

AUTHOR: Barbara Davis and Gary Bloom

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If you are like most California school administrators, you have started this school year with at least a few new teachers on your staff. You've spent many hours, usually over the early summer months, recruiting and selecting the best possible candidates from the dwindling teacher candidate pool. You've spent long days in August meeting with these new teachers and providing them with the tools that -- you hope -- will ensure their success.

Most of your new teachers are beginners, and many may not have benefited from university teacher preparation programs. As the fall months progress, you see these new teachers experiencing a sense of overwhelm: Their learning curve can be compared to climbing Mt. Everest. You want to help. Your frustration and anxiety (and yes, guilt) levels rise. What can you do?

These experiences are only a preview of what is to come in the area of teacher training, recruitment and retention. It is estimated that California will need at least 225,000 new teachers over the next 10 years, as enrollment grows and our aging work force moves into retirement. Currently, about 22 percent of classroom teachers are not properly trained or credentialed for their positions. Meanwhile, about half of the teaching workforce leaves the profession within five to seven years of practice.

These data, exacerbated by class size reduction, have brought renewed attention to the needs for -- and the needs of -- new teachers in California. We are facing a teacher shortage of crisis proportions. At the state and national levels, steps are being taken to increase the pool of qualified teachers. At the site level, we have an obligation to do all that is in our power to ensure that new teachers are successful in meeting the needs of their students, and that those who are competent remain in the profession.

So what can you do? In this article, we briefly present some suggested steps you should consider taking in supporting new members of your teaching staff.

1 REMEMBER WHAT BEING A NEW TEACHER IS ALL ABOUT.

Even the best teacher training program does not fully prepare new professionals for the daunting responsibilities that come with a full-time teaching position. First-year teachers typically experience an emotional roller coaster that begins in anxious anticipation, and cycles through survival, disillusionment and -- with luck and adequate support -- rejuvenation and reflection.

For many of us, our first years of teaching were the most stressful years of our professional lives. Grounded in a place of empathy and support for new teachers, site administrators can help new teachers to survive and thrive through these difficult and often lonely times.

2 BUILD ASSIGNMENTS WITH NEW TEACHERS IN MIND.

It has often been the practice of schools that new teachers receive the most difficult assignments. Imagine a hospital where senior surgeons confine their work to tonsillectomies and where new residents are marched off, alone, to the operating theatre to perform brain surgery. We do the equivalent when we assign new secondary teachers multiple preps and remedial classes, while senior faculty teach five periods of honors, or when we assign the new male elementary teacher all of the second grade rowdies because "men are good with discipline."

Experienced teachers should receive the most difficult assignments, and new teachers should receive less difficult assignments, fewer adjunct duties and high levels of support. Preferably, new teachers should be assigned in areas in which they have student teaching experience. Schools should have policies and

procedures in place to these ends.

3 PROVIDE NEW TEACHERS WITH CURRICULUM GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Many new teachers report that they receive little or no guidance in relation to what they are expected to teach and how they are expected to teach it. Every school should have grade level and/or course standards in place, and adopted and available teaching materials and assessments. It is critical that every school provide new teachers with data describing the academic achievement of its pupils and their specific level of preparation. No new teacher can be expected to do an adequate job in a school where these elements are not in place.

Most schools in California have come a long way in this area. School curricula are guided by state Frameworks and state and local standards. Classrooms are well equipped with basal materials that support the Frameworks. Schools that have these foundation elements in place are schools that make it easy for new teachers to succeed.

4 PROVIDE NEW TEACHERS WITH SYSTEMATIC ORIENTATION.

In the mad scramble that comes at the beginning of a school year, it's easy to send new teachers off into the world with the assumption that they'll manage to "figure things out." In fact, the need to master the basic logistics of a new job (Where do the kids line up? How do I order chalk? How do I handle discipline problems? Where are last year's reading results?) confront new teachers at the same time that they are often feeling overwhelmed by the basic demands of a room full of kids and the parents that come with them.

Set up an organized orientation program for new teachers that covers school curricula, policies and procedures and relevant district matters. Many schools have developed pre-service orientation programs and buddy systems that address these needs. A staff handbook can be very helpful to new teachers (and can't hurt veteran teachers, either).

New teachers need to be oriented to the school community, and the school community needs to be oriented to the new teacher. Find ways to integrate new teachers into the teaching staff, the site council and the school community. Do so in ways that allow new teachers to showcase their strengths, and that don't pile on added responsibilities. New teachers who are fully accepted and fully integrated into the school community and culture thrive.

