan in place, and you should, it will only help you and your students to talk about their expectations and determine their personal needs. The natural time to do this is at the start of your semester, but don't limit your check in to the first week. As the semester rolls on, keep asking your students what they want through class discussion, one on one discussions with your students and assessment, then tailor your plans to meet these needs and desires when possible.

4 MIX IT UP

Small group activities will be one of the most useful tools for your mixed level classroom. Sometimes, you will want to divide your class into beginning, intermediate and advanced levels, and you may even choose to assign different goals to each group. But levelled groups are not always the best move for your multi-level classroom. Consider mixing your student levels when assigning group work. The advanced students will challenge the beginning students to perform at a higher level, just by being in the same group. In addition, the advanced students may be able to help the beginners understand what confuses them, especially if their first languages are the same. And while it may be true that teachers make the worst students, those who teach learn the material better than those who don't. So when your advanced students are assisting their classmates, they will be cementing the material in their own minds as well.

5 FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION

Every student will have different proficiency in grammar and vocabulary in your mixed level class, but they should all have one thing in common. They can communicate, to one degree or another, in English. In your mixed level class, focusing on communication is key. Communicative activities challenge students to use the language that they do know to get a message across to their listener. When a student lacks the grammar or vocabulary knowledge, she uses the language she does know in creative ways. By focusing on communicative activities in your mixed level class, each of your students uses what she knows to talk to her classmates. You may want to teach some grammatical structures or vocabulary as needed, but the primary focus of class activities should be communication.

6 BE FLEXIBLE

Most important of all is being flexible. I love the proverb, "Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape." When you are teaching a multi-level class, you have to expect each day to come with a degree of uncertainty. You may need to modify your lesson plan, change in class activities, or give an unexpected grammar lesson. The key is to be okay with a little planned chaos and help your students be okay with it, too. When you take an easygoing attitude, your students will catch on and will do the same. That way, you can all stay focused and flexible as each day presents its challenges.

But It is Clear: Dealing with the Defensive Student

Almost every time I hand back student essays, there is at least one student who is stunned by her grade — most often, that it was a "B" or a "C" rather than the "A" that she felt she deserved.

Often she'll come up to me after class — or more recently, confront me during class — about how she felt she deserved the "A." When I point out her need for transitions, the problems with verb tense and point of view switches, and so forth, she'll usually dismiss that with an "uh-huh" and go on reiterating the claim that it is good work, perhaps the best she has ever produced, and that she's always received "A's" on her previous work. I can't really argue these points, usually not knowing about her past record, so I'll pull out the grading rubric and show her how her essay measures against the rubric. The student may here change the subject and give her opinion that her writing is certainly as good as the textbook model by essayist Joan Didion. I'll then drag out the textbook and attempt to show her the difference between her own work and Didion's: Didion's precise word choice, the purposeful organization, etc. This usually only gets a blank look from the student and then the repeated claim she really deserved the "A" grade.

It's probably somewhat clear to the reader what might be going on with this student. One of the problems we often face with students and teaching them a skill, such as writing, is that their very status as beginners can often impede their ability to distinguish between good and poor work. This shouldn't be a surprise: it takes a certain skill level in a field to recognize what is good work and mediocre work within that field. As a non-tennis player, for example, I really wouldn't be able to recognize the elements of a good serve and a poor one. And this problem is also evident in the student mentioned above: she lacked the insight into good writing even to tell me why she felt she deserved an "A" (her development, word choice, etc.) but simply that she wanted it. There are several concerns with defensive students, but fortunately, also methods to deal with them. These methods are designed to get the student beyond her defensiveness and protection of her work and, by extension, her ego ("But it is excellent work!") to recognizing there is room for improvement — in the work itself, not necessarily in herself as an individual -- and to move forward in revising and improving her work.

CONCERNS WITH DEFENSIVE STUDENTS AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

1 LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS GOOD WORK

Again, a major concern with defensive students is lack of even understanding the difference between good and mediocre efforts in a field they themselves are new to. One of the contributing factors to this problem is the tradition of teaching by unrealistically strong professional models: an essay by Joan Didion or Richard Rodriguez, for example, is so removed from most students' abilities they are unable to even relate to it or aspire to write like that. More helpful, I've found, is to keep a bank of past student work, with names removed, of course, of both strong and weaker essays. I find that after a semester of analyzing these, students have a well-developed sense of what is good and poor writing. Students can then apply this understanding of what is good work to their own performance.

2 PAST POSITIVE FEEDBACK (IMAGINED OR REAL)

Another major problem that students face in the United States in particular is that they may have in the past received nothing but positive feedback for their work, so they have no sense that there is any room for improvement. Teachers tend to be a kind and encouraging group of people, so they may have focused solely on what was strong in their students' work: in addition, there is a big gap, in the United States at least, in the expectations of college and students' prior education. Therefore, students are often shocked when they find themselves getting "C's" on papers when they have only earned "A's" in the past. Methods of dealing with this are again discussing the expectations of the field of study: college composition, this case. I find that opening this discussion with what students' own opinions of what makes good writing is particularly valuable: their answers, drawn from reading, of vivid word choice, good description and examples, a strong main idea and examples, "flows well" (i.e., well-organized with clear transitions) are the very qualities on the rubric by which they will be judged. Students therefore often have an existing sense of what good work is in the field that just needs to be made explicit by discussion, referring to the grading rubric, and showing examples of stronger and weaker work.

3 INSECURITY AND TENDENCY TO PERSONALIZE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

A final large problem of dealing with the defensive student is their underlying insecurity and hence tendency to personalize criticism: e.g. the student may hear "Your essay needs some revision" as "You're a poor writer and not very intelligent either." This problem can in part be addressed by recognizing first the writing's strong points and the student's potential as a writer and that revising the essay will continue to improve both the writing and the student as a writer — therefore taking the focus of the discussion away from the student's personhood and focusing on the writing itself and ways to improve it.

DEALING WITH DEFENSIVE STUDENTS CAN BE DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF THE VERY NATURE OF DEFENSIVENESS AS A SERIES OF BARRIERS TO PROTECT THE STUDENT'S EGO, WHICH CAN BE DIFFICULT TO PENETRATE IN ORDER TO FOCUS ON THE WORK, NOT THE STUDENT AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

However, by using several strategies in teaching the difference between strong and mediocre work, keeping the focus on the work itself rather than the student as a person, and addressing both the strengths of the student work as well as its areas for improvement, get past the defensiveness and allows focus to move to the work itself and how to improve it.

Correcting Student Error in Writing &Speech: When, How, & How Much

Recently my teenaged daughter was watching as I corrected student papers.

"Mom," she exclaimed. "That's wrong. It's 'she goes to school,' not 'she go.'" "Yes," I replied. "I know that." "Well, aren't you going to do something about it?" "What do you think I should do?" "Well, mark it, of course!" I then showed her where I had indeed marked the same error, earlier in the paper, before the five or six other instances. "I still think you should mark the others," Shoshana said. "And what good do you think that would do? Will it make the student learn English faster?" "Well, no —" "How will it make the student feel?" I asked. "How would it make you feel if a paper that you wrote in Spanish came back covered with red ink?" "I can't write anything this long in Spanish," was her reply. "But the couple of sentences you do write are correct, I guess." At least that was true of my experiences in second language learning: I have a limited range of what I could say or write in French or Russian, but the little I can produce is precise due to the meticulous correction of my attentive teachers.

Although a small incident, the conversation highlights a number of misconceptions about correcting error in second language writing (and speaking, for that matter): that every error should be corrected, no matter the situation and no matter how small, -- that correcting error somehow results in improved language production, and that the learner's emotional response to correction doesn't matter. All three assumptions are incorrect, in my experience, leading to the principles of error correction I have developed.

PRINCIPLES OF ERROR CORRECTION IN SPEECH IN WRITING

1 CONSIDER THE SITUATION.

Is the language situation an informal situation or formal one? Is the student speaking extemporaneously or writing a first draft, or has she had time to plan and reflect? Who are the participants in the situation — other students or the larger community, for example? All of these considerations matter in deciding if it's appropriate or not to correct student error. Even native speakers, actually, sometimes make mistakes like subject/verb agreement errors when engaged in spontaneous speech in an informal situation. It's just that nobody really notices their errors.

2 FOCUS ON LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION.

What is the purpose of language: to show how correct and elegant we can be in our production, or is it to communicate a specific message? Unless you are a poet, for example, whose business is the beauty of language, and for whom the main purpose might be its beauty, the ultimate goal of language is most cases is to get across a specific message. If the student has achieved that, his production is probably "good enough," in most cases.

3 FOCUS ON PURPOSE OF CORRECTION.

Why do we correct student error? Is it to show our expertise, to show the student her errors so she'll learn from them? To demonstrate our editing skills? To show we know more than our students? In most cases, of course, the purpose of correction is to help the student revise her writing or improve her fluency and accent. In order to do this, correction should be limited and focused on specific points for improvement: for example, verb tenses or intonation patterns. If every error is noted, it becomes too overwhelming for the student to begin to know where to improve.

4 FOCUS ON LARGER, OR GLOBAL, ERRORS.

Which errors should be corrected? Should all student errors be marked? If they are mistakes, the instructor should point them out, shouldn't she? Again, we should go back here to the purpose of correction. If the purpose is to help students improve production, then correction should be limited to one or two areas for students to focus on which are important to overall comprehensibility: the student's pattern of run-on sentences, for example, or stress patterns, not a single misspelling or mispronunciation. Isolated issues of misspelling and mispronunciation usually do not detract from overall comprehensibility (if this were the case, most native speakers of English would on occasion lapse into incoherence), -- rather, the instructor should look for the global problems — problems in verb tense switch, for example, usually effect overall comprehensibility of a message.

5 FOCUS ON PATTERNS OF ERRORS.

In addition to considering the seriousness of an error, the instructor should consider the frequency of the error. If the student has a concern with almost always omitting articles ("a," "an," and "the"), this is a problem that should be addressed because omitted articles are distracting from the overall message and can affect overall comprehensibility of the writing.

6 COST-BENEFIT

Are all errors even worth the time and trouble to correct? For example, prepositions in English, especially the more abstract ones that don't refer to a literal place, are very difficult to teach as they are idiomatic and dialectal: for example, in American English I "come around" to see a friend, while in British English I "come round." Is it "go down" the street or "go up" the street? They mean the same thing. And if a nonnative speaker mixed up these expressions, I probably wouldn't notice, much less be confused. So considering the difficulty in learning prepositions, and the overall unimportance of them, it probably is not worth the time investment to learn them. This also goes for trying to "correct" specific nonnative English speech sounds, like the non-English trilled "r." It is all right in most cases, unless the student is training to be a spy, to retain some nonnative "accent" in both speech and writing.

