

TOP TEN THINGS I LEARNED FROM PRACTICUM

1. **The subject I am teaching is not the most important thing.** What I mean by this, is I saw a lot of students whom really struggle with math, ones that have deeply fallen through the cracks in the past. Mrs. Brenden taught three periods of Algebra I Year 2. There were a lot of students with a really rough home life, some of which she shared with me have seen others in their life commit suicide or die in their arms. With this said, even in her Calculus class, one of her students just went through a relationship break up because of being cheated on and he uncle dying in the same week. As a teacher, in order to even know of this information, she *HAS* to have a relationship with them. She is there for them during these times and does her best to accommodate them while still challenging them to succeed and keep going. Seeing her compassion and relationship with her students is so inspiring!
2. **“Fair isn’t every student getting the same thing, but every student getting what they need to be successful.”** This is a quote Mrs. Brenden had hanging by her door and describes her true belief that students do not all fit the “average.” For example, she has one student who is on the autism spectrum where he really does not like to show work or work with others. It is very rare though, even without showing any work, that he gets the answer wrong. For Mrs. Brenden, she knows he can do the process in her head. This just reminded me how that not all students will do, or like to do things the same way, and that is okay! It is important that students receive the help they need to be successful and also to be challenged.
3. **If the teacher is having fun and excited, the likelihood of the student’s having fun and being excited, even with a difficult topic, is much higher.** Mrs. Brenden loved to have fun, with either her funny sayings or her actions and responses, she knew how to be entertaining, but also to be informative and help her students remember in a fun way. It was so fun seeing them remember things and imitating her silly way! It made class enjoyable for her and for her students and time passed so quickly.
4. **A teacher does not have to “know all” but be humble in the unknowing and admit mistakes.** Some days, things just seem to go wrong and certain problems seem more confusing. It is okay to admit I forget how to do this, and sometimes, a student will chime in recognizing a mistake! Other times they won’t but it makes a teacher seem more human and understanding when they make mistakes. It also shows students to problem solve with you, rather than already knowing the answer. It shows great rigor and determination that can be imitated on an average homework assignment as well.
5. **Many tasks can be going on all at once.** One day, students were coming in randomly asking about an honor society meeting, another teacher came in asking for advice on a homework problem, and students from other hours were coming in for help all within one hour we were all working on a review. Mrs. Brenden gave her attention to what was the most important in every moment. At some moments, she had the honor society students wait a minute to finish a problem or she would have her students move on to the next problem and she would be with them in a moment after she visited with the teacher. It is amazing to see her mind balancing and juggling different topics at once and do so with grace!
6. **Color coordination can be a great tool!** For student that struggle with seeing different numbers or value or graphing, colored pencils are a great tool for helping to clarify and see what we are working with!

7. **Life outside of the classroom can be just as hectic or more hectic than in the classroom, but one must balance both.** When tragedy strikes, life can just be difficult. It is important to still give students time and attention but to also know that someday as a teacher, I will not accomplish what should be done for grading, planning, or other things revolving school and that is okay.
8. **No technology can replace the teacher.** Flipped classrooms, calculators, and other forms of technology can be a great tool and I believe they are! A lot of schooling is not just about that academic material, but so much more! A teacher who cares, who gives students time and pushes them to their best potential! No form of technology can replace that, but they can be great aids in the academic pursuit but to remember not to become reliant on that to teach my students what they will need to know, for I will be there to encourage, push, and care for my students.
9. **Never tire in trying to find new ways to help students understand.** There was this one topic Mrs. Brenden dreaded teaching because for the last 12 years, she hasn't had a successful lesson in teaching this particular topic, she googled and googled new ideas. She had an idea the night before she taught it on Monday and she typed up new worksheets in this new form she thought of. It was a huge success!! Even after 12 years or more, there may be some lessons that I feel I still have not got my students to master but to keep trying new ideas and brainstorming for hopefully eventually I find what can work well for me and my students!
10. **There will be some really tough days, but some really awesome days too.** Somedays I walked into class, and after only two hours, it had already been a long day because things just didn't go right, but there are other days that can go incredibly well that when students grasp a new concept and they light up, what better reward!