

826 BOSTON WORKSHOP GUIDELINES



Teaching partners and TAs

1. *Two heads are better than one.*

If you are new to teaching, consider team-teaching your class. You will be able to improve your lesson plans dramatically with the input and brains of another person. It does take more time to collaborate, but you may find that the students' needs are better met, that you will have more fun, and that you will be dying to work with that person to implement your ideas again. If you're interested, Alia can help match you up with one of our many fantastic volunteers as a teaching partner.

2. *826 interns can provide logistical support.*

If you have a clear idea of what you would like to get done but would still like support in handling logistics, a teaching assistant may be the right solution. A teaching assistant can support you and take care of some of the following: attendance, greeting students, evaluations, running small group discussions, getting students published, etc. You may also find that they have ideas for your lesson plans and are helpful in giving feedback to your students. 826 interns are perfect for this job. Contact Alia and she will set you up.

Elements of a successful workshop

1. *Keep your goals in mind.*

Where will your workshop begin and end? Knowing your goals from the start will help you plan out each lesson to make the most out of your time with the students. Unless a surprise is part of your particular drama for the day, it's best to let people know what's going to happen. "I am so excited about the plan for the day: I have an activity for you to critique screenplays in small groups. After we hear your feedback on the screenplays, we are going to talk about screenplay format. Then, we are going to respond to a writing prompt. We are going to spend twenty minutes speed-writing so that we can have something to come to next week. We are going to end by watching ten minutes of a film I want to use for our writing activity next week."

2. *Use active teaching.*

Be engaged with the students. Vary the kinds of activities you do in one session. Design activities that invite them to be the talkers, not always the listeners. If you're talking about the elements of a certain genre of writing, you can provide an example and get the students to identify those elements by asking the right questions. Do activities that get them to use not only their brains but their bodies as well. Sitting down for two hours can be hard, especially if they have been sitting at school all day. You can always get them up and into different groups to move them around. This is good practice anyway for breaking up students who come from the same school so that you can better incorporate the students who have come alone.

3. *Make sure your lessons are project-based.*

At 826 Boston, we strongly believe in a project-based approach, where learning is student-centered and has real-world application. Your workshop should be driven by an end product or a creative goal, whether it is a bound anthology, a literary performance, their own 'zine, or a great short story submission for the next *826 Quarterly*. You'll find that with a meaningful goal established, students will feel more motivated and engaged, and will produce higher quality work.

4. *Provide clear guidelines and model, model, model.*

Whenever you ask students to work on a writing task, make sure you have given clear guidelines for what they have to do and post them on the board so students and volunteers can refer to them as they work together. Let them know how much time they have to complete the task, and give the group warnings when they have five minutes or two minutes to complete a task. When the students are concentrating, it's easy for them to lose track of time. Time warnings go a long way to alleviating the anxiety of time having already run out!

5. *Give your students time to create.*

Students can be very product-oriented and are thinking about what they will be getting out of their time with you. Make sure to emphasize what the end result of the workshop will produce for them, and give them time during the workshop to work towards this goal. Assigning required homework is not recommended, because students have other demand on their time and may not come back if they haven't completed the homework. While it's obvious to us that there are good things coming out of the workshop, you can never remind them too frequently that you are excited about their final product. "I can't wait to see your parents' response at our play!" or "These poems are fantastic! Daniel is going to be impressed when he sees our group's submissions to *The Quarterly*."

6. *Rehearse your lesson.*

Once you've framed your lesson, grab a friend who's willing to play an 8-year-old (or whichever age group you've designed the lesson for) and try it out! Teaching a lesson is the single most effective way to find what flows best about it and where there might be some gaps that need to be filled in.

Your first day, coming and going, and the store

1. *Be early.*

Make sure you are at least 60 minutes early to check in with the staff point person for your lesson. This is doubly true for the first class. The volunteers who will assist you with the workshop will be scheduled to arrive 30 minutes early in order to meet with you, go over the agenda for the day, learn how you would like them to assist the students, and help you set up for the class. Some students arrive early as well, and parents want to leave their students with a person, not an empty room. You are representing 826 to new families and we want them to know that you are in control of the class and that you are ready for their child.