7 TEACH STUDENTS HOW TO SELF-CORRECT.

Finally, it's usually not enough for the instructor to just show where the errors are. The student also must know how to correct them, so the instructor should dem-

onstrate for the student how to do this — how to check that the verbs agree with the subject, for example — rather than just making the correction herself, from which the student learns nothing. It is, of course, ultimately the goal for the student to use English independently, which means monitoring and correcting his own language production.

8 CONSIDER STUDENT AFFECT.

Last but really not least, student affect, emotional response, has to be taken into consideration. A paper that comes back covered in red ink accompanied by the instructor's biting comments at the end — we've all probably experienced something like this at some point — may very well result in the student giving up, which is, of course, not the goal. The goal is for students to move forward, improving from the place they are. This involves carefully weighing what comments and marks on papers will mean to students how they will be affected by them. Do they know what subject-verb agreement means? Have I taught that yet? Do they know how to correct it? What are the positive aspects of the students' speech and language production that I can mention and which they can build on while working on their weaker spots? Marking papers and giving feedback does really involve addressing many aspects of student need.

CORRECTING STUDENT ERROR IS A SENSITIVE ISSUE THAT MOST INSTRUCTORS WOULD PROBABLY RATHER NOT DO. HOWEVER, THROUGH CONSIDERING SUCH ISSUES AS OVERALL COMPREHENSIBILITY AND GOALS OF CORRECTION, THE INSTRUCTOR CAN TURN THE POTENTIALLY NEGATIVE EXERCISE OF GIVING CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK INTO A POSITIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

Are You Coming Back Tomorrow? Addressing Student Attrition

Some of my fondest teaching memories are of teaching adult ESL: the students are motivated, the curriculum clear-cut, the colleagues pleasant and noncompetitive, and the general environment low-stress because it is low-stakes: the students are in most cases not working to pass tests or matriculate into the "regular" classes, and indeed most of the classes are ungraded and noncredit.

So what could possibly go wrong in such a dream teaching environment? One of the major problems is its very low-stress, noncompetitive environment — the class is seen as perhaps the way many of us regard going to the gym or taking a sewing or other extra-curricular class. The noncompetitive atmosphere can create a lack of incentive for even showing up. In addition, given the very hectic nature of many adult ESL students' lives and their barriers — change in work hours, lack of childcare — the teacher might see her class shrink considerably over the course of a term. Fortunately, there are methods to address this trend and create a class of committed students who attend, if not regularly, as much as possible for them.

WAYS TO COMBAT STUDENT ATTRITION

1 ACCEPT A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF ATTRITION IS INEVITABLE.

Given the choice between paid labor and a class, students are generally going to choose the job and with good reason: they have family and themselves to support, perhaps even relatives back in their home countries depending on them financially. Therefore, don't take their leaving personally: say good-bye pleasantly as they leave to bring in the harvest or work the night shift and invite them back next term. Often they do show up again the next term — so perhaps this is not really attrition but the normal ebb and flow of an adult, noncredit class.

2 WELCOME STUDENTS BACK.

Make students feel welcome when they return after a long period away: greet them pleasantly and help reintegrate them into the class structure. Make this reintegration possible through detailed schedules, course outlines, websites with the term's important handouts posted, as well peer mentoring, classmates that will help returning students with the material they missed, going over important points. Students are likely to return when their work or family situation normalizes if they feel welcomed back and there's a procedure in place to help them catch up.

3 CREATE A PLEASANT, LOW-STRESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

Many adult students who resume their education after a long time in the workforce or at home have had negative experiences with schools and teachers which caused them to leave the academic setting in the first place. That, combined with a stressful current classroom situation, will discourage them from returning. Therefore, maintain a low-stress atmosphere by positively responding to student work, fair treatment of all students, and a good balance of activities that are neither too challenging nor too easy. In addition, making learning interactive, giving students the opportunity to learn from both their peers and you, will keep students returning to the class.

4 FLEXIBILITY.

These class circumstances of students attending when they can and shifting student population result in the need for more day-to-day planning in which the instructor knows in general what will be covered — language for extended families and their daily activities, for example — but the activities related to the particular learning objective can be adjusted on the spot depending on who shows up for class, focusing, for example, on more common and "universal" vocabulary such as "sister" or "uncle" for beginning classes, and more cultural/advanced vocabulary for advanced classes: vocabulary such as "stepsister" or "significant other," for more contemporary family relationships.

In addition, while working in adult-level ESL classes, I quickly learned to move to more day-to-day planning rather than long-range projects. Long-range projects are too frustrating and difficult to see through when the student population changes on a near-daily basis.

5 WORK TO REMOVE BARRIERS.

As much as possible, accommodate work schedules and implement methods to allow students to catch up when they've been away on the job, such as a website with a schedule and assignments posted. Accept late work. Implement group work and peer tutoring so students can catch each other up to speed. In as much as your institution allows it, permit students to bring their children to class if their childcare falls through. I've never had a student abuse this privilege, using it as a one-time measure, usually, and the children have been uniformly well-behaved and non-disruptive.

6 PROVIDE A MEANINGFUL CURRICULUM.

Often ESL classes offer instruction that is not matched student needs: popular movies, cross-word puzzles, grammar drills, and conjugating verbs are not what ESL students are focused on learning and are not the best use of their time. Offer instead meaningful instruction in English use related to their immediate lives: how to have conversations with new friends and neighbors, ways to speak at the doctor's office or airport, how to write a standard business letter or do a productive web search. Offering meaningful curriculum is one way to keep students coming back again and again.

7 COMMUNICATE YOUR ENTHUSIASM AND ENERGY.

Show your enthusiasm for the English language and English-speaking culture. This enthusiasm will communicate itself to the students, affecting their mood and desire to learn. A teacher who is enthusiastic about material almost always generates similar enthusiasm in students. Take lectures and discussions beyond the textbook page to give students information and practice they can't get on their own. For example, a lecture on the passive versus the active voice can be a dry-as-dust grammar activity or it can come alive as the instructor delves into why the passive voice is used and specific examples: for example, a well-known leader's use to explain his administration's faux-pas: "Mistakes were made," as well as more everyday usage of avoiding responsibility: "I'm sorry, but your records have been lost." Examples like these drawn from life can't necessarily be found in textbooks and are a reason to return to class. .

8 CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO INTERACT.

To often even today language classes involve students sitting in neat rows, listening to the instructor lecture about language use, and speaking the new language only when called on — which may only be a couple of times a session. Instead, after a brief demonstration and instruction, set up groups and allow students to practice the language point with each other.

ADULT CLASSES WITH HIGH STUDENT ATTRITION ARE A CHALLENGE TO TEACH. INSTRUCTORS CAN'T BE SURE WHO WILL BE IN CLASS THE NEXT DAY, WHICH OF COURSE HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING. HOWEVER, THROUGH ATTENTION TO THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION, AS WELL AS CREATING A LOW-STRESS ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH LESSONS ARE APPROACHED WITH ENTHUSIASM, THE TEACHER CAN ENSURE THAT STUDENTS WILL KEEP COMING BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN!

ESL Learning Styles: 9 Ways to Teach Interpersonal Learners

THEY'RE ALWAYS TALKING TO EACH OTHER.

They volunteer to help you without even being asked. They ask people lots of questions and are often fascinated by what they have to say. They love pair work, group work or any type of task they can do with their classmates. Socializing is their main thing, and that's because they are interpersonal learners.

Interpersonal learners thrive in social interactions. One of eight types of learning styles or intelligence, as defined by Howard Gardner, interpersonal learners are "people smart" in the truest sense of the word.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERPERSONAL LEARNERS:

- They have no trouble making new friends.
- They do well in collaborative/cooperative activities.
- They are able to "read" people: they understand what motivates them and what intentions they have, as well as moods and temperament.
- They are good at empathizing with others.
- They are very skilled at interpreting faces, gestures and tone of voice.

Use these resources/activities to capitalize on this particular learning style:

1 INTERVIEWS

Split the class into pairs and have one interview the other, then switch. Students may simply be themselves or choose a famous celebrity they admire and know well. The interviewer has to guess who the famous person is.

2 GIVING ADVICE

This is a great way to tap into your learners' people skills and practice modals. Hand out cards with problems/situations you students may encounter. If you make your own, the cards may say things like, "I have a sore throat" or "I don't know how to get to the library from here" and so on. Students read the card they were given. You may ask them to elaborate and give more details about their "problem". The student giving advice uses modal verbs like could, should, or must to give their recommendations.

3 TEACHING!

Interpersonal learners are good teachers! Go over which words are useful when explaining a sequence of steps (time-order words). Ask them to choose one thing they are good at and to tell the class how to do it – step by step. Language they are expected to use may be words like, first, then, next, and finally.

4 PAIR WORK

There are endless tasks students may do in pairs. Aside from the usual pairwork speaking tasks, like this one (busyteacher.org/8742-houses-pairwork-activity-worksheet.html), try writing activities in pairs, like writing a story together.

5 GROUP WORK

Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students. Give them a group scenario they are likely to face in real life: they must plan a surprise birthday party for a friend. Together they must decide what food and drinks they will serve, who will buy the supplies, who will play the music, in other words, who will be responsible for what. You can give all of the groups the same scenario and later compare. Or give each a different one.

6 ROLE PLAYS

Interpersonal learners are perfect for role plays. The essence of a role play is to act out a real life situation, so whether you give them a shopping, restaurant or hotel scenario, they will put their people skills and English-speaking skills to the test.

7 LEADING

Interpersonal learners are natural-born leaders, so if you ever need someone to be in charge, you know who to choose. Give your class a big poster board and tell them they will have to create a poster together as a group. The "leader" will be able to say who will look for pictures to cut out from magazines, who will glue them and who will write on the poster.

8 BRAINSTORMING

When working together interpersonal students will come up with some awesome ideas. Use the cards in this Brainstorming Game (busyteacher.org/12818-the-brainstorming-game.html) and ask them to come up with, for example environmental problems we currently face and ideas to deal with these problems.

9 SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES

Because they are very good at empathizing, ask them to take someone else's point of view. Read a story with your class, then, tell your students to imagine they are the main character in the story. Ask them to tell you or write about how they felt and why they did what they did.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR:

Interpersonal learners are very good at handling people in general, and in most cases will contribute genuine, friendly interactions in the ESL class. But watch out for the following:

- Manipulation, or trying to get their own way.
- Socializing, when they should be doing a quiet activity like reading or writing.
- Arguing, when their opinion is different from yours or another classmate's.

