

**Advice for New Teachers from the Philippines  
by Total Teaching Solutions International**

All of us at TTSI are very excited that you are coming to New Mexico! Our students here will be blessed by having you as their teacher.

I have a few strategies and recommendations to help you be successful. They are based on the experiences of prior TTSI clients.

Following is the list of advice and strategies. Each item is further explained below.

1. Communicate with TTSI.
2. Do what your principal asks.
3. Manage your students.
4. Be careful with your finances.
5. Watch your physical fitness.
6. Get along with your housemates.
7. Be involved in the community.
8. Keep a language journal.

**1. Communicate with TTSI.**

This is the most important advice I can give you.

If you have questions, concerns, challenges, or difficulties and you are not sure what to do, contact us. Good communication with TTSI will help with almost every issue.

Small problems can become big problems, so make sure to communicate with us early. Whether the issue is instruction, classroom management, school policy, colleagues, finances, living conditions, or housing, let us know.

You are in the TTSI family now, and we are here to help you be successful.

**2. Do what your principal asks.**

Your principal will have a lot of influence on your success in the school. As a result, your principal can affect whether or not you are renewed to teach another year. Do what your principal asks. For example:

- If your principal tells you to use the school's curriculum program, do it.
- If your principal tells you to set up learning centers, do it.
- If they your principal tells to stand at your door and greet students, do it.
- If your principal tells you to use specific books, resources, or materials, do it.
- *If your principal tells you to do something that is different than how you USED to teach in the Philippines, do it.*

Also, there are things that your principal will not tell you, things that he or she expects you to understand as a professional teacher:

- Keep your kids on task with learning;
- Provide interesting lessons that align with the content standards and school curriculum;
- **Prevent discipline problems before they occur and take care of them when they do;**
- Fix any problems and improve any areas where you get low marks on your evaluation;
- Discover and use the learning approaches that are common in your school;
- Keep good records of student attendance, grades, and assignments; and
- Treat your supervisors, colleagues, and students with respect.

These are a few examples of what your principals expect of you and every other teacher in your school. If you don't meet these expectations—or if you are unwilling to meet these expectations—you can lose your job, and you will go home.

### 3. Manage your students.

The number one reason that teachers don't get renewed is poor classroom management. You can do many interactive and active activities in your classroom, but the students need to be involved in learning activities from the beginning to the end of the day. They need to be on-task, orderly, and respectful to one another.

Your first responsibility is to make sure that students are in a classroom environment that focuses on, and allows, learning—every minute of every day. This means that students need to do what they are supposed to do—every minute of every day.

The students in the U.S. are not like the students in the Philippines, and you will need stronger discipline. If you treat them the same way as your students in the Philippines, they will control your classroom and you. You must take charge of your classroom! Of course you can be nice and friendly and loving and compassionate. However, you must first be the authority in the classroom. You will need to speak and act with authority. Instead of asking (or begging) students to follow the rules, tell them what you expect. You determine the rules, and your rules are not negotiable.

Students will test you. In almost every case, you will have to earn their respect. They can have no doubt that you are in charge. From the moment they enter your classroom until the moment they leave, you must demonstrate authority. You set the classroom rules, and you enforce them consistently. You can use “If-Then” statements, such as “If you do this, then - blank- will happen.”

You need to make sure that the students understand your rules. Telling them “respect each other” is not enough. They might not know how, or they might have a different idea about respect than your idea. Instead, you have to tell them and show them what respectful behavior looks like. They need to know exactly what is acceptable behavior and what is not. At the same time, they need to know what benefits they receive for good behavior and what consequences they receive for bad behavior.

Overall, it is much easier to start with good management than it is to create and enforce rules after things get out of control.

Also, as you think about student behavior, consider your lesson design. If the lessons promote or require student involvement and activity, students will be more likely to be involved in learning activity instead of misbehavior. For example, well-designed cooperative learning activities help encourage student involvement. Additionally, consider the processes you use in the classroom, such as what students do every time they enter, how they ask questions, or get permission to move around the classroom. Consider your signals for getting attention to provide more instructions and for helping the class to re-focus their attention on the lesson.

Don't be afraid to discipline students for bad behavior, but also give them the opportunity to correct their behavior, and reward them when they do. In most cases, taking care of problems when they are first beginning will be more successful than letting problems grow until they are difficult to fix and require more severe consequences. If you have to call for assistance or send students to the principal frequently for discipline, you lose students' respect and they will be less likely to behave well in the future.

Do you know the term "eyes behind your head"? This expression means always being aware of what every student is doing and being aware of potential misbehavior before it occurs. Sometimes, all you need to do is stand next to a student who shows signs of potential misbehavior. Sometimes you need to speak directly to them about their behavior. If you can prevent misbehavior before it happens, or if you can re-direct students away from misbehavior before it occurs, you will have much better classroom management.

Students deserve the opportunity to learn. However, learning will only happen if you have good classroom management. You're the adult in the classroom, the leader, the instructor, and the authority. If you can master this, if you really embrace this concept, you will do fine in your new U.S. classroom.

