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A guide for first year middle school teachers

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A GUIDE FOR FIRST YEAR
MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

MASTER'S THESIS

Submitted to the Department of Teacher Education,
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

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Official Advisor

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose for the Study

Teaching may well be one of the most complex professions to master, and the first year of teaching may be the most difficult. The first year of teaching is the most critical to the success of the professional life of a teacher and also the most demanding (Smith, 1993). When a teacher begins his first year of teaching, he is placed into complex situations with no organized support system. Also, first year teachers are expected to immediately perform the same duties as a veteran teacher.

The author believes that developing a guide for first year middle school teachers to help them through one of their most demanding years of teaching is important. The first reason a guide is important is because many times teacher education programs and student teaching may not have prepared new teachers how to operate a well-managed classroom. Student teaching tries to prepare the new teacher to "learn the ropes," but student teaching can not possibly prepare new teachers for every aspect of a teaching career.

There are many unwritten rules that the teacher is left to learn on his own. Each school system has specific procedures that must be followed. There may be specific grading methods or ways of handling student illnesses. The use of audio-visual equipment may have to be scheduled. There may be certain discipline techniques that are permitted or prohibited. These are only a few examples of the many procedures that teachers must be aware of in order to have a successful first year of teaching.

Along with many procedures, beginning teachers may face problems as they make the difficult transition from being a student to being an instructor. Many teachers do not receive sufficient preparation for this difficult transition into their own classroom and are overwhelmed by their job requirements (Boynton, Geronimo, and Gustafson, 1985). A guide could help them learn some of their responsibilities.

The second reason the author believes that a guide is necessary is because there is a high rate of teacher turnover. Unfortunately, because teaching is such a demanding profession, many teachers end up leaving the teaching profession. An estimated thirty percent of beginning teachers leave the profession during their first two years (Cole, 1994). According to Varah (1986) approximately fifty percent of teachers leave the profession within five years. A guide could help teachers get off to a good start and keep them in the teaching profession.

The third reason for writing a guide is because teachers are expected to perform in a new teaching position, with no on the job training period. In the business profession, when new employees begin a job, they are usually given a training period in which to learn their new position and assigned a mentor that works along with them to answer any questions they might have. This usually continues until the employee feels comfortable with his new position. After an education major has graduated from college, he is placed in a classroom and is usually isolated from other teachers. Many times these teachers are left to "learn the ropes" without help from others. Many teachers may end up leaving their profession because they must assume all of the responsibilities of a veteran teacher on their first day of employment. In this guide the author discusses an induction or mentoring program that may be in place in some school districts to help to introduce beginning teachers to the classroom.

In order to assist new teachers in getting a successful start to the most difficult year of their career, the writer offers some written procedures and helpful hints. The author discusses how induction programs or mentor teachers can help to make the new teacher's transition into the classroom easier. A guide for beginning middle school teachers that outlines some of the specific school system procedures might allow new teachers to be more comfortable with school policies and devote their time to more important activities, such as planning lessons.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to design a guide of classroom procedures for first year middle school teachers.

Definition of Terms

Beginning teacher is a person who is experiencing his first employment as a teacher.

Induction program is a program designed to successfully establish a beginning teacher in a new teaching environment.

Mentor is an experienced teacher acting as a support person for a beginning teacher.

Veteran teacher is a teacher who has three or more years of teaching experience.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter the review of the literature is presented. It is divided into the following sections: problems faced by beginning teachers and tips for a beginning teacher's successful transition to the classroom.

Problems Faced by Beginning Teachers

Beginning teachers face many difficulties in their first year of teaching. Deal and Chatman (1989) discussed the problems that they feel are prominent. They are: working in isolation; learning that principals and colleagues are rarely available to help individual teachers "learn the ropes"; learning that teaching is primarily a self-directed activity; and realizing that college courses may not have prepared them for day-to-day teaching activities. These are just some of the problems they believe a beginning teacher may face and might cause him to leave the profession.

Veenman (1984) reviewed eighty-three studies since 1960 on the perceived problems of beginning teachers in their first year. He discovered eight problems that were faced most often by beginning teachers. These problems in rank order included maintaining classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing students' work, establishing relationships with parents, planning for the school day, working with inadequate teaching supplies, and dealing with problems of individual students.

Varah, Theune, and Parker (1986) reported on other research that examines the difficulties of new teachers at selected times during the first year of teaching. They found that the main concern of new teachers is how to handle discipline. In addition, they determined that beginning teachers had problems with administrative approval. For example, many new teachers felt extreme stress when the principal came in to observe their teaching. Another problem was how to communicate with other teachers in the school social setting.

Ryan, as cited in Varah, Theune, and Parker (1986), identified several problem areas for new teachers. These areas included personal life adjustment; teachers' expectations and perceptions of teaching; the strains of daily interactions; and the teaching assignment itself. They concluded that the more problems a beginning teacher encounters, the more likely he may be to leave the profession.

Beginning teachers face many concerns and problems as they make the difficult transition from being a student to being a teacher. According to the literature reviewed, many teachers end up exiting the profession because of these difficulties. In order to retain the best teachers, there must be some types of solutions to the problems already discussed. Different authors' suggestions or tips are reviewed on how to make the first year of teaching successful.