INTERPERSONAL LEARNERS ARE A PLEASURE TO HAVE IN THE ESL CLASS, AS THEY'RE ALWAYS READY TO PARTICIPATE AND CONTRIBUTE.

Because the ESL classroom is a very social environment, they will feel at ease with most of the tasks you propose. And yet the most wonderful thing is that you will learn as much from them as they will from you.

ESL Learning Styles: 9 Ways to Teach Musical Learners

THEY HUM TO THEMSELVES.
They tap rhythmically on the desk with their pencils. They love silly rhymes and chants. These learners don't just like music, they connect to it on every level because they are musical/rhythmic learners.

Musical learners thrive in an environment where they can not only hear music, but also hear patterns and relationships between sounds. One of eight types of learning styles or intelligence, as defined by Howard Gardner, musical learners have the ability to process all kinds of auditory information.

5 CHARACTERISTICS OF MUSICAL LEARNERS:

- They have music or a song in their heads most of the time.
- They may even say ordinary things in a singsong way.
- They enjoy singing and chanting.
- They are very good listeners.
- They tap and move to rhythm.

Use these resources/activities to capitalize on this particular learning style:

1 SONGS

Songs are what work best for musical learners, so don't be afraid to give them plenty of those. Here are just a few things you can do with a song:

- Do a gap-filling exercise for a specific verb tense or type of word (adjective, adverb, pronoun)
- Learn a seasonal or holiday song (Christmas, New Year's, summer)
- Listen and discuss
- Listen and write a story/dialogue based on the song
- Listen and act out a role play based on the song

Use your imagination! There's no limit to what you can do with a song!

2 CHANTS

Chants are very rhythmic and easy to remember – the ideal way to reach musical learners. Did you know you can teach almost anything with a chant? Here are just a few ideas:

- A numbers chant
- A classroom rules chant
- The "Thirty Days Has September.." chant to learn the months
- Grammar chants – a very effective way to practice any verb tense

3 READING OUT LOUD

When it comes to reading, it is best for musical learners to read out loud as they have the chance to hear the sounds and patterns the English words and structures make. You can try:

- A single student reading out loud,
- Choral reading, or
- Rereading after you model the reading

4 DANCE/MOVE/CLAP TO A CERTAIN BEAT

Musical learners are even more motivated when a certain beat is accompanied by movement. When you teach sentence or word stress, clap your hands once for each of the words/syllables, but emphasize the stressed word/syllable with a louder clap. Sing songs that you can also dance/move to like "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes".

5 RHYMES

Use popular rhymes like Mother Goose Rhymes or books like Dr. Seuss'. They have a particular rhythm that is very attractive to musical learners. Play games with rhymes. Teach irregular verbs in rhymes. Ask musical learners to come up with words that rhyme! They will!

6 LISTENING WHILE WRITING, READING, DRAWING

Musical learners are more stimulated to learn when they are surrounded by music. Feel free to play some music they can listen to while they read, write or draw. Just make sure you pick the right kind of music, perhaps Mozart or anything instrumental. Pop songs with lyrics they are familiar with will make them sing instead of help them focus on the task at hand.

7 LISTENING TO REAL AUDIO

Musical learners are very skilled listeners and are able to pick up on all sorts of information. Make good use of these skills by giving them authentic materials to listen to.

8 INTONATION PRACTICE

Sentence stress, word stress, rising or falling intonation -- these are the types of things musical learners should have no trouble with as they have a good ear for picking up on the differences.

9 PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE

Their pronunciation may not be perfect, but musical learners are certainly better able to hear differences between vowel and consonant sounds. Capitalize on this skill and give them plenty of pronunciation practice – it won't be wasted! They're also very good at seeing patterns so they will easily pick on the spelling of some vowel and consonant sounds, as well as specific consonant combinations.

WHAT TO AVOID:

There are certain things that will not work well with musical learners. These are mainly:

- A completely quiet environment. Musical learners need to be stimulated by music and sound. Making them sit quietly for extended periods to read or write will only make them start humming or tapping tunes.
- Quiet reading or writing. Musical learners need to hear out loud what they will write before they can write it. Reading out loud is also preferred.

TRY NOT TO GET ANNOYED BY THE CONSTANT DRUMMING, TOE TAPPING, NOT TO MENTION THE IPODS THAT SEEM TO BE SURGICALLY ATTACHED TO MUSICAL LEARNERS. Instead of fighting it, embrace it and bring some rhythm into your class. You might notice yourself humming a tune on your way home.

ESL Learning Styles: 9 Ways to Teach Visual Learners

AS AN ESL TEACHER, YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED THAT STUDENTS LEARN IN DIFFERENT WAYS, AND MORE THAN THAT, YOU'VE STARTED SEEING SOME TRENDS.

Do you have students who consistently ask you to write down a new word? Or perhaps students who open the book and try to find the page with the language point you happen to be teaching? How about students who respond better to visual stimuli rather than audio? Then, in all likelihood you've got visual learners: these are students who learn more easily through images or written words.

5 CHARACTERISTICS OF VISUAL LEARNERS:

- They forget what they hear, but rather remember what they see.
- They enjoy puzzles, board games, building blocks and all types of crafts materials.
- They have a better sense of space than time.
- They are very imaginative and may come up with lots of ideas and/or solutions to a problem, especially of they can "see" it in their mind's eye.
- They learn words and their correct spelling more easily after seeing them written down.

Use these resources to capitalize on this particular learning style:

1 FLASHCARDS

Visual learners of all ages and levels learn better with flashcards. The great thing is that flashcards are highly versatile -- there is a huge variety of activities you can do with your class – they'll never get bored! Use them to introduce new vocabulary, or practice, review or even test their knowledge. And don't forget flashcard games!

2 COMICS AND CARTOONS

Take a comic strip and white out the speech bubbles. Have your students complete them with their own story. Or have your visual learners draw one themselves, or a cartoon to illustrate a scene. This type of activity also gives visual learners their much-needed quiet time. They thrive in learning environments where they can think and concentrate.

3 WORD PUZZLES

Having visual learners doesn't necessarily mean that they have to only use pictures or illustrations to learn. They also relate quite well to the written word because they can "see" it, and so it is much easier for them to remember words they have practiced. Use all types of puzzles from crosswords to word searches – create your own (busyteacher.org/tilepuzzle/)!

4 DRAW – PICTIONARY

One of the best games you can play with visual learners is Pictionary. But instead of using the board game as is (because it may be too hard), make your own version with word cards that you can create to suit your students' level.

5 WHITEBOARD GAMES

Whether you use it for drawing or writing, you should use the whiteboard a lot in classes with a great deal of visual learners. And don't just write or draw in them, be sure to play plenty of games. Use different color board markers – visual learners love colors! You can color code new vocabulary, for example, by writing verbs in green, adjectives in red and nouns in blue.

6 GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

For visual learners, concepts and words often get lost if they are not organized in a graphic that is both clear and easy to remember – and this exactly is where graphic organizers come in. From Venn Diagrams to Sequence Charts, these graphic helpers really get the point across.

7 VIDEO

Visual learners may find listening to audio too hard. They have trouble grasping concepts they can't clearly "see". But they must still develop their listening comprehension skills, which is why video is a lot better than simple audio. Visual learners get images and context to accompany what they hear, and this boosts their listening comprehension.

8 MULTIMEDIA

Multimedia presentations like PowerPoint slides also help students retain new concepts and words. They are easy to make and very effective in a classroom full of visual learners.

9 ILLUSTRATED READING

When reading with visual learners, it's much better if you use books with illustrations. There are wonderful graphic novel versions of classics like Treasure Island, A Wrinkle in Time or The Odyssey.

WHAT TO AVOID:

There are certain resources or strategies that will not work well with visual learners. These are mainly:

- Anything that relies too heavily on audio (without video)
- Following strictly verbal instructions – they must be written down
- Spelling out words without writing them on the board – visual learners need to see them.

THERE ARE SEVERAL DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES YOUR ESL STUDENTS COULD FIT INTO.

By figuring out how they learn best, and catering to this particular style, you'll be making use of abilities your students already possess. Struggling to get them to do something (like listen to a CD) simply because they "have to" or "it's what other classes do" is not only counterproductive, but also frustrating for your students. Work with them, and their abilities, and you'll soon see them making progress by leaps and bounds.

ESL Learning Styles: 9 Ways to Teach Tactile-Kinesthetic Learners

Have you ever had students who were truly "hands on"? The kind who want to touch everything, gesticulate wildly and find it hard to sit still for extended periods of time? Then, you have been faced with tactile-kinesthetic learners, the kind of student who needs to do things and use their whole body to learn.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TACTILE-KINESTHETIC LEARNERS:

- They use their hands to speak: they make lots of gestures and describe things with their hands or even their entire body.
- They enjoy working with their hands, so crafts are a must in the ESL classroom, as well as building blocks and toys.
- They need to move, do and touch. For this reason, they are better suited to activities with Total Physical Response.
- They need frequent breaks.
- They have excellent hand-eye coordination.

Use these resources/activities to capitalize on this particular learning style:

1 REALIA

The use of realia, or real life objects that you bring into the classroom, is the ideal strategy for tactile-kinesthetic learners. Plastic fruits and vegetables are a lot better than flashcards. Real clothes or costumes are better than illustrations. For instance, bring a toy tea set to teach asking for/offering drinks.

2 CRAFTS

Tactile learners are great with their hands. They have the ability to create masterpieces in watercolors, or build anything out of clay or blocks. Put those crafty little hands to good use, particularly during the holidays and let them enjoy fall, spring, Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving or Christmas crafts.

3 EXPERIMENTS

Science experiments are ideal for tactile learners – but how do you introduce science experiments in an ESL classroom? Easy! Students may experiment with the speed at which ice melts. Plant seeds with them – you will see that a lot more than a garden will grow in your classroom. And how about some simple color mixing with your youngest learners? They will have loads of fun finding out how to make their favorites out of just the basic primary colors. And for more ideas visit TryScience.org.

4 MAGIC

Amaze your tactile learners with some simple magic tricks! Teach them how to make invisible ink. Here are (bit.ly/foI2OG) some easy magic tricks that you can learn and teach your students. You can use them to fit into your lesson plan or as an added bonus for good behavior at the end of class.

5 SONGS WITH MOVEMENT

Most young learners enjoy singing, but tactile-kinesthetic learners will love songs with movement. It can be as simple as having them hold hands and go round and round as they sing. Or have them sing songs where they mime the actions, like Wheels on the Bus or Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.

