

"Soft"

What you see is not necessarily really what is there. Students are young and many are lost. They are trying to be "cool" because they have not learned any better. That is an invitation for a great teacher.

Fear dominates the classroom. Don't let it get you, and teach your students to recognize it and defeat it.

A great teacher must believe that the student can learn, that the student can be redeemed, and that the teacher can make a difference.

Students must believe that life is or can be good and that the system is there for them. They must also believe in their own potential and abilities.

Inspiration in the classroom requires that we teach children how to live their lives because most of the time people do the exact opposite of what they need to do to be successful. "The reason most people don't succeed is that they give up what they want most for what they want at the moment."

Inspiring teachers take time to teach students how to make good choices.

Don't be so tied to your lesson plan that you let the teachable moment pass you by.

The art of inspiring students requires us to look for the best in our students. "Love requires that we see beyond the flaws that live within the children we teach. Love requires that we see what they can become." - Richard Sagor

There is a song that asks, "What if he's an angel sent here from heaven, and he's makin' certain that you are doing your best to take the time to help one another? Brother, are you going to pass that test?"

Love is an attitude toward life in general according to Eric Fromm. Parker Palmer says that "teaching is an act of hospitality toward the young." Teach children to love by loving them.

"Treat people as if they were what they should be, and you help them become what they are capable of becoming." - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"Anyone can be great because anyone can serve." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Nuts and Bolts"

Recognize students when they are successful through websites, showcases, agenda covers, incentive programs, proclamations, pins, and bravos. Students will seek attention. It is up to you to make sure they believe they can get it in positive ways.

Make assignments through DoNows, short homework projects, and English classes to keep students thinking about applying the principles of inspiration to their lives.

Remind students of how special your school is and how much your school does for them. Remind them of all the extras you do for them. Students will quickly accept all you do as "normal" if you don't spend time selling what you do.

Create opportunities to enhance CBUPD's. Give students opportunities to feel competent and useful. That may include a classroom responsibility. Once they have mastered something, give them a chance to help someone else.

Give students hope. Create opportunities for students to recover from bad choices. Give them nothing, but allow them a way to dig out of a hole.

Help students create a vision. One of the most common reasons that students do not do well is that they have no reason to do well in school. They have no goals, and they have no reason to work. Teach students to create a vision of who they are and who they want to be.

Autonomy - While it is important to teach teamwork, our students need to learn the value of standing alone against the crowd. Too often students choose not to excel because it is not "cool" to do well in school.

Teach students that the real power in life is in creating and not in destroying. Students think they are smart because they can destroy what others create. Point out that any fool can destroy. Heroes create. Teach them about the word generative.

Fear and Failure - Bob Moore says that the big failure in American education is that we do not teach students the role of failure in success. "In order to increase your success rate, you must double your failure rate." - Rick Pitino

Points of inspiration to take back to the classroom:

"Soft"

Believe - Beliefs determine what you will be as a teacher and what your kids will be as students. A trailer from "Field of Dreams" says, "Sometimes when you believe in the impossible, the incredible comes true."

The teacher can make a huge difference in a student's life.

Inspiring teachers seek to be inspired. They read books, search for quotes, listen to songs, and watch movies that "arm them for battle." It is hard to carry a non-believing classroom on your back, but that is a real teacher's job. "Nurture your minds with great thoughts. To believe in the heroic, makes heroes." -Benjamin Disraeli

Show you care. Take time before class to talk to students about their lives. Check at the end of each class to see that you spoke to each one.

Fill the classroom with your inspiration.

Parker Palmer says that authority is afforded to those who are perceived "to author their own words." Your belief in your students should be so strong that they know you care and that everything you are telling them is the truth as best you know it and that it comes straight from your heart. You will be amazed at how much better they pay attention. Tell students often that you love being with them.

Teachers are in the business of changing behaviors and the way students view school and their lives. What will they remember about your class?

Topics to consider for inspiration:

- Believing in something means investing
- Change is possible
- Working and waiting
- Destiny is choice, not chance
- What is the measure of a man (or a woman)?

Teaching is a calling. Anyone can teach the bright and motivated. The glory is in redeeming the unmotivated, the misdirected, the challenged, and the challenging.

An inspiring teacher must model inspiration. Each day the teacher must bring energy and excitement to the classroom.

"Nuts and Bolts"

Create images - Jaime Escalante taught calculus to inner city students by creating sports images that would help them remember how to solve problems. Read Escalante, The Greatest Teacher in America by Jay Matthews.

Teach a theme for the year - On a team or by yourself, plan how you want students' behavior to change and then follow a plan to get them there.

Use quotes, songs, books and movies - Regardless of the subject area, you can make the DoNow a quote or a song that gets your point across. Follow up on these ideas on subsequent days through the DoNows. Coordinate with English teachers to expand these ideas through longer works like books and movies.

English teachers should choose all literature to support the inspiration program.

Take time to teach students how to set goals and how to reach them. Use images like Mt. Olympus to explain the purpose of vision and focus.

Teach the blocks in John Wooden's Pyramid of Success, and when students fail to use those building blocks, remind them and challenge them to do better. When a student walks into class and says, "Can we just sleep today?" challenge that statement. Ask the class, "What just happened to the Pyramid of Success?" Ask, "How can we be successful if we start the class by knocking out the cornerstones to success?"

Explain to students that we humans are often our own worst enemies. Instruct them on the role of victim statements, roadblocks, and false beliefs in hampering their road to success. Help them understand that much of what humans say, do, and believe is the opposite of what will make them successful. Then remind them daily in class when they participate in these self-destructive behaviors.

Choose basic values that will enhance student success and then look for quotes, songs, and books that will reinforce those values. Some of these values could include working and waiting, the importance of believing, the responsibility of choice, and the importance of service.