

## STUDENT TEACHERS

Student teachers can be a crapshoot. Here are some things I have done to assure that the experience is a good one for the student teacher, my students, and me.

1. Check out the student. Strong recommendation from the university or someone who knows the student is a good place to start.
2. Meet the student teacher in person. In the interview, you will probably get a feeling for whether or not this is a person you would like to spend lots and lots of time with. During the student teacher experience you will spend more time with this person than you do with your own spouse. It will become a very close personal relationship for the two of you, so be ready to give love, understanding, guidance and support.
3. During your interview with the candidate, conduct a part of the interview in the language.
4. If the student teacher wants to teach using TPR Storytelling then I am a good partner for this candidate. If the student teacher would like to try a variety of techniques, then s/he wants somebody else.

If possible, arrange the interview to be at a time that you can follow this plan: Go over the lesson plan for your next class, explaining what you will be doing. Have the candidate observe you teaching that class and then have him/her teach the exact same lesson plan in the next period class. (Not the whole period, maybe just steps 1,2,3 for example.)

Do not take a student teacher because you want time off. Yes, you will have some time to get things done, but your primary motivation must be to fill the need for serious, competent, well-trained teachers in our schools. It is excruciating to watch a student teacher teach your own students. But if you don't help train quality teachers, where will they get quality training?

After every lesson do a post-mortem. The first few post-mortems will be of your own teaching. Every post-mortem begins with what went well. Follow that with what mistakes you made, how did the kids react, what could you have done differently, how did you handle inattentive behavior, etc. Train your student teacher to observe you with a blend of admiration and suggestions. Let the student teacher take over a 5 or 10-minute segment early on and do the same post-mortem on that lesson, so that you both know what things you are looking for and you both feel comfortable admitting errors and successes.

Soon your student teacher will understand that you are his/her #1 cheerleader. At that point the student teacher will become very self-critical. There are almost always tears because this teaching job is so incredibly demanding and difficult. The snotty students just make it harder for the poor student teacher. You must nurture the student teacher with love, encouragement, suggestions, and praise. Lots and lots of **specific** praise.

To be a good cooperating teacher is work, not a vacation. I love training teachers because I think that quality teachers are best legacy I can leave my nation. But do not fool yourself into thinking it is a job you can take lightly. It will be frustrating, exasperating, and rewarding. Just like teaching!

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