

How to Train a New Teacher in This Present Age? How to Deal With a Classroom, Different Learning Styles, Group Work, Difficult Students and Students' Use of AI

Roberto Cuccu

Independent Researcher, Sestu (Ca), Italy

In this article, it is explained how to have students eager to do something with their teacher and, most of all, for themselves. Another point is to help students achieve effective learning strategies: strong study habits, active learning techniques, and metacognitive skills are essential for maximizing academic achievement. If they do not have them, a teacher's job is to help them achieve the best strategies to learn in class and at home. In order to create the right atmosphere in a classroom and to make weaker students feel as they are essential for the advancement of their group, it is analysed how to use Cooperative Learning strategies. Not many teachers know how to deal with difficult students. Learning about and understanding diversity in the classroom can enhance the chances for both students and teachers to connect and produce together better results. In nature, conflicts are parts of it: clashes between opposing forces constitute the essence of life and evolution. Inside a classroom, both students and teachers have to adapt to the reality of the social roles present inside it. Finally, there is a section that deals with the use of digital resources and of artificial intelligence (AI) by the students.

Keywords: how to create the right atmosphere in a classroom, how to deal with conflicts, AI in the classroom

Classroom Management

Imagine yourself as a teacher entering for the first time a new class of students. There is in them some curiosity about you, but there is also in the background the feeling that they already know what is going to happen and they have just to say yes to you and keep on doing the usual routine, because that is what is expected from them at school.

How to change that uninspiring situation, how to move it upside down, and have those students eager to do something with you, and most of all, for themselves?

The two key words on which to work are motivation and success.

Motivation is one of the most important elements in learning. Without motivation, learning is not likely to take place. There are different types of motivation. Motivation can come from the learner himself or it can come from outside the learner. This first type of motivation is called "primary." The learner feels that he/she wants to learn, that he/she is interested, and that the subject he/she is studying is exciting.

Primary motivation is the strongest type of motivation. "Secondary" motivation comes from the outside the learner. The learner feels that he/she must learn in order to pass a test, to avoid punishment, or to please

his/her parents or teachers. The learner is not really interested in the learning itself, but in the result of the learning.

When we think of successful students, and about what that success looks like, the first response is typically measured by grade. Test scores are important measures and part of the fabric of education, but let us consider some of the alternatives. Essentially, something is a success when the outcome is desirable or favourable.

Success is also taking care of yourself. Success is overcoming fear. Even if it is confronting just one small fear each week, that is certainly something to feel proud of.

Here are some factors that contribute to student success.

1. Effective learning strategies: Strong study habits, active learning techniques, and metacognitive skills are essential for maximizing academic achievement. If they do not have them, your job as a teacher is to help them achieve the best strategies to learn in class and at home.

2. Supportive learning environment: A nurturing and inclusive classroom environment that fosters positive relationships, collaboration, and high expectations can significantly impact student outcomes. Some activities based on cooperation can help create this environment.

3. Personalized learning: Tailoring instruction and learning experiences to individual student needs, interests, and learning styles enhances engagement and motivation. As there are many learning styles in your classroom, in order to reach to them you should have different teaching styles, to connect to each one of them.

Educators have always been surrogate parents. In the past, it was given for granted that a teacher could manage with Power to set parameters, in an authoritarian way. Only if we stop executing from “Power” and start building relationships based on “Influence” can we begin to understand our students and find ways to have the pupil both behave and understand.

Michael Grinder, one of the founders of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) in his book *Envoy, A Personal Guide to Classroom Management*, shows how to create in a classroom the right atmosphere that allows learning and feelings accepted. It is all based on non-verbal administration of the classroom, starting from the position of the body of the teacher at the beginning of a lesson, to how to interact with students, how to end a lesson, how to use the so-called “influence approach”—For example, never looking at the student but focusing on their work, and giving always positive feedback, how to teach and how to deal with hard-to-reach students.

