



# A Principal's Guide to Teacher Induction

partnership  
leadership  
sharing  
encouragement  
wellness  
collaboration  
inspiration  
skill



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association

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PD-182 2015-08



The Alberta Teachers' Association

# A Principal's Guide to Teacher Induction



# Preface

Administrators play a key role in the success of a beginning teacher's first years of practice. The Association's recent five-year longitudinal study, *Teaching in the Early Years of Practice: A Five-Year Longitudinal Study* (2013), suggests that coordinated induction practices that help new teachers become long-term professional educators reduce early attrition rates. Furthermore, the study confirmed the need for administrator support at the school and district level for mentoring programs, and within the teacher induction process.

Prompted by field member requests for information on the role administrators should play in the induction process, this monograph fills a noticeable gap in the literature. Further, it provides information administrators can use when implementing a teacher induction program in their schools. Included are templates for teacher mentorship program applications, a beginning teacher orientation package, a principal's calendar to support teacher induction, as well as a list of actions principals can take to foster the conditions that further support beginning teachers.

Administrators can support a holistic approach to socialization into the profession through a pyramid of supports for beginning teachers. Administrators play multiple roles in the induction program, including culture builder, instructional leader, advocate and retainer. Understanding these various roles also enables administrators to develop a comprehensive and responsive mentoring program.

In addition, to ensure a beginning teacher's success, better understanding of the administrator's role in relation to a mentoring program, and of the distinction between this role and that of administrator as supervisor and evaluator, is essential. This document seeks to provide clarity in this regard.

This monograph is based on over two decades of collaborative work with ATA locals and districts across the province. The Association would like to acknowledge the contributions of district mentorship coordinators, school administrators, teacher mentors and beginning teachers who continue to devote time and energy to initiating and implementing successful mentorship programs.

Special thanks goes to Jacqueline Skytt, lead writer, and Françoise Ruban, PD staff officer, reviewer and consultant who collaborated in the development of this document; to Penny Harter, Sandra Bit and Lindsay Yakimyshyn, editors, and Erin Solano, graphic designer, who also helped prepare this report for publication.

The Association firmly believes that voluntary comprehensive mentorship programs that are appropriately funded, are based on current research, are designed for the ongoing professional growth of beginning teachers, constitute the participants' professional growth plan, are sponsored in collaboration with the Association and are supported by knowledgeable, compassionate administrators will contribute to the success of beginning teachers throughout their entire careers.

Gordon R Thomas  
Executive Secretary



# Introduction

The principal as administrator and instructional leader of the school plays a significant role in creating the conditions that will support beginning teachers to transition into the profession and have a successful year. In Alberta, more than 2,500 new teachers have applied for a statement of teacher qualifications for salary purposes each year since 2008. Roughly 51 per cent of new hires graduated from Alberta universities, 36 per cent were from out of the province and 12 per cent were from out of the country. As positive as these numbers seem, Alberta Education reported in 2012 there was a shortage of teachers in rural and remote school districts, a decline in the number of male teachers, difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers in some specialized fields, and an estimated attrition rate of 25 per cent among teachers within their first five years of practice (Alberta Education 2012). These data confirm that the public education workforce in Alberta is facing serious labour challenges.

**The first year of teaching should focus on creating the conditions and supports to enable beginning teachers to experience success, become effective teachers and launch their educational careers in a positive manner.**

This publication has been developed based on the belief that more can be done at the school level, and principals will work with their staff to support beginning teachers through the induction phase of their career. Research has shown that school administrators are most effective when this support is proactive and intentional. In a five-year study, Alberta beginning teachers reported that they received varying degrees of administrative support in their first year and emphasized that this support had a strong effect on them. As one teacher stated, “Administration is key. Support, feedback and the communication in each school affected my experience either positively or negatively” (ATA 2012, 21).

Beginning teachers are at a vulnerable place in their careers. They have just graduated from four or five years of university and are both excited and eager to put their learning into practice, but there is a lot yet to learn. As Bill Parcells, NFL head coach, said, “When you don’t know that you don’t know, it’s a lot different than when you do know that you don’t know.” The first year of teaching is filled with emotions, both positive and negative, but above all it should provide the conditions and supports to enable beginning teachers to experience success, become effective teachers and launch their educational careers in a positive manner. *A Principal’s Guide to Teacher Induction* is designed to help principals develop a plan and a network of school-based supports for the successful induction of the beginning teacher.





# Contents

- Teacher Induction..... 1
- The Principal’s Role in Teacher Induction ..... 9
- Mentorship.....19
- Principal’s Actions to Support Beginning Teachers.....33
- Supervision and Evaluation.....41
- Conclusion.....49
- References .....51
- Appendix A.....55
- Appendix B.....57
- Appendix C.....65



# Teacher Induction

Socialization into the Profession.....	3
Reduce Attrition.....	4
Increase Retention .....	4
Benefits to School Community.....	5
Pyramid of Support.....	6



# Teacher Induction

**// Induction is a systemwide, coherent, comprehensive training and support process that continues for 2 or 3 years and then seamlessly becomes part of the lifelong professional development program of the district to keep new teachers teaching and improving toward increasing their effectiveness. //**

(Wong 2004, 42)

The Alberta Teachers' Association's (ATA) five-year study of 135 beginning teachers' experiences found that what beginning teachers find most beneficial is a holistic web of support. In other words induction should not be thought of as a set of discrete components but as a philosophy about (1) the role of new teachers and (2) the relationships that exist between novices, veteran teachers and school administrators. The effectiveness of induction practices ultimately depends on the climate of the school in which they work (ATA 2013, 37).

Principals play a pivotal role in the induction of beginning teachers into the school and the profession. As administrators and instructional leaders of the school, principals have a unique perspective and many levers at their disposal to support the induction process. At the same time principals have a vested interest in creating conditions that will support new teachers to become the best teachers they can be.



## **Four moral purposes that compel principals to take active roles in the induction process are to**

- 1) facilitate effective socialization into the profession,
- 2) reduce beginning teacher attrition,
- 3) increase retention and
- 4) benefit the entire school community.



*Teachers work through a workshop exercise at an ATA Beginning Teachers Conference.*

## Socialization into the Profession

Lawson (1986) defines occupational socialization as all kinds of socialization that initially influence persons to enter the field of education and later are responsible for their perceptions and actions as teachers. Socialization “is the process by which persons recruited into education acquire the knowledge, values, sensitivities and skills endorsed by the profession” (Lawson 1988, 267).

The socialization of teachers begins in their undergraduate programs, but it does not end there. Education and socialization continue throughout teachers’ careers with ongoing professional learning and collaboration. The first year of teachers’

careers therefore is a critical factor in their socialization to the profession, and the school culture can have a profound effect. Each school has its own unique culture and power politics. In a passive school culture the staff would wait for the beginning teachers to reach out rather than seeking out the new teachers to support them. In a veteran-oriented school the new teacher is not viewed as having learning needs and is left to sink or swim. “It takes a whole school community to raise a beginning teacher” is the philosophy of a successful school culture. School personnel share the responsibility of supporting beginning teachers.

## Reduce Attrition

Everyone wants beginning teachers to succeed, but why are so many leaving the profession in the first five years? Principals and school staff need to understand the underlying factors that lead to beginning teacher attrition and talk about how to prevent those situations from happening.

