

The Massage Educator

Summer 07

5% of practicing massage therapists are also massage instructors, according to the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB) Job Task Analysis survey published in 2007.

Created by Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals • [philosophy for instructors](#)



THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS SET THE TONE

Great teachers think carefully about how they introduce new content areas, how they want students to feel about upcoming classes, and how they prepare for successful academic outcomes. Below, you'll find ideas for capitalizing on the importance of the first day of class.

EMPHASIZE RAPPORT

The relationship of a student to the instructor is a primary factor in student retention. According to author W.J. McKeachie, students respond best to



HOW TO GET STUDENTS INVOLVED

PAGE 2

instructors who show enthusiasm for the topic, work to make course material interesting, treat students fairly, and have a sympathetic attitude toward student problems or setbacks.¹ “Characteristics of Effective Teaching” suggests that instructors think about the nonverbal cues they send students right from the start. Is the instructor early for the class? Does he or she greet students as they enter the classroom? Does the instructor know the students’ names? Does the instructor smile, use active listening techniques, and maintain eye contact with students who are sharing ideas? These behaviors provide a sense of the instructor’s personality, while communicating to students that the environment is safe and friendly.²

EMPHASIZE EXPERIENCE

Students respond well to instructors who have established their credibility and who demonstrate enthusiasm for the coursework.³ Most massage instructors are also working massage therapists with firsthand knowledge of what it takes to succeed. Course content anchored to stories or real experiences with clients comes alive, helping students envision their own careers. The classroom is a setting where instructors should feel proud to share their accomplishments and their areas of expertise. Students want and need to know they are learning from an accomplished professional. When massage program instructors are also experts in related areas, including

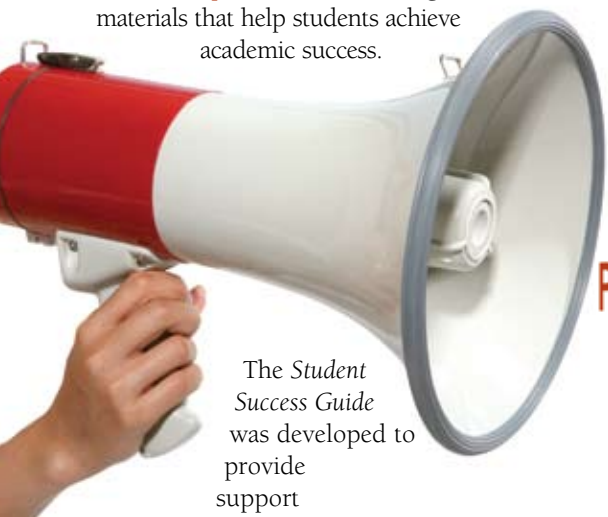
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

“encourage mints”



Promote a positive, supportive, and upbeat campus environment with “encourage mints.” Place encouraging words on labels, then affix them to the back of mint candies. Pass a bowl full of encourage mints around and have each student take one, then have each of them individually read the quote a loud. After each student has read his or her encourage mint, discuss the power of positive words. Use them at open house events, before a big test, during orientation, in the front lobby, or from the desks of faculty and staff. Enjoy!

Beginning August 1, **ABMP Student membership** will include exciting new materials that help students achieve academic success.



The *Student Success Guide* was developed to provide support to students beginning massage school. Teachers know that new students often start classes filled with enthusiasm and the energy to succeed. Those with good study habits are able to maintain their motivation even when classes are challenging. But many capable adult students experience frustration, and even failure, in school. This is not because they

lack ability, but because they do not have adequate study skills. The *Student Success Guide* helps instructors teach; it comes with a comprehensive curriculum schools can integrate into their programs to help students reach their academic goals.

Teachers will also find students using the *Massage Year Planner*, a dynamic time-

Pleased to announce

management system created especially for massage students. The planner helps students organize their schedules, arrange study sessions, and proactively plan their lives. It also provides a place for photos and notes from classmates and becomes a treasured keepsake at the end of the massage training.

To find out more about student membership materials and how they can be integrated into your classroom, contact ABMP at 800-458-2267 or visit us online at www.abmp.com. 🍎

3 Tips to Beat Teacher Stress

Massage instructors deal with the same difficulties as other instructors teaching in a post secondary setting. They also address the unique demands of working in a setting where people undress and touch each other as part of the curriculum. They aid students through varied emotional struggles: helping an ostracized student find a massage exchange partner; helping each student feel comfortable about body image; working through powerful emotional reactions to touch. It is no wonder instructors sometimes find themselves mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausted. Decrease the stress in your own classroom and school with these three basic tips.

1 Seek Peer Support

Massage instructors rarely receive training in how to cope and manage the intense dynamics of massage school. By sharing classroom experiences in instructor



mentoring and peer support groups, teachers can develop new skills for addressing these issues and process their own emotions in a positive and caring environment.

Some schools offer faculty peer groups, providing a meeting area and refreshments on a regular basis. If your school doesn't have one already, start a monthly peer group.

2 Plan Ahead

One teacher, Debbie, comments that "the evil copier" is her biggest stressor during the term. "I don't know how many times I've come to copy materials for the day's lesson, only to find that the copier is broken or we are out of paper." Her colleague, Erin, does all her photocopying in advance of the term, eliminating common annoyances. She also creates a classroom environment she likes by posting special images, hanging plants, and checking that all the equipment is working properly. "On the first day of class, I know that everything

HOW TO GET STUDENTS INVOLVED

If only the most talkative students are sharing during a discussion, or if the instructor wants the chance to get students on their feet while sharing, try the ball toss exercise. Have students stand in a circle. Hand the ball to a student and ask each student to give one comment (or answer) when they receive the ball. Students toss the ball until every student has given at least one idea. The instructor stands outside the ball toss circle and writes the ideas on the board.



is ready. It helps me feel calm and relaxed." Another teacher, David, noticed that, though he always told his students to take care of themselves, he never planned for his own well-being. "One term, I finally made it my own priority. I brought a healthy lunch, drank more water, and took walks during breaks. It was amazing how much better I felt from these small changes."

