JOSSEY-BASS TEACHER

GRADES 7–12

The English Teacher's SURVIVAL GUIDE

Ready-to-Use Techniques & Materials *for* Grades 7-12

SECOND EDITION

MARY LOU **BRANDVIK**

KATHERINE S. **McKNIGHT**

Contents

List of Illustrations

List of Tables

Jossey-Bass Teacher

Jossey-Bass Teacher provides educators with practical knowledge and tools to create a positive and lifelong impact on student learning. We offer classroom-tested and research-based teaching resources for a variety of grade levels and subject areas. Whether you are an aspiring, new, or veteran teacher, we want to help you make every teaching day your best.

From ready-to-use classroom activities to the latest teaching framework, our value-packed books provide insightful, practical, and comprehensive materials on the topics that matter most to K–12 teachers. We hope to become your trusted source for the best ideas from the most experienced and respected experts in the field.

Titles in the Jossey-Bass Teacher Survival Guide Series

First-Year Teacher's Survival Guide: Ready-To-Use Strategies, Tools & Activities for Meeting the Challenges of Each School Day, Second Edition

Julia G. Thompson ISBN 978-0-7879-9455-6

The Art Teacher's Survival Guide for Elementary and Middle Schools, Second Edition

Helen D. Hume ISBN 978-0-470-18302-1

The Classroom Teacher's Survival Guide: Practical Strategies, Management Techniques and Reproducibles for New and Experienced Teachers, Third Edition

Ronald L. Partin ISBN 978-0-470-45364-3

Discipline Survival Guide for the Secondary Teacher, Second Edition

Julia G. Thompson ISBN 978-0-470-54743-4

Writing Workshop Survival Kit, Second Edition

Gary Robert Muschla ISBN 978-0-7879-7619-4

Special Educator's Survival Guide, Second Edition

Roger Pierangelo Ph.D. ISBN 978-0-7879-7096-3

The English Teacher's Survival Guide: Ready-To-Use Techniques & Materials for Grades 7–12, Second Edition

Mary Lou Brandvik and Katherine S. McKnight ISBN 978-0-470-52513-5

School Newspaper Adviser's Survival Guide

Patricia Osborn ISBN 978-0-7879-6624-9

Play Director's Survival Kit: a Complete Step-By-Step Guide to Producing Theater in Any School or Community Setting

James W. Rodgers and Wanda C. Rodgers ISBN 978-0-87628-565-7

Math Teacher’s Survival Guide: Practical Strategies, Management Techniques, and Reproducibles for New and Experienced Teachers, Grades 5–12

Judith A. Muschla, Gary Robert Muschla and Erin Muschla ISBN 978-0-470-40764-6

A Survival Kit for the Elementary School Principal: with Reproducible Forms, Checklists & Letters

Abby Barry Bergman ISBN 978-0-7879-6639-3

The Reading Teacher’s Survival Kit: Ready-To-Use Checklists, Activities and Materials to Help All Students Become Successful Readers

Wilma H. Miller Ed.D. ISBN 978-0-13-042593-5

Biology Teacher’s Survival Guide: Tips, Techniques & Materials for Success in the Classroom

Michael F. Fleming ISBN 978-0-13-045051-7

The Elementary/Middle School Counselor’s Survival Guide, Third Edition

John J. Schmidt Ed.D. 978-0-470-56085-3

The Substitute Teaching Survival Guide, Grades K–5: Emergency Lesson Plans and Essential Advice

John Dellinger ISBN 978-0-7879-7410-7

The Substitute Teaching Survival Guide, Grades 6–12: Emergency Lesson Plans and Essential Advice

John Dellinger ISBN 978-0-7879-7411-4

The ENGLISH TEACHER'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

Ready-to-Use Techniques & Materials for Grades 7–12

SECOND EDITION

Mary Lou Brandvik
Katherine S. McKnight

JOSSEY-BASS
A Wiley Imprint
www.josseybass.com

Published by Jossey-Bass

A Wiley Imprint

989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741—www.josseybass.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brandvik, Mary Lou.

The English teacher’s survival guide: ready-to-use techniques & materials for grades 7-12 / Mary Lou Brandvik, Katherine S. McKnight.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-470-52513-5 (pbk.)

1. Language arts (Secondary)—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. High school teaching—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 3. Classroom management—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 4. English teachers—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. McKnight, Katherine S. (Katherine Siewert) II. Title.

LB1631.B762 2011

428.0071′2—dc22

2010037985

For Olivia, Nora, Ava, Freya, and Esme, whose creativity, enthusiasm, and love fill my heart with joy every day.

