

# Tips for Successful Teaching of Stained Glass Techniques

by Diana Rubel-Pressley

## First Considerations

Being able to create beautiful windows does not always translate into having the skills to teach another artist to create that same quality of window. The Stained Glass Association of America can help artists to become successful teachers. The following tips will help you transition from artist to teacher of artists.

Ask yourself: *What is the real reason I am teaching this class?* A stained glass artist should never use teaching a class purely as a source of income when they are not able to get sufficient commissions for windows. Do you have a passion for teaching?

Put together a well-laid-out curriculum with lesson plans for each lesson. Attach your references, notes, or bibli-

ography/books list. Don't ask the students to do your work.

Consider what specific skills you intend to teach and the teaching method you will use to teach them; consider how much time you have to deliver each lesson and whether or not you can real-

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istically fit the material to be covered into the allotted time.

Don't be afraid to ask for advice; an experienced teacher can help you examine your lesson plans and look for weaknesses. Show your lesson plan to a college instructor or a high school teacher.

It is important to take the time to design a student/teacher contract and individualize it for each student so that it includes specific objectives for that student. Clarify any additional costs/fees before the students arrive. Clarify housing conditions and arrangements, to include who will host the student. Be sure that students know what supplies

and materials they should bring with them to class. Co-sign with each student.

Put together a well-thought-out business and customer service plan. Ask yourself:

- What is your refund policy for students who are not satisfied with your course?
- Who do you want to teach? Do you desire only teaching males, single females, middle-age or second-career people? Interview each student on the phone before you enroll them. If that student's religion/career/culture does not fit your style, avoid a potential conflict and dissatisfied customer; do not enroll that person.
- Are you physically well and mentally able to teach?
- What will it cost to teach your subject?
- What will you charge for your knowledge and what information are you going to sell the students (adults from all backgrounds and professions)?

## Teaching

Realize that not everyone will perform at the same level. Have a plan to assist students who are not performing up to your standards.

When you tell a student to redo a project, be careful that you clearly identify what the student needs to do differently. Mark the first version clearly for later comparison. When you come back to see the second version, reinforce the progress that student has made, and identify any further changes needed, in an encouraging way.

Important issues to consider when correcting a student include: You should be prepared to deal with disagreements proactively in a positive yet respectful



way. Do not show disrespect to students in front of others when you correct them.

Do not encourage other students to disagree with the student who is not seeing things your way. If you feel the need to reinforce your position by building a coalition, there is a good chance that your position is not as solid as it should be. It is important to maintain harmony in the classroom and encourage mutual respect among the students, both because this will create a positive learning environment for the students, and also because doing otherwise will negatively impact your reputation as a teacher.

Remember always to respect the student as a customer who may bring you future business (by either returning or referring other artists to you). You never know when a student is considering you for a commission to make windows for their church or a loved one (alienating them may lose you \$20,000-\$200,000).

### ***Housing and After-Hours Issues***

Housing standards vary greatly among artists. Adults may want their own room at the end of the day. Many people do not share bathrooms well. Don't force others to live the way you do. Do not ask students to spend money they did not plan to spend. Be very clear on the standards of the accommodations.

Consider safety measures to minimize risk to you and your out-of-town students who are living away from home. Are you placing the students in safe, clean, and healthy living conditions? Are they approved by the health department?

Insure that any guest hosts you select are clear on the type of student they will be hosting (race, sex, culture, religion, diet, or other personal preferences). Avoid the perception that students may feel pressured to associate



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with other students or hosts who may not have similar values or cultural preferences.

Don't put students in the position of giving each other rides, especially after alcohol is consumed. There may be liability associated with putting students in vehicles they do not own.

If you live in an isolated area, please rethink whether you should be teaching classes there. The risks may outweigh the benefits.

### ***Tips for Success***

*Set your studio up for learning, not to display your accomplishments.*

Safety should always be a primary concern. Do not allow students to bring food into your studio. Do not serve meals in your studio.

Be sure that there is adequate light and table space for all students; be sure that the environment is comfortable and conducive to learning.

If there are specific classroom rules, be sure that they are prominently posted and understood by all.

### ***Conclusion***

Not everyone is cut out to teach; no matter how much a person may know about stained glass or how great his accomplishments might be, these alone will not make a successful teacher. Teaching requires patience, understanding, knowledge, and a desire to equip your students for success.

There is no way to guarantee success as a teacher; however, with planning and consideration, and by actively working to prevent problems before they happen, you can dramatically improve your chances of succeeding as a teacher.