What to do in the classroom:

- (a) Know your classroom, both in a verbal and in a non-verbal way (face expressions, gestures, and clothing);
- (b) Adapt yourself to the individuals in front of you;
- (c) Involve your students, make them active participants in the learning process;
- (d) Bring to their attention concrete examples of what they are learning at the moment;
- (e) Capture their attention mentioning personal experiences;
- (f) Downplay any situation that might be embarrassing for any of them;
- (g) If there is a student that is an element of disruption, deal with the person calmly and with humour, find a connection, outside the classroom;
- (h) At the midterm of the school year, ask students to fill a questionnaire. It should contain questions on which was the part of the previous months that they enjoyed the most and which is still a critical part of their learning in your subject. Ask them to propose some advice to improve their learning.

What not to do:

- (a) lose control of the situation;

- (b) frontal lesson, where the teacher sits and considers the audience with a passive role;
- (c) avoid privileging some students to the detriment of others.

Different Styles of Learning and of Teaching

Study skills are essentials in helping students to progress. They should not be given for granted, as being rightly acquired in the previous years, but should be presented at the beginning of each year.

Teachers should ensure that the learning problems presented to the class (whether in the form of oral questions or written assignments) contain a fair proportion designed to prompt the kind of reflective thinking that leads to discovery and that is essential in developing higher order (metacognitive) learning skills

As such, it covers attitudes and value systems, emotions and feelings, ambitions and aspirations, personal complexes and self-regard. It takes in both conscious and unconscious elements, and incorporates many of the things that help define people as individuals.

Start with the learning objective, chosen from the school's curriculum, then translate it into what you want the pupils to know and understand. First, you need to consider what the pupils already know. This is called "using assessment to inform planning—one of the standards for qualified teacher status." Good teaching involves the plan, do, assess, plan, do, and assess cycle.

There is no such thing as a perfect teacher (except in your mind), so your lesson does not have to be perfect. You need to show that you are reflective, making progress and acting on advice. However, if you think your teaching is criticised unfairly, make sure you explain the reasoning behind your actions.

Here are a few suggestions that the research provided that mentors could share with new teachers in addition to their own ideas.

At the classroom level:

1. "Set clear standards" that students understand as criteria (rubrics work well here) for individual assignments by giving them examples of high-, average-, and low-level work and be clear on how each piece was assessed and evaluated. Make sure the examples are within the intellectual bell curve of the class and remain reachable as standards.

2. "Make students feel welcome" and supported and make the environment as much theirs as the teacher's. Students of all ages need to feel that teachers are involved in their lives. Take time to get to know students, talk to them individually, and express personal enjoyment in interactions with them.

3. "Break down large tasks" into more doable smaller goals. Doing so prevents students from becoming overwhelmed and discouraged by lengthy projects. Some students simply are not capable of planning further than short periods at a time.

4. "Promote mastery learning." When a student completes an assignment that does not meet the expected criteria, give her or him one or more opportunities to tackle the task again, with clear direction on how to achieve the desired result. Be prepared to work directly with the student if necessary.

5. "Try to evaluate students individually" if possible. Sometimes, a weaker student's gains are proportionally greater than a stronger student's. Be sure to recognize them.

6. "Build relevance into course materials" by relating them to students' lives and highlight ways learning can be applied in real-life situations. Schoolwork should be meaningful to students in their real world, as well as within the classroom. Students are more engaged in activities when they can build on prior knowledge and draw clear connections between what they are learning and the world they live in.

7. “Arouse students’ curiosity” about the topic being studied. Controversy sells. Build it into lessons. Use the “mystery” approach, in which students are presented with fragmentary or contradictory information about a subject and are then asked to examine available evidence and their own feeling and thinking on the subject.

As far as possible, most textual communication should be transferred and reorganized in a more accessible format through visual organizers, presented in alternative ways with visual displays, subtitled videos or animations.

Graphic organizers are particularly helpful to visually represent ideas, organize information, and grasp concepts, such as sequencing and cause and effect.

Students with low-productive skills should be encouraged to give also non-verbal responses to show their understanding of the topic, for example, using the interactive tools of Digital Whiteboards.

As a researcher, the author carried out for some years an analysis of the relationship between the way they study at home and their level of achievement at school (Cuccu, 2003). Here are two case studies that show the relevance of what has been stated above. The first showed top marks, and second very low ones.

