



Preparing NEW Teachers to Meet the Learning Needs of Students

by Rhonda Renfro



As the summer break from the classroom challenges continues, it is time to reflect on how to best prepare novice and new teachers for the school year ahead. After hiring a teacher, a school district has an obligation to make every effort to assure the students assigned to the new teacher's classroom will have the best possible opportunity to learn and grow.

There are many factors that encourage new teachers to leave the classroom. Besides the usual culprits of low salary, extreme demands on time, frustration with the challenges of motivating students, there are factors that can and should be addressed by the district before the school year starts. Support before the school year prepares new hires or novice teachers for the challenges to face them and, perhaps, encourages the new teacher to stay as an effective classroom teacher and a contributing member of the professional community of the district.

According to Kendyll Stansbury and Joy Zimmerman in the WestEd publication [Designing Support for Beginning Teachers](#), *"A third of beginning teachers quit within their first three years on the job. We cannot stand for this kind of dropout rate among students, and we can no longer*

afford it in our teaching ranks. ... What lifelines can we offer so they will remain in the profession and develop into highly effective classroom educators?"

How can districts capitalize on the time available to make sure new teachers are ready for the challenges facing them?

In designing such an opportunity for your new teachers, there are considerations other schools or districts have added to their programs. The following list of priorities is compiled from recommendations and discussions from Susan Totaro and Mark Wise of West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District in New Jersey, Stansbury and Zimmerman from WestEd, David Goldblatt of SwingEducation, and new teacher orientation agendas prepared by Curriculum Leadership Institute Consultants.

1. Professional development orientation that emphasizes the district's vision for learning
2. Opportunities to collaborate with colleagues
3. Meet a wide variety of district stakeholders (including students)
4. Teachers experience being treated as the district expects students to be treated
5. Exposure to the expectations for student learning
6. How data are used in their classroom and in collaboration with colleagues
7. Procedural policies for classroom management
8. Available instructional resources and their intended use
9. Discussion of established district or school adopted and expected instructional strategies
10. District policies for curriculum development and implementation requirements
11. How and where to access the district curriculum and assessments
12. How to participate in feedback for curriculum improvement
13. Build "communities" of experienced colleagues for support and advice

A common mistake in "new teacher orientation" plans is to try to deliver as much information as possible for procedures that will occur throughout the year. While every district has its own structures for new teacher orientation, the cited authors all cautioned against packing the orientation time with deadlines and rules that can be communicated later in the year.

Clearly, a new teacher who has thoroughly interacted with the district's Vision and Mission and identified the district's learning expectations of all students starts the school year with a clear picture of how to best serve the students assigned to them!