

An Inspirational Message from Leah Carper

2022 NC Burroughs Wellcome Fund Teacher of the Year



I've been teaching since 2006. Being a new teacher is so hard because there are so many things you don't know about the profession, the curriculum, the school culture, the students, etc. It's a lot! There are so many things I wish I knew earlier in my career, and I know many other teachers would agree. After speaking with a bunch of my colleagues and teacher friends, we came up with a list of things we wish we knew as a beginning teacher.

Here are the top things all new teachers need to know:

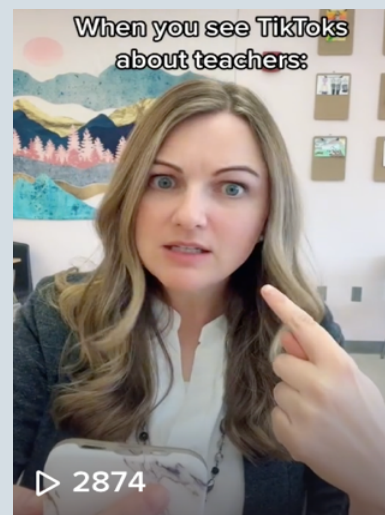
- **Find your people.**

Find the teachers in the school who represent the type of teacher you want to be. Spend time with them. Ask them questions.

Observe them while they're teaching. These teachers need to become your go-to people. Ask them to help you learn about the culture of the school. Be sure to ask them to help you prioritize your to-do list. (Not every email you get from your principal is a class 10 emergency. This is something that took me years to learn.) When you find your people, look to them as mentors. Run ideas by them. Share what's going on in your class. You'll find that most teachers want to help other teachers be successful. You may find that these go-to people at work might become your go-to people in other aspects of your life, too.

- **Use the first 10 minutes of class to set the tone for the day.**

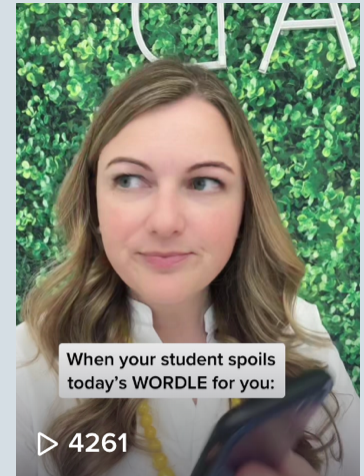
Establish a routine where your students know exactly what they need to do when they walk in the room. For me, it is a warm-up activity. (Some people call them starters or activators.) Every day, my students know to pull out their warm-up response sheet and to complete the activity that's projected on the board. Use this as an opportunity to review what was learned yesterday or to anticipate the day's lesson. The first 10 minutes are also a great time to check in with your students emotionally. Spend this time chatting with them individually while everyone completes the warm-up activity. Having a routine will make it easier to settle your class once it is time to begin the learning portion of the day. (I have my students submit their warm-up sheet every other week for a grade.) The first ten minutes set the tone for the whole class. Make them count.



TikTok @how_i_teach_high_school

- **Your students are always observing you.**

Building relationships with your students takes time, and not every student is going to be super open to get to know you, but please remember that they are always watching you. They are deciding if they can trust you as they see how you interact with other students. So even if a student is not interacting with you personally, it doesn't mean that you can't build trust with them. If they feel like you are kind, sincere, and warm, they will be more likely to feel safe with learning from you. As they watch you, you are influencing how they think adults feel about them or people like them. It's hard to always have to be "on" like this, but please be mindful that students of all ages are watching you and learning from you.



Instagram @how_i_teach_high_school

- **Mistakes are opportunities to grow. Don't be afraid to start over.**

You're going to mess up sometimes. When you make a mistake, own it, and use it as a tool to help you become a better educator. There are no perfect teachers, and unfortunately, there are no perfect solutions to the problems you'll face daily as a teacher. This means mistakes are inevitable. Keep a growth mindset not only for your students, but also for yourself. You will be impressed with how much you learn in a year if you reflect on your mistakes and tough situations and move forward. One year I started a late work policy and it just wasn't working. I admitted openly to my students that it wasn't working, and together we came up with a new solution and just started over. There is nothing wrong with admitting something isn't working and trying something else. This is a life skill you can model to your students. There is no shame in trying to make things better. Remember, you're not just teaching a curriculum; you're teaching people how to be people. This means they need to learn how to make mistakes or bad choices, learn from them, and move forward in a positive way.