Student A—School Achievement at the End of the Year: 10/10

Study method:

“I read aloud, memorize it and I repeat trying to do it in a clear and confident way; if I am not confident enough, I read it again and create in my memory a diagram that I use to repeat.”

Student A starts her process reading aloud (auditory), until she feels that the content of the text is settled in her. Then, she repeats it in a clear and confident way, without reading from the textbook. Here, we do not have only the auditory channel, as the modality is more complex. The way she does it implies that she repeats it and does it in a way that makes her feel ready to say it clearly and confidently in front of other people (kinaesthetic channel).

This powerful synergy between listening and feeling her own body in a state of particular ease is a powerful technique that the student has developed and that continues to re-propose in time as it gives positive results.

But what does she do when she does not feel sure enough? She visualizes in her mind (visual channel) a diagram that she creates from memory and then she repeats that using the same procedure described above.

From this case study, we can generalize as follows:

1. The synergy among the different channels yields good results. When one uses one or two channels and the desired results are not achieved, another system must be introduced.

2. It is not enough to repeat or read to acquire the information. If while we read we activate also sensations or visualize in our mind some diagram to be referred to, the process will be incredibly more effective and less boring and repetitive.

Student B—School Achievement at the End of the Year: 4/10

Study method:

“I read at least five times to understand, summarise the text, read and repeat, sometimes record it and listen again.”

Student B, who is endowed with high potentials in the secondary system (visual and auditory 86%; kinaesthetic 100%), stubbornly insists on reading the text in front of him several times, trying to achieve the miracle only because of his repetition of the words. When he speaks of reading to understand, since it is a foreign language of which he has very limited knowledge, both in lexical and syntactic terms, we have to see him trying

to open doors to which he does not have all the keys.

For how can he expect to “understand” a text if he merely repeats it, without doing anything to understand the meaning of its individual parts? The channel this student uses exclusively is the auditory one. He does not create maps, his summarising is probably done orally, and he sometimes insists on this same channel by recording and listening to himself.

He does not refer to “sensations or kinaesthetic manipulations of the text.” Yet, the student in the classroom is extremely kinaesthetic, enjoys physical activities, and uses gestures a lot to express himself. But when he studies, he does not consciously make use of this potential. It is as if when he is studying, he is a different person, forcing himself into behaviours and disciplines that he does not really feel are his own.

This shows that a teacher should help students find their own way to study, without giving for granted that they had already acquired the right methodology in the past.

Group Work

If you just ask student to form pairs or groups and work together, what generally happens is that the leaders inside the group or the most proficient students lead the group and the others just follow, without using their own skills.

Each student should feel, at times, to have an essential role in the whole learning process that is taking place in the class. One of the techniques that might help this is the so-called “cooperative learning.” It was developed initially in the USA at the beginning of the 20th century in evening schools for immigrants coming from different parts of the world. The general attitude of the participants was to make a separate group with the others from the same country: Greeks with Greeks, Italians with Italians, and so on. And so, teachers had to find ways to make them work together in mixed groups.

When students are told to work together for a specific task, it does not mean that they are working cooperatively. It often happens that they depend on those who show to be the leaders of the group, relying on what they say and following their ideas.

When organizing a group activity in a cooperative way, the first thing to do is to give different roles to each member of the group. Let us, for example, call the roles A, B, C, and D. Then, ask all those with Role A to sit at a table, and so on for the others roles. Then, support each group separately in order to assure that each one of them knows how to carry on the task given to them.

When the same task groups are ready, ask each student to join the initial group. Each of them has a specific task to achieve that requires the contribution of the expertise of each of their members. One student cannot complete the task without the information and ideas of each one of the others.

This methodology helps create acceptance of differences among students in order to achieve a big goal.

If possible, it would be motivating to introduce during the activity elements of entertainment and fun.

For example, prepare a WebQuest where you have selected some specific Web resources for the task and place leaflets in different parts of the school, and each one of them has a question to answer. To do that, they have to read with their cellular phones the QR-code printed on the paper to access the Webpage. On the leaflet there is also instruction on where to find the next leaflet and the question to be answered using the online material.

