

BESO Tip
Surviving Internship

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Congratulations! You have made it to internship. This is a very exciting, yet challenging, time for you. You might have many questions running through your mind. You might also be experiencing some nerves and uncertainty about what internship holds for you. Student teaching will give you the tools you need to become prepared for your own class.

Upon beginning my internship in a dual language kindergarten class, I felt it was imperative to establish a good relationship with my mentor. I had been a teacher aide before, so I had an idea of what my role would be. Having a mentor/intern relationship means give and take. The first day of internship, I got to meet the kids and observe all day. My mentor was very welcoming, and she assured me she was there to offer a helping hand. I took note of her daily classroom operations. Because I started my student teaching in January, I felt that I should really learn her style of teaching and classroom management; so that when the time came to teach a lesson I would not have to disrupt the established routine. Doing this would allow for my lessons to run smoothly. When the day ended, I was able to sit with my mentor and debrief. This was a time to ask questions. I got a copy of her schedule, and she even assigned me a small student desk to keep my things.

As an intern I wanted to be helpful and not hover over my mentor. As the days progressed, I continued to observe and take notes. Every day I looked for subtle opportunities to assist her in any way that I could without her having to ask me. This can be a very awkward situation because your mentor might not know how to ask you for help, and you might not want to feel like you are interrupting your mentor to ask if help is needed. I wanted for my mentor to

feel that she could count on me to assist; so I jumped in to help whenever and wherever I could. One day I covered the calendar routine. The next, I did a read aloud and so on. My mentor appreciated my pitching in because that way she was able to work with a group of students or informally observe me. Taking an active role in the classroom also helped me get to know the students better.

The students were certainly making it clear that I was not their teacher. There were times I had to reinforce the rules and discipline when teaching and interacting with the students. Of course, the students sometimes pushed back. My mentor reinforced my authority as the students' teacher, and the students eventually understood that my mentor and I were both in charge of the classroom. Having my mentor help with the classroom management really helped establish the relationship with the students just in time for my first observed lesson.

As I prepared for my first formal observation, I made sure to start my lesson planning early. I sought the help of my mentor. After all, I needed to know what she planned to teach during that week. She pulled out her year at a glance and informed me that the TEKS to be taught that week would be making inferences and drawing conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and providing evidence from the text to support their understanding by retelling a main event from the story. The book chosen for this particular lesson was *La gallinita roja*. She pulled the resources she used in the past for this lesson, and she let me take my pick of what resources I wanted to use.

Teaching your first lesson while being observed by someone is nerve-wracking. You begin to doubt if you can even deliver the lesson. You also think about what the observer is thinking about you while you teach. Thankfully, my mentor was there to reassure me that it would all be fine. She let me rehearse my lesson and even offered feedback. She was able to set

my nerves at ease and offered encouraging words. I was still feeling nervous and decided to ask my mentor nicely to not be present during my observation because having two people observing me was making it an overwhelming situation. The thought of having two people watching me, judging, and criticizing me while I taught a lesson was just adding more stress. My mentor very understandingly agreed and found something to do during my 45-minute lesson.

As I began my lesson, I started to stumble on my words. The nerves slowly calmed as I got deeper into my lesson. After a while, I became so involved in the lesson that I forgot my supervisor was even watching. My mind was so busy making sure I was hitting every teaching point, managing the time, informally assessing, and making sure the students were paying attention, that I did not have any room in my mind to think about what my mentor was doing. Soon after, the lesson was over, and the moment of truth came. I stepped out of the class with my supervisor to debrief. She was very impressed with how I conducted the lesson. She said that the students were actively engaged from beginning to end. After completing my sequence lesson and hearing what my supervisor had to say, I realized that I can do anything I set my mind to and that the nerves would always be there. I just had to work my way around it. It is normal to experience nerves and fear during internship. Someone once said, to be worried about your teaching is to care about your students. If you are worried about your students, it is because you want to make sure you are doing a good job.

Overall, internship is a sea of emotions. Are you doing it right? Will the students accept you? Will you embarrass yourself? Will your lesson go as planned? Chances of any of these thoughts occurring are very high. However, it is how you deal with it when it happens that's important. Accept that you are not perfect. Reflect on how your lessons go and look for ways to improve. It is okay to admit your mistakes in front of your students. Your students will respect

you for that. The students will see that we all make mistakes and not feel bad when they make them, too. You are in the beginning stages of teaching. You have learned that an effective way of learning is through exploring and doing. You have to undergo these tough, nerve-wracking, terrifying, and humbling situations in order to fully understand and learn that teaching is an art. There is no right way of doing it. It is about finding out what works for you and your students. It is also about building relationships with your colleagues. Teaching is a collaborative profession. You must be able to work together. It is also about being able to accept constructive criticism. After all, student teaching is essentially a job interview. How you conduct yourself will play a huge role in whether or not you are hired. So, play nice, be fair, and stay focused. You WILL get through internship!