



Tech Teaching Tips

Advice for Pharmacy Technician Educators

Tips for New Pharmacy Technician Teachers

Your first day as a teacher can be an overwhelming and stressful experience—but it doesn't have to be. We have compiled a few tips (adapted from *What Great Teachers Do Differently* by Todd Whitaker) to help you make your first day a resounding success and to set a positive course for the rest of the semester.

Tip #1: Establish Expectations

Perhaps the most important thing you can do to ensure a successful semester is to plan ahead. Have your syllabus prepared and have your expectations for the students set before you even enter the classroom. This will give you more confidence and an easy starting point on that first day, no matter how nervous you are. Make sure you have a good understanding of what you expect of your students and that you clearly communicate this to the class. If you aren't clear about what you expect from them, how will they be able to fulfill your expectations?

Tip #2: Engage the Students

We have all had that one teacher who stood at the front of the classroom for 50 minutes and droned on and on from a lectern about a subject we probably can't recall. Why can't we recall it? Because we were not engaged. Students learn best when their interest is piqued, so you need to find interesting ways to break up class time and make the students active participants in their education.

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Tips for Avoiding Stress for Pharmacy Technician Teachers

Teaching can be exhausting and time-consuming with some days when you just can't remember why you started teaching in the first place. We've gathered some ideas (adapted from *Teaching Matters: How to Keep Your Passion and Thrive in Today's Classroom* by Todd Whitaker and Beth Whitaker) for avoiding that mid-semester burnout.

Tip #1: Make Time for Yourself Every Day

You are many things to many people: teacher, parent, child, sibling, friend, coworker, mentor. All of these roles require you to give your time, energy, and effort to someone else. And while these different roles are important, there is no way we can be there for those who need us most without taking

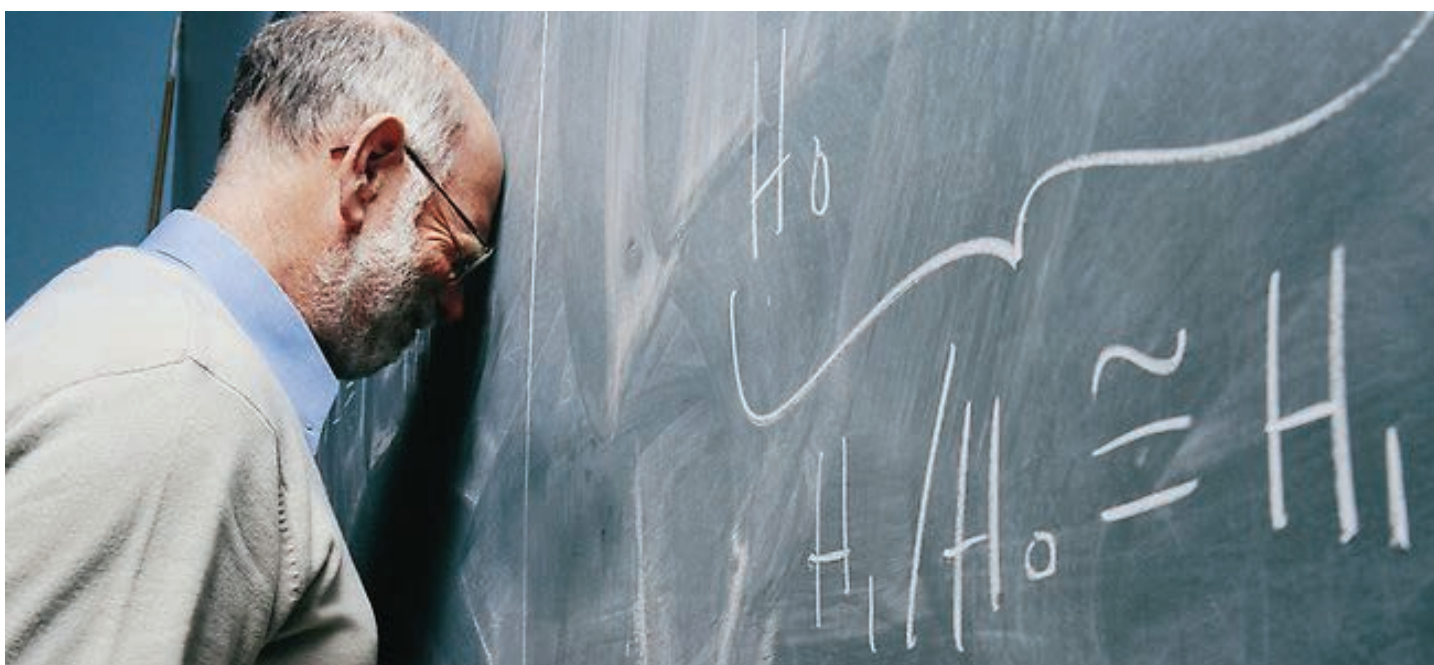
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time for ourselves. Whether it's taking a quick walk, stealing a few minutes to chat with good friends, or simply remembering to drink enough water during the day, be sure to find ways of giving yourself a quick boost when you need it.