If you do not give them fun, they will make their own. If you do not give them a sense of empowerment, they will assert themselves in their own way. And if you do not help them feel valued, they will opt out and form troublemaking splinter groups. (Plevin, 2018)

How to Deal With Difficult Students

Learning about and understanding diversity in the classroom can enhance the chances for both students and teachers to connect and produce together better results.

First, today's teachers are likely to confront a range of different types of students—students with different socioeconomic backgrounds, different learning abilities/disabilities, and different ethnic or religious identities.

Second, working effectively with classroom diversity is critical to promoting educational equity and optimizing both access and outcomes.

Third, learning about diversity and developing strategies for working productively with those who are different entail short- and long-term benefits for students (School of Education, American University, Washington, DC, 2023).

Disabled individuals, like everyone else, possess unique aspirations and talents, but they may encounter additional obstacles that can sometimes hinder their motivation.

However, with the right support, encouragement, and understanding, we can empower disabled individuals to unlock their full potential and stay motivated on their journey towards success. Here are various strategies and approaches to motivate disabled people effectively (Value Care, 2023).

Be Supportive and Encouraging

Supporting and encouraging a disabled person is fundamental to motivate them. Expressing unwavering belief in their abilities can have a profound impact on their self-esteem and determination to achieve their goals. When individuals with disabilities feel supported, they are more likely to confront challenges with resilience and confidence, propelling them towards their aspirations.

This support can take various forms, including offering words of encouragement, actively listening to their concerns, and being there during both triumphs and setbacks. It means providing a safe and nurturing environment where they feel valued and understood.

Moreover, demonstrating faith in their abilities helps counteract the doubts and uncertainties that can arise when pursuing goals, especially in the face of disability-related challenges. This belief in their potential serves as a powerful motivator, inspiring them to push beyond limitations and strive for success.

Help Set Realistic Goals

Realistic goal-setting is an essential step in motivating a disabled person. It involves breaking down larger objectives into smaller, manageable steps. By setting achievable milestones, individuals with disabilities can see tangible progress and track their accomplishments along the way. This not only boosts their confidence, but also reinforces their belief in their ability to overcome challenges.

Celebrate Successes

When successes are celebrated, it reinforces the idea that progress is attainable. It instills confidence and a sense of pride in one's abilities. Moreover, celebrating achievements cultivates a positive mindset, encouraging individuals to maintain their motivation and continue striving toward their goals.

Be Patient and Understanding

Patience entails refraining from imposing unrealistic expectations and timelines. Instead, it involves allowing disabled individuals to progress at their own speed, celebrating each milestone, no matter how small. It's about understanding that setbacks and challenges are part of the journey and providing continuous encouragement.

Students tend to enjoy learning and to do better when they are more intrinsically, rather than extrinsically, motivated to achieve.

Conflicts Inside the Classroom

In nature, conflicts are parts of it: clashes between opposing forces constitute the essence of life and evolution. Inside a classroom, both students and teachers have to adapt to the reality of the social roles present inside it.

Often, it happens that the behaviours of students at school have their origin from characteristics not intrinsic to their personality, but from their inability to manage complex and conflicting relationships, deriving not only from generation differences/gaps, but also from the difference in the values between the family and school contest.

The presence of a condition of discomfort creates, quite often, dropping out of school especially as a consequence of disciplinary sanctions. The unease that is present in a school environment could be taken care of so that it could be adapted to acceptable levels and it could also be transformed in a growth factor thanks to dialogue, listening, and communication, that allow the person to be protagonist of their own choices. School choices should not be based on rigidity and isolation, but on relation. Teachers should address behaviours, not people.

When a problem arises, a way to find a way out is to brainstorm possible solutions together with the students. It is also effective to offer to talk privately during a break in class, or to go to a quieter place if it is safe; acknowledge the student's anger and let them vent to you about what is upsetting them; listen and try to understand the real issues that are concerning the student; during your conversation, summarize and clarify your understanding of what the student has said; do not disagree with the student, but build on what they have said; use "active listening techniques," such as paraphrasing, summarising, and asking clarifying questions to ensure that you fully grasp the situation from all angles. Active listening also creates trust between teachers and students. When students feel heard and understood, they are more likely to trust their teacher and be open to working towards a resolution together. This creates a more supportive classroom environment.