Mary Lou Brandvik

To Jim, Ellie, and Colin, who bring joy to my life, and to the teachers who make a difference every day in preparing our children to be members of our democratic society.

Katherine S. McKnight

About This Resource

This updated second edition explores successful approaches to teaching English and classroom management. It is a book intended for both new teachers who are looking for solutions to potential problems and for more experienced teachers who may be staggering under an enormous teaching load and conflicting demands.

Most of us have chosen to be teachers of English because we love to read or write—or both—and we want to instill and nurture this same passion in our students. We want to be inspiring and provocative, caring and nurturing—a composite of the best teachers who have taught us. While thoroughly satisfying, the teaching of English is also extraordinarily demanding. The reality of the school day—interruptions, forms to fill out, bell schedules, alphabet grades, tardy slips, admits, PA announcements—drains any teacher's energy, vitality, and creativity. This book will encourage you to look at yourself and your job with a bit of selfishness. To regain or maintain the idealism that caused us to become teachers, we all need to manage and organize our professional lives in such a way that we also have time for ourselves, our families, and our lives outside the classroom.

The English Teacher's Survival Guide, Second Edition will help you do just that. It offers suggestions for beginning the year and managing and planning your classroom efficiently. It will help you organize your teaching units and design your daily lessons. It offers ideas for developing a grading philosophy and will show you ways to involve both parents and students in the evaluation process. This second edition has a new chapter on media literacy and technology and updated resources from the previous edition. It will also help

you address controversial issues such as confidentiality and censorship and provides numerous reproducible materials for teaching writing, reading, listening, speaking, and viewing.

All of us have heard the term “excellent school.” We are told that in an excellent school, students should be doing authentic work rather than sitting in rows and working on worksheets or activities with little relevance. We are told that subjects should be integrated in order to promote intense, interesting learning activities that are meaningful to students. Instead of filling out workbook exercises to learn the mechanics of language, students should be using writing for a real readership. We are told that schools should promote and encourage collaborative activities as well as competitive ones. And, we are told, excellent schools go far beyond the standardized test routine in the evaluation of students by setting up portfolios—collections that show the progress of student work over time. Most of all, we are told, excellent schools engender an excitement and enthusiasm for learning that students, teachers, and parents share.

An excellent school is everyone's goal. We each want our classroom to resemble this model as closely as possible. But how do we make it happen? Times have changed, we've changed, and our students have changed. Yesterday's lesson plans aren't meeting our needs or those of our students. Along with plenty of suggestions for writing and reading activities, the *Survival Guide* includes specific suggestions for integrating the teaching of speaking, listening, writing, literature, and viewing. It will show you how to introduce cooperative learning activities in your classroom, offer suggestions for portfolio assessment, and provide models for integrating technology. It is intended to help you create an excellent classroom that reflects the excitement for learning that every one of us desires.

About the Authors

Mary Lou Brandvik graduated summa cum laude from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, with a B.A. in English and art and earned a master's degree in English education from the University of Illinois. She has taught in public schools in Illinois and Minnesota, as well as at Bemidji State University in Minnesota. She has led in-service workshops in Minnesota and was a participant in the Northern Minnesota Writing Project. Brandvik chaired the Bemidji Public Schools' Writing Curriculum Committee and was selected Teacher of the Year in the Bemidji Public Schools in 1988.

In 1991 she received the Lila B. Wallace Teacher-Scholar Award from the National Endowment for the Humanities. During the sabbatical that accompanied the award, she researched the literature of the Ojibwe. She is also the author of *Writing Process Activities Kit: 75 Ready-to-Use Lessons and Worksheets for Grades 7–12*.

Katherine S. McKnight is a former middle and high school teacher who taught in the Chicago Public Schools for ten years and went on to earn her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction: reading, writing, and literacy from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is currently associate professor in secondary education at National-Louis University and lives in Chicago. She is also a recipient of the Faculty in Excellence Teaching Award from Northeastern Illinois University. Serving as a consultant for the National Council of Teachers of English, she works in schools all over the United States in many contexts—urban, rural, and suburban—providing professional development in adolescent literacy, curriculum differentiation, arts integration, and strategies for teaching English in the inclusive classroom. She is a

regular presenter at local and national conferences, and her recent books include *Teaching Writing in the Inclusive Classroom, Teaching the Classics in the Inclusive Classroom, The Second City Guide to Improve in the Classroom*, and *The Teacher's Big Book of Graphic Organizers*.