Tip #2: Find Opportunities for Professional Renewal

With the stress of teaching sometimes you can forget that you are a member of a vibrant and thriving profession. In the world outside your classroom, there are professional pharmacy technicians struggling with the same problems that you are, as well as those who have found solutions to those problems. In addition, the world of pharmacy is constantly changing and it is important for you and your

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Flipped Classrooms: Teaching to the Student

With the ubiquity of technology in our everyday lives, especially in the lives of young people, it is increasingly difficult for teachers to gain and hold their students' attention. The traditional instruction design of a 50-minute lecture followed by hours of homework isn't engaging

students who spend most of their free time watching three-minute YouTube videos and who get their news in 140 characters or less on Twitter.

Some teachers, frustrated by the limited impact of their instruction, have decided to try a different approach. This practice has many versions, but they all basically begin by recording lectures and making them available on a website dedicated to the class (there are many versions of these websites available, including Blackboard, Sakai, and EDUonGo), and can be accessed by any device with Internet capabilities. Recorded lectures range

anywhere from 5 minutes to 55 minutes, depending on the topic. Students are required to view these videos before coming to class so they have a basic idea of the concepts that will be explored in the next class session.

The *flipped classroom* is where the students complete, in class, work that would have traditionally been assigned as homework. At the start of the class, teachers ask for questions about the lecture, give a few minutes of a "mini-lecture" if needed, then introduce the activities that will be done in class that day. Students engage in experiments, group activities, or individual assignments, as the case may be. Teachers spend the

From the Publisher

Welcome to the first issue of *Tech Teaching Tips*. Instructors in pharmacy technician training programs have many challenges. Teaching pharmacology, compounding techniques, administrative procedures, pharmacy law, and drug information is daunting enough. Add to the mix student backgrounds encompassing a range of ages, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and language differences, and the challenges only multiply. We stand in awe of the work you do. As the responsibilities of pharmacy technicians continue to increase in our changing health care system, the need for solid training of pharmacy technicians only increases.

In each issue of *Tech Teaching Tips* we will focus on ideas, suggestions, and tools to help you be a better teacher. We realize that many of you come to your positions trained as pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, not as teachers. Our hope is that this complimentary, quarterly newsletter will start a continuing conversation about improving your teaching techniques. We invite you to submit ideas, tips, techniques, and ideas for future articles to us.

The newsletter will always be free, free to copy, and free to distribute. Let us know what you think.

Jack Bruggeman

Director, ASHP Special Publishing

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Tip #3: Respect Every Student, All the Time

It may seem like a no-brainer, but treating every student in your class with dignity and respect 100% of the time can go a long way toward creating a positive learning environment. There will be students you like more than others, but you must treat every student in your classroom as if you *do* like them. Nobody wants to be in a place where they aren't wanted, and a student is not going to be receptive to your teaching if he or she does not feel welcome. So it is very important to make each and every student in your classroom believe that you want them there.

Tip #4: Don't Be Afraid to Praise

No one has ever complained about getting too much honest, genuine praise. Your students will want to work hard to receive praise if they know it's real. In *What Great Teachers Do Differently*, Todd Whitaker gives five aspects of praise that must be met to be effective: *Authentic*, *Specific*, *Immediate*, *Clean*, and *Private*. This means you need to recognize them for something real that they did (*authentic*); give an example of the action that is being praised (*specific*); give the feedback in a timely manner (*immediate*); do not issue praise to get them to do something in the future (*clean*); give the praise in a

one-on-one setting so as not to create resentment among peers or embarrass the recipient (*private*).

Tip #5: Be the Positive Influence

Everyone has off-days. You burned your coffee, you got a flat tire, your dog made a mess you had to clean up before you left. You are human; it happens. But what great teachers always do is leave their off-days at the door when they enter the classroom. You should always do your best to project a positive attitude in your classroom. Smile and greet students as they enter the room and focus on the time ahead with your students. You'll find that your positive attitude will set the tone for class, whether you're faking it or not.

Source: Whitaker, Todd. *What Great Teachers Do Differently: 17 Things That Matter Most*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education; 2012.



"Stress" continued from page 2



students that you keep up with the latest information. You can do this by attending conferences such as ASHP's Midyear Clinical Meeting and the annual conference of the Pharmacy Technician Educators Council (PTEC). You can also stay up-to-date by following reputable organizations and professionals on Twitter and Facebook.

