

From Theory to Practice

A Positive Mindset to Start a Successful Year

By **Pilar Bravo**, Leader of Academic Innovation and Curricula



It's been a very exciting beginning of duties at the Colombo. Seeing teachers in person as opposed to seeing them via Zoom is both stirring and eye opening. In most of the cases we see genuine thrill in their faces. But also, we can see some anxiety, which is a lot more common among educators at the beginning of an academic year than we may think. We've been there, too, so, please, know that you are not alone. We feel you and would like to offer some useful tips to help you cope with it unabashedly.

This type of anxiety is usually originated from the fear of the new challenges, uncertainty about the kind of students, classes, content to cover, new materials, new tech tools, new procedures you will have to face; the sometimes-abrupt transition between the vacation routine and the work routine, among other factors. In sum, you may feel the need to prove yourself to your students, to the institution or to your own standards and expectations and feeling you do not have the control at the beginning of a process can be unsettling. So, here's what you can do:

From theory to Practice

1. Change your focus.

From getting your students to know, like, and respect you to getting to know, like, respect your students and creating connections with them.

Remember you can't control what others think of you, but what you can do is take action to know your students, their preferences, interests, learning styles, trends, fears and lifestyles. That information will help you plan your class sessions more down-to-earth. Students will appreciate your putting them and their needs in the center of the teaching-learning process. It is not about being liked; it's about doing your job with an attitude of service, which others will genuinely appreciate and profit from, and which you will find fulfilling.



2. Plan. Simply...plan!

It's no coincidence organization is one of the most valued skills in today's world. A study recently published in Forbes showed that procrastinators and planners are driven by a common motivator: **anxiety**. Both reported their behaviors are a way of managing stress. Planners showed more control over their emotions, less stress and more positive emotional, health and life outcomes*. So, understand what is expected from you, set your own goals, visualize the outcomes, and establish specific tasks that will help you achieve them. Don't forget to check on your progress constantly and redirect your plans if need be.

3. Practice mindfulness and meditation.

Stay present. It is important to be clear about what is expected from the institution and create a plan but avoid overthinking and worrying about scenarios that have not happened yet and may never actually exist. May the challenges find you prepared and occupied rather than preoccupied. Breathe, meditate, take breaks, talk to your friends, sleep, eat well, work out and enjoy some quality me-time. That's how you refocus and help your mind and heart have a more objective perception of reality.

* For more info, please, visit: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2021/08/14/new-study-shows-8-career-benefits-in-planning-versus-procrastinating-to-reduce-stress/?sh=3b59e5c8476e>

4. Seek support and inspiration.

Sometimes, what you do on your own is not enough. You may need a friend, a relative, a coworker or even your supervisor, who you can talk to about your concerns and shortcomings, who can understand and help you devise a plan. Do not seek or expect commiseration. More than pity, what you need is a sensible source of ideas. Someone who can both empathize with you and help you with a realistic plan to manage your anxiety. Books and podcasts can also help.

No matter what you do, do not allow yourself to feel isolated or think you're the only one experiencing this distressful situation. While it is true you cannot downplay it, take one step at a time, show compassion and care to yourself, find the support needed, plan, assess and celebrate your progress. Remember:

Your heart is slightly larger than the average human heart, but that's because you're a teacher. You may feel too much, but that's because you care.
- Aaron Bacall

Did you know...

We are launching a new scholarship?



It's called the **Nancy Kotal de Cortés Scholarship** and it will favor young high-performance sportspeople from vulnerable backgrounds. It aims at helping them develop their communicative competence in English and leadership skills that will contribute to their personal and professional success.

Mrs. Cortes was the executive director of the CCA Bogotá for over three decades. She led our institution towards success and inspired us all to face challenges with a positive mindset and effective, realistic, and concrete actions. She will also be remembered as a very altruistic role model. We are extremely glad to honor her memory with this new opportunity for young people. For more information, visit: <https://fundnancykotaldecortes.org/>

What is HOT in ELT?



Micro-learning!

In case you haven't heard of it yet, here's a quick guide to it, so let's micro-learn.

What is it?

Microlearning is the delivery of learning content in a short, appealing, and succinct way. Condensing large quantities of information into bite-sized training drives better engagement and knowledge retention for learners. It is often a technology-based or technology-enhanced form of teaching.

Advantages

- It maximizes learning and performance.
- It's a flexible way of learning. Flexible time and pace.
- It makes students feel they can learn anywhere, anytime.
- It condenses large quantity of info into bite-sized training.
- It's engaging and provides a quick sense of achievement.

How?

Microlearning delivers short bursts of content for students to explore at their convenience by means of:

- Text (phrases, short paragraphs)
- Images (photos, illustrations)
- Videos (of the short variety)
- Audio (short snippets of speech or music)
- Tests and Quizzes
- Games (e.g. simple single-screen challenges)

Suggested steps

1. Identify learning gaps and ideate a way to fill them as simply and effectively as possible.
2. Focus on the main topic and on clarifying key aspects. Use your creativity to design a delivery product that keeps a balance between text and graphic or (audio) visual material.
3. Make sure your design is appealing and easily accessible through different devices.