Use of Digital Resources and of AI by the Students

One topic that is top of mind for almost every parent and educator of teens is the effect of screen time on not just teens' academic motivation but their lives overall. There are two areas of screen use that are most concerning to parents: video games and social media. The latter is especially concerning to parents, because it is so new—while the internet was in its early stages when many current parents of teens were themselves teens, the ability to share thoughts, images, and videos for immediate response from anyone online was not. And the effects of these technologies on motivation are real: Dopamine production, a key neurochemical in motivation and goal pursuit, is triggered by screen use and increased screen use correlates with decreased academic motivation. It means we can get quick hits of pleasure from very little effort, making us more inclined to seek out that easy access in the future rather than seeking it from higher-effort activities like learning, growth, and goal-pursuit. (Hung & Chiappedi, 2026).

Nonetheless, with a supervised use inside the classroom, digital resources can be useful.

Teachers, sometimes, notice their unease growing as they read a piece of student work. Word by word their suspicion builds, and then all at once they understand. This is an artificial intelligence (AI)—generated text and not something their student actually wrote. Now what do they do?

There may be students who continue to claim the work is their own original writing, insisting they did not use AI at all. In that case, you can ask more open-ended questions like “Tell me about your process” or “Say more about your thinking about...” and then they can name something they wrote about in the assignment. Students who did not use AI respond to these questions by telling their teachers about their thought process, saying who helped them with the assignment, or asking a question about the directions.

Here are some options if you are not absolutely sure the work is AI generated:

- (a) Give an alternate assessment of the material and try some strategies for promoting authentic writing;
- (b) Do some assignments on paper in class to gather examples of your students’ authentic writing for future comparison.

How to Handle Plagiarism:

- (a) Be clear about if and how students can use AI with various assignments so there’s no confusion;
- (b) Get to know students’ writing as much as possible;
- (c) Do some writing in class, staying mindful of some students’ limitations to do so;
- (d) Use formative assessment to get snapshots of progress over time.

Aside from actually teaching kids what is ok and what is not ok, the second-best thing schools can do is use authentic assessments instead of busy work. When something is busy work, students are inclined to cheat in order to complete the task (since completion and grades are all that matter in that scenario). When teachers start using authentic assessment, they focus on actual learning, as well as give better options for evaluation outside of memorization tests (which shifts the goal to learning for the sake of understanding). Additionally, when using authentic assessments, it is much harder to cheat. If you, for example, have a kid in front of you and have them have to demonstrate something, they really cannot use generative AI or hire someone to do the work for them.

Common Indicators of AI-Generated Work

Here are a few signs that can prompt further review:

- (a) Inconsistent tone or fluency: The style suddenly shifts from one assignment to another, or within a single essay;
- (b) Impersonal or generic language: The text sounds polished but lacks voice or emotional connection to the student’s experience;
- (c) Overly formal phrasing: Sentences feel repetitive or unnaturally sophisticated for the student’s level;
- (d) Shallow understanding: The work summarizes concepts accurately but avoids specific examples or nuanced insight;
- (e) Invented details: References quotes or data points that do not exist or are incorrectly formatted;
- (f) Robotic structure: Predictable paragraph lengths and a formulaic rhythm that lacks spontaneity;
- (g) Formatting inconsistencies: Changes in font, spacing, or alignment that suggest copy-and-paste use.

Other ways of questioning that can be useful to try:

1. Can you walk me through how you approached this assignment?
2. What tools or resources did you use while working on this?
3. Can you explain this paragraph or concept in your own words?
4. Talk me through how you tackled this piece from start to finish. Which sections felt the strongest to you, and which ones were more difficult to put into your own words?

Process to Take

Once, the initial conversation begins, the focus shifts to what to do next, and how to do it fairly.

