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Dear New Teacher,

National Board Certified teacher and accomplished author Rick Wormeli has given advice for new teachers: "Because the first year is a time of such growth, give yourself this latitude: tell yourself each morning that you will make at least twelve big mistakes during the day...[mistakes] are normal for any progressing teacher...After twenty years, I still allow ten mistakes per day in my daily regimen" (*Day One and Beyond*, 2003, p. 5).

By overcoming your own mistakes, challenges and obstacles, you'll be better prepared to support your students' learning processes. It is important to help them find value in the mistakes they make along their journey to master new concepts. In "Failure Preferred, Actually," (2009), Rick Wormeli offers [thirteen ways to help students reframe what it means to "fail" at something](#).

Great teachers have the ability to turn frustrating moments into moments of growth for themselves and their students. In fact, having the courage to address problems, make adjustments, and create solutions is a crucial part of the DOE's [Vision for School Improvement](#).

In this issue of *First Class*, you'll find resources and tips for how to set you and your students up for success, as well as how to turn mistakes or failures into teachable moments.

Please take a few moments to explore the resources in this issue and [let us know what you think](#) in this short (only four questions!) reader survey. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

The *First Class* Team
NewTeacherSupport@schools.nyc.gov



Classroom Culture and Management

Normalizing Mistakes

How can I establish a supportive learning environment in my classroom?



To establish a classroom culture that empowers students to take risks, make mistakes, and persist through challenges, successful teachers infuse opportunities to try and try again *throughout* a lesson. Take a look at these three short videos to see examples of how to encourage risk-taking and normalize mistakes during established routines:

- **Warm-Up:** A middle school teacher shares her "[favorite wrong answer](#)" with her students after each Do Now. Talk to a colleague about how you could implement this strategy in your grade level or content area.
- **Independent Work:** An elementary school teacher gives her students [multiple opportunities to find the right answer](#) in this video. Download the worksheet she uses in the video [here](#) and consider adapting it for your specific grade and content area.
- **Assessment:** A middle school teacher [highlights mistakes](#) on assessments so that the learning never stops. Watch how she shifted students' focus from what grade they received to how well they mastered the content on the assessment.

Read more about [how to normalize mistakes](#) and find tools to get your started [here](#).

Time Management and Organization

How to Create and Prioritize your "To Do" List

How do I prioritize my responsibilities, deadlines, tasks, and obligations?



Maia Heyck-Merlin, author of *The Together Teacher* (2012), addresses an all-too-common problem overworked teachers run into when they try to make their "To Do" lists: getting overwhelmed by the amount they need to accomplish and not being sure how to prioritize each task. She recommends using an index card for a "brain dump" as a first step so you know *what* you need to do, and then sorting all those tasks by *when* they need to happen. Read more about this strategy and view a sample "brain dump" index card [here](#).

Tip: For more organizational strategies, [sign up](#) for Maia's free *Together Teacher* monthly newsletter.

Content and Curriculum

Misconceptions as Barriers to Learning

How do I correct my students' misconceptions in my content area?



Do your students have factual misconceptions that you want to address? For example, do they believe that the sun disappears at night or that Christopher Columbus was the first to discover the New World? Challenging students to reexamine widely-held factual misconceptions can be an engaging and highly memorable experience for K-12 learners. Explore other common misconceptions in [science](#), [math](#), and [American history](#); you can find many other examples via a simple Internet search.

The best way to crush a misconception is to give direct experiences that contradict that misconception and then a strong explanation of how the phenomenon really works. Inquiry

activities are a very powerful way to do this. An inquiry lesson starts out with a compelling question (for example, "Why does the ocean look blue but the water in my cup looks clear?"). NY State produced [a planning template](#) for teachers to design lessons or units around those compelling questions. The [Inquiry Design Model](#) on which this template is based is rooted in principles of Social Studies instruction; however, an inquiry lesson can be implemented in any content area.

Teaching Tip: Check out the [Inquiries Archive](#) for examples of great inquiries for K-12 students.

Words of Wisdom from an Experienced Teacher

Ten Tips for Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

How can I ensure I'm meeting my diverse learners' needs?

Geneviève DeBose is a seventh-grade ELA teacher at District 8's Bronx Studio School for Writers and Artists and a [National Board Certified Teacher](#). Her list of [10 strategies](#) to help her diverse learners succeed was recently published on the Teaching Channel's blog. As you read through her tips, notice that she describes how she sets herself and her paraprofessionals up for success *and* how she modifies instruction for students to succeed.

Teaching Tip: Science teachers, here are [strategies to make your labs inclusive](#).

Mentoring and Virtual Support

Pause, Reflect, and Reset

What tools exist to help guide my growth for the remainder of the year?



Although the end of the year is in sight, there is so much you can still learn and achieve before June. Your professional goals and priorities have likely shifted since September, so if you have not done so recently, sit down with your mentor and reflect on your successes so far and your goals for the remainder of the year. This DOE-created [Teacher Self-Reflection Tool](#) can serve as a guide to that conversation.

HR Nuts and Bolts

Help Recruit Teachers

Do you know someone who would be a great teacher?



Teachers know great teachers. Help influence New York City for generations to come by sharing our [teacher application](#) with educators in your network and former classmates. You can also complete [our referral form](#) and the DOE will reach out to share more information.

Topics of Interest to New Teachers

WeTeachNYC

[WeTeachNYC](#) is a new online space for DOE educators. Search instructional resources across content areas and log in (using your schools.nyc.gov email address and password) to explore online learning opportunities and connect with other NYC educators.

Free Classroom Resources for Earth Day

Earth Day is on Friday, April 22. This is a great opportunity to teach your students about environmental stewardship. Take advantage of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's [free classroom resources](#) for K-12 teachers to enhance your instruction. You can also browse some [DOE-recommended science websites](#) and subscribe to the [DOE's Sustainability Initiative Newsletter](#) for more Earth Day ideas and year-round opportunities for students.

Now that you've read this edition of *First Class*, we'd love to hear your thoughts!

Please take a minute to [share your feedback with us](#) by completing a brief four-question survey.