

## MODEL ADVICE COLUMN

Advice to a New Teacher by Jacqueline Podolski

Don't be afraid to ask advice—  
frequently and a lot.  
Veteran teachers may seem annoyed and roll their eyes  
or even avoid you,  
but it's better to be annoying than floundering in front of 30 students.

Observe other teachers.  
Some may be excellent, some may be awful, some may be mediocre.  
You might try one's technique while critiquing another.  
This is the best way to create your own style.

Keep a journal for these observations.

You are going to hear a lot about students—  
some good, most bad.  
Don't let what you hear from other teachers form your opinion of a student.  
Do that yourself when you encounter her.  
You may find out the rumors were true;  
more likely you'll find they're not.

Eat in the teacher's lounge, but do not spend your prep period there.  
Eating with them helps you learn who they are and what they're about.  
Spending your prep there may lead to more gossip.  
See above.

Use your prep period to prepare.  
Those fifty minutes will not be enough to grade all papers  
or plan all lessons  
or reflect on all class sessions.  
They will, however, help you organize.

Remember that teaching is only a job;  
it is not and should not be your life.  
Keep in touch with your non-teaching friends,  
Dedicate time to your significant other (or your cat if you don't have a significant  
other).  
Play with your children when you think you should be grading essays.  
Never stay up until midnight grading papers—both you and the students will  
suffer.

Read a book or take a class about your subject matter.  
Join a professional organization.  
You'll earn continuing education credits  
while keeping up to date on educational trends.

Make friends with the secretary, the engineers, and the paraprofessionals.  
You will need them all in an emergency or for simple help.  
Don't alienate them. Their help won't be so good if you do.

Always be professional around administrators.  
Listen to parents, regardless of whether or not they are wrong.  
Do not argue with either.

Love and respect your students.  
Have fun with them.  
Be crazy, shock them, do something unconventional.  
But remember at all times:  
You are their teacher, not their friend.

If none of this advice stays with you,  
at least remember this:  
Have fun!

## MODEL FORMAL ADVICE

Musings from a Veteran to a New Teacher by Jacqueline Podolski

Oh young teacher, so scared upon your first day,  
Do not despair for there are many here who  
would love to mold you after themselves.  
Of the advice received from those questioned,  
adopt only that with which you are comfortable.  
Observe the experienced both at work  
and amongst themselves outside of classrooms,  
for you will gain valuable opinions  
as well as potential prejudices.  
Take not these prejudices as your own  
for they will thrive and fester in your mind,  
obscuring the true nature of those your peers  
malign or laud; your judgments should be yours,  
formed after experience with your students.  
Temptation to gossip and distractions  
may delay preparation and reflection.  
The precious minutes allotted to you  
for these should be used wisely and well,  
else they shall impede upon your real life.  
For, remember this—you are more than teacher;  
You are also friend, companion, caretaker.  
Do not sacrifice these roles to career.  
Continue to learn so that you may respect  
the challenges your students encounter  
allaying frustration and lack of time.  
Do not disdain the secretaries or  
others in your building who are teachers not,  
for theirs are the services most sought out.  
Keep thy tongue to yourself in front of students  
when you do not agree with administrators  
or when you feel they are in error;  
you will be much more respected by all  
if you air grievances in private calm.  
If all that I offer your ears do not meet,  
I beg you keep this: enjoy all you do  
here with yourself, colleagues, and students.