The ATA's longitudinal study of beginning teachers' working conditions and supports, *Teaching in the Early Years of Practice* (2013), has identified the major sources of stress for teachers in their first five years of practice:

- Classroom conditions (class size, class composition, support for students with special needs and resources)
- Relationships with stakeholders (colleagues, students and parents)
- The sense of “never being off duty”
- Adjusting to school culture (overt and covert)
- Constantly changing teaching and school assignments
- Inability to attain a work–life balance

Knowing the sources of stress for beginning teachers, principals can take steps to address the organizational factors and monitor the new teachers' well-being. Staff colleagues who are aware of the sources of stress can provide social, emotional and professional support to the beginning teachers throughout the induction period. These early professional relationships can be significant and often last throughout the teachers' careers.

## Increase Retention

Experts agree that a school's administration plays a crucial role in determining the school's culture and, by extension, the way in which early-career teachers experience their work. In the ATA's *Teaching in the Early Years of Practice* study, 135 beginning teachers described the support they or teachers hired after them had received. Most participants mentioned the involvement of the principal. Although the quality of their relationships with their administration varied, most participants agreed that school administrators play a major role in determining new teachers' experiences in their first year. This research study identified three leadership styles regarding principal and beginning teacher interactions: active, passive and absent administrators.

**Active administrators:** These administrators recognize that new teachers need extra time, attention and support. They model supportive behaviours for experienced staff members by touching base with new teachers frequently, creating an atmosphere in which new teachers feel safe asking questions and monitoring mentoring relationships to ensure that the partners are compatible.

**Passive administrators:** These administrators do not recognize that new teachers have unique learning needs or require exceptional forms of support. Although they may be welcoming and friendly, they tend to allow existing cultural school norms to determine how new teachers will be integrated.

**Absent administrators:** Though well intentioned and caring, these administrators are simply too busy to offer support to beginning teachers. For their part, beginning teachers do not want to burden administrators who, they believe, are too busy to answer questions and address concerns that these teachers inevitably encounter in getting to know the school routines, staff and students (ATA 2013, 50–51).

## Benefits to School Community

Beginning teachers add a lot of value to the school on many different levels. Students are the first to be excited about the new teachers in the building. Often new teachers can relate to the students' interests, activities and current culture, then use that information in their teaching and to build relationships with students. Experienced teachers enjoy the new teachers' fresh approach and enthusiasm while they, at the same time, have the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching. The entire school benefits from beginning teachers' new ideas and perspectives.

A successful induction supports the development of a school culture that is open to new ideas, different instructional practices, continual improvement, collaboration, collegiality and learning from one another. As well, the school and the jurisdiction will benefit from attracting and retaining the best, most creative teachers.



*Which leadership style describes you best? Studies show that school administrators play a major role in teachers' experiences in their first year of teaching, which can increase retention.*

## Pyramid of Support

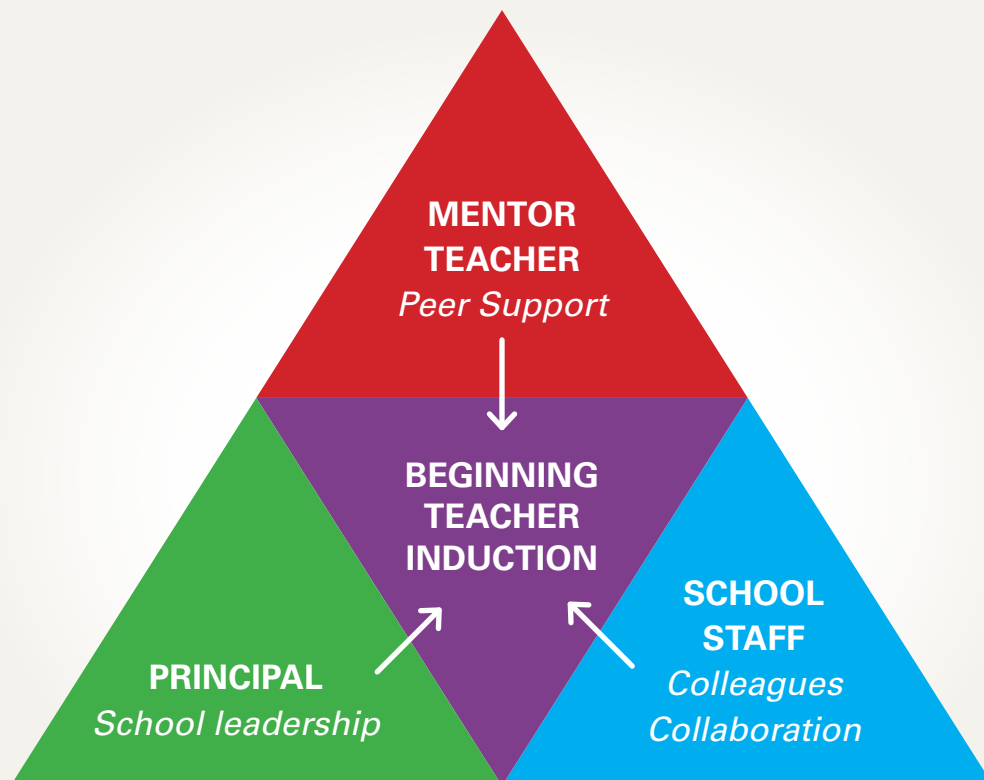
The Pyramid of Support for Beginning Teachers on the next page illustrates a holistic approach to teacher induction in Alberta. In Alberta, public schools function on a collegial model where professional staff work collaboratively to provide the best possible learning opportunities for students. Research shows that the most successful induction programs exist in schools where the induction of novice teachers is viewed as a collective responsibility. In the case of teacher induction, the school community works collaboratively to support beginning teachers as they transition from their pre-service education to professional practice in the classroom. The school principals, as the educational leaders in the school, are

**Research shows that the most successful induction programs exist in schools where the induction of novice teachers is viewed as a collective responsibility.**

responsible for the supervision and evaluation of the beginning teachers and for allocating the appropriate supports and resources. Mentor teachers are assigned to beginning teachers, in a nonevaluative role, to provide ongoing guidance that supports their classroom instruction. The other school staff members are professional colleagues who collaborate with beginning teachers on a wide range of topics and offer information and support throughout the school year. At the centre of the Pyramid of Support are the beginning teachers who are guided and supported by the entire school community as they develop quality teaching practices resulting in optimum learning by students.



### PYRAMID OF SUPPORT FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS



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# The Principal's Role in Teacher Induction

Culture Builder.....	11
Instructional Leader.....	13
Advocate and Retainer .....	15



# The Principal's Role In Teacher Induction

**// The principal plays, or should be encouraged to play, the critical role of making sure the school environment and its pressures don't drive teachers away. //**

(Varrati, Lavine and Turner 2009, 490)

All teachers remember their first year—the tremendous workload, the challenges and the milestone achievements. If the first year was overall a positive learning experience, teachers are eager for the next school year to start. Unfortunately many beginning teachers don't experience a positive year and leave the profession within the first five years.

Almost 30 years ago O'Dell stated, “Even the best induction program won't save a teacher who is given

the worse situation in which experienced teachers could not succeed” (1986, 27). Very little appears to have changed since then. In Berkeley, California, teachers have openly labelled these problems “the hazing of novice teachers.” This kind of disenfranchisement of beginning teachers in an era of rising expectations and demands for higher student achievement leads to beginning teacher attrition. Principals can't afford to ignore it or participate in it. Naming it hazing is a positive step to understanding the scope of the problem and engaging the support of the school staff to eliminate this negative culture.