6 CHARADES

Charades is a classic game and an excellent choice for tactile-kinesthetic learners. Moreover, it is a very versatile game that you can adapt to suit your language teaching needs. For example, you can play charades to practice animals, sports or even musical instruments.

7 SIMON SAYS

Another classic game for tactile-kinesthetic learners, it is also best if you put a spin on it. Instead of having them just "touch your nose", have Simon ask them to carry out more challenging tasks: "Simon says take your student book and balance it on your head."

8 IMPERATIVES

Tactile-kinesthetic learners are great at "doing", so the best way to teach action verbs and their imperative form to these active learners is by doing the actions. Don't be afraid to open and close windows and doors, take items and put them in different places, or dance, skip or jump. Then, use the imperative form to tell students to carry out these actions themselves, and finally have them tell others.

9 GAMES WITH ACTION!

Tactile-kinesthetic learners love playing games like any child, but they will thrive in those with plenty of action. Prefer games where they have to race to the whiteboard to those where they have to only move pieces across a board. Choose games where they shoot baskets instead of those where they have to sit.

WHAT TO AVOID:

There are certain resources or strategies that will not work well with tactile-kinesthetic learners. These are mainly:

- Extended periods of reading.
- Extended periods of listening.
- Extended periods of writing. Instead of long essays or stories, opt for a written Q and A.
- Extended periods of sitting. Tactile learners will become restless – they need to move around!

Notice that the recommendation is to avoid "extended" periods of reading, writing or listening. Of course, even your most energetic, restless, tactile learners will need to practice these essential skills. Your best course of action is to alternate a quiet period of reading or writing with a more active game or TPR activity.

ONE FINAL NOTE: BE PREPARED TO JUMP, DANCE AND SHOUT.

Tactile learners will wear you out! But rest assured, they are such a happy bunch, so full of energy and enthusiasm, that you will have as much fun as they will!

Helping Students with Time Management

YOU'VE PROBABLY SEEN THEM, THOSE STUDENTS WHO PERHAPS REMIND YOU OF YOURSELF IN YOUR FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE: THEY COME IN LATE.

They spend ten minutes trying to organize their materials. When you collect papers, they don't have theirs ready yet, saying they will get it to you "tomorrow." They consult their day planner and then realize they have two big tests coming up this week and important appointments and practices to attend — at least they think so because they may not have actually noted them on their schedules or may not have noted them correctly. Sometimes they fall asleep in class, or they come up to you after class, desperate, looking for help, and then you learn they are taking eighteen units, playing a sport that requires almost daily practice, as well as working part time. You realize then you are dealing with a student with poor time management skills — they take on too many commitments and don't know how to organize or plan their schedules to address all of those commitments. There are methods, however, to help such students, and most students, in fact, can benefit from instruction in managing schedules and time.

PRINCIPLES OF TIME MANAGEMENT

1 SET PRIORITIES

Discuss with students their goals and priorities. What is most important to you as a student? Earning your degree as quickly as possible? Getting straight "As"? Working your way through college and graduating without debt? Taking part in sports, theater, and other extracurricular activities? Any of these are obtainable, but probably not all at once — someone who wants to take part regularly in sports or theater, for example, is probably not going to be able to take all the units necessary to graduate in three years, while someone committed to getting straight "As" may have to take out loans because working long hours will usually result in fewer study hours and lower grades. Students must themselves then decide which are their largest priorities — grades, job, or sport. While one or two of these goals are certainly obtainable, not all are — at least, not at the same time.

2 LEARN TO SAY "NO" TO EXTRA COMMITMENTS

Some students wind up overcommitted because they haven't yet learned to say "no"—"no" to serving on student council because they are already have a paid job, for example, or "no" to taking on a leadership position within their sorority or fraternity because they are taking eighteen units. They may even need to say "no" to their bosses on working extra hours because of their school schedule. Saying "no" is not a pleasant experience for most of us, but if done politely and honestly, it is better than the alternative of, for example, agreeing to work during the time of scheduled classes and then hope somehow this will somehow be all right (I have known students to do this.) Being upfront about what you can and cannot do results in fewer misunderstandings and less poor performance and hurt feelings down the road.

3 BUDGET TIME FOR DAILY NEEDS

Again, students should recognize they are mortal and must budget time for daily needs such as eating and sleeping and then other regular if not daily needs of going to the doctor, dentist, maintaining a car, doing laundry, and so forth. Not to do so may result in illness, a car that breaks down, desperate searches for a clean set of clothing — all of which take up more time than regular maintenance of oneself and one's possessions.

4 BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

Time spent looking for lost books, papers, wallets, and keys wastes time. Getting lost and driving around aimlessly or looking for the correct train route also wastes time. This is time that can be better spent on studying, working, or building relationships. Therefore, students should keep reference lists or databases of such important information as phone numbers and directions regularly used so that time is not wasted on searching for numbers or getting lost. In addition, allocate a specific place for each item, and return it to that place when finished. Finally, keep a daily schedule and budget time for study, work, doing laundry, and so forth. Note important appointments and due dates so that they aren't forgotten and then have to be rescheduled, which wastes more time. Organizational skills like these will help students throughout college and beyond.

5 BUILD IN TIME FOR REST, EXERCISE, AND SOCIALIZING

As important as work is, rest, exercise, and socializing is also important—regular relaxation and exercise being vital to physical health and socialization to mental health as we are beings meant to live in a community. In addition, it is through regular meetings, parties, lunches, and other get-togethers with students and faculty that students will make valuable connections and learn social skills that are arguably as valuable as the work and academic skills they are learning in class.

TEACHING TIME MANAGEMENT

1 LINK TO THE CURRICULUM

Learning about time management may seem to students initially as — well, a waste of time, particularly if they already feel they have good time management skills or that a content class is not the place to be addressing the issue. One way to address the concern is to connect the topic to the

course content — either through readings and discussions that introduces higher level vocabulary and concepts or by demonstrating how managing time well can result directly in improved study habits and grades.

2 DISCUSSION

Discussion about time management can be teacher-led or small group. The topic is almost always interesting to students as we almost all have over–taxed schedules. Have students discuss priorities and methods they currently use for time management, and have them share their ideas and methods on managing time. Often this will result in students seeing gaps in their methods — indeed it's common for students to see they have no real current principle of time management, and that it is itself a concern. Students also are able to learn from each other important methods of managing schedules that they had not thought of.

3 EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

Teach the fine arts of scheduling, budgeting, and keeping databases of important information: students often have little or no experience with this, and showing students that the calendar application on their smart phones, for example, has an actual purpose and features that can really help them in scheduling, is often enlightening. Students often have never even used a more traditional paper calendar, such as a day planner, and keep their commitments on scraps of paper or in stray places in binders and wallets. Showing them how to organize all the material in one place will free up mental as well as physical space: there will be less worry, for example, about what may have been forgotten.

4 ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICE

Have students discuss with each other worksheets that assist them in setting goals, for example, or demonstrate through modeling and practicing setting up a schedule. Discuss common scenarios and then have students role play polite ways to set limits on all the people who invariably make demands on our time and human limits: family, friends, roommates, and employers. Having student practice will get them in the mental habit of setting priorities and scheduling time.

LEARNING TIME MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS ISN'T EASY, AND IN FACT THEY ARE COMPLEX SKILLS PERHAPS LEARNED INCREMENTALLY OVER A LIFETIME, NOT IN ONE CLASS.

But getting students in the habit of thinking of how to manage their limited time from the outset sets them on a course for success in the rest of college and their careers.

6 Fresh Activities for Group Work

ARE YOU STUCK IN A RUT WHEN IT COMES TO GROUP ACTIVITIES?
Is it time to teach new vocabulary, review for a test or just do something different in class? Try these 6 unique ideas for group work to mix things up.

GROUP WORK IS VERY EFFECTIVE WHEN USED IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS

1 CHOOSE YOUR OWN VOCABULARY

For something different, why not have your students come up with a set of vocabulary words to learn for the day? Start with a topic of your choice. Tell your students that you are going to let them choose their own set of vocabulary words on that subject. Give your students one word associated with that topic and write it on the board. Then have your students take turns adding words to the list. You should write the words on the board as they give them. Their words can be anything as long as they are associated with the topic you have given them. Students should be allowed to use dictionaries and thesauruses to come up with their words. Once everyone has given a unique word to the vocabulary set, have groups of students write a paragraph or two using each of the words on the list.

2 SECRET DESCRIPTIONS

The next time you want to review adjectives with your class, try this group activity. Put your students into groups of about five or six, and have each group choose one person they will describe for the rest of the class. Without telling the class who it is, members of the group should take turns writing descriptive words or phrases on the board about that person. The other groups should try to determine who the group is describing as they write the adjectives on the board. Once each person in the presenting group has added a description, the other groups should write down who they think is being described. If they are correct, their group earns a point. After each of the groups have described a member, start again with the first group. The game is over once one or more teams have scored three points.

3 PLAY BALL

Is there a test coming up soon in your class? This is a fun way to review before it's time to put pencils to paper. Have your students arrange themselves in a circle. You stand in the center of the circle holding a ball. Ask a review question, and then throw the ball to one of your students. That student should answer your question and then throw the ball back to you. If the student with the ball cannot answer the question, he or she must say, "I'm sorry. I don't know the answer." He then passes the ball to another student. That student either answers the question and gives you the ball or says she doesn't know and passes the ball to another student. If at any time a student gives an incorrect answer say, "I'm sorry. That isn't the correct answer." Then pass the ball to another student who tries to answer. Play this way until someone gives the correct answer to the question. Then move on to another question and pass the ball again. Play until you have asked all of your review questions or until everyone in the class has answered a question correctly.

4 MEMORY CHALLENGE

This vocabulary learning activity is fun for students of all levels. Collect several items on a tray (they can be around one theme or randomly selected), and show them to your students for sixty seconds. The more items you use, the more difficult the activity will be. Then cover the items and have groups of students work together to make a list of all of the items that were on the tray. When your students cannot remember any more items, uncover the tray and have them check their answers. This is a good time to review the names of the items on the tray or give alternative names for them. After checking their lists, have each group work together to write one sentence about each of the items. To extend the activity, remove one or two items and show the tray to your students again. Groups discuss what is different or what items are missing. This gives them a chance to use the vocabulary they have just learned. In addition, you can use this activity to review prepositions of location. Have your students write descriptive sentences about where the items are located on the tray. Then, rather than removing items, move items around and have groups discuss what changes you made to the positions of the objects.

