“How To Deal With Unexpected Problems”

“Failure is the key to success; each mistake teaches us something.” –Morihei Ueshiba-

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The educational field is a living organism. Many things such as the student’s moods, problems caused by other faculty members, and even the slightest things such as the weather or a glitch with devices such as the computer can be a variable which can affect the lecture. A teacher must be prepared for all unexpected surprises. The teacher may use her past experiences to be ready for all things that may happen.

1. Your institution has a very strict, “English Only” policy. They are relying on you to implement and enforce this rule. How are you going to go about it?

Many English-based camps enforce this rule to enable students to become used to the concept of speaking English. If a student broke the English-only rule, I would use the ‘sticker board’. On the laminated sticker board, students may display stickers which they may collect when they have actively participated in class, or spoken in full English sentences. Stickers will be taken away when students speak Korean or break other rules in the classroom. When a certain amount of stickers are collected, the student with the stickers may throw the dice. The six sides of the dice show six options for the student that he may get: candy, chocolate, a chance to swap seats with another student, a recess of ten minutes, a chance to play a game, or ‘better next time.’

Prizes and punishment are like two sides of a coin. They coexist together and when they are given to the student, they must be in full understanding and agreement regarding the rules about prizes and punishment. A teacher must not decide everything by herself and demand her students follow her rules. Questions such as why is this rule important? Why is it good for students to follow these rules? Must be fully discussed, with the students leading the debate. In the years of teaching experience, eliciting a conclusion out of students is the best way to get them to behave. The ‘sticker board’ rule has been the most successful, and I now help students come to an agreement among themselves by suggesting the rule as a possible solution.

1. How will you enforce frequent tardiness and frequent absences in the classroom?

Students who often fall behind in class have various reasons why they often fail to do their work, or abide by rules. I have witnessed many students who have attention problems, family problems, even those with a case of ADHD. These different types of students require help unique to their situations. However, all students who need care have one thing in common; they are not interested in the class. Playing games and inducing interest is the first step to solve their indifference to rules. When they have started to enjoy the class, giving them easy problems to solve is a good way to continue to hold their attention. On solving the problems, they feel accomplished that they have achieved something and usually keep in line from then on.

Students who are frequently absent often have problems with their health, relationships with friends, or in the household. Showing a little attention from the teacher helps the student to feel the obligation to come to school. Methods such as promising rewards for consecutive 10 days of attendance show that the teacher cares.

1. How will you help your students prepare for any lesson presentations that they may need to do throughout the school year?

When doing presentations, knowing the exact subject, organizing the information to present, and doing so with a clear voice and pronunciation is the key. However, elementary students are too young to be fully experienced in presenting. Therefore, encouraging the student to be confident is the most important role for the teacher. Setting a standard to follow allows them to take the initiative in developing their presenting skills. I have personally used the ‘TEPS’ module, which stands for Thanks, Excuse me, Please, and Sorry, often. These four simple polite sayings allow students to respect each other’s feelings accordingly to the situation, and will allow students to develop close rapports with one another. Trust and closeness among students allow even shy ones to be more self-assured. With confidence as the base, I would then teach students how to present in a skilled manner.

Being a student and a teacher has contributed to many life experiences that I have witnessed. Most of all, being the teacher at NaeBalSan Elementary has given me understanding of concepts that are necessary even beyond the chalkboard. Being a teacher is learning to help young children become students who can obey rules, actively engage in learning, as well as form close-knit relationships with the people around them. We are human as well as teachers, which is why we make mistakes sometimes. When we do make mistakes, how we deal with them defines what kind of teachers we are. Teachers teach values such as patience, persistence and perseverance. By evaluating our actions from the past, we also learn these values at the same time.