Tips for a Beginning Teacher's Successful Transition to the Classroom

Authors suggest various tips for beginning teachers' successful transition to the classroom in order to help them become successful and professional teachers. Armstrong (1993), a veteran teacher, discussed her twelve commandments for new teachers. They are as follows: pace yourself, provide your students with options, be ready to justify your teaching to your students, use the Socratic method, do not stop discussion in order to cover a lesson plan, listen to veteran teachers, begin parent conferences on a positive note, do not try to solve all of your students' problems, do not insult your students' intelligence, bring your principal solutions rather than problems, and do not become discouraged. By following this advice, Armstrong (1993) believes that the teaching profession will offer new teachers joy and satisfaction.

Another tip for making a successful transition to the classroom involves establishing the proper climate during the first week of school. Wong (1991) talked about why a teacher needs to succeed during the first week of school. He believes that "student achievement at the end of the year is directly related to the degree to which the teacher establishes good control of the classroom procedures in the very first week of the

school year." He discussed many tips a teacher can use the first week of school in order to be effective.

Wong (1991) stated that the effective teacher starts the class immediately with an assignment, not with roll taking. Once the students are all on task then the teacher should take attendance. The students do not need to be involved in the roll taking process. This wastes five or more minutes of student learning time. By having an assignment posted for the students each day, they should be able to enter the classroom and begin work immediately.

Wong (1991) also talked about setting procedures during the first week of school so that they become routine. One example he used is how to quiet a class in fifteen seconds or less. The teacher should choose some type of signal, for example, a bell. When the students hear the bell, they should freeze; turn and face the teacher; and be ready for instruction. After students have rehearsed this and the teacher has reinforced it, this should become a routine.

According to Wong (1991) classroom rules should be made very clear the first week. He believes that there are two types of rules: general and specific. General rules are encompassing and cover a wide variety of behaviors. For example, students should respect others and keep the room clean. Specific rules cover only one behavior. Students should arrive to class on time or students should listen to instructions are a few examples. Wong (1991) feels that specific rules are better for the beginning teacher because a teacher can always move from specific to general rules during the school year. Wong (1991) also stated that all rules should be stated in the positive and be concerned only with behavior, not academics.

Boynton and others (1986) offered a variety of tips and procedures for classroom management in a thorough "Survival Guide." They believe that the first week of school in the classroom seems to set the climate for the remaining portion of the entire year.

These tips are broken down into four categories: classroom management, classroom discipline, instruction, and professionalism.

The first category is classroom management. Boynton (1986) stated that on the first day of school, the teacher should hand the students an explanation sheet. This should include information about classroom procedures, disciplinary expectations, and course requirements. This should be thoroughly discussed with the students. The rules should also be explained on the first day of school. They should be posted in clear view in dark print on a bulletin board as a constant reminder to the students. These rules should also be limited in number, and the teacher must be consistent in enforcing these rules.

Another tip Boynton (1986) suggested for effective classroom management is that the teacher should be in the classroom before the students arrive. The class should begin as soon as the tardy bell rings. The first few minutes of the class period are critical to the successful management of the classroom that day, just as the first week of school is critical to the management of the classroom for the rest of the year.

Boynton (1986) offered another tip to ensure the successful management of the classroom. He stated that the teacher should move about the classroom. In this manner, potential problems can be extinguished before they start. Boynton (1986) agrees with Wong (1991) that a teacher should provide exercises for the students during the first few minutes of class time. This should settle down the class and allow the teacher to take roll. An example may be to have a geography question written on the board for the students to complete when they first enter the classroom.

Another tip that Boynton (1986) proposed for successful classroom management is that the teacher should avoid being intimidated by the students. The teacher should be confident in stating classroom procedures and routines. These routines should be non disruptive. The teacher can ensure this by making students aware of classroom routines.

Interruptions can be held to a minimum when students know to sharpen pencils at the beginning of class or to throw garbage out at the end of class.

Another classroom management tip that Boynton (1986) suggested is that students should be aware of how to make up any work they missed while they were absent. For example, the teacher could have a calendar labeled with the specifics of what was done in class each day, along with the homework assignment. These assignments should be kept in a labeled basket that the students can go to when they return to school after an absence. This places some of the responsibility in the students' hands.

Boynton (1986) discussed another tip for making a successful transition to the classroom that has to do with classroom discipline. He offered ideas to handle problems that may occur. Boynton (1986) feels that discipline problems should be addressed quickly, but the teacher must also be compassionate, understanding, fair, and consistent when handling discipline problems. Boynton (1986) stressed that it is unfair to punish the whole class for the behavior of a few students. The teacher should also avoid using sarcasm or ridicule as a discipline method. This could hurt the student emotionally and not be appreciated by the parents.

Boynton (1986) outlined other tips for beginning teachers on making a successful transition to the classroom. These are tips for beginning teachers on how to handle instruction. These tips included: preparing detailed lesson plans, having back-up plans prepared in case a lesson does not go as planned, knowing the subject matter being taught, testing for understanding rather than to show how tough a teacher's class is, varying the pace of lessons, having all necessary audio-visual equipment organized and ready to use, reviewing lessons and quizzes periodically to make sure that the students are retaining what the teacher has taught them, and supporting students by believing that they are all capable of learning.