5 WHAT WILL YOU NEED

Tell your students they are going on a trip, and they will need to pack. You decide where they will be going or take suggestions from the class. Groups of two or three students work together to make a list of all the items they will need to bring with them. Give your students no less than one but no more than five minutes to make their list. (The shorter the amount of time, the more difficult the game will be.) Then, have groups compare what they have listed. Any items that another group has listed should be crossed out. Groups score one point for each of the unique items on their packing list. The group with the most number of unique (and appropriate) items wins the round. Play again, this time with another destination in mind. At the end of three rounds, the team with the most points wins.

6 GET CREATIVE

Prepare for this activity by collecting 20-40 pictures of objects. You can use pictures from magazines or recycled picture books, pictures printed off the internet, take pictures of items yourself or buy a set of flash cards with random nouns. Shuffle the pictures and divide your class into groups of around three students. Then have each group choose five pictures without looking at them. The students must then work together to compose a skit that includes all of the objects they have chosen. Encourage your students to be creative and to have fun. Then, have each group perform their skit in front of the class.

9 Simple Tips for Keeping Your Students Motivated (Part 1)

ANYONE WHO HAS SPENT TIME IN AN ESL CLASSROOM KNOWS TEACHERS WORK HARD TO MAKE SURE THEIR STUDENTS ARE LEARNING AND PROGRESSING IN THEIR LANGUAGE STUDIES.

We design curriculum, present information in creative and engaging ways and try to focus on practical and useful language tasks. Unfortunately, all that can mean little if the students in our class are unmotivated. That's why it's important to get students engaged and invested in their own language studies. The good news is that getting students motivated is easier than you might think. These simple ideas for your classroom can mean the difference between a student who doesn't care and one who really wants to make a difference in his or her own education.

IT IS A WAY MORE PLEASANT AND INSPIRING TO TEACH A MOTIVATED GROUP OF PEOPLE

1 LET THEM KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

Most of my ESL teaching happened at the collegiate level, so writing a syllabus at the start of the semester was something I had to do anyway. But even if it isn't required for your teaching environment, a syllabus is still worth doing. For one, it keeps you organized and on track. When you plan out the semester, marking period or year in one sitting, you automatically have a timeline in place. (If you are unsure how to plan your entire year at one time, I've Got the Book, Now What? will walk you through creating a full semester plan.) If you are teaching ESL at the younger grades, a syllabus may not be the best choice for communicating with your students, but you can still let them know where you are going. In fact, you can give them the same information on a calendar. If you like, post a monthly calendar in your classroom with goals and objectives. For younger and older students alike, posting daily goals on the board before class begins will help them know what you expect of them each day. When your students know your expectations, they are more likely to engage in activities as well as feel a sense of accomplishment once those objectives are met, and this will increase their motivation to do well in school.

2 GIVE THEM WHAT THEY NEED.

Letting your students know your goals and expectations is great, but that knowledge won't help them if they don't have what they need to succeed in the classroom. Making sure you have the right tools, resources and environment for your students is essential. You cannot expect a student to do an independent listening activity if you do not have any listening material available in the classroom. Likewise, how well will your students be able to research if they do not have books or the internet as information sources? Sometimes, meeting students' needs takes no more than a class trip to the library or inviting native speakers to come be conversation partners. Before your next class, think about what you want your students to accomplish. Then think about what you would need to accomplish that goal. Then add in the challenge of working in a second language and make a list of everything your students will need to be successful. If you have these resources in your classroom, your students will avoid frustration and will, as a result, stay more motivated in their language learning.

3 GIVE DIRECTION.

Even when your students have the road map and the car, if they don't know how to drive they won't get anywhere. It's similar for your ESL students. Once you have communicated your plan and made the right resources available, you need to show them the way. When we learn our first language, our infant mind processes and eventually produces language with little to no conscious effort. But that won't be the case with your ESL students. Unless you are teaching very young children (under five years old), language learning is more complicated. Your students will have to think about what they are doing and saying and how they are using language. That's what language teaching is all about – showing your students how language works and encouraging them to use what they know. But giving direction doesn't stop there. Your students won't know how to use the tools you have made available in your classroom unless you show them. Instead of assigning general assignments (e.g. do exercises on prepositions of location), the best teachers show their students exactly where to find these exercises. Don't get me wrong: almost every teacher gives specific assignments, but showing your students useful websites, effective study methods and the best ways to practice language will make a difference. In addition, giving them lists of books, specific magazines, television shows or movies that they can understand and learn from will help your students focus. Your students will feel more confident in what they are doing and that it will help them in their language learning efforts when they know they are doing things right. As a result, they will be more motivated to continue those activities and add others that you suggest.

4 THINK ABOUT YOUR STYLE.

The most motivated students are ones who feel they are valued and whose teachers make classroom activities work for them. This ties into a concept that most teachers have heard several times over: learning styles. Not all learners have the same success with every activity you will plan for class. Not every student learns the same way. That's why targeting as many different learning styles as possible in your classroom will give you the most motivated students. This means thinking about students who learn through what they see, what they hear, and what they do. It also means including activities for students who learn best through analysis, music, by themselves and with others. When your students know that you are making efforts to meet their personal learning needs, and they will once you start including several types of classroom activities, they will match your effort with effort of their own and will become better overall students and language learners.

9 Simple Tips for Keeping Your Students Motivated (Part Two)

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR EASY WAYS TO MOTIVATE YOUR ESL STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM?

Here are the final five classroom tips to help you do just that.

MOTIVATING CAN BE EASY IF YOU TAKE THE FOLLOWING INTO ACCOUNT

5 ACKNOWLEDGE JOBS WELL DONE.

Whether you are teaching second graders or secondary school, telling your students that they are doing a good job means a lot. Perhaps getting positive feedback from our teachers meant more when we were children than it does as adults, but that doesn't mean that we no longer need to hear praise from our teachers. When we know that our efforts are appreciated and that those efforts have helped us reach our goals, we are more motivated to make additional efforts in the future. Teachers can praise their students in many effective ways. Perhaps the most simple is saying, "Good job" when our students do something right. Praise given one on one or in front of the class will have a positive effect on your students. But don't stop there. Take time to make comments on homework, tests and projects that you receive from your students. Not only will that build confidence in your students, it will give them something they can see and hold that shows how much they have accomplished. And they will want to get that positive feedback on future assignments as well.

6 MAKE IT PERSONAL.

Personalized attention and assignment modifications can do a lot when it comes to motivating your students. Whether you teach a class of five students or have fifty in the course of a week, one or more of your students will struggle. By taking time to help students one on one, you let them know that you care about them and are walking with them through their struggles. When possible, spend some one on one time with each student during class. You may choose to do this while the rest of your class is doing independent work or group work. When you talk to each of your students, find out what is difficult for them, and ask if there is anything you can do to help. Giving students the individualized attention they need might also mean spending time outside of class with your students. Offer office hours or afterschool help to those students who need it. It will show them that you care. Also, be willing to modify assignments to help your students succeed. You may need to make homework easier, shorter or flexible. For example, letting someone read to your student rather than making him read himself might be a way to help a student with dyslexia. Get creative with your modifications, and encourage your students to share their thoughts with you as well. You don't necessarily have to okay all of their modification plans, but by working together you should be able to come up with a solution acceptable to you both.

7 MAKE A TEAM EFFORT.

As frustrating or invigorating as it might be, the other students in your classroom also play a role in motivating each of your students. If only a few students are pursuing fluency and being courageous in their speech, students who only care about grades may make them feel out of place. When you can get these groups to work well together, it will help your students motivate one another. It is the teacher's job to try and make the most effective groupings and assignment teams as possible. Sometimes this might mean grouping students with similar goals and attitudes as well as skill levels. Other times, it will mean mixing things up a bit. In any case, being involved in group activities and encouraging your students to help each other learn will be essential. This also means you should include activities in class or out of it where students will need their partner for successful completion of the assignment. Don't shy away from giving grades to group work. This may be just the motivation some of your students need to really focus on the task at hand.

8 USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM.

Learning a language can be stressful, and in life's difficult moments some of our greatest support comes from our friends. This is particularly true when a student is studying overseas. You should encourage your students to build friendships with their classmates. You can do this by including team building activities and get to know you activities right from the start. When your students have a support network right there in the classroom, they will feel stronger and more capable of attacking the hurdles that lay before them. If you have a student or students who are struggling with relationship building, try matching them with someone you think would be good during class activities. Stress to your entire class how important friendships are in the classroom, and make sure you plan times for your students to simply have fun with one another. Sometimes this might tie into an English lesson (e.g. performing a skit or playing word games). Other times, though, it's okay to put the curriculum on the back burner and just let your students enjoy being together.

9 MAKE THINGS PRACTICAL.

If you have gotten this far in your classroom motivation, you are doing great. Your students have what they need, they are engaged in learning and they are supporting one another. What else could a teacher want? The final key to motivating your students is to take a moment and look at the long term goals of their English education. What is it that your students want to do with English? Will they be attending an American university? Will they use English in the workplace? Take time to talk with your students about their goals, and then show them how the language that they know (and that they will learn) has practical application to their futures. No one wants to do busywork just for the sake of doing it. When you make your instruction practical and show your students how their success will help them long term, they will see the bigger picture and take their studies seriously. When they see their present efforts paying off in the future, they will work hard in their English education.

Becoming a Better Teacher: Evaluate and Improve Teaching Skills

USUALLY WHEN A TEACHER HEARS THE WORD 'ASSESSMENT', SHE THINKS ABOUT STRATEGIES FOR CHECKING IN ON HER STUDENTS' PROGRESS AND PROFICIENCY.

She uses a variety of assessment methods: tests, interviews, homework, and direct observations to name a few. But the best teachers don't limit their assessment efforts to their students. Self-assessment for teachers can mean the difference between great and stellar performance. But self-assessment is foreign for those who are usually focused on student assessment. Where does the interested teacher start?

HOW TO MAKE GOOD USE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

1 ASK YOURSELF SOMETHING

If you have never done self-assessment before, you may not know where to start. It's not like teachers can give themselves tests on the effectiveness of their teaching. But by making some key and simple observations, you can gain even more information than the choice between a, b, c, or d could tell you. After each lesson, activity or event, take a few minutes to ask yourself some questions and take notes on your answers. When you are evaluating what happened in your classroom, make sure you are focusing on both the good and the bad results. Both have benefits. When you analyze something that didn't work, you can make sure you do not repeat your mistakes. When you analyze something that did work, you will be able to recreate the circumstances that made the activity successful.

2 THE BENEFITS OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

Though self-assessment may be the last thing on your to do list as a teacher, the process is really quite valuable. When we take an honest look at our teaching, the good and the bad, the successes and the failures, we learn where our strengths and weaknesses lie. Sometimes, we evaluate specific activities or assignments. When we do, we plan better and have higher quality activities to direct our students the next time through. Sometimes, though, assessment can give an even broader perspective. We begin to see where our teaching strengths and weaknesses lie. We may find areas where we need further training or where our teaching biases lie. Becoming aware of these needs then allows us to meet them through different types of professional development. As a result, we become better overall teachers and everyone benefits.