Chapter 1

Beginning *the* School Year

- Designing a lesson for Day One
- Learning still more about your students
- Helping students to know one another

I'll never forget my first day of teaching. I was so nervous that I reached into my desk for hand lotion and, instead, poured white Elmer's glue all over my hands.

It's the first day of school in your district and it is fraught with capital letters for both you and your students. For the student there are The Outfit, The Supplies, The Bus Route, The Locker Assignment, The Lunch Schedule, The Teachers, The Program Schedule, The Seat Assignments. For teachers there are The Class Lists, The Bell Schedules, The Read-on-the-First-Day Announcements from the Principal's Office, The Add-or-Drop Lists of Student Names from the Counseling Office, The Student Handbook, The Fire-Drill Explanation, The Sign-up Sheet for Audiovisual Materials, The Computer Lab Schedule, and The Library Orientation Schedule. For teachers and students alike, the first day of school is indeed momentous. This is the day students size us up as competent or incompetent, nice or mean, fair or unfair, caring or uncaring.

One of the most important plans we make is the lesson design for the first day of the year. Some teachers spend the entire first class period making seat assignments, handing out books, and reading long lists of classroom and school regulations. If every teacher does this, and many school administrations encourage teachers to do so, a single

student may hear a nearly identical set of regulations six or seven times on the first day alone. It is not the tone most schools or classroom teachers wish to set, but it is a tone students perceive and one that's difficult to undo.

Of course, all of us are concerned with discipline. "Be strict in the beginning," they tell us in methods classes and in the teachers' lounge. But what happens when you let up and the students are so intimidated they are afraid to talk? There are guidelines and limits, of course. Your position tells the students you are the teacher in the classroom. How you function will tell them whether you are up to the task, and you will function best if your planning is thorough and organized. Begin setting a classroom tone and atmosphere that is right for you from the very first day of school. If you are required to read school regulations and policies, do it on a subsequent day.

Designing a Lesson for Day One

In setting the tone for your classroom, consider the following plan for the first day.

Welcome Your Students to the School and Your Classroom

Take note of what is special for students on this day. If, for example, your students are ninth or tenth graders, this may be their first day in high school. They may have come from several junior highs or middle schools or from other communities. They must form new friendships and solve new problems in the more complex, less sheltered world of the high school. If they are seniors, this is the first day of

their last year of high school—a time they've looked forward to with anticipation. There may be transfer students who are unfamiliar with the campus and know few classmates. Some students are raring to get busy; others may not want to be in school at all. View your school and classroom through your students' eyes, and acknowledge and honor the emotions and questions they may have concerning the new school year and your class.

Introduce Yourself

Give information about your own background, jobs you have held, your family, your interests. Explain why you chose teaching English as a career. Show that you are proud to be a teacher and that you value and respect your work.

Introduce Your Subject

Be positive about the class you are teaching. Explain its benefits, and elaborate on these clearly and specifically. What is it the students can expect to learn from you? What new skills will they practice and acquire? What books or novels can they look forward to reading? What units or projects do you have planned? What can they look forward to with eagerness? Be enthusiastic and inclusive as you do so. Don't expect students to understand why they should take a particular class. Many are enrolled only because the course is required. Remember that not every student likes English and not every student hates English. However, each needs to know what he or she will learn in your classroom.

Don't qualify your first-day message by suggesting that some students will succeed while others will fail. Be sure your students understand each is beginning a new year with a clean slate. Let your students know they have a responsibility to attend class regularly, attempt each assignment, and participate in the class. Assure them that if

each approaches the class in this manner, each can be a successful student.

Teach a Lesson on the First Day

The first day of school, when motivation is high, is the time for both students and teachers to make a good first impression. Capitalize on this readiness by avoiding a deadly review, and begin with a real lesson that will show off what both you and your students can do. Your goal should be to have your students do something successfully or learn something each can use immediately. The following exercises are a variety of nonthreatening first-day options to foster student success, help set a tone of cooperation and a sense of community in your classroom, and encourage and foster immediate student participation.

Lesson One: Self-Introductions

Have your students write answers to the following directions. Then have them use their answers as a guide while introducing themselves orally to the whole class.

- Write your name.
- Write the name of the city where you were born.
- Write the name of your best subject.
- Write the name of a subject that is difficult for you.
- Do you have a job? If so, where? Please describe it briefly. What are some good parts of the job? Some drawbacks?
- List three things you can do well.
- Tell one thing your best friend doesn’t know about you.