The last classroom management tip that Boynton (1986) discussed is professionalism. He offered the new teacher many suggestions on how to be a

professional teacher. These included: dressing as a professional, handing out work to the students that has been carefully prepared to avoid misspelled words or other errors, taking advice from respected veteran teachers, being considerate to custodians and clerical staff, being a friendly and positive teacher by not complaining, being flexible, and keeping personal problems outside of the classroom. These are just a sampling of Boynton's survival guidelines on how to be a professional teacher.

Ralph (1993) is another author who suggested various tips for beginning teachers' effective transition to the classroom. These suggestions deal with how to become successful and professional educators. Ralph (1993) believes that the first week of school is extremely important for effective classroom management. He stated that "the research demonstrates that, prior to and as soon as they meet a new group of students, experienced teachers plan and implement specific management principles by engaging in three basic processes." The three processes of this effective classroom strategy included proactive pre-planning, deliberate introduction, and immediate assertiveness.

In the pre-planning process, Ralph (1993) offered tips which state that effective teachers should develop specific classroom rules and procedures before meeting a new class. These rules should be few in number, stated in specific terms, and state the desired student behavior. The teacher should think about how he or she would like the students to act and anticipate how the classroom will be run. All of this should be done before the students come to class on the first day of school.

The second process Ralph (1993) discussed is deliberate introduction. This is when professional teachers clearly explain the rules and begin to consistently enforce them. Ralph offered beginning teachers the tip that they must continually reteach, review, and rehearse the rules, because students may forget. Ralph (1993) believes that this should be done in an objective and pleasant manner. There is no need to be rigid and inflexible. When the teacher enforces rules, each situation must be individually analyzed.

The third process that Ralph (1993) feels is necessary to maintain a well run classroom is immediate assertiveness. He gave the tip that the teachers should display an "in charge" yet approachable attitude toward students when establishing their authority. Ralph (1993) believes that this should include using the correct tone of voice, establishing eye contact, and being enthusiastic. The teacher should also wait to begin instruction until he has the attention of all of the students. These three processes included tips that can help beginning teachers to establish and maintain an effectively managed classroom.

Another tip suggested for a beginning teacher to have a successful transition to the classroom is to participate in an induction program if one is available. Many of the difficulties associated with the first year of teaching could be avoided if some type of induction program were in place to introduce the beginning teacher to teaching. Creating a system of induction whereby new teachers are nurtured and supported seems to be a reasonable approach to solving the problems inherent in the beginning teacher's job. The author describes an induction program and discusses why it is an important tip for a new teacher to take part in an induction program.

Some school districts do have an induction program in place to introduce beginning teachers to teaching. An induction program is usually a formal or planned program that offers guidance and support to beginning teachers (Varah, Theune, and Parker, 1986). In order to better understand the topic being presented, the terms "induction program" and "mentor" are described.

The induction program is a program in which a beginning teacher is placed in a classroom situation after being assigned an experienced or veteran teacher to help with the responsibilities of teaching. Schlechty, as cited by Varah (1986), stated that the purpose of induction is "to develop in new members of an occupation those skills, forms of knowledge, attitudes and values that are necessary to effectively carry out their

occupational roles." Eye, as cited by Varah (1986), defined induction "as assisting new teachers in adjusting to a new teaching environment."

Just as the term "induction program" has many interpretations, so does the term "mentor." In education, a mentor is usually an experienced teacher who is assigned to a beginning teacher to offer regular support and advice (Deal and Chatman, 1989). His function is to orient the newcomer to the ways and traditions of the school and to help him develop effective teaching techniques and classroom management skills. Instead of leaving new teachers on their own to resort to trial and error techniques, the mentor teacher can use his experiences and knowledge to guide the beginner, so that the new teacher does not end up leaving the teaching profession.

An induction program is an important tip for a beginning teacher's successful transition to the classroom. A beginning teacher's introduction to teaching should include some type of induction program and/or an assignment of a mentor teacher because these have been proven effective ways to develop an excellent staff and to reduce the dropout rate of new teachers (Varah, Theune, and Parker, 1986). Varah (1986) stated that the lack of appropriate induction is the major cause of teachers leaving the profession during their first few years of teaching. If they follow the tip to take part in an induction program this may not happen.

Unfortunately, it seems as if some of the most promising teachers are the first to leave the profession. According to the 1984 Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Task Force Report on Teaching and Teacher Education, the most studious teachers tend to be the first to leave the teaching profession. Almost fifty-percent of new teachers leave the teaching profession during the first five years (Varah, Theune, and Parker, 1986). The best beginning teachers need to be retained in the teaching profession and by taking part in a successful induction program, beginning teachers are more likely to stay in the profession (Huling-Austin, 1986).

Varah, Theune, and Parker (1986) offered beginning teachers another tip on why they should participate in an induction program. They conducted a study to determine the effect of induction programs on teacher turnover rates. They concluded that induction programs are an effective means of strengthening a beginning teacher's performance. They also carried out numerous studies that suggest that the lack of extensive teacher induction programs is the main reason why teachers are leaving the profession in their first three years (Smith, 1993). In an attempt to prevent some of the best teachers from leaving the profession, many school districts have developed some type of induction program for new teachers.

In conclusion, the tip that a beginning teacher take part in an induction program in order for him to have a successful transition to the classroom is important. The main objective of an induction program is to make a new teacher's transition into the classroom successful. A successful transition means that the new teacher becomes an effective teacher and wants to stay in the teaching profession.

