

An A-Z list of everything we wish we knew before starting our Senior Internship and 1st year of teaching

Written by several of our UCF graduates as part of the UCF Lake County Teacher Knights initiative

Written for future educators everywhere

In 2017, several Elementary Education faculty members came together to create the UCF Lake County Teacher Knights program, which was designed to support students who were graduating from the UCF South Lake Campus as they navigated their first few years in the classroom. Each month, the faculty members host evening professional learning sessions (with dinner) for these 1st -3rd year teachers. Additionally, they have partnered with Lake County Schools professional development department to host workshops on topics of the teachers' request.

Now in Year 4, Lake County Teacher Knights are reflecting on a question many senior interns and recent graduates ask themselves before that first day in their senior placement OR their first classroom ... "What do I need to know"??? Well, here is what this group of dedicated and talented teachers want to share with future senior interns and new career teachers, shared with love and hope for a brighter teaching future.

Here is their A-Z list of everything you wished you knew.....

A

Ask questions.
Always ask for help when you need it!
Allow students to have time to ask clarifying questions.

B

Build relationships.
Be okay not knowing everything.
Be fun, think outside the box.
Be flexible with your growth, and realize it takes time to find your style.

C

Create memories that you and your children will cherish forever!
Create a meaningful- working relationship with your administrators.
Check in with your colleagues when you feel like you're drowning because you're never alone in this!

D

Don't be so hard on yourself!
Do not participate in gossip.
Do not work yourself into the position of burnout.

E

Every day is a new day.
Even the hard days are important!
Every lesson will not go as planned.
Every student will not always have a good day (just like us).
Every teacher/staff member is doing their personal best.

F

Find your marigold and don't let them go!

Feedback: your students need real, honest feedback. Be comfortable enough to let them know where they went wrong and allow time for them to use your feedback to generate a new response.

Family comes first.

Flexibility is needed more than ever.

Find someone you admire and look up to, learn from them.

G

Give yourself grace.

H

Have a growth mindset and take feedback as advice- not criticism! Your administration wants you to grow, and they are only guiding you!

H is for health- you can't pour from an empty cup!

Have fun with your students, your team, and the staff.

I

Instruction is second to relationships.

It is ok to cry.

If it were easy, everyone would do it.

If a student does not know the answer, ask permission to call on another student.

J

Just keep swimming.

Junior Internship was way harder than Senior Internship. Take time and enjoy it all.

K

Know that you are not alone in this process.

L

Laugh at yourself when you mess up.

M

Mean what you say.

Make memories with your students.

Make your mark even though you are going to be new.

N

Never allow the negative talk to reach your soul.

O

Own your mistakes in front of the kids. It's the best way to model that nobody is perfect, and the classroom is a safe space to take risks!

P

Practice patience with yourself and your students.

Pace: let your students process new information at their own personal pace.

Prioritize. The to-do list is never-ending, but not everything needs to get done in the same day.

Progress IS Perfection. No, your teaching will never be perfect, but if you're progressing, you're there!

Q

Quickly find a teacher bestie.

R

Relationships matter.

Remember your why!

Reflect and focus on what is going well!

S

Scales are such a valuable resource when students truly understand them and can use them to their advantage. Do not just use them as a part of your formal observation.

Surround yourself with encouraging people.

Support your school, staff, and fellow teachers.

Set boundaries so you can achieve a healthy work/life balance. The first year I felt like I was ALWAYS working, grading, responding to emails, calling parents.

Students need time to create questions while making connections to content.

T

Tell your students you love them, especially on the hard days.

There is always tomorrow!!

Take it one day at a time!

Take care of yourself mentally and physically, and you will be the best version of yourself for your kids and colleagues!

Take chances and go out of your comfort zone every opportunity that you can. You grow in those uncomfortable moments.

Take and ask for all the feedback you can get. It will make you even better.

U

Understand that your students come from many different walks of life.

Use your internship time to watch, conduct, and lead small groups.

V

Value teamwork. Having a great team behind you is important for sharing resources, bouncing ideas, dividing and conquering, and for those much-needed venting sessions.

W

Write everything down!

Walk away. There will always be things to do. It's ok not to finish it all now!

Writing should be included in every subject area.

Writing about learning is essential.

What we once thought teaching was going to look/be like isn't always what it turns out to be.

X

X games. Yes, you'll feel like you're a competitor in an extreme event, but you got this! You have spent your life preparing for this incredible feat.

Xerox. Don't put off making copies. Save yourself by getting it done sooner than later.

Y

Your ideas are valid, important, and amazing! Share them!

Your best is enough.

Your teacher teammates will help you more than you ever thought you needed!

You are a difference maker- you may not see it now, but every day, the little things you do, they matter.

Z

ZZZZZZZ sleep is important! Shut off your brain and allow yourself time to relax.

BIG thanks to our amazing UCF South Lake graduates and current UCF Teacher Knights for their mentorship, encouragement, and collaboration. Your students are so lucky to have YOU as their teacher.

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