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First Days of School  
Section A

Prepare, prepare, prepare! This is the overriding theme of the first section of The First Days of School. He throws a lot of material at the reader in this book. What stands out most in my mind is the repeated calls of the sheer importance of the first days of the school year. I have been told time and again that many concepts of what is and is not allowed are formed in those first few days and weeks. The old saying “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks” comes to mind when I try to think about how hard it is to modify a classroom’s behavior *after* the school year has progressed beyond those first few days.

Something else that I’ve seen in my own life (and is reflected upon in the reading) is how woefully unprepared you *feel* leading up to your first day of class. I was very excited to get started in my classroom assignment but I could never find enough people to ask questions about what to do. I must have asked for tips and advice from every teacher I encountered. None of the tips or advice really calmed my nerves waiting for the students to arrive on Day 1, it finally came down that I just had to do it and realize it wasn’t going to kill me. I think it’s true to that “most student teachers enter…with no training and no experience in what to do on the first day of school”. Alas, I’ve learned much by *doing* and experience is the best teacher.

Mr. Wong also tells both beginning and experienced teachers to “listen, listen, listen”. Too often teachers come up with a formula for teaching. This is good if the formula is successful in educating well-rounded students. Too often, I think, the formula that is employed is the formula that best suits the teacher. The teacher will find what is comfortable and easiest to do, with little regard for maximizing student potential. Teachers must be willing to open up, learn and explore new subjects. “Never stop learning”. The whole idea that a teacher should never stop learning, and this learning is actually building the worth of the teacher is one of the things I love about the teaching profession. I love to learn, explore and gain that new understanding. I’m addicted to the “aha moment”, what other job *requires* you experience the “aha moment” more than a teacher?! “A teacher cannot give what he or she is not.”

One area I want to look into is new teacher training for local school districts. I personally found quite a bit lacking from my orientation process. I hope to help remedy this problem because starting a new school year is stressful enough without being lost and confused too!