3 THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY METHOD

One very simple tool for evaluation is what I like to call the good, the bad, and the ugly. After completing a class activity or classroom unit, simply ask yourself three questions. First, ask yourself about the good stuff. What worked? What was fun, successful or productive? What would you do again? Make a list of your thoughts on a sheet of paper. These are the activities or types of activities you should repeat. On a second sheet, look at the bad stuff. What didn't work? What was a flop or too difficult? What would you not do again? These are the types of activities you want to eliminate from your plans in the future. Finally, make a third list of the ugly stuff, that is, the things that need improvement. What could have worked if you had made some changes? What could you have tweaked to make more successful? What almost worked? Which activities have potential with a little more work and planning? These are the activities that you should include in the future after you have made improvements to them.

4 THE WHAT/WHO/WHEN/WHY METHOD

Another method for evaluation and self-assessment is what I call the 4W method. It's a little more detailed than the good, bad and ugly analysis. Your post activity evaluation will be focused with four simple questions. For this type of evaluation, think back to all the things that happened in class and make a numbered or bulleted list. What happened? Remember to focus on both the good and the bad. Once you have your list of events, look at each of them in more detail. For each, ask yourself who was involved. Ask yourself when it happened. And then attempt to determine why each of those things happened. When you answer these questions, you will begin to see what worked and didn't work in class. You will know what types of events you want to try to recreate and others that you want to avoid. Then, once you have finished evaluating each event, you will know whether you need to include this activity or type of activity in the future, whether you need to make some changes to that activity, or whether you need to eliminate that activity altogether.

5 LOOK FOR PATTERNS

Once you are in the habit of evaluating your class activities, you will start to notice patterns in your teaching. You will see areas of your teaching or classroom activities that are consistently strong. In addition, you will see areas of your teaching or classroom activities that are consistently weaker. Once you start noticing these patterns, these are the areas in which you should seek professional development. Do you struggle with incorporating communicative activities in class? Find a book or read some articles for advice. Do you have trouble explaining grammatical concepts to your students? Ask a fellow teacher for tips on how to make the abstract more concrete or take a refresher course yourself. Are you failing to cover the amount of material you need to by the end of the year? Or are your students in the habit of misbehaving? Maybe it's time to get some training on classroom management or time management.

FOR TEACHERS, IT CAN BE TEMPTING TO DO THE SAME ACTIVITIES OVER AND OVER AGAIN, AND A TEACHING RUT CAN BE HARD TO GET OUT OF ONCE YOU'RE IN IT.

By regularly spending a few minutes reflecting, evaluating, and assessing what you have done in class, you can become a better teacher and one who is always getting better.

8 Ways to Improve Your Professionalism as an ESL Teacher

EVERY YEAR NEW TEACHERS ARRIVE ON CAMPUS OVERFLOWING WITH ENTHUSIASM FOR THEIR NEW CRAFT, UNABLE TO WAIT TO PRACTICE IT.

They have new ideas, love for their students, good relationships with their colleagues. So why do they often seem disillusioned by the end of the semester? Or why don't they stay and serve well but fail to advance within their careers? It may be that, although good teachers, they lack a certain professionalism, an awareness of themselves as professionals, beyond being teachers, and this might be because they see teaching as more a calling rather than a career, which is admirable, but may be ultimately self-defeating if the goal is to remain in the profession and serve. Following are some ways for teachers to develop their professionalism in order to advance within their careers.

8 METHODS TEACHERS CAN USE TO IMPROVE PROFESSIONALISM

1 IMPROVE PUNCTUALITY

Being on time may seem basic, but often the basics get forgotten. One basic is punctuality. Teachers are often overworked and overcommitted, but to always be flying in late for class or meetings lacks certain professionalism. Everyone is late occasionally, of course, but if a teacher can commit to being on time to class and to meetings every day for a week, then for the next, and the next, this will go a long way in improving her professional image.

2 MEET DEADLINES. TURN IN PAPERWORK.

Along with being on time goes meeting deadlines. If you make an effort to turn your attendance and other reports in on or before the deadline, this will get noticed and increase rapport with the administrative staff. It creates a certain amount of pride to hear, "Oh, yes, Mr. Rodriguez is always on top of things!" Also, the staff will then in turn support you on the days you need help because you are running late and need copies made and so forth.

3 PAY ATTENTION TO AND MEET OBJECTIVES

In the course of teaching a class, it can be very easy to get bogged down or derailed by something relatively peripheral that we and the class are enthusiastic about — a particular holiday, current event, or movie. It's at these times that it's important to go back to the course objectives and remind yourself of what students really need to learn: the Star Wars movie trilogy, for example, although an important part of 20th century American popular culture, is hard to justify spending ten hours of class time on when students have academic vocabulary and American English pronunciation to practice. Review the course objectives on a weekly basis to make sure you are staying close to the course standards and not getting sidetracked — which again, is easy to do in the excitement of teaching particular content, even for experienced teachers.

4 IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

Outcomes are not measured as much in education, traditionally, as other fields — there is no end "product" which can be measured quantitatively or qualitatively. This is especially true in ESL instruction, where it is generally recognized that language learning takes a long time, especially in adults, and there is little or no expectation to produce fluent English speakers at the end of a term. However, there are some ways teachers can themselves improve efficiency: some mornings when I find myself stalling over the roll, for example, I recognize this is as a tactic to avoid getting to the real business of the day, which may be particularly difficult curriculum, such as working on clausal structure that confuses almost everyone. On these days I'll force myself to just pass around a roll sheet for students to sign and immediately begin teaching. Then I'll glance at it after it's circulated to make sure it's accurate and not falsified. These sign-in sheets also serve as a written record in the event of an attendance audit, which my department has been through at least once.

5 SHOW RESPECT FOR COLLEAGUES AND STUDENTS

This can be difficult, certainly, with the teacher who somehow develops a need to barge into your class "looking for" something whenever you begin teaching or the student who unfailing interrupts your lecture just as you begin, however, it is just these individuals to whom the most respect must be shown. If the teacher is unfailingly polite to them, while stating what she needs -- "Please wait until I'm finished, and then we'll hear from you" — she not only sets boundaries but also models courtesy.

6 REFRAIN FROM NEGATIVITY AND OFFICE GOSSIP

Teachers sitting around the staff room gossiping is something of a tradition. Most of it is innocent — discussion of a recent movie, for example — but sometimes it can turn negative in the form of complaint sessions about colleagues, the school, and students. Such negativity can pull down your own mood and looks unprofessional. Work to avoid such conversations or change the subject.

7 VOLUNTEER FOR EXTRA ASSIGNMENTS AND COMMITTEE WORK

Another way to increase professionalism is to volunteer for extra assignments and committee work. If you serve on a committee designing a new course or set of new course material such as rubrics, you not only show how you are serious about your work, but you also get a chance to work with higher-ups in the depart-

ment. This increases your chances of getting noticed and hired permanently or promoted.

8 ENGAGE IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

Finally, the professional teacher should always engage in continuing education, whether at her school site itself, or at a conference, or at a local university. There are always ways the teacher can improve her knowledge of course content, teaching methods, innovative technology, and classroom management, and teachers as educators should be engaged in lifelong learning.

A LOT OF THE MEASURES HERE, YOU WILL NOTE, INVOLVE "POLICING" OURSELVES — IT'S BEEN MY EXPERIENCE THAT WITH TEACHERS FOR ADULTS, IN PARTICULAR, ADMINISTRATORS DON'T TAKE MUCH NOTE OF HOW PUNCTUAL, EFFICIENT, OR PROFESSIONAL THE TEACHING STAFF IS, UNLESS THERE IS A GLARING CONCERN.

Therefore, it is up to teachers to maintain our own professionalism and create our own standards in how we develop ourselves professionally and how we treat our colleagues and students -- which is really the very heart of professionalism.

How to Build a Learning Community in 6 Simple Steps

Occasionally in visiting another teacher's classroom, I'll be impressed by the order: everyone is on task, respectful, and knows what to do.

If they don't, another classmate will help without being asked. They share information with each other freely. They form groups easily without being prodded and assume roles within the group without being told what to do. In such a classroom, students also typically, when they get papers back, check their answers and grades against their peers' or discuss them with the teacher without too much drama and a seeming focus on the work itself, not the grade. They share their experiences with the teacher and classmates, who seem genuinely interested.

So this may seem like a class straight from heaven, created more from divine, rather than teacher, intervention. On the contrary, however, it reflects the teacher's careful craftsmanship over the term to create a learning community, a community in which everyone teaches and learns in an environment that is safe for making mistakes.

SO HOW CAN A TEACHER CREATE A LEARNING COMMUNITY?

1 THINK LONG-TERM AND BIG. ACT IN THE SHORT TERM AND SMALL.

To achieve a strong learning community, teachers must have a vision of the kind of class they want: students working, learning, and teaching in harmony. However, we can't act in the long-term: we can really only act in the short term and in small incremental steps of first getting students used to working in groups, teaching procedures for group work, and developing a safe environment, and so forth. However, the vision will collapse if not put into practice in a series of small steps in the present.

2 INTERACTIVE, GROUP-ORIENTED EXERCISES

The first step in developing a learning community is in getting students used to the entire notion of community, which implies a group, rather than individual process. So the first couple of weeks should be devoted to having students work in various groupings in which they share ideas on a reading, for example, and begin to learn polite ways to advance an opinion or disagree with another person's.

3 PROCEDURES FOR GROUP WORK

Because students are working in groups, they need to learn some of the logistics of group work, such as how to select group members, how to divide up roles of leader, recorder, and materials gatherer, and how to get in and out of groups with minimal disruption. The teacher may have to take a couple of weeks teaching these procedures before students will be able to practice them on their own. It is very rewarding when students go from not quite knowing what to do at the beginning of the semester to coming into class, finding partners, setting up their groups, and getting to work with minimal assistance from the teacher. This is the beginning of the learning community, when students are able to function in a group, but it is not quite developed yet — students may be functioning, but for it to be a true learning community, they must thrive.

4 SAFE ENVIRONMENT: POLICIES FOR GROUP WORK

A safe environment is also very important to a true learning community. This is an environment where the students feel free to share ideas without being ridiculed — questioned, certainly, but in a respectful manner. This can be achieved by discussing the elements of a safe learning environment, perhaps developing with the students the "rules of engagement," as I call them, for working in groups. The teacher should also always model respectful, attentive behavior when students are speaking. Even if the student is not particularly polite — interrupting a lecture, for example, to talk off topic — the teacher remaining calm and courteous sends a powerful message of how students should treat each other. Once a safe environment is achieved, the foundation for a learning community is laid.

