

WEEK 26

Teaching Techniques

Student Control of Learning

"I design an activity that offers opportunity for personal expression and that will require students to use a small piece of information that they DON'T have, such as a vocabulary word or a verb tense. Once they realize they need to know that, they will want to learn it because it has become their decision to learn it, not mine. Things acquired in this way seem to stick much better."

Content

Reading in the Halls

"For Read Across America, we took time at the end of the day and every single student and teacher sat in the hallway and read for thirty minutes. It was awesome! Our principal feels that we should do this every week. I hope we can do that. It was wonderful!"

Getting Organized

Extra Copy Box

"I frequently have students absent, leaving my room for music lessons, calls to the office, nurse, etc. I have a box in my room labeled extra copies. After I pass out worksheets, I put 10 extra copies in the box for students to use. When a student comes back to my room and notices we are working on a sheet he/she doesn't have, they know to go to the extra copy box and get the sheet. I post all assignments on my backboard so they could check to see what they missed and do not have. I leave the assignments up for two weeks. This has eliminated them interrupting class to ask for a worksheet and makes them responsible for catching up on work they missed. Frequently students may ask to recopy a worksheet because it is sloppy and they want to do it over, I just tell them to go to the box and get another copy. This also instills pride in their work."

Managing Your Classroom

Group Work

"When choosing groups, I tell my students that when they are working they will not always be working with their best friend. I remind them that an important part of class is learning how to work in a group."

Stick Grouping

"I vary my classroom groups by greeting each student at the door with a craft stick. The tips of the sticks are color coded according to the area of the room they must go to or the activity they must work on first. This allows for a differentiation in grouping. The students really like this method and it's very simple to control."

Relationships

Reflections on the Quarter Past

"When report card time approaches, I ask my students, without submitting their names, to reflect and write short notes on what to change, delete and add to the class. Sometimes students have insight that teachers forget to consider. Their comments help me improve my lessons and teaching techniques as well as see myself through their eyes. This gives my students ownership and gives me some grounding."

Using Technology

Movie Night

"I add a blank tape to my list of supplies at the beginning of the year. The students and I use a digital camera to take pictures of classroom activities all year. We use Photo Studio software to download the pictures to videotape and can even put music to accompany these pictures. Our year ends with a class movie night. Parents and students come view our class memory tape. Everyone enjoys the tape tremendously. I make individual copies on the blank tapes students brought in at the beginning of the year so all students have their own copies. It is a wonderful way to capture and celebrate student accomplishments."

Yoga At Your Desk

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By Holly St. Lifer

Regardless of what you do at school, there are 2 aspects of your profession that you share with other educators: you're either sitting or standing—a lot. And no doubt as a result, you've got some aches and pains in your shoulders, legs, hips and back. “Imbalances start to present themselves when muscles get fatigued from being in one position for too long,” says April Martucci, a Manhattan-based yoga instructor. For example, after a few minutes of standing, you might lean more on one hip or begin to hunch forward as your upper body begins to tire. This creates misalignment which in turn causes muscles to tighten and contract. Fortunately, there are simple yoga postures you can do throughout your day to set you straight. Added bonus: “Unlike traditional stretches, yoga postures are designed to improve circulation and that translates into more energy,” says Martucci.

Standing Forward Bend

Shoulders, chest, inner thigh, hamstrings, lower back

Stand in a wide straddle position, feet about 3 feet apart. Interlace your hands to make a fist at the base of your back. Fold forward, as arms extend overhead. Breathe in and out of your nose for 10 breaths. Return to start and repeat. If your shoulders are very tight rather than interlacing the hands, hold a towel at each end at shoulder width behind your back and make the connection that way.

Seated Spinal Twist

Lower back, shoulders

Sit tall at the edge of your chair, knees together touching and even. Inhale as you take left hand over to right knee and twist your torso to the right, gazing behind you. On your next inhale, sit tall and on your exhale twist a little more, and repeat. Return to start. Switch sides and repeat 4 more times on each side. Bonus: Yogic twists massage and squeeze the organs to release stored toxins and gases and increase blood flow.

Cow face

Triceps, shoulders, sides of waist, chest

Sit tall on edge of chair. Reach right arm overhead and place hand on center of back, elbow pointing toward ceiling. Reach left arm behind you clasping hands together. If you can't join hands, hold your shirt. Look up toward ceiling and breathe for 5 breaths. Switch sides.

Squat with Prayer Pose

Lower back, hips, calves

Stand a little wider than your hips, toes turned out slightly. Bend legs and squat so your butt is just off the floor. Bring hands to prayer pose at center of the chest, torso lifted. Use your elbows to move the knees apart by pressing hands together tightly as you press elbows against inside of knees. (If your heels come off the floor, widen the stance until you're able to get the heels all the way down.) Close eyes and hold for 8 breaths. Return to start and repeat 2 more times.

Downward Dog

Opens and lengthens entire body

Get on hands and knees, shoulders aligned under wrists. Spread your fingers wide, pressing hands flat into the floor, and lift into a push-up position. Now press hips all the way into the air so you're in an upside down "V." Your heels should hover above the floor an inch, back and legs straight. (If you have lower back problems or tight hamstrings, bend legs slightly.)

Breathe in this pose for at least 5 full breaths and then lower into Child's Pose and rest by lowering knees to floor, butt on your heels, chest on thighs, arms extended forward.

To learn more postures go to yogajournal.com. Find a class near you at yogaclasssearch.com.

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