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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from "When I Started Teaching, I Wish I Had Known...".

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WEEK

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GIVE STUDENTS A FRESH START

Meaghan Calkins

9 years

Since my first year of teaching, I have taught high school freshmen. I was told, “This class coming is just awful!” I decided my very first year that I was not going to listen to the opinions about the upcoming freshmen, and I was going to give every student a clean slate and a new start.

I tell each one of my freshmen classes this, and I believe it resonates with the students as an opportunity to truly become who they want to be perceived as. I learned very early on that there are truly no “bad” students; they are just kids trying to do the best they can given circumstances they had zero say in. In short, I realized my own professional affirmation: If you can get a student to trust you, then you can get that student to do anything!



I give every student a clean
slate and a new start.

Practical Wisdom for the Classroom

Consistency, consistency, consistency! I cannot express enough that any classroom policy or expectation you state during the first couple days of school must be upheld all year long. Idle threats will get you nowhere. Gray areas of classroom management will confuse students. Create fair routines and procedures, and if you do have to change them, explain why.

Take Care of You

In my first year of teaching I was full of motivation and eager to “change the world one student at a time!” I soon realized that before I can help someone else, I need to make sure I am taking care of myself first. To a novice teacher, I would say there must be a point in the day when you unplug from work. You will never feel like you have “completed everything.” Therefore, now is the time to learn to keep your health and well-being a priority—before you experience teacher burnout early in your career. Make every effort to maintain any healthy habits that you had prior to becoming a teacher. For example, if you exercise in the morning, keep exercising in the morning. If you read the paper and enjoy a cup of coffee in the morning, continue to do that. Do not work 24/7.

●●● I TAKE CARE OF MYSELF FIRST.

PAUSE. REFLECT. ACT.

Hearing that an entire class is “awful” can be a daunting message to a new teacher.

- How will you share your positive view of your students’ potential with them?
- What will you do this week to support your growth as a teacher?
- What will you keep doing that is good for you?

Write your responses to the prompts in a journal to further your reflection and to help you remember what you are learning. An online journal for your use is available on our companion website (resources.corwin.com/WeeklyWisdom). ●

