

Top 10 Pieces of Advice from Students for Teachers

Naturally, every student is different. “My favorite teacher ever” usually refers to someone whose style and methods happened to suit the learning style of a particular student particularly well.

At the same time, the teen writers at *New Youth Connections* magazine found considerable common ground when they sat down to share their best learning experiences. Below, individual writers articulate the “top 10” principles gleaned from the contributions of everyone in the group.

1. Be pushy.

Being a junior in high school was stressful. There were times when the work got so hard I felt that I should just give up and quit school. However, there was this teacher at the school, Ms. Alexander, she became like a mother to me. Whenever I have a problem, she is always there to push me to strive to do better, even when I think I’m not up to the work. She pushes other students, too. Whenever a student is failing a class or feeling depressed, she has a meeting with them and finds out exactly what is going on.



Right now I need a math credit, but I wasn’t planning on going to summer class. However, Ms. Alexander recently called my house to inform me that I should be in summer school for math so I’ll graduate next year. She gives that extra push whenever she feels that students are not willing to push themselves the extra mile. — **Renea Williams**

2. Make the lesson relevant to our lives.

My global history teacher taught a lesson about feudalism and the caste system, comparing it to a typical high school’s cliques and hierarchies. Since she knew that I dislike cliques, she used me to explain those who rebelled against the clergy, nobility and feudalism in general. Because she put our lives — and me — into her



explanation, I will remember that lesson on feudalism forever.

— **Ebony Coleman**

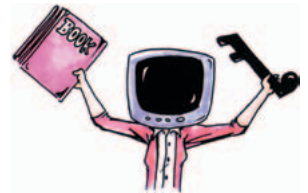
3. Be relatable, but please don't say: "It's time to dip, y'all!"

Teachers shouldn't act like students. You can be their friend, help them with their schoolwork, let them come to you and talk to you about their lives. But when you act your students' age and use the slang that students use — I hate when teachers do that. I have a teacher who says things like, "Y'all, it is time to dip." It's just rude and unprofessional. — **Renea Williams**



4. Teach us with words, sights and sounds.

A teacher should be able to teach in a wide variety of ways. If the teacher's showing me a video and then gives us a paper with the facts, and then maybe she makes a speech about it, she's using a variety of ways to teach. This makes it easier for me to learn. — **Evin Cruz**



5. Be consistent and firm.

I have a teacher who's too nice: She lets the students take over. When she would give us an assignment, some of the students would end up persuading her that we didn't actually need to do it. Because she wasn't very firm, she ended up being like a puppet and the students were the puppeteers. Because of this, I missed the lesson.

— **Irving Torres**



6. Believe in us.

One of my favorite teachers during this school year was my math teacher, Mr. Hatchett. He not only teaches well, he believes in all his students and doesn't give up on us.



Let's say one student complains that the work is hard. Mr. Hatchett will go up to the board and let the student tell him which part of the problem they don't understand. Then he'll explain

it and do another problem and let the student try it, using the same steps from the previous problem. Later, he'll call on that student all the time when doing class work so they start getting motivated. And during independent study, he's constantly asking the class if anyone needs help. Nobody is left behind, and he shows us that he believes we can do it.

— **Margarita Martinez**

7. Explain, explain, explain.

Sometimes you just truly don't get it, and then you need a teacher to be patient and explain it over and over again, maybe in a different way, to make sure you understand. The teacher shouldn't give up and think, "He doesn't get it, but he'll learn eventually" — he probably won't! The thing with school is that it's a snowball effect: If you don't know one thing, it's harder for you to learn other things, especially in math. — **Evin Cruz**



8. Use our time wisely.

In my music class, kids would talk about fights they were in, gangs and even sex. Instead of ignoring it, the teacher would spend five minutes lecturing us on how life was better and kids acted right when he was younger. Students would continue to aggravate the teacher on purpose, just to prompt him to waste time on more of these lectures. If I was the teacher, I would have simply told them to be quiet and, if that didn't work, kicked them out of the class so I could move on with the lesson.

— **Ebony Coleman**



9. Have clear objectives, clearly communicated.

I like when a teacher is in control, prepared and ready to teach their class as soon as the bell rings. For example, my English teacher writes "do nows" on the board so, as soon as we get in, we know what we're supposed to be doing and are ready to work. Great teachers write out objectives and also grading policy to ensure the students have a clear idea of what they will be learning and what's expected of them. — **Renea Williams**



10. Be a good example.

My teacher brings food in the morning and if anyone is hungry he'll offer some of his food, which is always organic and very healthy. Over the course of the year he's had an influence on people's eating habits. He doesn't look his age and is very energetic, so some students changed the way they ate because they said that they want to be like that when they get older as well. He's not only a mentor but someone that people look up to.

— **Margarita Martinez**



*All illustrations by **Freddy Bruce**, graduate of Robert F. Wagner High School.*