

10 Tips for New Art Teachers



Frank Juarez

In October, I received the 2015 Wisconsin Art Education Association Art Educator of the Year Award at Lawrence University. On the way to the award ceremony, I had a great talk with fellow art teacher Brian Sommersberger about what I was going to say during my acceptance speech. Like most teachers, I have many stories I could talk about, but I knew that I wanted to take this opportunity to address teachers—particularly those new to the profession—with tips that I have found to be successful throughout my teaching career.

10. Be Yourself

Being yourself allows you to enjoy your time with your students. If you treat your students like adults, they will treat you with respect. I like to infuse humor with my teaching, which makes my students more comfortable in the classroom.

9. Focus on the Positive

We are constantly faced with high demand for increasing rigor within the curriculum. It's easy to be overwhelmed. However, the earlier you learn that there are things that you can control and things that you cannot, you're more apt to

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make better decisions by focusing on the positive. Focus on what you can change.

8. Push Yourself into the Unknown

I am driven by not knowing what may happen next. This may sound somewhat frightening, but I have found that I enjoy being challenged. We teach students to practice critical thinking and problem solving. Shouldn't we do the same?

7. Ignore the Critics and Take Risks

This is a difficult thing to do, especially when you're a beginning art teacher. However, to develop as a professional you must take risks and ignore what people may say about your decisions. Learn from your mistakes and move on. Trust your gut. If you don't take risks, how will you grow?

6. Focus on Your Students

What you do in the classroom isn't about you—it's about your students. If a student has a difficult time learning



something, figure out a way to differentiate your instruction. If a student is not being challenged, figure out how to increase rigor. As educators, it's our responsibility to provide students with the tools they need to succeed.

5. Laugh

Most of us go into education because we want to teach what we are passionate about, but we often forget to enjoy ourselves. It's okay to laugh once in a while. Students like to see that you're human. Laughter is just one way to make your classroom a more comfortable place.

4. Surround Yourself with Good People

Rather than wasting precious energy on things you cannot control, surround yourself with people who are

positive, optimistic, and willing to embrace change for the betterment of the students.

3. Smile

I stand outside of my classroom during passing period every day in a special spot where I greet students with a smile or a "How's it going?" This small gesture can make a world of difference in the way students interact with you and each other.

2. Advocate and Promote

When I first started teaching, I could tell that staff and students didn't fully understand what happens inside the art classroom. I discovered ways to bring art education into the hallways and into the community by writing press releases, creating opportunities for my students' work to be displayed in local businesses, including art news in our parent newsletter, writing an annual review and sending it to my school board and superintendent, submitting student artwork to local and state art exhibitions, and

joining my state's art education association. Today, the art department is a creative and integral part of my school.

1. Follow your Instincts

This is the most important piece of advice I can offer any teacher new to the profession. There's a reason you became an art teacher. Let this reason guide you to create the best possible art program for your students and school. You are the only person who knows what's best for your students. It's okay to ask for advice, but be sure to follow your own instincts. Carve your own path to success. 🐉

Frank Juarez is art department chair at Sheboygan North High School in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and founder of the Midwest Artist Studios Project and the 365 Artists 365 Days Project. fjuarez@sasd.net