Some of the reasons beginning teachers leave the profession can be addressed at the school level if the principal and school staff are proactive. Principals play three major roles in teacher induction: school culture builder, instructional leader and advocate/retainer.



*By building a positive school culture, becoming instructional leaders and advocating for beginning teachers, principals can have a positive influence on the careers of beginning teachers.*

## Culture Builder

### *The School as a Learning Community*

As the instructional leaders of the school, principals can help beginning teachers understand the school culture and their role as members of the profession. The principal is in a key position to communicate the school's mission, vision and values, and can answer questions about what makes the school unique, including why things are done in a certain way. By providing information about the school community, the principal will help new staff members gain a better understanding of their own role in the school.

The principal's role as culture builder includes developing a learning community that supports the continuous professional growth of all school staff. According to Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996), collaboration is necessary for teachers to practise and fine-tune their instruction; through collaboration a sense of affiliation to the school and to one another develops. Key to this is ensuring that beginning teachers are well integrated with

the professional communities of practice at the grade, curriculum group or department level.

A sense of collaboration without competition and the need for continuing learning, both tempered with a sense of mutual respect, help in the retention process of new teachers. The hope (and assumption) is that such feelings of efficacy and job satisfaction will lead to greater retention of high-quality teachers (Brown and Wynn 2009, 57). Beginning teachers bring with them a wealth of ideas and strategies, and they need support and encouragement to share this expertise with their colleagues. Feeling a sense of community is a critical factor in the successful retention of beginning teachers.

### *Being a Member of the ATA*

An important part of beginning teachers' socialization into the profession is to understand the role of the ATA and how to be active members at both the local and provincial levels. As the professional organization for teachers in Alberta, the ATA promotes and advances public educa-

## ATA RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



The Beginning Teachers Conference occurs annually in early fall in both Edmonton and Calgary.

For registration information visit [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca).



Learn about the teaching profession in Alberta by reading, *We are Teachers. Teaching is Our Profession.*

Read it at [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca).

tion, safeguards standards of professional practice and serves as the advocate for its members. The provincial ATA offers a number of programs and services for beginning teachers, including an annual Beginning Teachers' Conference, publications, professional learning webinars and support for collaborative mentorship programs involving the ATA local, provincial ATA and school district. Collaborative mentorship programs are eligible for a \$2,000 grant to form a joint steering committee that plans and oversees the mentoring program activities. Information about these programs and services is available on the ATA website at [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca). Principals may also want to order copies of the publication *We Are Teachers. Teaching is Our Profession.* that provides information on what it means to be a professional teacher in Alberta. Copies are available at no charge by calling ATA Distribution at 1-800-232-7208.

Early in the year introduce the beginning teachers to the ATA school representative and any other local committee members in the school. These members can provide information about the local ATA programs and activities, and you may ask one of these teachers to serve as the primary ATA contact for the beginning teachers. Principals must ensure that the beginning teachers are aware of the local induction ceremony as this is their only formal opportunity to be inducted into the profession.

Principals should also encourage the beginning teachers to attend meetings of the bargaining unit so that they have a

voice in the collective bargaining process. Beginning teachers should have received a copy of the collective agreement when they signed their contract and if not, a copy of the collective agreement can be downloaded from the ATA website.

Teachers' conventions are a highly anticipated event in the beginning teachers' first year. Ensure that the beginning teachers have access to the online program information and know the expectations for attendance. Highlight some of the speakers and sessions that would interest them, and as this is likely the teachers' first professional conference, provide tips on travel, accommodation and parking.

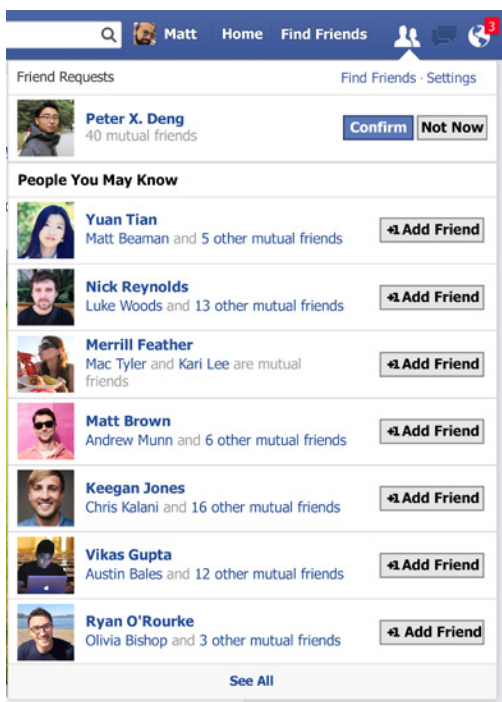
Additionally, encourage mentors and beginning teachers to attend a session together as a springboard to discussing their work together.

### *Professional Standards*

Beginning teachers who graduated from Alberta universities are familiar with the ATA Code of Professional Conduct, as it is discussed in their preservice program. Principals should, however, ensure that all beginning teachers have a copy of the Code of Professional Conduct, and it is recommended to review it with out-of-province teachers.

One area that some beginning teachers struggle with is establishing and maintaining professional boundaries with students. This is especially challenging when the beginning teachers are only

four or five years older than their high school students. Principals should talk to beginning teachers about these issues and caution them not to establish friendships, including online friendships, with students as this can undermine the teacher–student roles and be viewed as inappropriate.



### To friend or not to friend

Online friendships with students can create serious complications. Principals should discourage teachers from making online connections with their students.

## Instructional Leader

### *Support and Guidance*

Most beginning teachers experience praxis shock, which is the challenge of coping with classroom realities for which their preservice university program has not adequately prepared them. These challenges include the full weight of responsibility and accountability of teaching, time constraints, uncertainty as to what is expected to succeed, struggling to develop a professional identity, not knowing how to ask for help, and taking on difficult assignments and extracurricular activities (ATA 2012, 23). Administrators also should seize the opportunity when scheduling to arrange common preparation time for mentor and protégé partners.

Supportive leadership from the principal is about growth and development, not evaluation and punishment. It's about an open-door policy where all staff, including the beginning teacher, always feel comfortable sharing successes and challenges. It's about protecting beginning teachers, setting them up for success to begin with and providing a safety net just in case (Brown and Wynn 2009, 52).

Principals may not feel that they have the expertise to offer beginning teachers curriculum support and therefore assign a mentor teacher to provide this support. Principals, however, will address areas of classroom instruction that are governed by school or board policy.

Many beginning teachers are on an emotional rollercoaster during their first year. They start with a sense of anticipation that becomes more of a sense of survival in their first months.

Student assessment and evaluation are areas usually governed by policy. In addition to the policy guidelines, principals should clarify the following expectations for all teachers:

- Beginning teachers are anxious about their evaluation. Administrators should make a point at the beginning of the year to fully explain how the evaluation process will be accomplished and provide the appropriate documentation.
- Make sure the teachers understand the Principles of Fair Assessment and Assessment for Learning Principles.
- Ensure that record of achievement and assessment follows policy and is based on evidence of student learning. Do not downplay the importance of qualitative assessment and nontraditional evidence of learning.
- Review marking, grading, reporting practices and expectations for providing students feedback on their learning.
- Communicate student learning to parents on an ongoing basis. Parents should not be surprised by a poor grade on an assignment or report card.
- Principals should direct beginning teachers to the resources available on the Alberta Assessment Consortium website at [www.aac.ab.ca](http://www.aac.ab.ca).

