

An Effective Teacher

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I was appointed as subject specialist in Civics at the Government Girls Higher Secondary School Khanpur. There were no English subject specialists in the school, so the administration asked me to teach English in addition to my own subject. And thus I began teaching English.

I found that the girls lacked the skill to even write a proper sentence. There were one hundred and fifty students in 1st year, most of them lacking basic English language skills. I was aware that a lot of our students don't do well in English as they don't have a sound base. These girls needed help in both spoken and written English. I started with verb tenses and instructed the girls to keep their dictionaries handy so they can look up difficult words.

The school principal was also aware that the standard of English language was not very high in our school. She often talked to me about how our students' record in English was not very encouraging. This is a common problem in our rural schools where English language specialists are hard to find. I assured her that it was a problem that could be solved.

I had a group of a hundred and fifty students. I had to have discipline in the classroom, yet keep a friendly atmosphere. I also started from the basics of grammar so they had a strong sense of the language to build on. And I had to test them very frequently on small sections of the text or syllabus to help them gain mastery over the rules of grammar and the new vocabulary. I had to be well prepared for class myself and I had to keep throwing questions their way to ensure that this class of a hundred and fifty

was not falling asleep. I set up parent teacher meetings. I encouraged competition among the girls. I tried anything and everything to engage my students in their own learning.

Slowly my students were starting to show results. Their grades in the written tests were improving as were their spoken English skills.

I got further reassurance when an inspection team came to school to monitor children's progress in each subject. They appreciated my efforts and commented on my girls' English language skills. We were getting some where.

Then the final test came. My girls had their final exam. Classes had ended in April to give students time to prepare for their exams in May. On the day of their exam, I waited outside their examination hall. As they came out one by one, I saw satisfaction on their faces as they walked up to me and exclaimed, 'Ma'am the paper was so easy!'

These words meant all the world to me!

Not only that, the children also requested me to teach them English the next year too! This was the most unforgettable moment of my life. I, who wasn't even an English teacher had been able to get results from these students.

The author of the story is a subject specialist in History and Civics with Masters degrees in International Relations and Political Science in the North Western Frontier Province