

Leaving First Year Teacher Stereotypes in the Dust

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What is a stereotype?

Merriam-Webster defines the word *stereotype* as “a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.”

How can you beat the stereotypes?

Discipline Issues

1. Have a discipline plan for the grade level you teach (elementary, MS and HS shouldn't be the same). What does your school do? What does the handbook say? Read it, learn it, know it.
2. Say what you mean; mean what you say.
3. Be firm, but kind.
4. Do not allow kids to blurt out. Give one redirect only.
5. Have a procedure for everything, and follow it. Practice these procedures with your students, do not assume they already know how to do them.
 - a. Seating
 - b. Folders (getting them out, putting them away, storage, numbering, etc.)
 - c. Gum
 - d. Concert Attendance
 - e. Grading
 - f. Lining Up
 - g. Tardies
 - h. Entering and exiting the room (no packing up early or lining up at the door)
 - i. Nurse and RR Pass
 - j. Taking attendance

Comparison to previous teachers and programs

1. Listen when students, staff, and the community tell you what Mrs. Such and Such did. Smile nod, and say “ I'm sure that was great, this year we are going to try ____ and ____.” Don't speak negatively about the teacher that preceded you, and don't feel pressured to do everything they did. Listen, smile, nod, and move on, but never belittle.

2. Don't take comparisons to other teachers or programs personally. Parents want to remember the "Good Ole' Days".
3. There is nothing we can compare with this year or last. We've never experienced anything like it. Don't spend too much time stressing over student involvement or numbers in your choirs.

Befriending students/wanting to be cool

1. Students are not your peers. Don't try to fit in. Be an adult. Everyone is expecting you to do the opposite.
2. Set boundaries.

Not asking for help

1. You know a lot. You learned a lot in college and in student teaching. It's okay to ask questions.
2. Make a phone call. Texts and messages only go so far.
3. Join all of the Facebook choir groups.
4. Join MCDA and MMEA. It's worth it to be in both organizations.

Curriculum and Organization

1. If you step into a small school program, your curriculum may be less than stellar or you may not be able to perform or sing at all this year. Reach out to other teachers and use their ideas or curriculum. You won't have time to write an entire curriculum before school starts, but make a quick map of all of the things you want to accomplish each quarter and write lesson plans from there. If you are not able to have a performance class this year, work for a well-rounded curriculum of music theory, history, culture, sight-singing, listening, composition, and careers.

Concert disorganization

1. Get a concert check-list from a friend or music page.
2. Type your program two weeks before, and make changes as you get closer to the date.
3. Check student names at least 3 times or better yet leave them all off.
4. Know what your procedures are for set up/maintenance, practicing during the school day, and technology set up. Send emails asking for permission and advice.
5. Find a staff member or adult to help with: student supervision, sound, programs, video, lighting, stage/curtains, etc.

Good Habits

1. Get to school at least 30 minutes before you have to (if possible).
2. Look like "the teacher". Wear professional attire to school, conferences, and meetings. Grab some school gear or extra sports shirts from coaches for school spirit day. Participate in spirit week.
3. Stand at your door between EVERY hour/block (unless you have to go to the bathroom, and don't forget to do that). Say Hello. Joke around. Be present. Don't sit at your desk.
4. Put all of your meetings and duties in your calendar and show up.

Make friends with a variety of faculty and staff members (Not just the fine arts folks)

1. What? I need to talk to the coaches? Yep, even them! Teach them that your program matters, you put in tons of work just like them, and that music is important. They will go to bat for you and possibly help you recruit kids to your program.
2. Your best friends should be: the counselor, secretary, and custodian.
3. Make sure you can walk into a room and begin a conversation with staff from every department.

Attend student and community activities

1. Go to football, basketball, and volleyball games.
2. Volunteer to work at an academic team, science olympiad, or speech and debate tournament.
3. Sign up to work the gate, run the clock, or take the book at a sporting event. You get to see your kids play, be out in the community, and maybe even make some money.
4. If you live close, find an easy way to get involved in the community.
5. Say "Yes!" to as many community performances as possible. Nursing home visits, Christmas caroling, civic meetings, etc are great ways to promote your program and make a difference in your community..

Don't be the teacher that has "Free Time" Every Day. "We never do anything in Mrs. Smith's class. She always gives us free time"

1. Always work to the bell.
2. Have extra activities ready to go at a moment's notice such as: team building, a round, extra warm-ups, theory, or a rhythm game.
3. We have to be flexible and roll with the punches. Have sub plans ready to go and always have more work than you think they need.

Repertoire

1. Plan out your concert repertoire with enough time to ensure that you have your pieces in hand when it's time to rehearse.
2. Be willing to change and be flexible. If something doesn't work, it's okay to scrap it and try something new.
3. There's no shame in singing unison.
4. Sing a varied repertoire. Classics are great, but don't be scared to put a pop piece in your line up. There's no shame once in a while, and your kids will love it.

District/Conference/State

1. Reach out to someone at a local school to find out information about All-District Choir, Conference Choir, Honor Choirs, etc.
2. When you attend District Choir events, spend time watching the clinicians lead warm-ups and rehearsal. Take notes so you don't forget these ideas.

Long Hours, frustration, and burnout

1. Take care of yourself by practicing self care.
2. Make a list, do what you can, but remember it will still be there tomorrow.
3. Give yourself grace. You are new at this, it's okay to make mistakes.
4. You don't have to do EVERYTHING.
5. It's okay to say no sometimes.
6. Make sure you have a support system.
7. If you don't have a mentor or buddy teacher in your building, ask someone if they will be your mentor.
8. Don't sweat the small stuff.
9. Have a little fun, be silly sometimes, and don't forget to enjoy what you are doing.
10. If you get frustrated, don't forget...things will get easier.

Online Resources

If you join MCDA, the team drive has lots of resources. Join and check it out!

<https://www.musictheory.net/>

<https://www.teoria.com/>

<https://www.brainpop.com/artsandmusic/learningmusic/>

<https://www.soundtrap.com/edu/>

<https://www.noteflight.com/>

<https://www.classicsforkids.com/>

https://www.8notes.com/music_training/

http://www.flacda.org/?page_id=404

This presentation is geared toward a “regular school year”. There is nothing normal or regular about teaching in a global pandemic. Work hard, get creative, and try your best, but allow yourself some grace. It's okay to be frustrated. Lean on other teachers. You are brave and courageous for starting this new journey as a music educator. Don't forget you have an army of Missouri Music Educators to use as a resource, listening ear, and support system! Feel free to reach out to me anytime for ideas and support. ~Sarah Cook