Beginning teachers identify principals as key figures in the school for support and guidance. Principals have unique perspectives as instructional leaders in the school and can help beginning teachers make the connection between the classroom, school and community.

Many beginning teachers have had limited exposure to the cultural, economic and social diversity that are present in Alberta's public schools. Principals can guide beginning teachers to develop the necessary skills, empathy and efficacy to deal with today's students, talking through different courses of action when these issues affect the classroom, and by helping them to understand the community context.

Most beginning teachers will hesitate to call parents to ask for support when dealing with student discipline, attendance or achievement. Their natural tendency is to worry about how the parent will respond. Principals can support beginning teachers to identify the goal of the conversation, then work with them to script the phone call. The use of social media, professionalism and beginning teachers are topics principals should address. Information provided within an ATA *E- Liability* brochure provides current and essential information beginning teachers need



to know. The principal may also provide some additional background information that will help the teacher.

Additionally, beginning teachers should also be made aware of setting boundaries in their electronic communication with parents. If beginning teachers respond to parents at 11 pm, this practice may send the message and unrealistic expectation that e-mails will be answered at any time of the day or night. Clear expectations of timely responses by teachers to parents should be communicated and supported by administration.

Principals should monitor the workload and well-being of beginning teachers. When do they arrive and leave the school? Are they working long hours on extracurricular activities? Are they getting enough rest? Sometimes it may be necessary for the principal to note the highs and lows of the Phases of the First Year of Teaching illustration on page 26 and to advise beginning teachers about possible burnout and offer suggestions on how to maintain work-life balance to survive and thrive in a teaching career.

## Advocate and Retainer

### *Stages of Focus for Beginning Teachers*

Typically, teachers define their learning needs according to a perceived problem or poor performance in a particular area. Their motivation to learn is to correct a problem; that is, they are self-directed and focused on their performance. To

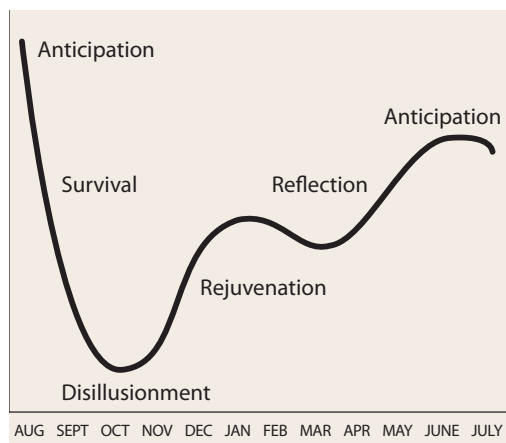
support beginning teachers through the induction phase, it is helpful to understand their stages of development:

- ***Focus on self***  
Survival is the teachers' primary concern at this stage. Teachers want to make good impressions when administrators are nearby, get along with colleagues and learn new procedures and routines.
- ***Focus on teaching tasks***  
The central concern is refining the act of teaching. Classroom management, instruction, planning, curriculum, evaluation and an orientation to "teaching the subject" all mark the characteristics of teachers at this stage. Teachers may need to be encouraged to move beyond this point, because after finding pedagogy that works, they may be inclined to rest in the security of having survived.
- ***Focus on serving the student***  
Teachers are now ready to look at teaching as a more flexible process. They are more likely to look for alternative strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of students, be more innovative and be more concerned with the emotional and social well-being of students (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation 2009, 21).

Many beginning teachers are on an emotional rollercoaster during their first year. They start with a sense of anticipation that becomes more of a sense of survival in their first months. Some experience profound disillusionment just before

winter holidays. Moir (1990) captured this in the Phases of First-Year Teaching illustrated below. This feeling occurs as new members of the profession experience concern about competence and commitment. As one beginning teacher described his first November in the classroom: "I may be mixing my metaphors, but I felt like water swirling down the drain wondering who I could call while I was hanging onto the end of my rope." Recognize when beginning teachers may be experiencing these deep emotions and reassure them that others have felt this way, too. This is an opportune time for administrators to touch base with mentors, reminding them of their supportive roles during the challenging periods in a beginning teacher's first year.

## PHASES OF FIRST-YEAR TEACHING



### *School-Based Resources*

Beginning teachers are often in challenging financial situations in their first year, especially if they relocated to assume the teaching positions. They may be feeling the financial crunch due to moving expenses, rent, utility payments, car payments and maintenance, new clothing, etc. Also most beginning teachers have student loans to pay six months after graduating from university. Being aware of these issues, school principals can help beginning teachers by allocating a reasonable budget for them to organize and prepare their classrooms.

Principals can also offer professional development funding to support beginning teachers' attendance at the Beginning Teachers Conference in September. The ATA, through locals, offers a grant-in-aid that supports 65 to 70 per cent of the cost of travel and accommodation. The remaining costs are borne by the beginning teacher. For some beginning teachers this is financially difficult, especially in the first months of starting a new job, so any extra support from the school PD funding is greatly appreciated.

ATA members are entitled to one no-cost annual membership in a specialist council of their choice. Beginning teachers who joined specialist councils reported that the experience greatly enhanced their sense of professionalism and expanded their collegial network outside of their school and district. Specialist councils are of particular value to teachers from more isolated areas of the province. Beginning teachers can register for their no-cost specialist council membership on the ATA website at [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca).

### *Problem Solving and Crisis Management*

Principals must lay a foundation of trust with beginning teachers so that they can talk to each other about concerns. Principals should develop strong relationships early in the year with beginning teachers so that they can talk about issues sooner rather than later. As one principal said, "If you have a problem, let me know before you're crying" (Brown and Wynn 2009, 52).

Being visible and available for short and spontaneous counselling sessions will not only help beginning teachers but can save future administrative headaches. Teachers who can immediately reach for the principal may be able to keep small issues from escalating into major ones (Colley 2002, 22).

Principals are encouraged to seek advice from the Association and/or advise beginning teachers to call the Association if they have concerns about any professional issue. Advice is available from executive staff officers who are well recognized for their expertise and knowledge. They can provide help on virtually all issues related to professional life, including contracts, teacher evaluation, medical issues, maternity, benefits, medical leaves and professional development. The Association gives professional advice that focuses solely on members' interests. Association staff will represent individual teachers in meetings or hearings related to any employment-related issues, including disciplinary matters, transfers and terminations. If necessary, the Associa-

tion will obtain legal advice or assistance when employment-related issues arise. All calls are confidential, and courses of action are left to the discretion of the member.

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# Mentorship

Background.....	20
Mentorship Programs .....	21
Principal’s Role in Mentorship .....	22
Comparison of Mentoring, Coaching..... and Supervision	23
Benefits of Mentorship.....	24
Recruiting Mentors .....	25
Assignment of the Appropriate Mentor .....	26



# Mentorship

Mentoring is a successful strategy in the induction of beginning teachers to raise retention rates for new teachers by improving their abilities, instructional skills and feelings of efficacy.

