

10

Great Ideas

for the

first

5

Days of School

TIPS, TRICKS, & HACKS TO GET TO KNOW
YOUR STUDENTS AND MAKE GREAT, FIRST
IMPRESSIONS!

High School

1

COLLECTIVELY SET THE SCENE!

You know how the first day goes in every. single. class...

The teacher explains behavior policy and course expectations while students passively half-listen.

Boo.

Why not **STAND OUT** this year by inviting students to create a set of realistic expectations **WITH** you?!

How many locker passes do **THEY** think are fair? How many absences are within reason? Make-up work rules?



Give them a voice and a choice this year, and I'll bet they stick to the plan! :)

TIP: Use **GOOGLE DRAWINGS** to swap-n-share ideas in and out of class!

2

GET A BASE-LINE

Looking to 'diagnose' your students that first week?

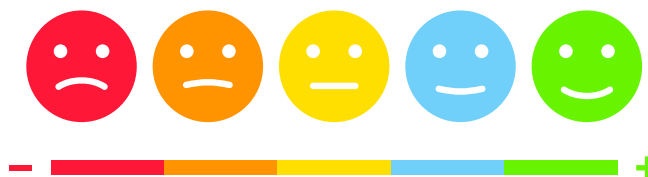
You don't necessarily need quantitative, diagnostic data to get to know your learners academically. In fact, make it a bigger priority to get to know them emotionally this week!

Use a polling tool like MENTIMETER to ask the class questions like: 'How would you describe yourself in one word?' 'What's your best academic quality?' 'What are your passionate pursuits off-campus?'

Project answers to the class as they pop up, and be wowed as the gates of a comfortable learning environment open up...conversations will spark and smiles will crack!

Sound like a fluff time-waster? Nah. Making this kind of an effort sits WELL with kids. It means you care (gasp!), and that you're willing to invest time in (all of) them!

Start with the heart, friends!



3

GET ON THEIR LEVEL

Encourage engagement outside the classroom walls!

Create an 'Evening Instagram' question for your class to explore...

FIRST, create a class-wide Instagram account; developing a collective identity does much to build community in the classroom.

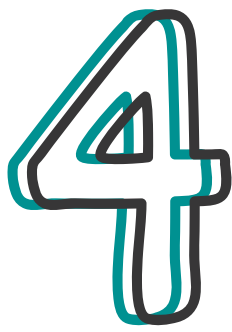
SECOND, have students write down one interesting question they'd like to see featured this quarter (perhaps give them parameters like a theme or topic).



THIRD, set a date for your Evening Instagrams to take place and provide incentives for participating!

Hey, maybe even put a student group in charge of leading the posts each week.

TIP: Check out the WORD SWAG app for image-creating fun!



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

I can't say it enough...

Getting to know your students and their interests is SO important. Yet sometimes, we (teachers) get SO overwhelmed by how much we have to teach in such little time, that we tend to forget that!

Sigh no more!

Using PADLET, have your students create an Identity Wall! Getting to know who they are, where they've been, what they value, their dreams, aspirations, quirks, and soft spots will help YOU design a better course that speaks to THEIR interests.

Passion Leads to Purpose!

TIP: Have them revisit their boards in June to see how much they've grown!

5

ENCOURAGE PROBLEM-FINDERS

As an English teacher, I used to think there was merit in beating my students over the head with Commonly Misspelled and Commonly Confused words during week 1; I thought it would magically fix my grading headache, right? Wrong! My students still made these classic mistakes, beat as I may...

Why is that?

Because drill-n-kill does exactly what it says...it **KILLS** any hope of learning!



Instead, ask students to seek out the problems learners tend to make or misconceptions they might have about your subject area, then let them lead the way in teaching corrections!

If you want to eradicate those nasty little, subject-specific errors, give them an opportunity to **OWN** these lessons...

They won't neglect what belongs to **THEM!**



VALUE CONTENT CREATION

Giving students the genuine freedom to explore content during the first week will immediately do TWO, awesome things:

1. It will help you get to know their interests.
2. It will generate content ideas for your course.

Let students roam wild in the archives of TED...

