



CEC Student Teacher Support Network

10 TIPS for Student Teachers

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10. Jump in! The best way to learn as a new teacher is to start working with students as soon as you start your experience. Assist students with independent work. Volunteer to draft an IEP. Introduce yourself to co-teachers and to the families and caregivers of your students. Be humble that you have a lot to learn, but don't be shy.

9. Presume Competence! All students have strengths and areas for growth. Reject ableist views that some people have of students with disabilities. See the strengths in every student; they have so much to offer the world.

8. Intentionally Observe your Mentor Teacher! They have a wealth of knowledge to offer you. From using Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions to co-teaching with ease, you are working with experts that you will learn from just by simply noticing what they do.

7. Find Your Crew! Lean on your university and school-based mentors, fellow student teachers, and CEC resources to make it through tough days. Finding a support system that sees your development as a teacher through a growth mindset will help you stay the course.

6. Stay Organized! Lessons. IEPs. Progress Monitoring. FBA data collection.... The many hats special education teachers wear can be overwhelming. Find ways to help yourself stay organized. Using color coded folders and developing routines for collecting student data helps keep track of the many duties you are learning to juggle.

5. Ask Questions! Your mentor teachers are experts at supporting youth. Be curious. Try to get inside your mentor teacher's head. Ask for feedback on your lessons and drafts of IEPs. Don't hesitate to ask how you are doing and what you can do to improve.

4. Refuel! Teaching is like running a marathon. If you don't take care of yourself you will risk burning out. Find outlets to decompress in healthy and productive ways. Be kind to yourself.

3. Utilize High Leverage Practices (HLPs)! The CEC and CEEDAR Center have created empirically based HLPs that we know work in the field of special education. Tips and videos are available. Use these resources to help guide your practice!

2. Disrupt Unconscious Biases! As hard as one tries, it is impossible not to have biases. Confront these. Read about racism, homophobia, ableism and other forms of discrimination in schools. Do the work to make yourself aware of the biases you unconsciously hold. We know from research students are adversely impacted by the implicit biases educators hold. Every student deserves a teacher who is actively working toward justice.

1. Take and Use Feedback! Student teaching is about learning and growing as a professional. No teacher is perfect. No lesson is perfect. The mark of a great educator is one where they seek and use feedback from others to improve. When you get feedback (and you WILL get feedback), try hard not to be defensive or reactionary. Listen. Reflect. And try to incorporate the feedback into future lessons, IEPs, collaborative meetings.... This shows your mentors that you are eager to be an outstanding special education teacher.



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