## Background

Mentoring is one of the most effective components of an induction program. The induction into most professions or trades involves a period of mentorship where the less experienced person (protégé) is partnered with an experienced person (mentor) to learn the technical and social practices to be successful in the career. There are two broad types of mentoring relationships: formal and informal. Informal mentorships are often formed in the workplace among people who work in the same department or have a social connection. Informal mentorship tends to have less structure with support being provided as needed. Formal mentorship, on the other hand, is a structured program that addresses the needs of the protégé and is supported by the organization with assigned personnel and dedicated resources.

Mentoring is a successful strategy in the induction of beginning teachers to raise retention rates for new teachers by improving their abilities, instructional skills and feelings of efficacy.

**Mentoring** in the field of education is defined as: the complex developmental, nonevaluative process that mentors use to support and guide their protégé through the necessary transitions that are part of learning how to be effective educators and career-long learners.



// This program is and can be a valuable tool to both mentors and protégés. For a brand new teacher, it is the perfect way to ease into the teaching profession. For an experienced teacher, it can be a reaffirmation of what it was that excited him or her about education in the first place. //

—Participant comment from Model Project for Implementing a Mentorship Program

**Mentor** is the name given to an experienced teacher working in a similar location and in a similar position who assumes the primary responsibility for guiding and supporting beginning teachers through the necessary transitions that are part of becoming an effective educator and career-long learner (adapted from Sweeny 2008).

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) has been involved in supporting and facilitating formal mentorship programs at the district, local and school levels for more than two decades.

The ATA believes that mentorship programs that assist teachers and school administrators new to their role should exhibit the following characteristics:

- 1) Be designed for professional growth.
- 2) Be ongoing rather than short term.
- 3) Be appropriately funded to provide participant release time.
- 4) Be based on current research and best practices.
- 5) Be allowed to constitute the participants' professional growth plan.
- 6) Be voluntary rather than compulsory.
- 7) Be sponsored in collaboration with the Association.

The Association has a comprehensive program of support, available at no cost, which includes mentor skills training and targeted professional learning for beginning teachers. The Association offers a grant to locals to fund the establishment of a collaborative mentoring steering committee. For more information, contact the ATA Professional Development staff at 1-800-232-7208 or 780-447-9400 (Edmonton area).

## Mentorship Programs

A systemic approach is recommended for the mentorship program with all stakeholders, district office personnel, school principals and teachers working together. District-level support for mentorship may include

- offering targeted professional learning specific to beginning teachers (classroom management, student assessment and evaluation, communication with parents, the use of technology as a pedagogical tool, etc);
- providing mentors with skills training and support;
- providing opportunities for the mentor and protégé to observe each other teaching;
- creating opportunities for protégés to meet and share with one another; and
- arranging for protégés to collaborate with more experienced teachers from other schools who share their area of specialization.



*An important part of the mentoring process is for the teachers to attend professional learning activities together.*

## Principal's Role in Mentorship

The principal's role within the district mentorship framework or a school-based mentorship program is to serve as coordinator of the school mentorship program, including

- recruiting mentors,
- matching mentors with beginning teachers,
- facilitating mentor training opportunities,
- monitoring the mentorship process and
- providing the resources necessary to support the program.

In situations where the school district does not offer a system-level mentorship program, the school principal is still encouraged to provide a mentorship program at the school level.

Mentoring has a different purpose and approach than peer coaching or supervision and evaluation. Supervision and evaluation are the school principal's responsibility to determine if the teachers' practices exceed, meet or do not meet the Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education 2008). Peer

coaching is a voluntary, mutual inquiry by two or more experienced teachers focused on enhancing teaching practices and student learning through the use of best instructional practices. Mentoring is a growth-oriented activity directed and determined by the beginning teachers to develop more effective teaching strategies and improve student learning. The chart on the following page is a comparison of mentoring, peer coaching, and supervision and evaluation processes used in Alberta schools.



## Comparison of Mentoring, Coaching and Supervision

FEATURES	MENTOR COACHING	PEER COACHING	SUPERVISION/EVALUATION
<b>Focus of the observation</b>	Set by the interests and needs of the teacher to be observed, often after some other activity that prompts discovery of a need to improve.	A mutual inquiry by two or more experienced educators into increased use of the best instructional practices in both parties' teaching.	Comparison of the teacher's knowledge, skills and attributes with the Teaching Quality Standard.
<b>Direction of the focus</b>			
<b>Goals of the activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a more trusting and collegial professional relationship.</li> <li>• Develop reflective, analytical and self-assessment skills in protégé and mentor.</li> <li>• Develop more effective teaching strategies.</li> <li>• Improve student learning and achievement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a more trusting and collegial professional relationship.</li> <li>• Develop reflective, analytical and self-assessment skills of both.</li> <li>• Develop more effective teaching strategies for both.</li> <li>• Improve student learning and achievement in both classrooms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judge teacher competence for decisions about certification and continued employment.</li> <li>• Create focus and apply pressure to increase teacher performance and accountability.</li> <li>• Improve student learning and achievement.</li> </ul>
<b>Observation initiated by</b>	<p>Mentor, first by invitation to the protégé, to observe the mentor at work.</p> <p>Then, after comfort is established, mentor observation in the protégé's classroom.</p>	Either teacher in the peer coaching pair.	The supervising administrator in response to legal and contractual requirements.
<b>Paper trail and use of the observational data</b>	Copies kept by both. Each looks for own data patterns. Mentor asks protégé reflective questions to teach how to self-assess, reflect, set PD goals and plan.	Given to the teacher who was observed to analyze. Coach asks reflective questions to prompt teacher's analysis.	Evaluator analyzes the data and prescribes needed improvement.  Papers go into personnel file as documentation of evaluation (teacher gets a copy).

Adapted from *Leading the Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program* (Sweeny 2008)

## Benefits of Mentorship

A successful mentorship program has far-reaching benefits for the teachers involved, school principals and district as a whole. Below are the benefits identified by participants in the Association-supported mentorship programs:

FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS	FOR MENTORS	FOR ADMINISTRATORS	FOR THE DISTRICT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Access to the knowledge, experience and support of a mentor teacher</li> <li>✓ Improved personal and professional well-being from reduced stress during the transition</li> <li>✓ Increased job success, self-confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>✓ Reduced trial-and-error learning and accelerated professional growth</li> <li>✓ Successful induction into their teaching career</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increased learning and enhanced teaching performance</li> <li>✓ Enhanced focus on instructional practices and development of reflective skills</li> <li>✓ Professional renewal</li> <li>✓ Recognition as excellent teachers conferred through being mentors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A helping hand from the mentor with beginning teacher orientation and support</li> <li>✓ Reduced teacher attrition resulting in less time spent on recruitment</li> <li>✓ Increased teaching quality for both beginning and mentor teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Attraction and retention of the best and most creative teachers</li> <li>✓ Retention of experienced teachers who find a new challenge and growth by serving as mentors</li> <li>✓ Establishment of such professional norms as continuous improvement, experimentation, learning from others, sharing of new ideas and instructional practices</li> <li>✓ Promotion of continuity of traditions and positive cultural norms including collaboration and collegiality</li> </ul>

## Recruiting Mentors

The first step in recruiting mentor teachers is for principals to ensure that the school staff understand the purpose, roles, activities and intended program outcomes. This orientation should include time for teachers to ask questions, offer suggestions and clarify any concerns. Principals will need to discuss the expectations of the mentor's

role to ensure that teachers have a clear and realistic understanding of their commitment before they volunteer to mentor, which includes further mentor training. It is recommended that mentors have five years of successful classroom teaching. A sample mentor application form is provided in Appendix A.

