

When I began my student teaching, someone told me not to freak out too much, and that the first five years of a teacher's career do not really count. This person advised me to learn as much as possible during those years, but not to get discouraged if things did not always go as planned. After five years, they said, things do get easier. As I dive into "the years that count", I have realized that things did get easier and I cannot and will not ever stop learning. It is important to continue to learn about the best ways to support student learning. There are many things I strive for as a teacher, but there are a few goals that stand out more than others. These goals correspond to three different themes: culturally responsive education, technology, and coaching.

First, I want to bring the ideals of Culturally Responsive Education into my classroom, and share this information with my colleagues. The more I learn and read about culturally responsive education, the more it appeals to me. There are many characteristics of this type of teaching but the ones that stand out to me are as follows: positive perspectives on parents and families, communication of high expectations, learning within the context of culture, and student centered instruction. I want to erase all forms of deficit thinking from my thoughts, and in order to do that I need to maintain positive perspectives on my students and their parents/families. I feel that it is important to share this information with my colleagues as well, and try to create an inclusive culture of culturally responsive teaching.

This type of teaching (and thinking) is important for me, especially at my current school. The student population is incredibly diverse, and we have a high number of English Language students (30% of the population!). These students have different values and perspectives that they bring to my classroom, and in order to help them succeed, I have to be able to make the necessary connections for them while teaching. I need to understand where my students come from, and how they see themselves. Furthermore, my colleagues could also benefit from this information. Our school has a long way to go in order to meet my goal, but it will be a worthwhile journey to take.

There is so much more to the idea of Culturally Responsive Education, and the provided resources will help me explain and share the information with my colleagues. The Lisa Delpit video is especially interesting and I plan to share this with the rest of the staff during our school improvement meetings.

I am constantly looking for new ways to use more technology. Specifically, I want ways to incorporate technology into my classroom that will actually enhance a lesson. One goal I have had for a long time is to adopt a site like Schoology into my curriculum consistently, and actually use it in ways that will enhance my students' learning.

There are features on Schoology which allow students to participate in online discussion boards, blog posts, and quizzes. It can be a great tool to keep students engaged in class while utilizing an online tool that is comparable to many social media sites. It is also a good way to keep all the work completed in one spot, so students can always access their work and feedback from the teacher. My ultimate goal here is to use Schoology consistently for an entire school year in a way that benefits my students the most.

The last goal I have is related to coaching. I want to become a better, more effective coach. The coaching related courses I have taken have helped me to realize that there is a lot more I could be doing as a coach. Physically, I have learned about the best ways to train athletes depending on the activity. Mentally, I have learned about the best ways to motivate athletes, and how to coach the mental side of the game. However, I still need experience and opportunities to utilize my knowledge. The videos below are drills that I have not used, but ones that seem to exemplify some of the knowledge I have learned. I need to help my teams communicate better in order to achieve better team cohesion, and some of these drills show ways to practice communication. I need to help my players with the mental side of the game, and the imagery link is one strategy I could try. As I continue coaching, I hope to get better at teaching the mental side of the game, including communication and mental skills. These things will help my players become better athletes and a better team overall.