This objective can also be met by the beginning teacher following another tip. This tip is to find an experienced teacher or mentor to help the beginning teacher be a success in the classroom. Some school districts have a mentor program in place where the beginning teacher is assigned an experienced mentor teacher. If a school does not have this program in place, it is a good idea for the new teacher to find an experienced teacher to help him. The mentor can enable the beginning teacher to make a successful transition to the classroom.

There are many reasons why the beginning teacher should follow the tip of finding a mentor teacher to help him make a successful transition to the classroom. Research findings supported by individual studies (Deal and Chatman, 1989; Gray and Gray, 1986; Huffman and Leak, 1986; Smith, 1993; Varah, Theune, and Parker, 1986) soundly endorse the mentor role as being an important element in the induction process. Because the mentor plays such a meaningful role in the induction program, the author

reviews findings of individual studies that focus on the characteristics and duties of an effective mentor teacher in the induction program.

Most studies that the author reviews describe the characteristics of an induction program in the same manner. Huffman and Leak (1986) and Varah, Theune, and Parker (1986) supported a team concept in the development of an induction program. The team usually consisted of the beginning teacher, the assigned mentor, and the building principal. The most critical role is that of the mentor. The mentor should teach the same grade level and subject matter as the beginning teacher because this will help the beginning teacher to have a successful transition to the classroom.

Characteristics or qualifications of the mentor teacher are also important in order to help the new teacher have a successful transition to the classroom. Because the mentor is the key person in the induction program, the mentor should be carefully selected. Varah, Theune, and Parker (1986) suggested that the mentor be a volunteer and not be appointed. The mentor should also have at least three to five years of teaching experience and have a thorough understanding of the school and the curriculum. Other qualifications for the position may include a dedication to teaching and a willingness to take on additional responsibilities.

The position of mentor also carries with it many responsibilities or duties in order to help the beginning teacher make an effective transition to the classroom. The mentor must introduce the new teacher to the education setting by helping the beginning teacher plan for teaching, prepare his room, and manage student discipline. In addition, the mentor teacher should complete some type of training session in which he learns how to best assist the beginning teacher with any problems he might have. There should also be some type of periodic training in addition to the initial training (Varah, Theune, and Parker, 1986).

According to Varah, Theune, and Parker (1986), other duties of the mentor teacher to help make the beginning teacher's transition to the classroom a success may

include meeting with the beginning teacher at a planned conference time to discuss any problems, providing the new teacher encouragement and reassurance, and evaluating the beginning teacher in the teaching process. This evaluation should be non-threatening and help the new teacher to assess when learning is taking place and determine how to enhance the learning process.

Smith (1993) stated that numerous other factors contribute to the success of the mentor teacher in helping to make the beginning teacher's transition to the classroom successful. He believes that there must be collegiality between the mentors and the mentees, as well as between the mentors. He agrees with Varah, Theune, and Parker (1986) that the mentor must go through some type of training program. He also discussed that the mentee must feel free to go to the mentor without being evaluated.

Providing the beginning teacher with support may well be one of the most important duties of the mentor teacher in making the beginning teacher's transition to the classroom successful. Odell, as cited in Smith (1993), identified seven categories where mentor teachers should offer support to their beginning teachers. She gathered data from elementary schools from actual mentor teachers on the types of support that they were actually giving to mentees. These areas of support included: information about the school district, resources/materials, instructional, emotional, management, environment, and demonstration teaching. Odell found that if the mentors supported beginning teachers in these areas then the induction program had a good chance for success.

Another duty of the mentor teacher that many researchers agree is necessary to make the beginning teacher have an effective transition to the classroom is that the mentor develop a successful mentor-beginner relationship. A review of this literature pertaining to mentoring was carried out by Gray and Gray as cited in Smith (1993). They developed a five-level model of functions that can help to bring success to the mentor/mentee relationship. Level one consists of the mentor telling the beginning teacher what to do after the mentor has received training in order to better help the new

teacher. At level two, the mentor acts as a role model and demonstrates the proper techniques, while allowing the beginning teacher more freedom. The third level is when co-planning takes place. The mentor allows the beginner to make equal contributions when they are interacting. The mentor begins to give the beginning teacher responsibilities and offers guided practice in level four. The fifth level is where the mentee has self-direction. The beginning teacher is usually more confident and competent and may now function without the mentor's help. Gray and Gray (1993) feel that the mentor must be willing to give the new teacher an ever-increasing amount of responsibility.

Deal and Chatman (1989) focused their research on similar functions or duties that a mentor teacher must carry out to make the beginning teacher's transition to the classroom successful. The mentor's "function is to orient the newcomer to the ways and traditions of the district or school and to help them develop effective teaching techniques and classroom management skills" (Deal and Chatman, 1986). The mentor can offer the beginning teacher experience, support, and advice.

In conclusion, the tip that a beginning teacher take part in some type of induction program that includes a mentor teacher is an important one. By reviewing the current literature addressing many characteristics and duties of an effective mentor teacher in an induction program, the following conclusions have been drawn. In order to make an induction program successful, the mentor plays an important role. The mentor must have certain characteristics that will allow the mentor-beginner relationship to evolve. To be successful the mentor must carry out his own teaching duties as well as his mentor responsibilities. The mentor must also function as support person to help the beginning teacher with the many problems that he will face in his first year of teaching.