#### **4. Be careful with your finances.**

Too many times, I have seen teachers get into financial problems because they don't pay attention to their expenditures. They have a much bigger salary than in the Philippines, but what they don't realize is that their expenses are also higher. Everything is going to cost more here.

Here is what happens. All of a sudden, you are making a lot more money than previously. The natural tendency is to go spend it. You will see many interesting and desirable things to buy, and suddenly you will have the money to buy them. It is fun and exciting. You will think, "I can buy this!"

You will confuse the things you *want* with the things you *need*. Soon, you won't have enough money for what you truly need or for the things you are obligated to pay. You won't have enough money to buy the high-cost items that you need because you spent it all on little things you didn't need.

If you get behind on any required payments or obligations, it can be difficult to overcome and get your accounts back into good shape. Take care of your obligations first!

At the same time, don't worry about what someone else has. You are not in a competition. However, you should buy some things just because you want them. Spend some on yourself for quality of life. Enjoy yourself. Just be careful and keep track of how much you spend.

First, make a list of all your required expenses each month and determine how much you have left over from your salary. Then decide how much to put into savings for large-cost items (such a car down payment, travel, or emergencies). Only then will you know how much you can spend on “wants”, which includes sending money to the Philippines.

Always know how much you are spending and how much you have available. If you are careful and conscientious, you will always have what you need.

#### **5. Watch your physical fitness.**

The type of food, and the quantity of food, available to you in the U.S. will probably be different than you are accustomed. (And a lot of the food is super unhealthy, even if it tastes good.) At the same time, your physical activity habits will change, so you might not need the same level of calorie intake.

You might think, “There is food. I must eat it.” Don’t. Instead, be aware of what you eat, how much you eat, and when you eat.

Try to eat good food in healthy portions. Limit the amount of snacks, desserts, and “junk” food you eat. Make sure you get daily physical activity, even if only walking to school or the store.

You will be happier if you are healthy, and you will have more energy for teaching classes and managing your students. You will need it!

#### **6. Get along with your housemates.**

Most of the international teachers live with colleagues, and we encourage this. It helps provide you with a support structure and save money. It can also be a disaster.

The two keys to getting along with housemates are (1) establish expectations and rules and (2) remember that you are sharing with people who have their own needs and interests.

When you first move in together, spend an evening in serious discussion about household expectations. It’s not fun, but it is important. For example, discuss

- Who will clean which parts of the house and when?
- How will utilities be paid?
- Who likes to sleep late in the morning and who likes to stay awake late at night?
- How loud is too loud for a radio?
- What is acceptable dress and behavior for the common areas?
- How will food be purchased and shared, or will each person take care of his or her own?
- Where do you store your food in the refrigerator?
- What is the order for using the bathroom, shower, etc.?
- Who decides on decorations and furniture?
- When can friends come and visit, and for how long?

Most importantly, if there is a disagreement, how will it be resolved? It will happen, so what will you and your housemates do?

You don't need to be best friends with your housemates, but if you can get along well, you will be great supports for one another.

### **7. Be involved in the community.**

The natural tendency is to associate with other teachers from the Philippines—only. You will be more comfortable speaking your own language and eating your own foods. You will have common experiences to share. You will be less homesick. Creating and participating in a community of people from the Philippines is very important to your emotional health. But it is not enough.

You also need to get involved in the broader community. You have chance to experience a new culture, which means you need to interact socially (not just professionally) with members in your new community. People in the community will also be a great help to you as you figure out how to get things done and where various stores, offices, and entertainment options are located. You will have the opportunity to engage in many types of new experiences.

Your U.S. teacher colleagues will invite you to their homes and various social groups—at first. Take advantage of their offers. If you begin by refusing, you won't get many new offers. Remember, they will be curious and interested in you.

Also consider participating in some type of community organization, club, or event to expand your experiences further. Embrace your new community, and let them embrace you, too.

Your time in the U.S. will be better, more satisfying, and much more interesting.

### **8. Keep a language journal.**

Whether your English skills are good or great, you will read, hear, and learn more. You will make mistakes. For example, three of the most common errors I hear and read from teachers are (1) incorrect or missing prepositions, (2) incorrect verb tenses, and (3) mistaking male and female pronouns, such as “he” and “she.” You will encounter many new idioms and colloquial language. You will also hear and read things that you don't understand.

If you encounter new expressions or if you receive any corrections, write them down in a language journal along with an explanation.

This simple strategy will accelerate your fluency with the English language, and it will help you understand your students, colleagues, and administrators better.

Also, don't be afraid to ask for clarifications or explanations. The simple expressions “What does ... mean?” and “Can you explain this?” will help you master the language and will help you become familiar and comfortable in your new community. You might be shy or embarrassed, but get past those feelings. Most people won't criticize you for not understanding because they understand that you are from a different place and that your primary language might not be English. In most cases, people will be willing to help you understand if you ask.

Then, write down the answers in your language journal.