

First Day Blueberry Blues

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- The special education teacher wants all teachers on the first day to include the special needs students.
 - You've just received a memo saying you have five special needs students: two with behavior disorders, one with a learning disability, and two with second language needs. You know the students' names, but you don't know who has what needs or what those specific needs are.
 - You also notice on the roll that your 1st period class also includes a 10th grader and an 11th grader.
- You want to start getting to know your students right off by having a "getting-to-know-you" activity and establishing your own learning environment. You assume many of your 9th graders are nervous about being in high school, so you want to make them comfortable.



Write a 250-word response on the following prompt:

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Blueberry Shock Tarts



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You notice that one of those students is in your third period class, and he had casually used some profanity in his first in-class writing and once when he was coming into the classroom.

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Double Blueberry Vision



On Monday morning just before your 12th grade English class begins, your student Jennifer comes to you wearing a concerned look. She's nervous about something. After reassuring her that you'll try to help, Jennifer explains that she suspects her friend Sydney has stolen Jennifer's English paper while having a sleep over at Jenn's. The paper was on Jennifer's desk, and it's no longer there. Jennifer suspects Sydney because Syd has copied from her before, but Jenn hasn't told anyone.

Syd, who is also your student, has frequently mentioned in class she must get good grades or she won't get into the universities her parents want her to attend. In fact, Syd has a strong mission to be the class valedictorian of Blueberry High. You are fully aware that all year Syd has tenaciously focused on grades, arguing over insignificant points or half points—she insists she maintains her 4.0 GPA. Jennifer has worried all weekend about what to do, and her parents have encouraged her to talk with you.

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They note the profanities and point to words and phrases in the book. They object to the use of "the Lord's name in vain," and show places in the book where the characters do that. They also make references to the repeated racial slurs and the immoral thoughts of one of the characters.

You know how engaged your students, including Lauren, have been with this novel. The discussions in class have been stimulating and meaningful. Students haven't even mentioned being offended; rather, they've made good connections with the characters and situations.

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<p style="text-align: center;">How should you treat a literature complaint? How should you respond to an offended parent?</p>
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During these weeks, you and the students have shared some meaningful class discussions about literature,

their writing even seems to have become more specific and significant, and there has also been the goofy times when you and they have laughed at dumb jokes in class.

Your three classes of 10th grade English students are nearing the end of the “Conflict” unit, and students are writing drafts of their unit paper in which they discuss a conflict in their lives. You are learning that students are hinting at disturbing events in their lives.

You learn that Chari's little sister is in the last stages of leukemia, Sean worries about his father's MS, Joe has lost his driver's license because of two DUIs in one month, Natasha is three months pregnant, Logan questions his sexuality, Monica's parents are divorcing, Jason's alcoholic father has kicked him out of home, and Sarrina is on medication for an obsessive compulsive disorder.

You begin to realize the emotional toll this unsolicited knowledge is having on you. You think more and more about your students when you're home. In fact, you're having troubles sleeping because you worry about your students' problems.

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Grammatically Correct Blueberries



You've just finished your first parent-teacher conference. It was good meeting parents and making connections with them through your students. It was also good hearing what students were telling their parents about your class and about you. For the most part, the conferencing was very positive and not as frightening as you had supposed.

Sean Luke's mom did ask you why you don't teach more grammar in your English class. She told how her other children have had Mr. Anglesey, a veteran English teacher, who stresses grammar instruction in his classes, and as a mother, Mrs. Luke has seen what a valuable approach that has been for helping her children feel more confident in their language skills and even to prepare them for the state writing exams.

You explain to Mrs. Luke, that you also teach grammar in your class, but you integrate it with the students' individual needs. You'll often take a few minutes in class to address a common grammar problem then ask students to apply the principles to the draft they're currently working on. You also indicate that in your English education courses, most professors and textbooks criticize teaching grammar separately from writing or using numerous worksheets to practice grammar concepts.

Mrs. Luke is gracious and thanks you. But in the back of your own mind, you've also been wondering whether you should be covering more grammar in your class and the worksheet practice is beginning to sound good, especially after you see the same grammar problems over and over again in the students' writing. You know students do like Mr. Anglesey, and they do well on the state exams. You also find that Mr. Anglesey has been very helpful to you since you've been teaching; you respect him.

Write a 250-word journal entry on the following prompt:

How do plan to teach grammar in your classroom?

Consider the following questions as you formulate your response?

- How is the traditional method of teaching grammar an effective approach?
- How is the integrated method of teaching grammar an effective approach?
- How can you determine the most effective approach?
- How do you know if your current approach is not working for you or for your students?
- What elements of both approaches could work well in your classroom?
- How do you evaluate how effectively students are learning grammar in your classroom?

Blueberry Stage Fright

You've made it through your first month of teaching. You've had a few bumps along the way; however, it has been a positive reward month. In your mailbox on Friday, you receive a note from your principal that she plans to observe your class on Monday. You immediately tense up wondering what you'll do in class on Monday.

You had planned to teach a rather complicated structure to prompt students to discuss related themes in a series of poems. You're not sure how your students will react to this discussion. You've worked hard preparing for this lesson and it will give your students an important and necessary foundation.

