

COMPILATION: student teacher in physics

Date: Mon, 17 Jan 2000

From: mitchell johnson <mitchjohnson@EARTHLINK.NET>

Subject: student teacher

I am having a student teacher for my first time and I was planning on having him sit back with me and ask questions when he thinks of them, basically modeling the behavior I want him to have. Are there any major pitfalls that I should watch out for from a modeling perspective?

Date: Tue, 18 Jan 2000

From: Janice Hudson <jmudson@WORLDNET.ATT.NET>

I had a student teacher last year in November and December. It was my first year "modeling". My students and I were finally getting comfortable with the approach when I relinquished the reins to my student teacher. She had watched the modeling approach. We had discussed it at length. I had given her articles to read. She started off quite well, but quickly fell into lecture, example, "I'll work the worksheet for you" approach. I tried to give her room to develop some of her own style. However, it was difficult "retraining" the students when I took over again. I guess my advice would

be to constantly observe the teacher, talk everyday about resisting the urge to teach with the traditional method, and expect the teacher to use modeling.

Date: Thu, 20 Jan 2000

From: Mary Anne Wells <JTMAWELL@AOL.COM>

I am a part of the CPU project and have had many student teachers. I have found that student teachers have issues with both content and discipline. For years, they have sat in classrooms in neat little rows or lecture halls and have been instructed primarily by lecture. After all, it is the quickest and easiest means of disseminating information. In addition, this format is often the easiest way to manage a classroom in terms of discipline. The lecture approach has been 'modeled' for these students for years and years.

When student teachers are challenged to walk into a classroom where the Modeling or CPU approach is used, it is often difficult for them to assume the role of facilitator in terms of content, discipline, and pedagogy. I have found that a fairly significant amount of 'modeling' the pedagogy is necessary for them to get the hang of this way of teaching. They may also need training in cooperative or group learning.

I usually do not give them their first class until a few weeks into the experience, then try to give them a class that is working in parallel to one that I am instructing (if possible). However, I do not have them sitting in back of the class watching. Instead, I have them involved in minor roles from the first day they step into the room and try to establish a team-teaching approach (with me leading) for the first month. It is rare that we have another physics person around to collaborate with, and you can learn a lot from the young minds stepping into your classroom!

In terms of discipline, one strategy that I have found helpful is to NOT introduce the student teacher as 'a student teacher', but rather as a student from the University of Delaware who is working with me full-time to develop teaching strategies for Physics. Believe it or not, it makes a difference in terms of how the student teacher is regarded by the students. 'Student teacher' is often translated as 'instant target for abuse'.

Date: Sat, 22 Jan 2000

From: SBrown <browns@ESKIMO.COM>

Mitch --

I had a student teacher last year -- split between me and the lead ninth grade science teacher. I let him have my "regular" classes -- geometry based course -- instead of my honors classes. He took over at 2-D motion and finished with CASTLE. Some of my difficulties were specific to him but others were generic.

Losing the algorithm-cranking mentality was difficult. At first, his approach was "because of this equation..." As he spent time with the CPU folks at Western Washington Univ., I was really taken aback. This is the main reason I took him on - it was a late placement and I thought he would have more on the ball compared to a more traditional candidate.

Debriefing was dentistry of the highest degree. I had a hard time getting him to discuss which parts worked (and why) and which didn't (and why). I don't know what the remedy is for this, if one exists. I'd be very sure that your student teacher understands that the analysis/reflection is just as important as the preparation.

Your mileage may vary.

Date: Sun, 23 Jan 2000

From: Jane Nelson <nelsonjb@IX.NETCOM.COM>

I have been reading the messages about student teaching. First, I agree whole-heartedly that student teachers must have time in front of the class from the very beginning to try out some of the things the education classes say work. However, they can benefit from watching you, the master teacher

also. So when I have an intern with me, we share the load. I teach most of the classes the first week or two, and the intern takes one class. I switch which class that is, but at first it is never first period. Then as time goes on the intern takes more classes and I less. Eventually the intern has all the classes. The next week the process reverses and I begin to take the classes back one at a time. The students get used to the fact that we, the intern and I, are really sharing the teaching. This lets me

come and go without the students being particularly interested in whether I am there or not. So this gives the intern the chance to be in charge and understand that discipline is his or her responsibility when he or she is the main instructor.

We share the whiteboarding role by sitting in the back together for a while as the intern gets the hang of sitting quietly most of the time. This makes the habit easier to hang onto when I leave the room. My interns find that trying to lecture after the style is set is uncomfortable for them because the students begin to get "antzy". So it is easy to ask why the intern thinks that students were not at their best behavior. The intern can find out for his or her own self that students don't like to sit and listen to him or her after they have experienced the good life. One day when I forgot and began a long lesson, one of my students raised his hand and said, Mrs. Nelson, "I think that we need to whiteboard something." You know, he was right. I had fallen into old habits. Shame on me. But the students will do the same thing to the intern if they have experienced good modeling instruction for any length of time. They don't like the old way.