In order to help new teachers have a successful first year in the classroom, different authors' tips and suggestions for beginning teachers' successful transition to the classroom were reviewed and discussed.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Review of Journals

Articles in major journals dating from 1984 to the present were consulted. These included: Action in Teacher Education; Alberta Journal of Educational Research; Clearing House; Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance; Journal of Teacher Education; Middle School Journal; NASSP Bulletin; Principal; Review of Educational Research; and Teacher Education Quarterly. The articles consisted of information pertaining to problems that beginning teachers face and strategies for handling these problems.

Review of Books

A published book for teachers, Wong, H. (1991). The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher. Sunnyvale, CA: Harry K. Wong Publications, was reviewed for related content.

School Teacher Handbooks

Teacher handbooks were used to gather rules and regulations concerning the specific school systems involved. These handbooks included the Studebaker Middle School Teacher Handbook which was issued for the 1994-1995 school year and the Yorktown Elementary School Teacher Handbook which was issued for the 1996-1997 school year.

Board and School Policies

The board and school policies for the school system involved were studied in order to develop specific ideas concerning classroom procedures. The author reviewed the board and school policies from a school district in a mid-western state. The author studied policies concerning new teacher orientation; teacher schedules and duties; student attendance; lesson plans; courses of study; school rules; discipline procedures; home/school communications; parent/teacher conferences; open house; interim reports;

grade cards; teacher attendance; substitute plans; illness or injury of a student; and fire and tornado drill procedures.

Critique by Experts

An experienced teacher and principal were consulted for their opinions regarding the content to be covered in this handbook. The author informally interviewed a principal and a mentor teacher. The author asked them what they believed should be included in a guide for beginning school teachers. They suggested the topics which are included in Chapter IV of the guide. The author also asked the mentor teacher for feedback regarding the guide once it was completed. The mentor teacher offered the following suggestions such as including a section about the induction program and how to better explain the school rules and discipline procedures.

Interviews of Beginning and Experienced Middle School Teachers

Brief, informal, open-ended interviews were conducted to obtain the opinions of beginning and experienced teachers. Beginning teachers were consulted about the difficulties they faced during their first year of teaching. Experienced teachers were asked for suggestions to help beginning teachers make a smooth transition to the classroom. The author learned that beginning teachers believe that a guide outlining school procedures is a necessity. Experienced teachers suggested that a new teacher be assigned a mentor teacher to work closely with the first year teacher. They suggested that the mentor teacher check on the beginning teacher periodically to see if he has any questions or if he just needs someone to talk to about the pressures of being a first year teacher.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

GUIDE FOR BEGINNING MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

The following section is a guide for beginning middle school teachers that outlines specific school procedures that might otherwise be overlooked by new teachers. The intent of this guide is to provide new teachers with information to help them make a successful transition from being student teachers to being professional teachers. The intent is to provide a valuable resource guide to the basic organizational information that the beginning teacher may not be aware of when he begins his first teaching position.

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BEGINNING TEACHERS

New Teacher Orientation

Prior to the beginning of school many school districts hold a new teacher orientation. This may include a bus tour of the district as well as a luncheon. At the orientation the new teacher will be provided with important information. Some of this information may include, but not be limited to, a copy of the teacher's employment contract; a contract booklet; a copy of the school district's philosophy; a copy of the district's discipline policy; a copy of the district's grading and retention policy; notice of any inservice meetings that the teacher is required to attend; information about professional organizations; and information about medical and dental insurance.

Induction

Many schools now have some type of induction program in place to help teachers successfully complete their first year of teaching. An induction program is usually a planned program that offers beginning teachers support and guidance from an experienced teacher. An experienced teacher or mentor will be assigned to the new teacher to help him learn the procedures of the school and get him comfortable with his teaching responsibilities.

Induction programs will vary according to the school district. The goals of this program are to improve the performance of beginning teachers and to retain these teachers by making their first year a success. It is important as a new teacher to take advantage of this support system. It can make your first year of teaching extremely satisfying.

Facilities

It is important that the teacher be familiar with the school facilities. This will help you to locate supplies, equipment, certain personnel, and emergency exit routes. The new teacher should be given a map of the school and be taken on a guided tour before the first day of school.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Teacher Daily Schedule

The teacher should receive his schedule in the mail over the summer. This schedule will state the periods, times, and subjects to be taught. It will also include your lunch period, planning period, and any other classes that you are responsible for conducting. For example, you may be in charge of a study hall period or an activity period.

Extra Duties

In the middle school setting, teachers are usually responsible for some extra duties. These may include, but not be limited to, morning or afternoon bus duty; hall or locker bay duty; rest room duty; or bulletin board assignments. These duties should state the time you are responsible for reporting, the date, and the time your duty ends. It is important to be on time for these extra duties to show that you are a responsible teacher.

Attendance

The teacher is to take daily attendance and record it according to the established school procedures. The attendance should be recorded on the attendance form provided by the school and returned to the office as soon as possible in the morning. The teacher should find out if he is responsible for sending a student to the office with the form or if he should post it outside his door. The secretary will provide a daily attendance report. If at the end of the day your attendance does not match the daily print-out you should notify the office and take the necessary measures.

The teacher should also keep an attendance record for himself to record tardies, absences, and early dismissals. This will keep the teacher informed if a student is missing a large number of school days. It will also provide you with your own record in case the attendance of a student is ever under scrutiny. After a certain number of days absent, the school district may require a doctor's note to excuse the student from school.