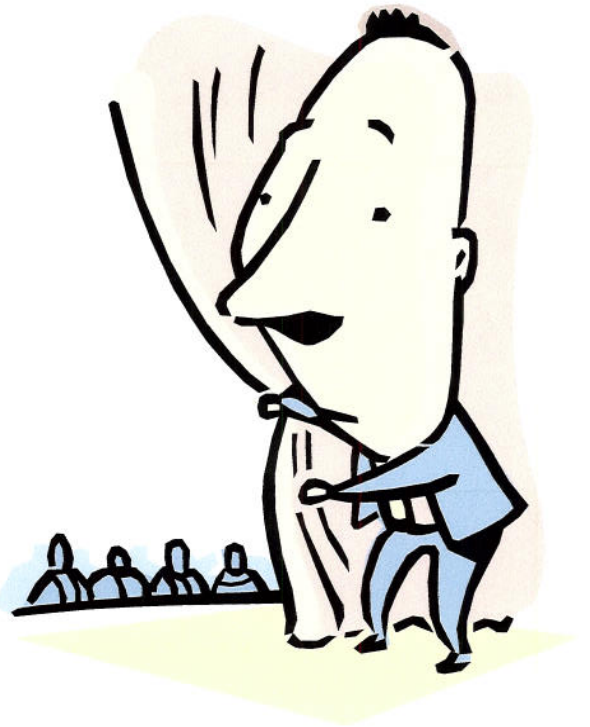
You also remember a fun activity you could do instead on Monday. In English Journal you read about a vocabulary activity that the students would probably really enjoy. You haven't used the activity yet because you haven't yet figured how to integrate the activity with what you're doing in class with your students.

Write a 250 – word journal entry on one of the following two prompts:

- How should a teacher prepare for a classroom observation by a school administrator?
- Should a teacher adjust any plans and usual practices when the teacher expects a classroom visit?

Consider the following questions as you write your response:

- How can a teacher relieve the pressure of being observed by an administrator?
- Is there another approach beside the two options given in this heart attack?
- Is it better to play it “safe” during an observation or to demonstrate your abilities? to challenge yourself and your students?
- Should you discuss your concerns with your administrator?
- Should a teacher prepare students for the observation or let the administrator see students in a natural, new teaching situation?



Shifting Blueberry Standards?



You're slowly realizing that you're going to survive this first-year teaching experience. You feel more comfortable and relaxed in the classroom, and you're sensing the students are learning and engaging in meaningful discussions. You've even managed the heavy paper load while responding thoughtfully to students' writings.

You're learning that students write better assignments when you have clear objectives in mind, give them as much information as possible to succeed, encourage numerous and varied opportunities to write in class, and share feedback. You know and feel that the purpose of assessment is to improve and measure students' performance.

You also want to ensure that your evaluation of their writing is fair and appropriate for all. Therefore, you set standards for their assignments such as having a limited topic, clear thesis statement, specific details, and grammatically sound writing. You and the students are familiar with the grading rubric.

However, you're feeling very uneasy when you notice students are writing at multiple levels because of their diverse strengths and weaknesses. For instance, you're stunned with Tien's use of brilliant description and details in her writing, but because she's a L2 student, she misapplies Standard English use of tense and articles. Emily, on the other hand, is a native speaker who uses tenses well, but she hasn't provided any specific details and examples in her writing. Jesse just seems to struggle with everything, but you noticed he's put significant effort into this paper and has the beginnings of a thesis statement and a good detail or two but a number of serious sentence errors—he's showing progress. And Sean is academically one of your most promising students, but he just hasn't put any effort into his writing; he does the bare-minimum, but he does have a thesis in his grammatically error-free paper.

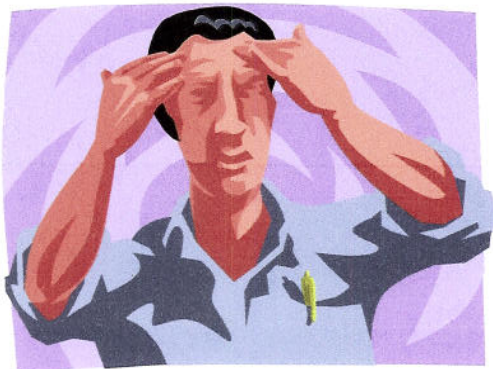
Write a 250-word journal entry on the following prompt:

How do you assess while applying high standards of student performance and continue to encourage and nurture personal growth and academic improvement?

Consider the following questions as you formulate your response:

- Should we insist on grading standards that are high?
- Should we consider students' differences as we evaluate their performance?
- Should we do blind evaluations of our students?
- Is it possible to evaluate writing objectively?
- Should our standards apply to all students in all circumstances?
- Should we look through students' mistakes to the intelligence behind?
- Should we show students that we're on their side?
- Should we be perfectly fair and in total command of what we teach?
- Should we show that as teachers we are also continuing to learn?

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High and Low Blueberry Roads



You have 28 students in your 10th grade English class. You're excited to integrate reading literature with student writing. You're also pleased that after the first few days, you and the students seem to connect with each other through class discussions; most of the students seem excited to be in class and are willing to work with you. You haven't had any red flags warning you about potential student problems.

You decide to launch right into *To Kill a Mockingbird*, so you create a pre-reading and pre-writing activity to introduce the students to the novel and to assess their general reading and writing abilities. As you read their first responses and hear them read passages a loud in class, you quickly learn that your students' abilities cover a wide, wide range. Some students have great difficulties reading simple passages, decoding word for word, yet not making meaning. Some students have troubles writing complete sentences. Other students read with great efficiency and analytical skills while writing well-developed essays of their insights based on their readings. The students seem to cross the entire spectrum of abilities.

Write a 250-word journal entry on the following prompt:

How do you teach a class of students with a diverse range of reading and writing abilities?

Consider the following questions as you write your response:

- How is teaching students at multiple levels an advantage?
- Should students be separated based on levels of abilities?
- Should the "best" teachers teach only the "best" students or the honors classes?
- Who should teach students with lower levels of abilities?
- Should teachers create different assignments for different learning levels and abilities?
- Should teachers evaluate students based on standards met or on students' individual abilities and progress?
- Which students in a classroom receive privileged status, neglected help, or even impatient tolerance?
- How can you adapt assignments to meet multiple levels?