

LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

- A(3) Know how to communicate well with students and their families
- B(3) Create a supportive and safe learning environment for students
- C(1) Service to profession



Mistakes are a normal part of the learning process. They are an opportunity for both the teacher and students to learn and grow. Don't avoid mistakes by only asking easy questions with a single answer. To create a classroom culture where students are comfortable to make mistakes takes careful thinking and planning.

"When my students make mistakes, it is their fault for not paying attention."



"When a student makes a mistake, I try to build their confidence and use it as an opportunity for everyone to learn."

REVIEW ALL ANSWERS

When giving a multiple-choice question or when students share very different methods or answers, purposefully review all the different answers, not just the correct one.

For example:

"Sarah Paw was able to factor the equation using a different method. Sarah, can you share with us how you did that?"



SAVE THE ANSWER

Before you talk, ask what students think and then have them share. Try not to share the answer until the students have had a chance to try for themselves. This will tell you how much they have learned.

For example:

"I want everyone to try on their own first before we discuss as a group. I will be coming around to check your books and give you suggestions."



SNAPS, CLAPS, HIGH 5's and THUMBS UP

Start a classroom tradition where everyone claps their hands, snaps their fingers, gives high 5's or thumbs up after a student tries to answer a difficult question, even if that student doesn't get the right answer. This will build student confidence.

For example:

"Zaw Zaw made a great effort and was able to get the first half of the question correct. Let's all clap for Zaw Zaw!"



SAY WHAT YOU SEE

Verbalize the good behaviors you see in class. This reinforces your expectations.

For example:

"I see that Moe Khine is working on a difficult question and asking her friends for help. Great job, Moe Khine!"





MODEL THE CULTURE

You model the culture of your class. If other students laugh or look down on a student when they try and fail, stop the lesson to reinforce why mistakes are important.

For example:

“We all make mistakes, so let’s not laugh at Sam San for trying. He made a great effort. What can we learn from him? Who can help him?”



YOU TELL ME

- Give students a reading passage and have them share what they think the main idea is.
- The right answer doesn’t always need to come from the teacher. Emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer to an opinion question as long as the students can provide evidence for *why* they think a certain way.

For example:

“OK, has everyone finished reading the story? Let’s start to understand it. Who can tell me what they think the main message of the story is? How did you come to that conclusion?”



CONTROL YOUR REACTION

Do you respond differently when a student answers correctly versus incorrectly? If you want students to feel comfortable making mistakes, keep a level tone whether students are right or wrong.

For example:

When a student shares the correct answer, you can respond, “Great effort, Mi Ni Ni. Thanks for your answer.”

When a student shares an incorrect answer, you can respond, “Great effort, Mi Ni Ni. Now how can make your answer even better?”



QUESTIONING STRATEGY

- Choose who answers your questions.
- Students need to trust that you won’t try and embarrass them or make them look foolish.
- If a student is struggling don’t make it obvious; instead, cooperate with others to help her/him.

For example:

“Aung Zaw, I know that this question might be a bit challenging for you. Can Thin Thin and Thi Ha help? If you guys need my help, let me know.”



NORMALIZE MISTAKES

Students will be more comfortable with taking risks is if you encourage it.

- Encourage students to ask new questions and try to answer challenging questions.
- Encourage students to answer even if they are not 100% sure they are right.

For example:

“I know this question is new and will be difficult, but I want us to try. Don’t worry if you get it wrong. This is how we learn.”



TEACHERS MAKE MISTAKES

What do you do when **you** make a mistake in front of the students? Do you ignore it, pretend like it didn’t happen or try and minimize it? Students will imitate your actions. Next time you make a mistake, use it as an opportunity for both you and students to learn.

For example:

“I have made a mistake on the board. Can anyone find it and help me out?”

or

“Naing Oo has found an error in my answer. I didn’t think about it that way before. Thanks for seeing that, Naing Oo. Does anyone else have another solution that they found?”