When the student returns to school, the teacher should request a note from home

stating why the student was absent. This note should be sent to the office along with the daily attendance. The teacher may then need to fill out an admit pass stating if the student's absence was excused or unexcused. This will allow other teachers that the student sees that day to take the necessary measures.

Usually the students are allowed the same number of days that they were absent to make-up any missed work. For example, if a student missed two days of school with an excused absence, then he should be allowed two days to make-up any missed work. If the absence was unexcused, then it is usually the teacher's discretion whether or not to allow the student to make-up the missed work.

Seating Charts

Seating charts should be included with your lesson plans. They should be kept visible and up-to-date in case the teacher is absent.

Lesson Plans

Teachers are required to create daily lesson plans based on the school district's course of study for each subject. These lesson plans should be kept visible at all times. The lesson plans are usually required to be recorded on a school provided form and handed in to the principal on a weekly basis. The plans are usually due the Friday before the week of the scheduled plans.

The plans should include the teacher's name, grade, dates, and periods. They should also state the objectives, detailed plans on how each lesson is to be presented, materials to be used, text sources to be utilized, work to be assigned, and the method of evaluation. The teacher may also be required by the school district to refer to the sections of the course of study that his lesson plans cover.

Course of Study

The course of study or curriculum guide is developed by each school district. Each subject area is listed along with the grade. The main objective is listed including specific student objectives. Instructional strategies and materials may be suggested on

how to best meet the objectives. It is important to be familiar with these objectives and to refer to them when preparing lesson plans because they contain the material to be taught at each grade level in each subject area. The teacher is responsible for covering all of the objectives listed in the course of study. The school district usually tries to adopt a textbook to help you meet these objectives. If the textbook does not cover a required objective in the course of study, the teacher is responsible for using supplemental material to meet the objective requirement.

Supplies

The teacher should be supplied with teacher manuals, texts for the students, and a course of study. When you hand out the texts to the students, you must record the book number and the condition of the text. This should be recorded on a school provided form and kept in a safe place until the end of the year when the teacher collects the student texts. You may be responsible for recording any damage and collecting money for damaged or lost books.

Materials such as chalk, tape, markers, etc. can usually be requested from one of the secretaries. You will probably need to fill out a supply request form and then return it to the appropriate person.

Maintenance Problem Procedures

There are maintenance people such as custodians that are in charge of the heating and ventilation, keeping the school clean, and fixing things in your classroom. They can also get you tables, desks, chairs, and garbage cans. The teacher probably needs to fill out a work order when help from the custodian is requested. You should treat these people with the same respect that you treat all other school personnel because they are the people who keep the school running.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

School Rules

Usually the school has rules that all of the students are expected to follow both in and out of the classroom. By the time students reach the middle school there is usually some type of handbook that contains the school rules. Teachers should give each student a copy of the student handbook on the first day of school. The rules should be read and discussed with the group. The children should then take the handbook home and go over it again with their parents. A form stating that the parents and students understand what is expected of them should be signed by all concerned parties and returned to the office. This will help to prevent parents or students saying that they were not aware of a school policy.

Discipline Procedures

The discipline of each student in the classroom is the teacher's responsibility. It is a good idea for each teacher to have class rules that address four general areas:

1. Listen to and follow directions.
2. Be prepared (pencil, paper, books, etc.).
3. Be on time.
4. Respect the rights of others.

These rules should be posted in the classroom; contain a list of positive consequences if the rules and expectations are followed; and contain a list of negative consequences to be implemented for not following the rules. The teacher should be firm and consistent when implementing classroom rules.

The teacher's discipline plan should include steps to be taken for misbehavior in the classroom before he refers the student to the office. Some consequences for the student's first through third offense may include a verbal reprimand, personal counseling, guidance counselor referral, intervention strategies such as moving seats, a writing assignment, a closed lunch, or an activity detention. By the fourth offense one of the

legal or custodial parents should be contacted either face to face or via telephone. By the fifth offense the student may then be referred to the office.

In cases of severe student behavior that require immediate disciplinary action, the student should be removed to the office after the first offense. This behavior may include fighting, cursing, damaging school property, intimidating other students, smoking, or taking drugs. The office will usually contact the parent and according to the behavior they may assign a detention, Saturday school, out-of-school suspension, or in extreme cases they may expel the student.

PARENT/TEACHER RELATIONS

Home/School Communications

Home/School communication is an essential part of the teacher's role in ensuring the growth and progress of a student academically and socially. Parents should be contacted by phone or letter at the first sign of an academic or social problem. By getting the parents involved many concerns can be extinguished before they develop into major problems.

When contacting the parent, there are phrases that you can use to get the conversation off to a good start. Then inform the parent of the situation by giving them examples of the situation. Explain to them the actions that have already been taken by the school and ask the parent for his help in curbing the situation. The teacher should be sure to follow up a few weeks later with a phone call or letter explaining any changes in the situation.

If the student is having problems completing homework, class work, or behaving satisfactorily in the classroom the teacher can use a check-up form to notify the parents of the student's daily or weekly progress.

It is also a good idea to contact parents acknowledging good behavior and academic progress. This will establish a good relationship with the parents and if a problem does arise it should be easier to deal with.