Can this be applied in any learning scenario?

Not really.
Check this comparison:

Micro-Learning

I need help now.

- ✓ 2 minutes or less
- ✓ Topic or problem based
- ✓ Search by asking a question
- ✓ Video or text
- ✓ Indexed and searchable
- ✓ Content rated for quality and utility

Is the content useful and accurate?
Videos, articles code samples, tools

Macro-Learning

I want to learn something new.

- ✓ Several hours or days
- ✓ Definitions, concepts, principles, and practice
- ✓ Exercises graded by others
- ✓ People to talk with, learn from
- ✓ Coaching and support needed

Is the author authoritative and educational?
Courses, classes, MOOCs, programs

What else is News?

Teacher Training Kept us Busy in January!



The TDTS (Teacher Development Training Session) and FDM (First-Day Meeting) signaled a successful beginning of our programs this year. Over 160 teachers from the Adult Programs and around 180 KTP teachers participated in these massive pre-service F2F training events where exciting news were shared and planning and teaching guidelines were reinforced.

Here's the summary of the most important news announced:

1. New B2G agreements and the renewal of previous ones will contribute to the growth, sustainability, and positioning of the organization: Boyacá, Zipaquirá, AMCHAM, Tocancipá and Chiquinquirá.

2. We celebrated the renewal of the license to continue to offer our services and programs at the Calle 100 branch, which is also accompanied by the so called *Registro Calificado de Programas a Distancia*. Yes, that's right! We are the first institution for work and human development to obtain this license in Bogotá. This means, we comply with all the demanding requirements established by the secretary of education to teach high-quality virtual courses.

3. This year Pilar Bravo, as the leader of Innovation and Curricular Design, will work more closely with Daniel Valderrama in the expansion of our portfolio of programs, products and

services, especially for continuing education. While she will still be in charge of the renovation of the existing traditional programs and the creation of new ones, she and Danny will lead the development of innovative ideas for continuing education opportunities.

As for the guidelines that were emphasized in these training sessions we would like to highlight:

AEP

AEP teachers are strongly encouraged to start planning units before tackling the session-by-session planning. This will allow them to prioritize the book and syllabus content to be covered; organize content per class session in a more coherent way; dose the teaching of grammar content in a more manageable manner; ensure more effective achievement of the course and exit profile objectives, among some other advantages.

KTP

It's time for us all to reinforce the application of both procedures that ensure the correct functioning of our processes as well as the key principles of the program such as:

- ✓ Speaking is a key element in communication.
- ✓ Linguistic skills should be taught inductively.
- ✓ Play does not always mean learn, and fun does not always mean play.
- ✓ Gamification dynamizes learning.
- ✓ Classes should be engaging.
- ✓ Interaction is a key element in language learning.
- ✓ Activities must be planned carefully.
- ✓ Textbooks should be a tool, not the backbone.
- ✓ Project Based Learning (PBL) makes learning more meaningful and memorable.
- ✓ Young learners also need training on XXI Century Skills.
- ✓ Socio-emotional Learning (SEL) makes education a more comprehensive endeavor.
- ✓ Learning Strategy Training shortens and facilitates the learning adventure.
- ✓ Asynchronous Work promotes independent learning.
- ✓ Class Preparation is a key component of asynchronous work.
- ✓ Communication with parents as our main allies ensures students' success.

The Top 10 for CCA teachers



This time, the top 10 recommendations for successful unit planning:

- 1.** To have solid planning we need to have all the pieces. (Syllabi, platform, exit profile, extra resources)
- 2.** Playing with different sections of the book will help us create more harmonious plans.
- 3.** No book is perfect, you can make it perfect. No book is designed based on our very specific students' needs, but we can adapt the content to teach great classes and meet our students needs.
- 4.** Training students is a must as it will help them understand our methodology and how classes are designed (pace, syllabi, materials, book, platform, etc.).
- 5.** Also, help students understand that we cannot follow the book to the letter! In order to achieve realistic learning goals, the teacher and the program need to carefully select the content to be taught and rearrange it strategically. The fact that we don't follow activity after activity exactly as the book layout suggests does not mean teachers do not plan their classes conscientiously.
- 6.** The exit profiles and checklists need to be your guides to make passing or failing decisions and they need to be used when planning. Find them in the curricular website.
- 7.** Planning the whole unit will let you use Flipped Learning in a more organized way.
- 8.** Use CAF to increase complexity as students advance in the program.
- 9.** Save both your unit plans and class session plans in a very organized way to be reused later.
- 10.** When teaching a class you already have lesson plans for, go over those plans and make the modifications you consider necessary based on your students' needs and the specific group characteristics.

2023 is full of challenges.
Together we will make it