3 Set Boundaries

Instructors often fail to set boundaries with administrators and students. Melody comments that, "I never said no to covering a class for a sick colleague. Finally, I told the director of education I was only willing to pick up one extra class a week. She respected my boundaries and my workload became reasonable again." Jason noticed the importance of taking break time for himself. "Students would wait for me to tally a grade or to talk about personal issues. I'd address all of their needs, then realize I hadn't used the restroom or eaten a snack. I solved this by leaving the classroom and insisting on time for myself. This helped me stay receptive to students' needs." Personal time and space are both necessary for instructors; areas like the faculty room should be off-limits to students.

Through peer support, good planning, and attention to boundaries, instructors can decrease their stress and foster effective strategies for aiding students. 🍏

FIRST DAY OF CLASS, CONTINUED

naturopathic medicine or physical therapy, students will want to know how these fields relate to massage.

EMPHASIZE COURSE MATERIALS

Many instructors take it for granted that students understand the value and importance of a course, but students often come to class without a clear idea of why they need to know the material. Define the subject, demonstrate the relationship between the parts of the subject, and relate the material to other coursework the students will encounter during the training program. This definition provides the perfect framework from which to discuss the syllabus, highlighting important homework and exam dates. Orienting students to the textbook increases the likelihood that they will use it effectively; read the preface, preview the table of contents, and discuss textbook features and ancillary materials.

EMPHASIZE DISCRETION

Regardless of an instructor's feeling about an administrative policy, curriculum design, or grading practices, the environment of the classroom should be free from such conflicts. To bring outside concerns to the students is inappropriate, yet happens far more regularly than one might imagine. One student tells the story of an instructor who declared that reading the textbook was a complete waste of time. Infuriated, the student raised her hand and asked, "I just paid \$80 for this textbook and you're telling me I don't need it?" The instructor replied that the student should take the issue up with the administration. It's easy to say "That's not me," but this type of situation happens frequently, in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Sharing too much behind the scenes information with students takes the focus away from topic content and student development.

EMPHASIZE UNDERSTANDING

Students value instructors who remember the hardships of being a student and who create an open classroom environment by sharing their past difficulties in mastering certain concepts. This reminds students that the content is challenging for everyone, but with perseverance, achievement is possible.



Bringing in more senior students or graduates of the massage training program to reflect on their own massage school experiences can help reduce students' fears and encourage them to look forward to all that is to come.

EMPHASIZE ACCOMPLISHMENT

Try to plan first class materials that have meaning, teach a new skill, or give students an immediate sense of accomplishment and immediate gratification. Building confidence is key. One school teaches all of the bones to students in an interactive game that has the class on its feet, cheering, laughing, and memorizing. Students have so much fun they are amazed to find that, by the end of the class, they have memorized all the body's bones. They move on, prepared to learn more advanced topics in engaging, invigorating ways.

EMPHASIZE SHARING

When instructors build discussion into instructional design, they send a message that students' ideas matter. In the first class, it works well to ask students to share what they hope to get out of the course and what they want to learn. Instructors should reinforce that individual learning needs are valued. At the end of the first class, give students the chance to ask questions and solicit feedback. Are students excited about the class? Why? Do students feel fearful or overwhelmed about course content? Why? When students are given the chance to express their enthusiasm, it often leads to an enhanced sense that the course content is valuable.

When teachers reflect on the climate they want to set for the class and the first impression they want to convey, the first day can become an opportunity to begin an exciting and successful course. 🍏

1. W. J. McKeachie, *Teaching Tips: A Guide Book for the Beginning College Teacher*, 8th ed. (Lexington: Mass Health, 1986).
2. Cheryl M. Adams and Rebecca L. Pierce, "Characteristics of Effective Teaching," www.bsu.edu/gradschool/media/pdf/chapter12.pdf.
3. L. Dee Fink, "First Day of Class: What Can/Should We Do?," www.honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/firstday.htm.

Building New Tools for Teachers

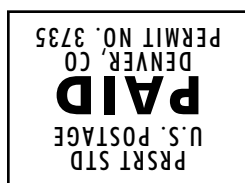
Launching *The Massage Educator*

Welcome! Today's massage instructors must help students fill in education gaps while teaching dynamic and complex content that integrates body, mind, and spiritual wellness in the unique setting of massage school. *The Massage Educator* was created by Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) as a way to reach out to massage instructors, promote the sharing of information, and acknowledge instructors' special contribution to the massage profession. **The content of this quarterly publication is focused on classroom management issues and ways to support each instructor's personal and professional process.**

This premiere issue of the newsletter looks at the importance of the first day of classes and ways that instructors

can set a proactive and positive tone for the term. It also offers tips for reducing stress. Upcoming issues will discuss such topics as learning objectives and Bloom's Taxonomy, self-evaluation models, managing classroom dynamics, ideas for great lectures, and the principles of active learning.

At ABMP we are always looking for ways to support massage instructors, students, schools, and professionals. **If you have ideas for us, we want to hear them.** Send comments and suggestions to Education Program Director Anne Williams at anne@abmp.com. 🍏



1271 Sugarbush Drive
Evergreen, Colorado 80439
800-458-2267
www.abmp.com
expectmore@abmp.com