Focusing the conversation on learning, not punishment. Present it as an opportunity to discuss the writing process, the ethical use of AI, and the importance of knowing boundaries.

This means that instead of asking for a generic essay on a common topic, you might ask students to connect a concept to their own experience. Requiring process evidence, such as outlines or short reflections explaining their choices makes the journey visible. When students know their thinking process matters as much as the outcome, the incentive to outsource their work fades.

.....

.....

As an experiment, the author asked an AI chat the following question:

I would like to have a review of a short story called "It Was Her," by Benjamin Smith. I need first a short summary of the story, and then personal comment on what happens, the language used and the end of the tale. Thanks.

The first answer was about another novel with just two protagonists.

So, the author answered with the following:

Sorry, you have described the wrong novel. "It was her" is about two women and two men and two children.

This time the review was about that book, following the structure the author asked.

As an experiment again, the author proposed the answer he had received by the AI chat to an AI checker, and here are the results from Humbot about the possibility that the text was created only by AI:

The output content is 50% likely to be human-written.

Conclusions

Even if you are not a new teacher, the atmosphere, the learning environment and the challenges in a classroom are different from the past. It is an opportunity to try something different from what was used so far in schools, a way to establish the right atmosphere and the best relationship between teacher and students. There are many techniques that help to make a classroom a place where we can share personal things, support each other and achieve results, without using the authority that is generally displayed by educators and parents.

As there are different learning styles, teachers should offer different teaching styles, in order to connect and make the main concept of the lesson easier to understand for each one of the students.

It would be more motivating for students if instead of the standard assessment they are evaluated individually, as far as possible and promoting mastery learning. When a student completes an assignment that does not meet the expected criteria, give her or him one or more opportunities to tackle the task again, with clear direction on how to achieve the desired result. Be prepared to work directly with the student if necessary.

Try to evaluate students individually if possible. Sometimes, a weaker student's gains are proportionally greater than a stronger student's.

Instead of just asking students to work together to complete a task, it is more profitable for each one of them if teachers propose a strategy from cooperative learning, that allows each student, no matter how good they are in the subject, to be an essential contribution to the achievement of the goal given to the group.

Nowadays, the number of students certified with some form of disability is much higher than in the past. This is why it is necessary to activate for some of them forms of individualized learning, following them

individually, understanding their difficulties, adapting the tasks to the condition, supporting them in different ways and celebrating their successes, even if they might appear small ones.

The spreading use of AI to create school homework is something that must be taken care of. Once, you see or suspect the use of AI in the homework in front of you, there are different possibilities to choose, none of them should be to punish the students. It is much better for their future to establish a connection, and find out first of all the reason why they used this tool to complete their task. Then, to offer them alternatives, other options, so that they could complete their task without being punished. In particular, if they are asked to put into their homework some personal reflections, that should be justified, it will help them to create something that is their own.

On the whole, a new teacher or one who is facing a new reality in their classroom needs to reconsider their behaviour and find new ways to deal with their students.

If they can create the right friendly atmosphere, where students do not feel judged but supported in their steps towards the accomplishment of their final results, problems will no longer be problems, but only steps in the development in the learning path of the teenagers in the classroom.

References

- Cuccu, R. (2003). *Learning styles, multiple intelligences and school achievement*. Lend: Lingua e Nuova Didattica.
- Cuccu, R. (2025). *Six elements that help create a friendly environment and motivate learning*. USA: David Publishing Company.
- Grinder, M. (1996). *Envoy: Your personal guide to classroom management* (3rd ed.). USA.
- Hung, K. L., & Chiappedi, M. A. (Eds.). (2026). *Impact of screen time on development of children*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12563978/>
- Plevin, R. (2018). *Take control of the noisy class*. Cockermouth: Life Raft Media Ltd.
- School of Education, American University, Washington, DC. (2023). *Diversity in the classroom: Teaching, types, and examples*. Retrieved from <http://www.soeonline.american.edu/blog/diversity-in-the-classroom/>
- Value Care. (2025). *Model for value-based, integrated health and social care services delivery supported by ict for older adults*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11827563/>