Information for New ESOL Teachers

- Stop whatever you are doing to welcome new students to the class. They are usually frightened and need a smile from the teacher and other students. Introduce them to the class members and ask the class to introduce themselves to the new students.

- Greet each student by name as he/she comes through the classroom door.

- At the end of the class session, ask the students to tell what they learned during this class.

- Say “Goodbye” to the students as they leave class and say that you are glad they came to class today. Say, “I will see you Thursday” or whenever your next class meets. (This is most important.)

- On the first day of class, ask, “What do you want to learn from this place?” Put the students’ answers on large pieces of paper on the walls of the classroom for all to see. On the day the students accomplish their goals, they can put their name and date on these pieces of paper that are on the walls.

- Give awards for perfect attendance for the six weeks. (Ask for donations from restaurants, coffee shops, pizza places, etc. and use these donations for student awards. The students must go to these places of business to collect their awards.)

- Always make sure that reading, writing, listening and speaking are addressed in each class session.

- The Beginning ESL Literacy (Level 1) students should begin their classes by studying lessons about a family. (Vocabulary words could be “mother,” “baby,” etc.)

- The teacher should always read orally before asking the student to read aloud. (The teacher should model the English language for the students and at all times speak only English.)

- If at all possible, add computer education to your ESOL program.

- Teach grammar and the alphabet in a meaningful context. (Use the alphabet song or student’s name.)

- The ESOL classroom should be a safe haven for the students. They should not be afraid that the teacher or someone in authority might contact immigration.

- Students should become immersed in the English language. If the teacher is doing all the talking and the students aren’t using the language, something is wrong.

- Speak slowly with new students. They may be frightened and you will need to reassure them.

- Do not assume that because you are standing before them and you are speaking English that they will automatically understand you and learn English.

- Teaching ESOL is not the same as teaching high school English. Most of our students have already learned at least one language and they understand how language is formed. They need to learn English vocabulary and they need to practice using it in a way that is meaningful to them.

- The overriding common goal of all adult ESOL learners is to make immediate use of their classroom learning.
They want to be able to communicate with English speakers and learn about the culture and customs of the United States.

Call or send the student a card if he/she has not been attending class. Let the students know you miss them and hope they are doing well.

Enjoy your students. Have fun in your classes. Sing, dance, and bring food into the classroom. Many of our students have very difficult lives. Let’s make their stay in our classrooms one where they will not only learn English, but will experience good feelings about their fellow classmates and teachers.

There are many techniques that ESOL teachers can use that will not require published materials.

- Role plays and skits.
- Communication and guessing games.
- Music.
- Outside-of-class assignments to speak or write or otherwise try out language.
- Movies and tapes.
- Sentences dictated by the teacher.
- Tape recordings of students reading a passage from a newspaper and then listening to the recording.
- Asking students to interview each other and report back to the class what they have learned.
- Telling students that you are going to write all the words they know that begin with one of the letters of the alphabet. Write these words on the board as the students say them. Use a different letter of the alphabet each class session.
- Visiting a library.
- Visiting a shopping mall.
- Selecting a pen pal and writing to that person.
- Collecting e-mail addresses and writing e-mail messages to other classmates.
- Asking each student to give a five-minute talk about something they do well (changing a tire, baking a cake, etc.).
- Sharing information about each culture that is represented in the class.
- Having fun, making the class one where students will not only learn English but will enjoy attending.
- Always reminding them of the rewards of learning English and the importance of attending classes.