### WHAT DO MENTORS DO?

This question will be asked by potential mentors and beginning teachers. The main objective of mentoring relationships is to facilitate the emergence of the beginning teachers' professional self-identify. There is no set formula for accomplishing this; however, some of the activities of effective mentors are noted below:

- Assist with school orientation (tours, explanation of school procedures, etc).
- Provide opportunities for the protégé to observe the mentor and for the mentor to observe in the protégé's classrooms.
- Participate in collaborative teaching with protégé and allow time to debrief.
- Provide opportunities, time and resources for reflective practice.
- Identify protégé's strengths and build on those.
- Share (or help to develop) materials, assessments and resources.
- Assist in the development of short- and long-range plans.
- Facilitate reflection through the collection of classroom data and conferencing.
- Facilitate problem-solving around issues of planning, management and curriculum.
- Assist protégé with understanding the norms of the school, especially in areas of interpersonal communication, roles and responsibilities, philosophy of discipline, etc.
- Practise active listening rather than telling.
- Model excellent professional practice.
- Demonstrate sensitivity toward the protégé's experiences and feelings.
- Respond to the professional needs as identified by the protégé, such as classroom management, questioning techniques, communicating with parents, etc.
- Assist in the development of a professional growth plan, which includes participation in a mentorship program.

Adapted from Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (2009, 33)

## Assignment of the Appropriate Mentor

The primary responsibility of principals is to identify their most qualified mentor teachers. There is a growing body of research in the area of mentoring for beginning teachers. The first quality of an effective mentor is that of being a good teacher, but simply being a good teacher does not ensure that a person will be a good mentor.

**BELOW ARE A VARIETY OF PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES THAT GO BEYOND THOSE REQUIRED OF A GOOD CLASSROOM TEACHER:**

- ✓ Demonstrated teaching excellence
- ✓ Disposition toward collaboration and inquiry
- ✓ Commitment to ongoing professional growth and change
- ✓ Flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity
- ✓ Enthusiasm for students and teaching
- ✓ Respect from colleagues
- ✓ Effective communication skills and interpersonal skills
- ✓ An open and approachable nature
- ✓ Confidence and eagerness to learn
- ✓ A belief in the value of mentoring
- ✓ A minimum of five years' successful teaching

In addition to the skills and attributes listed previously, Rowley and Hart (2000) identified the six qualities of high-performance mentors of beginning teachers outlined in the chart below.

<b>QUALITIES OF THE HIGH-PERFORMANCE MENTOR TEACHER: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES</b>		
<b>Commits to the Roles and Responsibilities of Mentoring</b>	<b>Accepts the Beginning Teacher as a Developing Person and Professional</b>	<b>Reflects on Interpersonal Communications and Decisions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicates time to meet with the protégé</li> <li>• Persists in efforts to assist the protégé despite obstacles or setbacks</li> <li>• Maintains congruence between mentoring words and actions</li> <li>• Attends meetings and professional development programs related to mentoring</li> <li>• Models self-reflection and self-assessment as hallmarks of professionalism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values acceptance as the foundation of a helping relationship</li> <li>• Understands the beginning teacher's differences from multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Endeavours to see the world through the protégé's eyes</li> <li>• Communicates respect and positive regard for the protégé</li> <li>• Models inclusion and acceptance of diversity in others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflects on what, where, when and how to communicate with the protégé</li> <li>• Adjusts communication style to the developmental needs of the protégé</li> <li>• Respects the confidentiality of the mentor-protégé relationship</li> <li>• Self-discloses regarding one's own professional challenges</li> <li>• Models effective helping relationship skills</li> </ul>
<b>Serves as an Instructional Coach</b>	<b>Models a Commitment to Personal and Professional Growth</b>	<b>Inspires Hope and Optimism for the Future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides strong instructional support</li> <li>• Values the role of shared experience in the coaching process</li> <li>• Engages the protégé in team planning and team teaching whenever possible</li> <li>• Possesses knowledge of effective teaching practices</li> <li>• Models openness to new ideas and instructional practices</li> <li>• Models self-reflection and problem-solving skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lives the life of learner as well as teacher</li> <li>• Pursues professional growth related to teaching and mentoring</li> <li>• Advises the protégé on professional growth opportunities</li> <li>• Models fallibility as a quality fundamental to personal and professional growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages and praises the protégé</li> <li>• Holds and communicates high expectations for the protégé</li> <li>• Projects a positive disposition toward the teaching professional</li> <li>• Avoids criticism of students, parents and colleagues</li> <li>• Models personal and professional self-efficacy</li> </ul>

Adapted from *High Performance Mentoring* (Rowley and Hart 2000)



There are no exact rules to follow when assigning mentors to beginning teachers, but certain factors, depending on the size of the school, should be considered:

<b>FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN ASSIGNING A MENTOR</b>	
<b>1</b>	Similar teaching assignment so that beginning teachers can be guided through specific instructional strategies, pacing, homework selections and other subject and grade-level issues.
<b>2</b>	Physical proximity is critical to allow for consistent and frequent mentoring, observation and dialogue.
<b>3</b>	Common planning time for the team with the clear understanding that the time is designated for mentorship activities.
<b>4</b>	A difference in teaching experience to ensure that the mentor teacher has time for the mentorship, and the beginning teachers can benefit from someone who has moved beyond the survival stage.

## Four Phases of a Mentoring Relationship

The mentoring relationship, like any other relationship, is founded on mutual trust and respect. As the relationship builds over time, the teachers will open up to self-disclosure and self-reflection. When this happens, the mentoring relationship has the power to influence the professional practice of both teachers and will ultimately result in enhanced student learning.

PHASE	PROCESS	PRODUCT
<b>Initiation</b>	Orienting	Mentor and protégé meet one another and form initial impressions. The mentor offers, or the protégé requests, assistance in preparing for the early days of the school year. Problem solving focuses on technical and logistical issues, including finding resources or clarifying policies and procedures.
	Introducing	
<b>Exploration</b>	Accepting	Mentor and protégé begin the process of self-disclosure as they conference about the needs, interests or goals of the protégé. Early impressions are reinforced or revised as each person moves toward or away from accepting the other. Formal and informal agreements are sometimes negotiated.
	Self-Disclosing	
<b>Collaboration</b>	Sharing	Mentor and protégé act in a trustworthy manner and openly share their personal thoughts and beliefs about a wide range of personal and professional issues. Both become increasingly transparent in their communications. The protégé believes the mentor intends to be a helpful force.
	Trusting	
<b>Consolidation</b>	Respecting	Mentor and protégé appreciate each other on a personal and professional level, and over time develop a strong and enduring sense of positive regard and mutual respect. The relationship merges into a genuine, collegial and consolidated purpose.
	Appreciating	

Adapted from *Becoming a High-Performance Mentor: A Guide to Reflection and Action* (Rowley 2008)

Not all mentoring relationships are made in heaven. For whatever reasons mentoring relationships may not work as intended, and one or both parties can request that the beginning teacher be assigned a different teacher mentor. When this happens, two routes can be taken: if the mentoring program has a coordinator, participants, whether a mentor or a protégé, are encouraged to communicate with the program coordinator to discuss the situation and a course of action. If necessary a new mentor may be matched with the protégé. If the mentoring program is only within the school, the principal should listen to the teachers' concerns, determine if any action can be taken to improve the situation and if not, work with the beginning teacher to identify a different mentor.