There were more on the list, so here are a few "Honorable Mention" things that all new teachers need to know:

- **Student behaviors are not a reflection of your skills as a teacher.** Sometimes young people just act like young people, and it has nothing to do with you. Please try not to take everything a student does personally. Most of the time, it's not about you at all.
- **Be yourself.** Students love authenticity and they love all the different facets that make you a unique person. Show them what it's like to be a well-rounded, functioning adult.
- **Have fun with your students.** You're at work, but that doesn't mean it needs to feel like work all the time. When you engage in play with your students, you build relationships. Make it fun.
- **Take a day off every once in a while.** You earned the days. Take them when you need to. There should be no guilt in taking a needed day off.

This is just a small list of things you will learn as you go through your beginning years as a teacher. Remember, it's all about growth, and you will grow so much as an educator and person during these years.

One more thing:

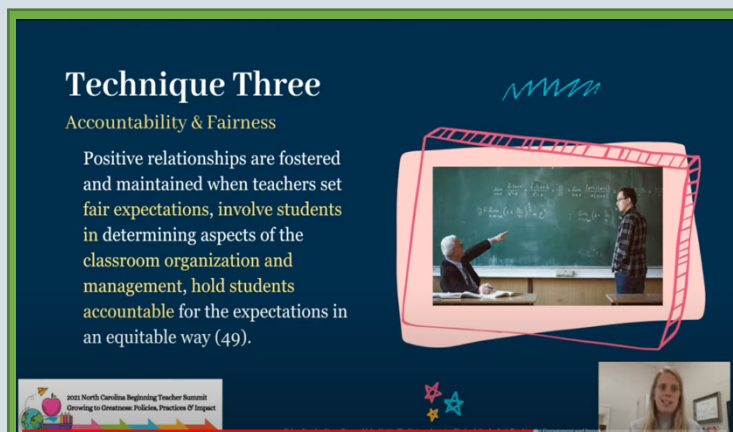
- **You're awesome.** Thank you for choosing to be a teacher. Thank you for choosing to spend your days in the service of your community. I say this with all sincerity: you're awesome.

I hope you all have a great beginning to your school year. I cannot wait to hear about all the fresh ideas and perspectives you're bringing to your school communities and to the profession.

BT Professional Development Corner

Establishing your classroom management procedures at the beginning of the year is important but maintaining management throughout the school year is vital. Linked below are two pre-recorded sessions from the virtual 2021 NC Beginning Teacher Summit. Capturing tips from each session will be helpful references for you as you cultivate the best learning environment for your students.

- **Keys to Classroom Management: Cultivating a Community of Kindness and Respect**
<https://youtu.be/2wSgbRS-6sY>
- **Classroom Management De-escalation Do's and Don'ts**
<https://youtu.be/iVXCvA6Xes>



Technique Three
Accountability & Fairness

Positive relationships are fostered and maintained when teachers set fair expectations, involve students in determining aspects of the classroom organization and management, hold students accountable for the expectations in an equitable way (49).

2021 North Carolina Beginning Teacher Summit
Growing to Excellence: Policies, Practices & Impact



Tweet with you soon!

BT Twitter Chat | Thursday October 20, 2022 7 - 8 pm

Mark your calendar for the Fall 2022 NC Beginning Teacher Chat on Twitter. The Twitter Chat will be an excellent opportunity for you to connect with teacher across the state including our NC State Teacher of the Year, Leah Carper @howIteachHS, and the 2022 Regional Teacher of the Year Team @NCstoriED. To participate you must have a twitter account. Follow the #NCBTChat to see the questions and responses from previous Twitter Chats. It will be great practice for our October chat.

Leah invites you to follow her on all social media platforms. Extend your professional network.

Twitter: [@howIteachHS](https://twitter.com/howIteachHS) and [@NCstoriED](https://twitter.com/NCstoriED)

Instagram: [@NCstoriED](https://www.instagram.com/NCstoriED) and [@how i teach high school](https://www.instagram.com/how_i_teach_high_school)

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