

Field Teaching Tips

TCE 432A Spring 2026

Before You Go

Know Your Context

- **Meet your cooperating teacher BEFORE your first lesson.** Ask about:
 - Class routines (How do they start class? Where do students sit?)
 - Classroom management strategies already in place
 - Available materials and technology
 - Students with special needs or accommodations
 - What content have they covered? What’s coming next?

Prepare Your Materials

- **Print backup copies.** Technology fails. Have paper versions ready.
- **Test technology the day before.** Don’t find out Phyphox doesn’t work on your phone 5 minutes before class.
- **Bring extra supplies.** Pencils, markers, tape—students will need them.
- **Have a “Plan B.”** What if the projector dies? What if the activity takes half as long as you planned?

Plan for Timing

- **Everything takes longer than you think.** Passing out materials, getting students into groups, transitions—budget time for these.
 - **Know your “must-do” vs. “nice-to-do.”** If time runs short, what can you skip?
 - **Have extension activities ready.** Fast finishers need something meaningful to do.
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During Class

Starting Strong

- **Introduce yourself briefly.** “Hi, I’m [Name], and I’m learning to be a science/math teacher. I’ll be teaching you for the next few weeks.”
- **Use your cooperating teacher’s routines.** Don’t reinvent the wheel—students respond to consistency.
- **Start with something engaging.** A hook, a puzzle, a surprising fact—grab their attention in the first 2 minutes.

Managing the Room

- **Circulate constantly.** Don't stand at the front. Move around, listen to conversations, ask questions.
- **Use proximity for behavior management.** Stand near a chatty group—often that's enough.
- **Ask your cooperating teacher for help.** If a student isn't responding to you, your CT can step in. That's what they're there for.
- **Speak to the behavior, not the student.** "I need everyone's eyes up here" is better than "Jason, stop talking."

Facilitating Discussion

- **Wait time is your friend.** Ask a question, then COUNT TO 5 in your head. It feels awkward. Do it anyway.
- **Rephrase and revoice.** "So you're saying that..." helps clarify student thinking and shows you're listening.
- **Ask follow-ups.** "Why do you think that?" "Can you say more?" "Does anyone agree or disagree?"
- **Don't answer your own questions.** If silence lingers, ask students to turn-and-talk first.

Keeping It Inquiry-Based

- **Resist the urge to tell.** When a student asks "Is this right?" ask them "What do you think? Why?"
 - **Let students struggle (productively).** Confusion is part of learning. Don't rescue them too quickly.
 - **Make student thinking visible.** Whiteboards, posters, document cameras—show what students are doing.
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Collecting Data

Formative Assessment (During the Lesson)

- **Listen to conversations.** What are students saying to each other? What misconceptions emerge?
- **Take photos of student work.** Whiteboards, notebooks, posters—capture the evidence. (Blur faces or crop them out.)
- **Jot quick notes.** Keep a notepad handy. Write down interesting moments, surprising responses, things that didn't work.

Summative Assessment (End of Lesson)

- **Exit tickets are your best friend.** 1-2 quick questions on an index card or half-sheet. Collect them as students leave.

- **Gather artifacts.** If students made something (graphs, diagrams, lab reports), photograph or collect copies.
- **Ask students to self-assess.** “On a scale of 1-5, how confident are you with today’s concept?”

Organize as You Go

- **Label everything immediately.** “Period 3, Group 2, Feb 25.” Future you will thank present you.
 - **Create a folder system.** Physical or digital—keep each lesson’s data together.
 - **Back up digital files.** Google Drive, Dropbox, email yourself—don’t lose your photos.
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After Class

Debrief with Your Cooperating Teacher

- **Ask for feedback.** “What went well? What could I improve?”
- **Be specific.** “Did my instructions make sense?” “Were students on task during group work?”
- **Take notes.** You’ll forget their insights by the time you write up your lesson.

Reflect Honestly

- **What surprised you?** What did students understand easily? What confused them?
- **What would you change?** Be specific. “Better instructions” is vague. “Write the task on the board, not just say it aloud” is actionable.
- **Celebrate small wins.** Did one student have an “aha” moment? Did a shy student speak up? Notice the good stuff.

Document While It’s Fresh

- **Write up your lesson within 24 hours.** Details fade fast.
 - **Use the 432/532 template.** Planning, Implementation, Assessment, Reflection—fill it in while you remember.
 - **Include evidence.** Photos, exit tickets, your notes—attach them to your documentation.
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When Things Don't Go as Planned

Common Challenges & What to Do

“Students finished the activity in 10 minutes. I planned for 30.” - Have extension questions ready: “What if we changed X? Can you create a new example?” - Move to the next phase early. Flexibility is good! - Ask students to explain their thinking to a partner.

“Students are confused and I don't know how to explain it differently.” - Ask a student who gets it to explain. Peer teaching is powerful. - Use a concrete example or analogy. - Pause and have students write down their confusion. Then address the patterns you see.

“The technology crashed / materials didn't arrive / fire drill happened.” - Implement Plan B. (You have one, right?) - Adapt on the fly. Can you do a simplified version with what you have? - It's okay to say, “This isn't working—let's try something else.”

“A student was disruptive and I didn't handle it well.” - Talk to your cooperating teacher afterward. Ask for strategies. - Reflect: What triggered the behavior? What could you do differently? - Remember: Classroom management is a SKILL. You're learning it, just like your students are learning math/science.

“I messed up.” - Welcome to teaching! Every teacher has bad lessons. - **Document it honestly.** That's what A05 is for—real teaching, not perfect teaching. - Focus on what you learned, not on beating yourself up.

Remember

You are learning. No one expects perfection.

Students are resilient. One rough lesson won't ruin them.

Your cooperating teacher is your ally. Use them!

Collect evidence as you go. Future you needs that data for A05.

Reflection is where growth happens. Be honest, be specific, be kind to yourself.

Questions? Problems? Reach out to Dr. Edwards immediately.

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You've got this!