The teacher should also keep a record of any parent contact. This may be necessary to back yourself up if you eventually get the office involved in the problem. You should keep track of the time, date, who you spoke to, what was discussed, and what actions were decided upon by the teacher and the parent.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

The school district usually sets aside two days out of the school year for conferences. The first one is usually scheduled in the fall before the first report card is sent home and the second one is usually in the spring before the last grading period begins.

The conferences may take place in the evening or during the day depending upon the district's policy. Most schools have a sign up procedure for conferences. A letter can be sent home to the parent stating the times that the teacher is available for a conference. The parent then signs and returns a portion of the form with a response. If the parent would like a conference, he should include a time that would be convenient for him. The teacher should then schedule a ten to fifteen minute conference with each parent and send home a notice with the date and time that the parent should come in for a conference.

The teacher should place a few chairs out in the hall for the parents to sit on in case the conference schedule is delayed. The teacher should try to remain on schedule. If a problem requires further discussion, then another meeting should be scheduled.

The teacher should have a table set up in the classroom with chairs around it as a place to hold the conference. It is a good idea to have paper, pens, assignment sheets, grading policies, and classroom rules available for the parents.

The teacher should also be prepared with what he would like to discuss about the student. It helps to have a form filled out about each child with some positive comments and concerns, if any. An easy way to begin the conference is to ask the parent if he has any questions or concerns. If there is a problem that the parent does not bring up, then

the teacher should state the problem and the expectations, discuss what action is being taken at school, ask the parent if he has any suggestions on how he may help, and formulate some type of plan to resolve the problem. Once again, it is a good idea to keep a record of what was discussed and any future plans to solve the problem.

If the conference may be a difficult one because of previously experienced problems with the parents, have the principal, school psychologist, school guidance counselor, and/or team teachers attend the conference.

Open House

Open house is usually scheduled during the first month of school to enable the parents to meet the teacher, principal, and possibly tour the school. The evening that open house is held in the middle school, the parents usually follow a shortened version of their child's schedule. The teacher should be prepared to speak to groups of parents for about ten minute intervals. This gives the teacher an opportunity to introduce himself, explain grading procedures, discuss classroom expectations, display some examples of finished work or projects, and show the parents materials that will be utilized, such as the textbook or journals. This is not a time to discuss behavior or academic problems. If a parent brings up a concern at open house it is a good idea to schedule a conference at a later time.

GRADING PROCEDURES

Interim Reports

Interim reports are usually given to middle school students to report on the students' progress half way through each nine week grading period. They are given to the student to take home during the fifth week of each nine week period.

The interim report will vary according to the school district policy. The interim will usually have a place for the teacher's name, the student's name, the subject, and the parent's signature. Some interim reports will have a column that is divided into four quarters and rows of statements that describe student behaviors. Next to the rows of

comments, the teacher may place check marks next to any behavior that describes the student academically or socially. Some examples of statements may include: listens to and follows directions, lacks preparation, does not pay attention in class, has good attitude, is capable of doing better work, disturbs others in class, and is absent excessively.

The interim report usually includes five carbon copies so the teacher will need to press firmly when filling them out. The top copy is kept by the teacher, the last copy is handed out the first quarter, the fourth copy is handed out the second quarter and so on. You will need to check with the office to see if they require a copy of the interim report for the student's file.

It is up to the teacher's discretion if he would like them signed by the parents and returned. Many teachers just request the students with averages below a seventy percent to return the interim reports signed. A good incentive to get the students to return these reports may be to offer a reward for returning the signed form by a certain deadline.

Grade Cards

Grade cards are passed out in each of your class periods once every nine weeks. Once again these will vary according to district guidelines. The principal will notify the teachers in advance of the date when these are due to the office.

The grade cards should be filled out very carefully. Many school districts now have the report cards on scantron sheets. They are already printed with the teacher's name, student's name, the grade, and the class title. The teacher is only required to color in the circle next to the student's grade. These may be in either numerical or letter form depending on the school district. Some schools will also require the teacher to choose one or two statements that describe the student's behavior for that quarter.

The way that grades are recorded will depend on the school's policy concerning grades. Some school districts will mandate that the teacher hand in his grade book at the end of the year. Therefore, it is a good idea to keep the grades in a record book labeled

with the teacher's name and school year. Inside the grade book, the students' names should be listed alphabetically along with their identification numbers. The grade should be recorded next to the student's name along with the type of work from which the score was taken.

How many grades are recorded is usually up to the teacher's discretion. It is best to have at least one grade per week for each student. The type of grades should vary. For example, some grades should be from quizzes, tests, homework, papers, projects, or class work. Tests should probably be weighted more than the other types of grades.

Once the grades are recorded in the grade book, then the teacher may determine how he would like to average the grades. There are a variety of computer programs available that may be used for this purpose. The school may have a software package and computers available for the teachers to use. It makes the process of figuring out grades much easier. However, you should remember not to just keep a record of the grades on the computer. It is a good idea to keep the written grade book as a back up.

The teacher is usually required to give the student a final grade that is an average of the student's grades for the previous four quarters. You will need to check with the school's policy on averaging these grades. The way that these are averaged can make the difference between a student passing or failing your class.

TEACHER ATTENDANCE

Illness/Personal Days

Throughout the school year you may need to be absent. Teachers should have personal days and sick leave days. You should check your contract booklet to determine how many of these days are available and in what situations to use these days.