Tip #3: Start a Positive Portfolio

From time to time we all need reminding that we are good at what we do. Start collecting positive feedback from students, colleagues, supervisors, and even grateful patients. You can also add special projects that you are proud of, copies of your published articles, awards, or presentations. Going back and looking over these accomplishments when you are feeling frustrated or discouraged can give you a quick shot of confidence and

serve as a reminder of how far you have come and what you have achieved in your career.

Tip #4: Participate

It might sound like a contradiction, but writing an article or two for a professional journal or a chapter for a book can rekindle your passion for your profession and can add to your positive portfolio. In addition, being active in the pharmacy technician community will serve as a positive role model

to your students and colleagues and perhaps give you more of a voice in the school where you teach.

Tip #5: Use the Facilities Available to You

Many pharmacy technician programs are taught in a community college setting. If your school has a gym, track, swimming pool, or other facilities, take advantage of them. Come to school an hour early and go for a swim, or take a few minutes between classes and walk around the track. Physical activity during the day can be an opportunity to work out frustrations, mentally prepare for the day ahead, or just enjoy the sunshine for a few minutes.

Source: Whitaker, Todd and Whitaker, Beth. *Teaching Matters: How to Keep Your Passion and Thrive in Today's Classroom*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education; 2013.



“Flipped Classrooms” continued from page 3

classroom time walking around, supervising group work, instructing students on a one-on-one basis, and answering questions.

There can be several advantages to redesigning classroom instruction in this way. Because teachers have more one-on-one time with students, it allows them to evaluate the student’s grasp of the concepts and to correct any misconceptions right away. It also prevents students from hiding in the background and

trying to skate by. Teachers are more aware of each student and his or her needs and are able to tailor their teaching to accommodate those needs. In traditional class-

rooms, teachers are often forced to “teach to the middle,” while advanced students become bored and struggling students fall further and further behind. With a flipped classroom the instructor has more time to challenge advanced students and to assist the struggling ones before it is too late.

Flipped classrooms also provide more options for different kinds of learners. Visual learners often have a hard time grasping concepts in lectures and need a more hands-on approach to their instruction. In-class experiments

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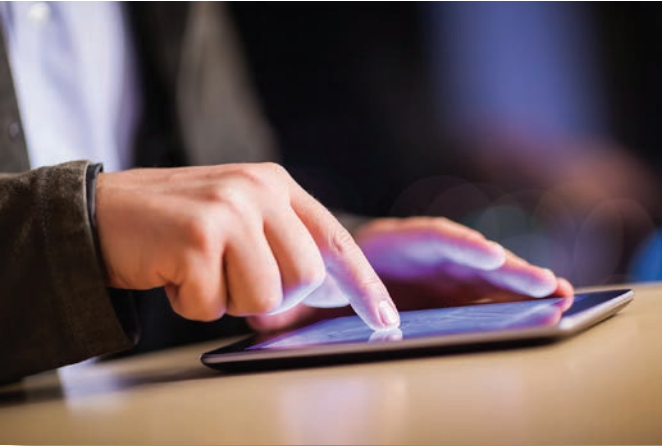
There are many different versions of this practice, but they all basically begin by recording lectures and making them available on a website dedicated to the class.

and group work are much better suited to their learning style. On the other hand, abstract learners prefer listening to a lecture. With recorded lectures, these learners can not only learn in the style that’s most comfortable for them, but they can pause, rewind, and fast-forward the video, creating a more self-paced learning environment.

There are important things to keep in mind when considering transitioning to a flipped classroom. There can be much more preparation time involved with the initial transition to a flipped classroom. Instructors have to condense their lectures down to the main points that the students should know for each lesson, and then record them. A class website must be created, although there are many, many websites, both free and not-so-free, that can assist. In-class activities must be planned. Again, there are many resources with in-class activity ideas.

Another important thing to keep in mind and to address promptly is that students will not be familiar with this kind of classroom. They will need you, the instructor, to explain in as much detail as possible the concept of a flipped classroom, how to use the class website, how to access the lecture videos, what kind of work they will do in class, and what will be expected of them both in and out of class. So, it is up to you to





make sure that each student understands the new structure, what they should expect from you, and what you will expect from them.

Although most evidence of the positive effects of the flipped classroom is anecdotal, there are a few studies demonstrating positive correlations between switching to a flipped classroom and student achievement (see the references for links to two of these studies).

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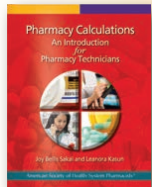


ASHP Pharmacy Technician Education and Training Resources

For information on these and other resources for technician training go to: www.ashp.org/menu/InformationFor/Technicians.aspx.

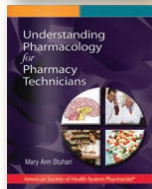
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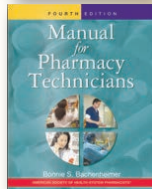
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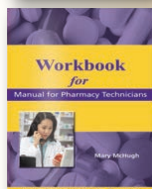
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