Using their answers for notes, ask students to stand and take turns introducing themselves to the class. The teacher might introduce herself or himself first as a model for others. Encourage students to listen carefully because they may be called on to repeat some of the information they

have heard. After each person offers his or her sketch, ask the next person to summarize orally what the previous student revealed. When the introductions are complete, call on individuals to identify someone in the class and give one or two details about him or her from memory. By the end of an exercise such as this, your students will no longer be strangers to one another, and you are likely to know each student by name and also by what they are willing to reveal about themselves.

Lesson Two: Partner Introductions

Pair students (preferably stranger-to-stranger to encourage new friendships), and ask them to spend approximately five minutes each interviewing one another. Point out that unusual questions elicit the most interesting information—for example, “What did you learn this summer that you’ll remember for the rest of your life?” Encourage students to take notes during the interview. Give them time to write a brief profile emphasizing the two most interesting things they learned about their partner. Allow students to check their information with their partners. Finally, ask each student to read the profile to the entire class. If students resist speaking or seem particularly insecure about speaking and reading in front of the whole class, you might have them form groups of six to eight students to make their introductions.

A more challenging option is to ask students to recast their profiles into another format, such as a poem, lyric, letter, or story. One format that is accessible to all students is the recipe. Brainstorm with the class for a list of cooking terms, such as *bake, broil, mix, whip,* and *simmer.* After you have listed several terms on the blackboard, suggest they write a recipe for the person they interviewed. The following is a sample:

Mike Peter Surprise Delight

To create this exotic senior, combine:
1 family of 8 children
Sift out the third youngest son.
Beat rapidly, adding:
clear, blue eyes
1 pinch of shyness
a heaping love of drums and carpentry
Bake at 350° for 17 years and frost with an application to vocational school.
Serve immediately. Your guests will be sure to ask for more.

Lesson Three: Props with Introductions

Another approach to interviewing is to have the whole class interview you on the first day and move on to interviewing one another on the next day. On Day One, bring to class several meaningful personal objects (mementos, documents, and a piece of clothing, for example) and encourage your students to base their questions on these. (What is it? How was it acquired? Why is it important to you? What plans do you have for its future?) Following the questioning, ask the students to write a brief profile of you either individually or collaboratively in groups to read aloud. Near the end of the period, call on students to identify the questions that produced the most information. Questions that pursue a point, for example, garner the most information.

On the following day, students bring to class three items important to each of them. Stress sentimental value as opposed to material value and the importance of keeping the items stored safely when they are not in use. Students present and explain their items to the class, and class members ask follow-up questions. Additional activities

might include student-authored profiles of class members or papers based on the significance of one of the author's possessions. Final polished versions may be read aloud, displayed on a bulletin board, or bound as a class book for everyone to enjoy (Kuehn, 1992).

Lesson Four: Freewriting (or Rush Writing)

Introduce the concept of freewriting or rush writing (writing without stopping or editing for a specific number of minutes). Give your students a topic such as, "The quality I like best about myself is …" or "The best class I've ever taken was …" Have students write for approximately five minutes. Be sure they understand they will eventually read their writing to the class. Give them a minute or two to edit briefly and then ask each to read aloud. Some teachers let students read these early writings while seated at their desks to keep the activity nonthreatening.

If someone declines to read, suggest that you will come back to him or her after others have had a chance to read, and do so. Don't let this exercise become a showdown between you and a reluctant student. When this student sees that classmates are reading their writings aloud, she will soon contribute too. After everyone has read, ask the class to recall specific answers they particularly liked and explain to the author why they liked the answer. This is an excellent way to give students positive, supportive peer feedback.

Lesson Five: Creative Excuses

Students brainstorm a list of four or five chores they dislike, select one item, and then write a creative excuse directed to a parent, teacher, or some other adult explaining why he or she should no longer be expected to do it. Encourage

students to be as wildly imaginative as possible, and discourage responses such as, “I don’t have my English paper today, because I had to work late at my part-time job.” You may want to read the following sample aloud:

1. Washing the dishes

2. Cleaning the bathroom

3. Cleaning the fireplace

4. Cleaning up after the cat

5. Taking care of my younger sister

6. ?