2. *Introduce yourself.*

Introduce yourself personally to the volunteers, parent and students as they arrive. Make sure all students and volunteers have nametags so that you can call them by their names throughout the course of the workshop. You can also provide the staff point person with a short introduction so they can kick off the lesson by singing your praises! (even if those praises are enjoying caramel macchiatos and Words With Friends)

3. *Be prepared before your class.*

Be prepared for your class before coming to 826 so that you are not scrambling minutes before the class is scheduled to begin. Again, use this time to greet students and invite them to sit. Chat with their parents. Tell them you are excited to see them and that you are happy to be teaching.

4. *Check in with the point person for the day.*

The 826 staff point person will give you an attendance list for the students who are registered for the class, as well as answer questions about where to find things and help with set up, including setting up and testing audio-visual equipment.

5. *Have enough copy machine time.*

If you need to use the copy machine, leave ample time for that. We recommend coming least 60 minutes early if you need to print or make copies the day of. If you would like to have copies made for you, you can email Alia your handouts a day early and she can have the copies you need ready to go.

6. *Have at least one backup plan for AV files:*

If you'll be showing video clips or playing sound clips, make sure to bring a few different versions of these files. Burn them to a CD or DVD, and bring them on a flash drive. You can also email them to yourself or run them from the internet. Having two to three different options is the safest, and make sure to test these files soon after you first arrive to make sure they run properly on our system. If you're bringing your own computer, please bring your own adapter for our projector or check with us in advance to see if we have the proper adapter.

7. *Leave the lab clean.*

Please be sure to leave the writing lab clean. You can ask the students to do this at the end of the class. Please also put tables and chairs back after your workshop if you moved them. Once you get the students into the routine of picking up after themselves and helping you put the tables and chairs back in order, you won't have to ask it of them—they will begin to just do it.

8. *The store staff is working in the store.*

At all times before, during, and after your workshop, never assume that the store staff is free to take care of your students. Of course, students can explore the store if it is part of the lesson plan, but you need to be in there as well. Otherwise, students need to wait until their parents arrive to explore the store.

Wrapping up

1. *Students know what works.*

The students will have valuable suggestions for future workshops. We obviously want to learn from them so that we can always be improving. Also, as we write grants and ask the community for money, it is invaluable for us to be able to show evidence of your impact on Boston students. That is why if you conduct a multiple-session workshop, we will provide you with student evaluation forms.

2. *Make the time for evaluations (for workshops with multiple sessions).*

Please do not give students the evaluation forms and think that they will send back their answers. You need to take seven minutes out of your final workshop day to give them time to respond. If you do not want to end your workshop with their heads down filling out forms, take the time to do it midway through the end of class. If you want to tailor the feedback form so that the students are writing about the specific activities you did, let Alia know before your final session and it can be customized. You are welcome to make copies of the filled-in forms, but please leave the originals and the workshop attendance sheet with the 826 staff point person.

3. *Remember The 826 Quarterly!*

In the weeks that you prepare, teach, and wrap up your workshop, please don't forget about *The 826 Quarterly*. *The Quarterly* is so much about showing off the work you and your students do within your workshops, that we want to make sure that work makes it to *The Quarterly* as hassle-free as possible.

You may either give submissions directly to Alia or email them to Alia@826boston.org (please attach Word documents rather than incorporating submissions within the body of the email). Every submission should be accompanied by the following student information:

- name
- date of birth
- school
- grade
- email address
- phone number
- signed Permission to Publish slip

Please also write a paragraph about your workshop, including the age range of students, the number of participants, and a brief description of the workshop's thrust and scope.

4. *Leave the session on a high note:*

Make sure you wrap up with a high-energy summary of what the students did with encouraging words that will make them feel proud of their accomplishments and more confident about the next writing endeavor that they undertake.