## Support for the Mentorship

Principals should provide beginning teachers with an orientation to the mentorship program including basic information about the mentoring program, the program purpose, goals and activities as well as the respective roles and responsibilities of protégés and their mentors. What the principal says about the mentoring program should communicate that the school community wants them to succeed, and the mentoring

program is designed to eliminate a sink-or-swim situation (Ganser 2001, 39).

Principals should find ways for beginning teachers and mentors to see each other teach. Talking about teaching is valuable, but effective support requires that the mentor

**Not all mentoring relationships are made in heaven. For whatever reasons mentoring relationships may not work as intended, and one or both parties can request that the beginning teacher be assigned a different teacher mentor.**

see the beginning teacher in action, and the beginning teacher observe experienced classroom strategies (Ganser 2001, 41). This may involve hiring a substitute teacher for a full or half day to provide release time for both teachers if time is not provided in the school timetable. Some principals have offered to teach the classes so that the mentorship partners can observe one another teach.

Principals also advocate for the professional growth of beginning teachers by arranging and providing time for them to collaborate with mentors and discuss student work (Wood 2005, 54). An important part of the mentoring process is for the teachers to attend professional learning activities together. School district mentorship programs usually schedule professional learning activities throughout the year that are designed to support the beginning teachers and the mentors. In addition to these activities beginning teachers and their mentors may wish to attend workshops and conferences offered by the ATA specialist



councils and teachers' conventions. Participation in these activities outside the school provides time for conversation and reflection.

In the ATA's *Teaching in the Early Years of Practice* study, beginning teachers talked about how administrators can show their support for new teachers by creating embedded opportunities for mentorship activities. One teacher described her experiences as follows: "At my first school, they ensured I had time to meet with a mentor. My administrator observed me and gave me good feedback. They were supportive and encouraging, and they gave me time to observe other classes." In these cases, the administrators, though acting in a supervisory capacity, signalled their commitment to the new teacher's professional growth by ensuring that supportive collegial relationships and learning opportunities were available (ATA 2012, 21).

## Respect the Mentoring Relationship and Confidentiality

Principals are responsible for the supervision and evaluation of all teaching staff. When supervising beginning teachers, talking to the mentor teachers who have important insights into the beginning teachers' experiences might seem reasonable. Principals must not engage in this type of conversation as it will undermine the confidentiality and trust on which the mentorship relationship is based. Principals should never talk to the

mentor teachers about their perceptions of the beginning teachers, the content of their mentoring conversations or the beginning teachers' progress. Remaining at arm's length is a wise course of action.

**Mentoring action plans and daily activities, however, *must* remain private and confidential between the beginning teachers and their mentors to ensure that this information is not used during the evaluation of the beginning teachers.**

Principals might also be inclined to ask the beginning teachers about the quality of mentorship they are receiving. However, asking beginning teachers to provide this feedback jeopardizes the integrity of the mentoring relationship and support for the program moving forward. Instead principals could meet with the beginning teachers and mentors together to talk about their professional growth if they are using the mentorship plan as an annual professional growth plan.

The Alberta Education (2008) *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5*, Section (4) states:

- 4) An annual teacher professional growth plan:
  - (a) may be a component of a long-term, multi-year plan; and
  - (b) may consist of a planned program of supervising a student teacher or mentoring a teacher.



# Principal's Actions to Support Beginning Teachers

School Orientation.....	35
Teaching Assignment.....	36
Limiting Extracurricular Responsibilities.....	36
Adapting Leadership to Teachers' Needs.....	37
Ongoing Communication .....	38
Fostering Collegiality and Collaboration .....	39



# Principals' Actions To Support Beginning Teachers

In the ATA's Teaching in the Early Years of Practice study, beginning teachers identified the following behaviours of administrators as being supportive:

## SUPPORTIVE ADMINISTRATION ACTIONS:

- ✓ Frequently touching base with beginning teachers.
- ✓ Helping beginning teachers to build relationships with colleagues.
- ✓ Creating embedded professional development time for mentorship, professional learning communities and classroom observation.
- ✓ Limiting extracurricular expectations.
- ✓ Reducing the complexity of teaching assignments.
- ✓ Ensuring that new teachers have/receive a complete school orientation.
- ✓ Keeping an open-door policy so that new teachers feel comfortable discussing concerns.
- ✓ Observing classes regularly and offering constructive feedback.
- ✓ Helping new teachers access such appropriate professional development opportunities as district mentorship programs, the Beginning Teachers' Conference and specialist councils.
- ✓ Helping new teachers with classroom management and discipline issues.
- ✓ Supporting new teachers when communicating with parents.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS INCLUDE:

- ✓ Providing essential information on the evaluation process early in the year.
- ✓ Identifying mentors early and providing contact information to allow for mentors and protégés to meet early in the year.

Beginning teachers need support and supervision: those who do not improve in confidence levels throughout their first year may be more likely to leave the profession (Elliot, Isaacs and Chugani 2010, 141). Do not make the first year of teaching a game of education survivor. Teachers who did not receive adequate support from administrators described the experience as “being on your own” (ATA 2013, 51). In addition to the strategies presented earlier, the strategies in this section focus on improving the self-efficacy, quality of teaching and retention rates of beginning teachers.

## School Orientation

An effective school orientation is a key moment of truth in the induction process. Principals want to make the teachers feel welcome, set the right tone and make a good impression. Careful planning and preparation will ensure a comprehensive and efficient orientation.

The school orientation is the first time principals will meet the beginning teachers as new staff members and colleagues. If the school orientation is viewed as an ongoing process, with two or three other meetings in the year, it will be possible to focus the agenda on the most important topics for that point in the school year. Appendix B is a monthly calendar of timely topics and issues that could be addressed throughout the school year. In addition to the practical and immediate issues, it is just as important to provide an overview of the school community, the school mission, vision, values and goals, educational philosophy and expectations for the teaching staff.

Build rapport with the teachers on the first day they come to the school by giving them a tour of the school. Do not delegate this to others. Introduce them to key people, including the office and custodial staff, librarian, school counsellor, technology lead and inclusive learning coach. Talk about such things as the library resources, staff room, school technology, photocopying and protocols essential for the first few days. The actual mechanics of the photocopy codes, technology ac-

cess and sign-out process for resources can be delegated to others. Take steps to ensure that the teacher has access to the school technology, including e-mail, marks record program, and school and district staff websites.

Ensure that the school secretary has all the required information to add the teachers to the staff lists, and school and district e-mail, and to make nameplates for the classroom door and mail slots. Nothing is worse than new teachers not having e-mail accounts and mail slots for the first few days because they will miss out on social activity notices and information about grade level or department meetings, textbook distribution, attendance lists, etc.

Show the teachers their classrooms and discuss how they plan to set up their classroom. Give the teachers some latitude to request furniture or resources that make the space their own. Inform them of their operating budget and advise them of the purpose and acceptable use of that budget. Let them know the process for ordering, any additional approvals and cataloguing of capital items. Ensure that the custodian has placed the correct number of desks in the classroom to reduce unnecessary turmoil on the first day of classes.