Mom,

I have a cut on my hand. No, it’s not bleeding, but it really hurts. I know it doesn’t show, but it throbs and aches. I think it could probably get infected if I stick it into greasy dishwater. And, if that happens, I might even end up in the emergency room. Then I won’t be able to help you with the dishes for a long time. So you do them tonight, OK? I’ll do them when my hand gets better—really. Just let me rest here and watch TV. Please. It doesn’t throb so much in this position.—Eric

Lesson Six: Stretching the Meaning of Words

Write a story that stretches the meaning of one word in every direction. Some possible words to use are:

- Out
- Run
- Down
- Side
- Set
- Back

A student’s story based on the word *down* might look like this:

When I lost my bookbag I figured that I was down on my luck. Feeling dogeared and down, I decided to go downtown to visit my best friend, Charlie. He is absolutely the best person to talk to when you're feeling down. On the way to Charlie's house, I decided to down a big container of lemonade. I guess it didn't go down well because when I got to Charlie's house, I had to lie down because I wasn't feeling all that well.

Lesson Seven: Lists

Lists of ten is a quick scaffolding idea that helps student find topics to write about. It also provides you with the opportunity to get to know your students. Have the students take out a sheet of paper and create lists of ten for each of the following categories. It is helpful to time the students so that they are able to stay on task and more freely write (Passman & McKnight, 2007).

Here are some suggested categories:

- Ten favorite songs
- Ten favorite foods
- Ten places I'd like to visit
- Ten favorite games
- Ten people I'd like to have dinner with
- Ten important goals for the future
- Ten important things I'd like to learn more about

You may have the students choose one idea from their lists that surprised them or is special in some way, write about it briefly, and then explain it or read it to the class. Encourage students to keep these lists as a resource for later writing projects.

By introducing a first-day lesson such as one of these, you will have achieved a number of objectives: your students will have written and shared their writing with a real audience; you will have begun to establish a positive, cooperative atmosphere; you will have eliminated some of

the tension and fear associated with new experiences; and, ideally, you will have shared laughter.

Learning Still More About Your Students

In middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools, we frequently meet 150 students every day even though the schedule breaks them into segments of twenty-five to thirty-five. In addition, we are expected to teach students with diverse ability levels and from varied linguistic backgrounds. To be effective at the secondary level, we need to know our students well and to get to know them as quickly as possible.

Name Tags or Student Name Plates

To take roll and learn student names, teachers have frequently begun the first day of class with assigned seating, and this arrangement frequently remains the same throughout the year. However, if you want your classroom seating plan to be more flexible, if you are also concerned that students learn one another's names, and if you want to begin moving students from large groups to small groups early in the year, consider distributing name tags or having each student design one of his or her own.

Another option is to have students fold a large sheet of notebook paper into thirds and to have them print their names in large letters on the middle section of the folded paper. The paper will sit upright on a desk, and the teacher and the students are able to read one another's names easily. (See Figure 1.1.) Students may keep these name

sheets in their notebooks and begin the first few weeks of classes by placing this identification on their desks. This is also a useful and helpful way to identify students when guest speakers are invited into the classroom.

Figure 1.1 Name Plates

Questionnaires

Some information about your students will be available prior to the first day of school in cumulative records, tests results, and discussions with other teachers (but don't let negative comments color your perspective). You may be able to receive information about a student's health status from the school nurse, but you may have to seek it out. It will also be possible to ask for additional information about students during parent-teacher conferences. However, much of this information will come to you later in the school year. Consequently you may wish to design and distribute student questionnaires or inventories at the beginning of the year and at other appropriate times throughout the school year. Forms 1.1 through 1.4 (which you may duplicate in their entirety or use as a basis for developing your own) are useful in surveying student interests, experiences, spoken languages, favorite subjects, friends, classroom expectations, and ability to study at home. This information will help you know your students more quickly and will be an immediate aid in planning your curriculum and in designing both large- and small-group activities.

Form 1.1 Getting Acquainted

Name _____ Date _____

Some of my friends call me by my nickname, _____.

Right now, I’m _____ years old, and my birthday is _____.
I live with (names, and relation to you) _____
at the following address _____.
My phone number is _____.
My best subject is _____.
My most difficult subject is _____.
One thing that makes me happy is _____
_____, and I am really sad when _____
Someday I hope to _____.

Form 1.2 Getting to Know You

Name _____ Date _____

1. Suppose you are a major character in one of your favorite books. What is your name? _____

2. In what book do you appear?_____

3. Write the names of five people you don’t know but would like to.

4. Name five things that you can do as well as or better than anyone else.

5. Many authors have used pen names to substitute for their own. Invent a pen name for yourself. _____

6. Explain your choice below. _____

Form 1.3 Reading Inventory

Name _____ Date _____

Reading is one of the most valuable things we do. As we work to develop our skills, it is helpful to understand how our attitudes are formed. Please answer the following questions about your own reading history.

1. When you were a young child, did your parents or someone else read to you or tell you bedtime stories? _____ If so, what were your favorites?