Teaching Strategies and Techniques

The following information is paraphrased from Teaching Strategies and Tips for Adjunct Faculty by Donald Greive, Lorain County Community College.

Pertinent Points for Professing

- Be a facilitator of learning
  
  Know how to develop learning skills and teach students to learn and to organize their materials.

- You are an actor or actress on stage.
  
  You are responsible to your audience. Your appearance, conduct, communication techniques, your voice and physical traits are constantly under scrutiny. You are the star of the show.

- Vary your teaching activities.
  
  Change format to keep students interested.
  
  Use a variety of teaching aids; films, videos, demonstrations, guest speakers, and field trips.

- Be sensitive to barriers.
  
  a. Be alert to early signs of difficulty and provide assistance and referrals.
  
  b. Be aware of time commitments for the course. Be realistic about amount of time required of the student.
  
  c. Be knowledgeable of college policies and procedures concerning activities such as the library, dropping and adding classes, student ID’s, etc., that can be passed on to the students.
  
  d. Try to recognize and assist students with limitations in areas such as writing, reading, and math. They should be referred for appropriate help before it affects their class standing.
  
  e. Be aware that students may be under significant stress. Avoid confrontations. Be considerate of such students.
  
  f. Disabled students may not wish to share their limitations publicly. Be sensitive to this as well as the need to assist them. At the beginning of the class, it is advisable to simply comment, “if anyone needs special seating, etc. please see me after class.”

- Keep in touch with students throughout the class sessions. Reflect upon “where we started”, “where we are”, and “where we’re going.”

- Always introduce yourself at the beginning of the first class.

- Prepare for your class over a period of time. Start preparation weeks before class starts, review one week before, and finalize the day before the first class.

- Respond to student questions and comments directly. This indicates that they are important part of the class and important to you. Don’t say, “we’ll cover that later”.

- When assigning group work, specify outcomes expected; otherwise, group work may become simply a conversation.

- Refer irrelevant questions (distracters) to the goals and objectives of the course.

- Ask a colleague who has a reputation as a good teacher if you may observe his/her class.

- Read literature and books about teaching. You will be surprised how much there is to know about successful classroom instruction.

- Use icebreakers. This technique works not only in the first class but in other sessions as well.

Faculty Checklist

- When are grades due, and when do students receive grades?

- Is there a college or departmental grading policy?

- Is there a departmental course syllabus, course outline, or statement of goals and objectives available for the course?

- Are there prepared departmental handouts?

- Are there prepared departmental tests?

- What is the library book checkout procedure?
Introduction to Teaching
Most professions are heavily content oriented. With a mastery of subject matter, theory, application, and execution and a considerable amount of devotion and hard work, one can succeed in one’s profession. In the world of teaching, those factors, while necessary, are useless without the additional qualities of having a pleasing personality and possessing the ability to communicate with other human beings. Thus, to be an effective teacher, it is necessary that one be multitalented and multidisciplined.

Basic characteristics of good teaching are:
- Knowing one’s subject content
- Knowing and liking students
- Understanding one’s culture

The First Class
It is normal when you begin your teaching assignment to experience some anxiety and nervousness. This can be a positive force, which sharpens the skills to do a better job.

Tips:
- Be over-prepared rather than under-prepared
- Plan an activity that allows students to get involved immediately. This may simply be an information gathering exercise.
- Initiate casual conversation between yourself and students and among students prior to launching into the specifics of the course.
- Narrate an anecdote about a trip a concert attended a sports event, a current news event or a college happening to bridge the communication gap.
- Acknowledge confusion at the beginning of class. Confusion is not detrimental. It is part of the “cooling in” process as students reduce anxieties with each other,
- Present the syllabus on an overhead or handout. Discuss it in detail with the class, emphasizing the sections describing requirements for the students. Remember the syllabus is often interpreted as the legal document of the classroom.
- **Conduct the class. Don’t meet and dismiss the class. First impressions are most lasting.**
- Share your background, training, and work with the class. Let the students know who you are and that you are willing to share information as well as gather it in.

Setting the Tone
Reducing anxieties sometimes involves what is called “setting the tone” of the classroom. Creative and positive feelings about a course and the expectations of the class are important. A professional appearance and planned process for initiating activity is an added positive factor. Above all, it is important to
communicate to the class that you are a friendly, helpful person and not an inflexible disciplinarian, whether it is in the academic or behavioral sense.

There are two extremes in classroom behavior that must be avoided by a college teacher. They are the traditionally rigid “stay in your place” strategy and the laissez-faire “what should we do today gang” approach. In teaching, the middle road is the successful road.

Classroom communication
An important ingredient to professional teaching is the ability to communicate clearly. In a classroom situation communication is more than talking and lecturing. Communication involves eye contact, physical gestures, behavior traits, classroom presence, proper media and blackboard usage, and other non-verbal activity that may be overlooked in other social situations.

It would be well for you to become acquainted with some non-verbal communication indicators in our culture and above all to be conscious of behavioral traits that you may possess which may be offensive or distracting to students. At the same time you should be conscious of your strengths and positive traits that add to a happy classroom. The positive actions of an individual are the same in the classroom as they are in social situations; thus, you may examine and reflect upon your most positive features and mannerisms and incorporate them into your teaching strategies.

The three R’s of teaching are repeat, respond, and reinforce. Very simply, they mean that student comments and contributions, if worthy of being recognized in a class, are worthy of being repeated, responded to, and reinforced by both verbal and other techniques at the command of the teacher.