5 FOCUS ON BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE

For a learning community to thrive, there must a focus on the collective — a community is a collective, after all. However, the individual student's needs and contributions within that community must also be recognized, or the community dies, as it is made up of individuals.

So there must be a balance in focusing not only on group processes and work but also on the individual contributions within that group. This can be done by rewarding both group and individual efforts, providing opportunities for individual students to present before the class as well as in groups, and recognizing both individual ideas and work and group processes and endeavors.

6 ALLOW STUDENTS TO DEVELOP AND SHOWCASE EXPERTISE

Finally, students should be allowed as both individuals and group members to showcase the expertise. For example, individual students can demonstrate their expertise all semester long, in class sessions devoted to individual students teaching their peers content they are experts in — how to plant and tend a garden, for example, or how to repair a bicycle. As a group students will also teach other groups their particular interpretation of a reading, for example, or the recommen-

dations they have crafted on some social issue like same-sex marriage. The teacher also becomes a learner here as he learns about students' areas of expertise and perspectives. It is at this time the learning community is really formed because at this point everyone is a learner and everyone is a teacher.

FORMING A TRUE LEARNING COMMUNITY IS NOT AN EASY PROCESS NOR DOES IT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT OR "NATURALLY."

It requires careful planning and craft on the part of the instructor and engagement on the part of the students. However, by starting small, teaching students the process of a learning community through group work, and creating a safe environment for everyone to thrive, a true learning community, where everyone teaches and learns, can be achieved.

Could You Do Me a Favor? Relations with Teacher Support Staff

TEACHERS TEND TO THINK OF THEIR MOST IMPORTANT PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS TO BE WITH THEIR STUDENTS, OR OTHER TEACHERS, OR THEIR ADMINISTRATORS — AND WITH GOOD CAUSE.

These are the people they are most responsible for, network with, and answer to. An often forgotten individual (and it is often one individual) is the administrative assistant: the person who officially "assists" the head administrator but in reality is often the person most responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school: its communications, scheduling, and decisions. And often it is the administrative assistant with whom the teacher will have most contact in ordering materials, scheduling classes, and keeping in touch with the rest of the staff in students. It is therefore necessary for the teacher to build a strong professional relationship with the administrative assistant. In addition, other support staff, such as custodians and student assistants, also provides valuable services for which they should be recognized and thanked for the pragmatic reason that we want them to continue providing such valuable service but also because it's simply the right thing to do to recognize another's efforts.

METHODS TO SHOW APPRECIATION TO OUR SUPPORT STAFF

1 MAKE SOME CONTACT

One of the barriers between support staff and teachers is simply physical: we don't see each other very often, and when we do, it's only in passing. Of course it's hard to build a relationship under these circumstances. Therefore, an instructor should make the effort to drop by an administrative assistant's office or student assistant's desk just to say "hello" when possible and just check in. If you see the custodian in the hall, don't just walk by: stop occasionally to ask after him and his family. People need recognition, especially if they work in the field of education, where we are often isolated from peers.

2 RECOGNIZE THE INDIVIDUAL

It may seem obvious, but recognize the administrative assistants and support staff as actual people. It's surprising, but many teachers don't even know the names of the staff they interact on a daily basis. Greeting each person by name every day, inquiring after their families and important events in their lives, recognizes their individuality and marks you as pleasant to interact with. Sometimes, unfortunately, the custodians are particularly ignored and demeaned even by the students (e.g., any mess is addressed with "Let the janitor clean that up.") It therefore becomes additionally important to teachers to model appropriate treatment of all staff (e.g., "We clean up our own messes, and his name is Robert.")

3 MAINTAIN A PLEASANT DEMEANOR

Remain easy to be around, not just nice when you need something. If we are unfailingly courteous and patient with the staff, this is guaranteed to be remembered when we need their help with a particularly difficult or embarrassing problem (we've locked ourselves out of the classroom, the copier won't stop jamming, etc.)

4 OFFER TO HELP

Offer to help the support staff — small things, like holding doors, carrying up boxes, watching the desk while the assistant steps away, leaving your room in order after a class party — marks you as responsible and helpful and again makes the staff willing to help you in turn when needed.

WHEN THE TIME COMES TO ASK FOR HELP

1 ASK THE RIGHT PERSON FOR HELP

Initially, don't ask the administrative assistant to unjam the copier. Don't go to the custodian for help on the computers. These tasks may very well be in their skills set, but try to go to the person with the correct job description. If you aren't sure who that is, try to find out. Going to the right person with the right problem will result in less annoyance on the part of others and less frustration on your part.

2 EXPLAIN THE SITUATION BRIEFLY

School staff tends to be very busy people, often multi-tasking to address multiple concerns. Therefore, being as brief when possible when asking for help and acknowledging the imposition will go a long way in building relationships: e.g., "I know you're very busy, but when you have a moment can we talk about my book order? It still hasn't come in, and I'd like to see what we can do about it. " This will mark you as a "low maintenance," nondemanding individual who is easy to get along with.

3 LIMIT REQUESTS

Besides being brief when asking for help, it's also important to limit requests. Someone needing extra assistance on a daily basis marks herself as difficult to get along with. Find out yourself how to fix the copier, where the ink toner is stored, and so forth. Also, try to not to ask for help on things that are really within your own job description, such as classroom management issues.

4 OFFER RETURN HELP OR ACKNOWLEDGE THE HELP RECEIVED

Return favors when someone has helped you: if possible, return more help than received in the form of helping new staff, for example, and orienting them to the school culture. If the

administrative assistant taught you the new software program for taking attendance, pass it on by helping a new teacher learn it.

5 OFFER YOUR UNIQUE SKILLS

A new high school substitute teacher I know has advanced skills in computers that he began sharing with school staff as the need arose — using his lunch break to troubleshoot malfunctioning hardware and temperamental software, for example. These skills became so quickly in demand that even with the recent economic downturn in California that has resulted in teacher layoffs, school principals worked to keep him because of these skills. And most of us probably have ancillary skills to our regular position which, if shared, may not make us as in demand as a computer tech but almost so.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF IS NOT EASY. THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE REGULAR PARTS OF OUR LIVES, WHOM WE DEPEND ON IN MANY WAYS IN ORDER TO PERFORM OUR JOBS, YET OUR INTERACTIONS WITH THEM MAY BE LIMITED BY TIME AND SPACE — WE OFTEN ONLY SEE EACH OTHER IN PASSING. BUT BY CHECKING IN REGULARLY, REMAINING PLEASANT, LIMITING REQUESTS WHILE ALSO RETURNING HELP, THE INSTRUCTOR CAN GO A LONG WAY IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPPORT STAFF.

Dealing with Overly-Competitive Colleagues & Building Relations

IF YOU'VE TAUGHT FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME, YOU'VE PROBABLY EXPERIENCED IT: THE COLLEAGUE WHO STOPS TO YOU IN THE HALL WITH GLOWING REPORTS OF HER OWN CLASS.

Or she might give veiled criticism of your class that she's allegedly heard through students. If you are leading a work meeting, she may make cynical remarks, interrupt, or even leave the room. If confronted, she'll probably deny any knowledge or intention of what she's doing. Competition in and of itself, of course, is not bad, necessarily, if it's in good spirit — seeing whose class can read the most books over a term, for example, and sharing ideas of how to reach the goal. But the overly-competitive colleague, whose actions are probably based on deep-seated insecurity, is focused on looking good at other instructors' expense. She is particularly difficult to deal with because her behavior in passive-aggressive and difficult to smoke out and confront. Fortunately, there are ways to address the overly-competitive colleague and remain pleasant.

METHODS OF TREATING THE OVERLY-COMPETITIVE COLLEAGUE FAIRLY

1 ACKNOWLEDGE HER EFFORTS AS A TEACHER

Again, the overly-competitive colleague's behavior is probably based on deep-seated insecurity and need for validation. So validating her upfront will probably go a long way to smoothing the situation over. When she brags about her class and her great interactions with students, validate this by asking about her activities in class, for example, or what she does to build relationships with students, such as, "Oh, it sounds like you have such great student-teacher relationships! What are some ways you facilitate that?" In this way, the instructor may open up and share her ideas because she'll feel less threatened.

2 PLEASANTLY SET BOUNDARIES

If some of the overly-competitive colleague's behavior is unacceptable to you, say so while remaining polite. "I'm sorry, but I'd really rather not discuss student gossip with you. Actually, I'd rather you not gossip with students, either." Or make a small joke: "You know, I really believe what people think about me in none of my business." This sends a message of what is and isn't acceptable to you, and the kind of communications you will participate in, while still remaining polite.

3 BE A ROLE MODEL

If the overly-competitive instructor sees you unfailingly focused on your class and serving your students, not getting distracted by what others are saying or undercutting colleagues, he may follow suit in also spending his time more productively on lesson planning and marking papers so that bragging about how great he is becomes less necessary or even possible, given time constraints. At minimum, he will probably get the message that you don't have time for and are not receptive to gossip and complaints, and he may look for someone else to pull into the negative dialogue, as it is impossible to carry on a conversation with a brick wall that is not responding.

4 UNPLUG YOURSELF FROM THE GRAPEVINE

Another positive element of focusing on your work rather than on chatting with challenging colleagues is that it unplugs you from the sometimes toxic grapevine of the teacher's lounge. Networking with other teachers can be great — if it's focused on the positive, such as trading lesson and materials ideas, for example, or how to serve specific students. Such an environment can quickly turn negative by one person who is not focused on the productive. Removing yourself from the teacher's lounge and complaints, bragging, and gossip limits the negative energy and again shows that you won't participate in these behaviors. It also frees up time and energy to be spent more positively. Saying something like "I'd love to chat, but I have papers to correct and lessons to plan" speaks volumes about where your priorities are.

5 BEFRIEND THE OVERLY COMPETITIVE COLLEAGUE

Sometimes the overly-competitive colleague actually feels isolated and lonely — not surprising, given her alienating behavior — so attempts at befriending her might be effective. When she begins complaining about other's classes, for example, or bragging about her own, divert the conversation by asking about some favorite activities she does in class and then perhaps moving the conversation to the more personal by asking about her life outside of class, what her favorite free time activities are, and so forth. This may give the instructor the recognition she wants and less need to complain and brag.

