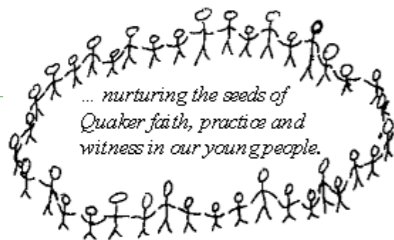


Top Ten List for New Teachers

What do you think is most important for a new teacher to know? This query was given to gifted and seasoned First Day School teachers in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Their responses were remarkably similar. They range from the practical (Make sure you have all of your materials ready on hand) to the reflective (Think of it less as First Day School and more as a programmed Meeting for Worship). They also focus on both the experience of the children and the teacher. The most striking theme is that expertise in teaching children is NOT the primary characteristic of a good teacher. What is required is a community of Friends who are on a spiritual path and willing to share the journey with others while having fun. We hope this resource encourages more Friends to try out teaching.



This pamphlet was prepared by Religious Education staff and the Children's Spiritual Life Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

QUERIES

- ✎ What do you believe is most important in nurturing children's spiritual lives?
- ✎ What is most important in nurturing your own spiritual life?
- ✎ Do you rest "from your own Will and Workings, and wait upon the Lord, with your minds fixed in that Light wherewith Christ has enlightened you, until the Lord breathes life in you, refresheth you, and prepares you, and your spirits and souls, to make you fit for God's service?"
~ from William Penn, written for worshipers, appropriate for teachers in the Meeting for Worship for First Day School:



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Support for Families
and Meetings in
their care of children

Top Ten List for New Teachers

Top Ten List for New Teachers

Seasoned First Day School Teachers from across the Yearly Meeting shared their thoughts on what new teachers most need to know. In no particular order, here are their responses.

FDS AS WORSHIP

- ✎ Think of time with the children less as First Day School and more as a programmed Meeting for Worship. It is not about imparting knowledge from an expert to an empty vessel; it is about living from the Center and experiencing God among us.
- ✎ This view opens us up to the continuing revelation that happens during the morning and reminds us that it's the Spirit's work that is important

PREPARATION

- ✎ Give yourself plenty of time to prepare so you are ready to share what you mean to. Don't sit down to start thinking about it for the first time on Saturday evening!
- ✎ Practice. Practice what you will say, practice reading or telling the story, practice the activity and make sure it works like you imagine. Practice the flow of the morning, running through it in your imagination, paying attention to transitions between activities or

rooms. Make sure you have all of your materials ready on hand. You don't want to hand the kids paint and then discover you have no paper.

FLEXIBILITY

- ✎ Be ready to be flexible to the point of scrapping your plans and going with your own and the children's leadings, or going with Plan B, when you recognize that your well prepared idea is not working after all.
- ✎ It is more important to express and explore the meaning of the lesson than follow the plans exactly.

PREDICTABILITY

- ✎ Arrange the components of your morning in the same way each week (like worship, story, activity, sharing).
- ✎ When kids know what to expect, they can use their resources to go deeper and get creative, rather than trying to figure out what's going on. Then they can slide right into what you are offering them and it provides some groundwork for their trusting you.
- ✎ Predictability is especially important in FDS's where the teachers change weekly.



ASK FOR HELP

- ✎ Ask for help from the RE committee, from PYM's RE department, from others in the Meeting.
- ✎ Asking for help not only supports you, it draws others closer to the children's community and highlights problems and solutions others can learn from.

PRAY

- ✎ Take time the week before to pray. Pray for the children; pray for yourself; pray for the other teachers; pray during class.
- ✎ Do not neglect your own need for corporate worship. If your Meeting's schedule doesn't allow you to teach and worship, find ways to make sure you and get this time, either with midweek or early morning worship or by not having the same teachers every week for more than a 2 month period.

BE A STUDENT OF THE STUDENTS

- ✎ Learn from the children about the world as they see it and their understanding of the Divine.
- ✎ Be ready to listen with an open heart, acknowledge what you are hearing, even when you disagree. You will grow and they will learn to trust themselves.

EXPERTISE NOT REQUIRED

- ✎ You don't need to know a lot more than the kids on the subject at hand, just stay a step ahead of them!
- ✎ It's also true that you can teach what you know better than what you don't know—so share what you know and love with the children.
- ✎ We don't need professional, well-seasoned teachers as much as we need Friends who love and care about our children, who are openly curious about the world, mysteries and other people's experience.
- ✎ The children won't remember your expertise as much as they will remember your presence.

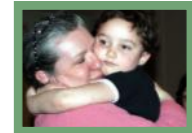
JOURNEY TOGETHER

- ✎ We cannot give children a spiritual life, but we can be their faithful companions along the path of discovery.
- ✎ Children benefit from having many companions along the way – each helping them through a different part and no one companion can help with every obstacle.

- ✎ Older Friends in particular have a unique perspective and gifts to offer that differ from those that parents can give. Our children need teachers of all generations.
- ✎ It is powerful for the children to know that you are on your own journey—journeys last a life-span.

HAVE FUN!

- ✎ Have a good time with the children! They will learn more, appreciate the community more, and you will enjoy teaching more.



FURTHER RESOURCES

- ✎ [Gently Lead: How to teach your children about God while finding out for yourself](#) by Polly Berrien Berrends
- ✎ [Opening Doors to Quaker Religious Education](#) by FGC RE Committee
- ✎ The PYM Children's Religious Education website: www.pym.org/education/children.
- ✎ [Making Space: Nurturing Children's Spirituality](#), the November 2005 issue of PYM's RE newsletter: www.pym.org/education/relednews and click on the 2005 November issue.

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