Ask them to find a video that speaks to who they are, what they're passionate or curious about, or one that they have something to say about/add to/question.

Dedicate one day a week or month to TED Talks. Put the student who selected the video in charge of leading a Socratic Seminar, debate, or other activity regarding their pick.

Students choose the content and create value from it for the class to enjoy! Boom!

Now we're (TED) talkin' (and so are they!)

7

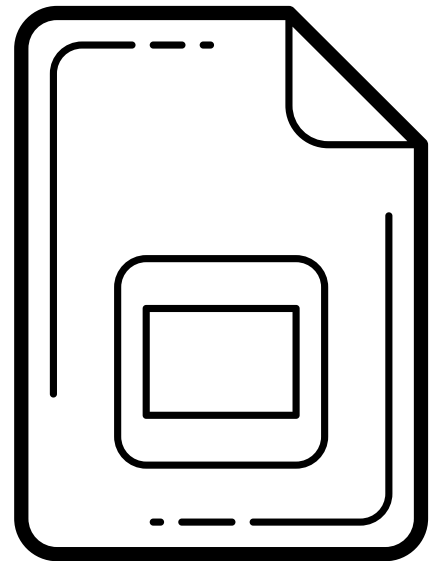
SHARE TO INSPIRE

All signed up for the computer lab today? Great! I've got just the collaborative-slash-interactive tool for you...

Create a class-wide, GOOGLE SLIDE.

Assign each student to a slide.

Assign a task (i.e. research and respond to question X; write a response to prompt X; using yesterday's strategy, complete the following...)



Students get to see each other's work, which will inspire them to even more creative work themselves!

TIP: Set clearly defined rules for this activity (i.e. whether or not they may edit each other's work, etc.)

The next day, peer review the work on the overhead back in class.

Total Grading Hack, by the way! Woot Woot!



GO PAPERLESS

The first week of school is full of excitement, but it's also full of scheduled changes! A student might show up on Day 1 only to be gone on Day 2, or he/she might not arrive until Day 4...

This movin' and shakin' can cause quite the paper shuffle, not to mention, paper waste!

Why not lessen the paper products by becoming besties with Google Classroom?

During pre-school week, upload PDFs of all course documents to your Google Classroom. Then take a day in class to get students signed up, and allow them to explore what's inside their Google Classroom paperwork library.

Perhaps then you could have THEM tell YOU what your course is all about and what they should expect this year!

Make a quiz on KAHOOT to follow up for extra, interactive fun!



GET PARENTS ON BOARD

Speaking of Google Classroom, it's NOT just for students!

Who says you can't create a Google Classroom page for PARENTS?!

Make them feel part of the experience in real time by setting up a Google Classroom group for the adults!

Now you have a spot to share important paperwork, post deadline notes, and even create homework assignments for parents (i.e. send in canned goods for this week's food drive, needing classroom supplies X, Y, and Z, etc.!).



Infinitely better than that boring, old district site, and way more aligned with your learning experience! Not to mention, this route will help you stand out to parents and draw them into the learning experience.

Besides, you'll totally score bonus points with the parents for going the extra mile! Oh yeah!



SKYPE WITH SOMEONE COOL

Good teachers know they don't know everything.

Shake up standard instruction right away by inviting someone in electronically to share their knowledge and expertise.

If you teach a college-bound course, for instance, perhaps Skype with a local college admissions rep or a college professor, and have them talk with your kids about what a class like this is going to do for them when it comes to getting ready for the big leagues.

Or, if you're getting ready for a unit on, say, 'Language and Communication,' how about setting up an interview with a linguist in the area or an expert abroad! Prior to, have students brainstorm what questions to ask by walking them through a simple K-W-L.

Hopefully, this will encourage students to seek out answers through proactive exploration!

LIKE THESE IDEAS?

IF I'VE
OFFERED EVEN
ONE IDEA YOU
CAN USE, I'M
DOIN' THE
HAPPY DANCE...
WILL YOU
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WITH ME?



JOIN MY MAILING LIST TODAY