5 BUILD A SCHOOL CULTURE THAT IS COLLEGIAL.

Teachers in the United States typically work in isolation, with few opportunities for professional dialogue or collaboration. Teachers rarely have the opportunity to observe one another, to discuss professional practice, to problem solve and plan together. A typical teacher may never observe another teacher after he/she has completed student teaching. It is not unusual for a new teacher to teach for an entire year and have no professional visits other than the required formal observation conducted by the principal.

Linda Darling-Hammond, in her recent book "The Right to Learn," quotes a high school teacher who has taught for 25 years. "I have taught 20,000 classes; I have been 'evaluated' 30 times; but I have never seen another teacher teach."

Create opportunities for new teachers to become part of collegial relationships and teams by designing time and processes for collaborative planning, grade-level meetings, peer coaching and action research.

New teachers struggle in schools that are characterized by a culture of closed classroom doors and teachers who function as "independent contractors." They thrive in schools where open, collaborative professional practice is the norm.

6 SUPPORT ONGOING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH FOR NEW TEACHERS.

A teaching credential is a license to learn, as well as a license to teach. New teachers need help identifying the most appropriate and productive staff development opportunities. New teachers are often

faced with a confusing menu of inservice options, and overwhelmed by the demands of the classroom. You can help the new teacher to focus his/her professional growth activities, and can assure the new teacher that it is OK not to participate in every offering out there.

Be particularly attentive to the time and energy needs of new teachers, who are often functioning on the edge of exhaustion (and afraid to admit it to their supervisors and colleagues). New teachers require staff development that is responsive to their classroom teaching needs. This means that inservice is best when it is relevant to day-to-day practices. To the largest extent possible, it should not make extraordinary new time demands.

7 BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS.

Even the most experienced and accomplished teachers are often quite insecure about their craft. This is because teaching is an art that is never mastered, since there is always room for improvement in even the most polished lesson. The best new teachers, those who are willing to observe and reflect upon their own shortcomings, may need the most reassurance and support.

New teachers need to know what is expected of them, in terms of classroom performance, participation in staff and extracurricular duties, and in every other aspect of the job. They need to know what kinds of support to expect, and not to expect. They need to have a clear understanding of the evaluation process and where they stand in that process.

These topics should be discussed one on one with new teachers regularly. Make it a point to drop in to the classrooms of new teachers often enough to get a clear picture of what is going on, and often enough so that your presence is not a special event. This doesn't have to be a burdensome practice. A weekly five-minute drop-in followed by a brief note is enough to build sense of ongoing connection between the new teacher and the supervisor.

8 SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BTSA PROGRAM.

If your district does not participate in a Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program yet, it almost certainly will soon. BTSA programs, funded by the state with some district support, are designed to support the successful "induction" of teachers in their first two years of service. While models vary, they all share some common characteristics:

- * They pair new teachers with "support providers" who provide intensive, individualized support and assistance to each beginning teacher.
- * Each new teacher develops an Individualized Induction Plan (IIP) based upon an ongoing assessment of the beginning teacher's development.
- * The IIP and the ongoing process of coaching and support is based upon the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, adopted by the California Department of Education and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

BTSA is a tremendous asset for both the new teacher and his or her site administrator. BTSA provides levels of support and assistance to new teachers that principals and other school staff members have typically been unable to muster. BTSA is counter-productive, however, if it serves to allow the site administrator to withdraw from his or her relationship with the new teacher. BTSA is a powerful tool for school leaders, but it demands their involvement. Among other things, site administrators at BTSA schools should be prepared to:

- * Participate in the state-developed BTSA Site Administrators Training, or its equivalent, a program designed to assist site administrators in creating a setting in which new teachers and the BTSA model can succeed.
- * Understand the role of the BTSA support provider and respect confidentiality between the support provider and the beginning teacher.
- * Work closely with the support provider and with the new teacher to provide appropriate guidance,

orientation and resources, and to ensure that site and district staff development, curriculum planning and evaluation processes don't conflict with BTSA. BTSA and site and district resources and processes should be synergistic.

Few aspects of school administration can be more important or more satisfying than nurturing and mentoring new members of our professional community. Few endeavors have greater payoffs in transforming school culture and increasing student achievement.

ADDED MATERIAL

Barbara Davis is assistant director of the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Gary Bloom is associate director of the New Teacher Center, which provides technical assistance, training, conducts research and provides leadership in the area of teacher induction. For more information, call (831) 459-4323.

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