The teacher is usually aware ahead of time when he has to be absent for personal reasons. The principal should be notified as soon as possible when requesting the use of a personal day so that he can obtain a substitute for your classroom. Most schools will require a form to be filled out when requesting a personal day. The principal usually

signs this form and returns it to the teacher if the leave has been approved. In case of illness, the teacher should find out who needs to be contacted. Either the principal or the secretary should be notified as soon as possible. It is a good idea to keep the phone number available at home in case you get sick during the night. If you are going to be absent again the following day, the school should be notified before the end of the day. This will allow them to keep the same substitute in your classroom and give the students some continuity in instruction.

Substitute Teacher Plans

Preparing for a substitute is a lot of work. It is a good idea to have a substitute folder with all of the necessary information inside. The teacher should also write a letter to the substitute stating the procedures that are to be followed that day along with the time frame. In the letter it may be a good idea to explain the lesson plans in detail so that the substitute knows exactly what is expected of him.

The substitute folder should contain the daily schedule, class roster, attendance slips and procedures, detention slips, cut slips, seating charts, lesson plans, map of the school, emergency procedures, names of a helpful teacher and a few students, names of students that may be behavior problems, types of discipline techniques, and a list of what the students are allowed to do during recess or activity.

It is also helpful for the substitute if the teacher has the teacher manuals, materials to be used that day, and any worksheets needed to carry out the lesson plans in an easy to spot location. The substitute may have some extra time so it is a good idea to have extra lessons or worksheets available that he may use in addition to the lesson plans for that day.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Illness or Injury of a Student

If a student is taken ill or injured during the school day, the teacher should send the student to the clinic or notify the nurse and the office immediately depending on the

situation. Once the student is in the clinic the nurse will take the necessary actions and contact the parents if the child is to be sent home. The clinic can be a very busy place so the teacher should use his discretion when sending a student to the clinic.

At the beginning of the year the students are required to fill out emergency medical forms and return them to the office. These forms will state who is to be notified in case of illness or injury and if the student has any allergies. The nurse will usually supply the teachers with a listing of their students who have important medical information or allergies that the teacher needs to be aware of.

If a student is required to take medication during the school day, he should bring the medication along with a note from his doctor to the school nurse. The students are not allowed to take medication outside of the clinic and the teacher should never give the students any medications.

Drill Procedures

Fire Drills

Fire drills are usually required by state. The beginning teacher should determine the school's fire drill policy by checking with the principal. In front of the classroom there should be a laminated map of the school that diagrams the escape route for fire drills. The procedures for a fire drill and the escape route should be discussed and practiced during the first few days of school. It is also a good idea to discuss an alternate escape route just in case the primary route is blocked. Sometimes the principal will announce that a certain route is blocked, and you need to be prepared to lead your students to the nearest exit.

Some important things to remember during the fire drill are to bring your attendance list outside and call roll to make sure that all of your students are safely out of the building, have the last student close the classroom door, and make sure that the students are at least one hundred feet from the building.

Tornado Drills

A beginning teacher should check with the principal to determine the procedure for tornado drills in his school. In the event of a real tornado threat, it is imperative that the students be moved in an orderly fashion to a shelter area. To prevent panic and disorder, these drills will usually be practiced a few times during the school year. There should be a laminated poster in front of the classroom showing the route to the closest shelter area. The shelter area may be in the locker bays, cafeteria, hallways, or offices. The students need to be taught the procedures that they are required to follow when they arrive at the shelter area.

A beginning teacher should check with an authority to determine if windows and doors should remain closed or opened. If a tornado hits without warning, remain in your room and get under the desks. Students should assume a face-to-lap position.

When a tornado watch is in effect, it will usually be announced over the intercom system. All teachers on planning periods should monitor the skies until the watch has been canceled. If a tornado is sighted, the students must be moved as quickly as possible to the designated shelter areas. If a tornado warning is issued, the students will be taken to the shelter areas until the warning has been lifted.

PART V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This project included a thorough review of the literature pertaining to the beginning year teacher and problems that many of them may face. The articles reviewed pertained to these problems and suggested different tips to enable the new teacher to have a successful transition to the teaching profession.

The literature reviewed also discussed induction programs and the role of the mentor teacher in helping to make the first year of teaching a success for the beginning teacher.

As a result of the review of the literature, the author of this project determined a need for some type of culmination of procedures and policies for beginning school teachers. The Guide for Beginning Middle School Teachers was compiled to address this need. This guide was prepared in a format that details specific areas of concern for new teachers.

Conclusions

It has been previously stated that beginning teachers' concerns and needs have often been neglected during their initial year of teaching. Also, colleges and universities may not have prepared new teachers for a successful transition to the classroom. The new teacher may be isolated from his peers and feel overwhelmed at having to accept the responsibilities of a veteran teacher on his first day of employment.

These factors may contribute to the ever-increasing attrition of teachers from our profession. Formalized plans, such as induction programs aid the beginning teacher during this transition period, may increase our chance of retaining some of the "best" and the "brightest" teachers within our profession. This handbook is just a step in trying to make the transition for new teachers as smooth as possible.

Recommendations

Each school system should develop and adopt a formal program, such as an induction program, to retain beginning teachers in the teaching profession. Each new teacher should also be assigned a veteran teacher or "mentor" teacher who can guide the new teacher during his first year of teaching. School districts should also compile handbooks specific to each school that contain detailed organizational information that can be referenced by individual teachers.

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