6 DIRECTNESS

Sometimes the more indirect methods mentioned here so far are ineffective with the overly-competitive colleague: he doesn't acknowledge your boundaries, for example, or respond to your efforts to befriend him. It is at this point you may have to say directly what it is that you find unacceptable in his behavior and ask for a change: "I find your conversations with students about my classes unacceptable. Please stop. Send students to me if they have concerns." The colleague here may protest he doesn't invite the complaints from students -- they just find him a natural confidante. Acknowledge that might very well be so, that students find him more approachable — but you would still prefer that he send students to you with concerns about your class. Usually the instructor at this point will either agree with the request, or he may then come out and admit that he really is the one

with concerns about your class, not so much the students. This is a more difficult conversation, of course, and it is up to the individual instructor how much she wants to listen to the competitive colleague's concerns. Perhaps the best choice is to ask what his concerns are, listen briefly and say you'll think about his comments, and then suggest that his time might be more productively focused on his own class. Again, this sets a boundary of what you find acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

DEALING WITH OVERLY-COMPETITIVE COLLEAGUES IS NOT SO EASY BECAUSE THEY ARE INSIDIOUS: FEW PEOPLE, OF COURSE, WILL COME OUT AND SAY DIRECTLY, "I AM THE GREATEST, AND YOU ARE NOT!" HOWEVER, BY SETTING BOUNDARIES, BEING A ROLE-MODEL, AND BEFRIENDING THE COMPETITIVE COLLEAGUE, THE NEGATIVE ENERGY FROM THE RELATIONSHIP CAN BE LIMITED OR EVEN TURNED INTO SOMETHING MORE POSITIVE.

5 Types of ESL Colleagues and How to Get Along with Them

WHEN NOT IN THEIR CLASSROOMS, WHERE DO ESL TEACHERS GO? OFTEN IT'S THE STAFF ROOM, THAT PLACE WITH THE REFRIGERATOR, MICROWAVE, COPY MACHINE, AND — OH, YES, OTHER ESL TEACHERS!

Usually, that is an advantage — the coming together of colleagues. You can discuss your classes and teaching methodology, trade stories of textbooks and materials, and discuss shared preferences in vacations and free time activities. What could possibly be the problem? Well, not all colleagues are necessarily people you want to share much time with! In fact, there may be the few that you may want to limit time with or will need to really work to get along with when you do encounter them.

5 TYPES OF PROBLEM ESL COLLEAGUES

These types cross genders and culture and therefore have a kind of universality. The use of "Mr." and "Miss," for example, does not imply any permanent applicability of the type to a specific gender.

1 MR. TALKATIVE

Mr. Talkative wants to do just that — talk. It doesn't seem to matter that his audience is or what that audience is doing — eating lunch, grading papers — anyone who enters the staff room or his periphery is fair game for one of his monologues, often on his personal life, like what he did that weekend, and at length.

2 MS. COMPLAINER

Ms. Complainer has a lot in common with Mr. Talkative, -- however, while Mr. Talkative's lengthy verbiage is focused simply on personal issues, most of them inconsequential, Ms. Complainer's excessive discussion is focused on the negative, complaining, and usually about the school: the students, the administration, other teachers, electronic equipment and facilities, etc. Individuals who have been teaching a long time may fall into this pattern, perhaps after a number of negative experiences in the profession.

3 MR. WORK ETHIC-CHALLENGED

Mr. Work Ethic-Challenged never seems to be in a hurry. He always looks well-rested. His briefcase usually looks disconcertingly light and empty (always a telling sign). He is out the door with the bell, rarely comes to meetings, and never contributes to any of the work of running the department, like participating in grading sessions or serving on committees. This type is rare in a profession that generally requires hard work and in which workaholics thrive, but they can be found.

4 MISS STILL-A-STUDENT

You can tell Miss Still-a-Student by her bike, book bag, long hair, and jeans. In other words, she looks like a student, and may in fact still be a graduate student or was one recently. She also perhaps identifies with other students, seeing herself as one, and invites her students over to her home and socializes and spends time with them over her colleagues.

5 MRS. SABOTEUR

This is a mercifully rare type in a profession where people are committed to helping each other, but again she can be found. Mrs. Saboteur may, for example, deliberately set out to undermine a colleague with negative comments to students and staff. The behavior probably arises out of insecure feelings and a need to make others look bad in order to feel or look better herself.

WAYS TO DEAL WITH TROUBLESOME COLLEAGUES

1 IDENTIFY THE BEHAVIOR

The first part of dealing with any problem is identifying it as a problem. "Oh, I get it. Jonathan keeps saying negative things about me to students because he's a Mr. Saboteur. It isn't me." There is something liberating in this — recognizing the set of troubling behaviors has something to do with the problem colleague — it is his or her "thing" that he or she does with everyone or nearly everyone, in all probability, and is not an overreaction on your part.

2 DIRECT APPROACH

A direct approach is usually best when dealing with problem colleagues. Someone who talks nonstop when you come into the staff room isn't going to get your subtle hints like deep sighs — or even putting on headphones or leaving the room! She might just follow you out and continue the routine. A direct approach works best: "I'm sorry, I'm correcting papers now and can't talk now." And then take out your papers and begin grading.

3 SET BOUNDARIES

Related to taking a direct approach is setting boundaries: in establishing boundaries you are directly stating what behaviors you will tolerate in relation to yourself and others. For example, to the colleague who keeps popping in and out of your class when it's in session (it's surprising how many instructors do this even with classrooms that are otherwise free for hours at a time), you might say, "I'm sorry, we're in class until 11 am. After that, the classroom is yours as you need it." She probably suddenly won't need it at 11, but this sends a powerful message on protecting your and your students' instructional space.

4 BE A ROLE MODEL

Ultimately, a good teacher is a good role model to her students and her colleagues. This is especially important for colleagues like Mr. Work-Ethic Challenged. If he sees his peers staying after class, correcting papers, and heading up committees, he will begin to get a message about the culture of the school and of the profession. Miss Still-a-Student, also, in seeing her colleagues spending their lunches lesson planning and sharing ideas will get the idea that she is now one of these professionals and should join them — at least occasionally — instead of hanging out with her students in the union.

IT TAKES ALL KINDS TO MAKE UP A TEACHING STAFF, AS IN ANY PROFESSION.

Most of the types you will meet as a teacher are positive role models — hard workers who communicate well and are good with people. There are a few more problematic types, however. But with communicating directly, setting boundaries, and being a role model, you will find you don't need to hide out in your office and can confidently return to the staff room!

5 Aspects of U.S. Culture the International Student Needs to Know

OFTENTIMES AN ADVANCED STUDENT WILL FEEL FAIRLY COMFORTABLE WITH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE BUT STILL HAVE CONCERNS WITH UNDERSTANDING AND FITTING IN WITH AMERICAN CULTURE.

For example, at a recent tutoring session with a student from Germany, in a conference room at his worksite, he discussed how he was having a hard time getting used to American work and communication patterns: in Germany, for example, if a supervisor asked an employee to do something, generally he would just do it, -- here it tends to get discussed for a long time and debated before anyone does anything — or it doesn't get done at all. Similarly, an excessive amount of time is spent — or wasted, depending on your viewpoint — in meetings. Both of these phenomena can probably be traced to our very founding as a nation — our uneasy relationship with authority and unwillingness to "just do" anything because someone in authority says so as well as our history of self-governance, which relies on meetings (and may actually come to us from Native Americans and their tribal councils). These can certainly be positive traits although they have negatives, such as wasting time, as my student mentioned. In addition, they are habits and values that can be hard to get used to although they can be learned. Finally, these observations do not, of course, apply to all Americans but rather to the culture in general, but students should learn something about different aspects of U.S. culture to understand and function within it.

ASPECTS OF U.S. FOR ESL STUDENTS TO LEARN

1 TIME

Americans tend to emphasize the value of time more than other cultures. This can be seen in the prevalence of clocks and watches, for example. "What time is it?" is a question taught early on in foreign language and ESL classes. Lateness of more than ten minutes to an appointment generally requires some sort of explanation and apology. We even speak of time in terms of money: "to spend time," "to waste time," "to save time," and even "time is money." On one memorable occasional in an ESL class, all of my students seemed to be shuffling in about a quarter of an hour late, much to my irritation. I finally treated the class to a diatribe on the value Americans placed on time, that being consistently late would lower the grades and get them fired from jobs, lose them friendships, and so on. One student finally spoke up: "What time do you think this class begins, Professor?" It was only then that I remembered that the class began at twenty minutes after the hour, not on the hour, so actually the students, who were showing more awareness of time than I was in this case, were early, not late. However, although I was wrong about the start time of that particular class, I was right about the value attached to time in general.

2 SPACE

Americans tend to be more sensitive about space than many people: the notorious "three foot bubble," describing social distance in the U.S., being fairly accurate. This is a large country which has at least a heritage of wide open spaces, and that has affected the people living here. There is even a well-known phrase, "I need some space," or "Give me some space," which means roughly "Leave me alone," or "I need privacy," but can be taken almost literally to mean "space" in the sense of an implied separation and distance from the addressee.

3 WORK

Americans also put a great value on work, and the country has been recognized by the U.N. as one of the most productive in the world. An economic depression becomes a real physical one to many individuals who find themselves out of work. This value of work probably goes back to the Puritan heritage of the country and their work ethic, the belief that hard work made one a good and valuable person. Most people in the U.S. have probably been affected by this prevalent value, no matter what their personal heritage, either by embracing it or rebelling against it.

4 MONEY

Americans are among the worst savers and biggest spenders in the world: it is no consequence that our national debt is now in the trillions of dollars. This gets enacted a the personal level as well: people routinely spend more than they have through use of credit cards. ESL students should remember that their American friends who seem to have a luxurious lifestyle and to be able to buy whatever they want may very well be doing this on credit and to not adopt this behavior or encourage the friend in it.

5 RELATIONSHIPS

Friendships can be difficult to make and maintain in the U.S. for some of the reasons discussed here: the work ethic and resultant lack of time as well as the need for "space" and fear of intimacy that perhaps does not exist in many cultures. Much of American literature addresses in some way this theme of the difficulty of achieving intimacy, from The Great Gatsby to The Catcher in the Rye, reflecting the nation's anxiety. Still, once others can get past initial barriers, Americans are capable of strong friendship ties although they may seem initially difficult to get to know.

NO CULTURE, OF COURSE, CAN BE REDUCED TO A COUPLE OF OBSERVATIONS IN A FEW PAGES.

However, by being introduced to a few American norms and values regarding time, relationships, and money, for example, ESL students can begin to understand the culture better, and understanding leads to fitting in better, if only for the small time that the student attends college in the U.S.