Many principals provide beginning teachers with an orientation binder specific to the school to which the teachers can add to during the year. A list of suggested items for the orientation binder is provided in Appendix C.

**An effective school orientation is a key moment of truth in the induction process.**

## Teaching Assignment

Principals can promote new teachers' success by ensuring that teaching assignments are not onerous. Historically beginning teachers were unfortunately assigned to the most challenging classes or students and the most difficult discipline issues frequently referred to as a "dog's breakfast" (Ganser 2001, 40).

Give beginning teachers assignments that will allow them to succeed, not overcrowded classes or classes with challenging high-needs students. Reduce the number of course preparations if possible. Assign them their own classrooms without moving rooms during the day.

Principals need to arrange teaching schedules so the mentor is easily accessible. Successful mentoring requires regular contact between mentors and beginning teachers, not just contact when needed, which can mean only during a crisis.

## Limiting Extracurricular Responsibilities

Limiting beginning teachers' extracurricular responsibilities is a difficult topic. Beginning teachers are fully aware that participation in the school's extracurricular program is an expectation, and some might view it as a requirement to getting a continuing contract. As well, there may be teachers on staff who have provided many years of coaching and sponsoring school clubs and now feel it is time for the new teachers to step up. The paradox



*Principals should talk with beginning teachers about what is an appropriate level of involvement in extracurricular activities in their first year, then inform the school staff as to why they are limiting the beginning teachers' involvement.*

is that beginning teachers will need to spend a larger amount of time planning, preparing lessons and marking than veteran teachers because they have limited classroom experience.

Principals understand that teachers are hired first and foremost to become proficient in the classroom and not for their coaching skills. Participation in extracurricular activities can add a lot of enjoyment to teaching by providing a different context to get to know and work with students. Principals should talk with beginning teachers about what is an appropriate level of involvement in extracurricular activities in their first year, then inform the school staff as to why they are limiting the beginning teachers' involvement. For example, if a beginning teacher would like to become involved, a suggestion would be for the beginning teacher to act as an assistant coach rather than the sole coach. This allows the beginning teacher to learn the ropes while not being solely responsible for the entire athletic program.

## Adapting Leadership to Teachers' Needs

Beginning teachers have individual professional growth needs that could not be addressed during preservice programs or outside of the classroom context. The first year of teaching is critical to their professional development as it is at that time that beginning teachers are solely responsible for a group of students for the entire year. As such every moment of truth is a first in their professional

career: the first day, the first IPP, the first discipline issue, the first phone call to a parent, the first report card and the first parent-teacher interview. Beginning teachers will often need to be coached through these situations, and the principal can be a major source of support.

One difficulty that beginning teachers face is the tension that exists between the principal as support person and the principal as evaluator. Beginning teachers will feel more comfortable if they have a clear idea as to how their performance is approximating the principals' expectations. When entering teaching, Gen Y members look to principals and other school leaders to fill the role of advisor. More than the generation of teachers before them, they value regular detailed, feedback on their performance from the principal (Behrstock-Sherratt and Cogshall 2010, 30).

Beginning teachers cannot be treated like their more experienced colleagues. They are in a tenuous situation of starting a new career, working toward permanent certification and wanting the stability of a continuous contract. Consequently they feel the need to try to please everyone. They understand the formal expectations of the job but tend to be unclear concerning the conflicting expectations of other teachers and parents. Principals need to ensure that beginning teachers know what is expected of them and that they are not acting on false assumptions.

One effective strategy for supporting beginning teachers is to coach them on student discipline.

### Have a conversation early about the following principles of student discipline:

- **Proactive strategies**—to reduce frequency and possibility of discipline concerns, establish classroom routines and organizational strategies, and be prepared and available in the classrooms when students arrive.
- **Due process**—the student you had a run-in with (probably) does not experience the strongest consequences on the first offence.
- **Avoid unenforceable threats**—don't threaten students with reduced marks, detentions or suspensions that are unenforceable (and indefensible).
- **View discipline as a learning opportunity**—students need to learn how to regulate their behaviour and make good choices.
- **Discipline with dignity**—never humiliate or embarrass anyone but implement discipline strategies that demonstrate fairness.
- **Communicate with parents**—get the parents on your side by making your first conversation a positive one; call early in the process of modifying student behaviour, never show frustration or anger with a student.
- **Confidentiality**—talk only to the parents about their child, and do not discuss other students.
- **Professional judgment**—not all things are black or white; in fact, nothing is. Use your professional judgment to determine the best course of action given the context.
- **Document**—if you didn't report it, document it or respond to it in some

formal way, it hasn't happened. Keep accurate, secure records of student discipline issues as you may need to refer to these records at a later time.

- **Every child is important**—don't sell anyone short, and don't jump to quick conclusions.

When beginning teachers request assistance with student discipline issues, include them in the conference so that you can model effective discipline strategies. Afterward debrief the conference with the teachers and explain why you handled it the way you did. Modelling is also an effective strategy when coaching beginning teachers on communicating with parents.

## Ongoing Communication

The most important support a principal can give beginning teachers is effective communication. This includes responsiveness to questions either by e-mail or in person, and sharing of important information. One new teacher said, "I want to know what's going on rather than hearing it from other teachers down the hall. When I hear different things from different people, the confusion is alleviated just from hearing the principal say this or getting an e-mail that says this is what's happening" (Morrison 2012, 7).

The following strategies will promote open, effective communication:

- Communicate to beginning teachers that their efforts are appreciated.
- Ask for their input on how to better support them and ask proactive questions about how they are managing.



- Articulate your expectations clearly and make sure your expectations are realistic. Remember it takes time for teachers to develop their craft.
- Discuss the sometimes unwritten expectations of the school district. Beginning teachers want to fit into the school and will be eager to adopt the norms and assumptions that they observe on staff whether positive or negative.
- Commit to meeting with beginning teachers regularly and schedule meetings in advance. These meetings will allow you to focus on the upcoming significant school activities and offer timely support. See Appendix A for a suggested year plan of support.
- **Share friendship and ideas.** Listen to the beginning teachers when they need to vent or share a laugh and offer tried and true suggestions for the future.
- **Navigate curriculum together.** Experienced teachers can share instructional materials, resources and ideas in their community of practice.
- **Grade together.** Evaluating assignments together, reviewing them in the context of the learning outcomes and discussing strategies for improvement helps beginning teachers set standards for their student work.
- **Discipline together.** Experienced teachers are encouraged to monitor student behaviour in relation to beginning teachers. If students are observed to not respect the beginning teachers while on supervision, experienced teachers may need to provide support so that students know what is expected of them.
- **Observe and reflect together.** Experienced teachers should open their door to informal, nonevaluative observations by the beginning teacher. Watching other teachers helps beginning teachers to validate their own teaching practices and to observe new strategies (Bieler 2012, 47–48).
- **Sharing knowledge and experience.** Given the busy schedule at the start of the year, principals can also work with mentors to provide timely mini-workshops on specific topics.

## Fostering Collegiality and Collaboration

Principals need to engage in discussions to prepare staff to nurture beginning teachers and to welcome their new ideas and initiatives. These conversations will ideally take place prior to the beginning teachers' arrival in the school so that they experience a welcoming, collegial, safe and collaborative professional culture. Throughout the school year the principal should monitor how the beginning teachers are experiencing the various communities of practice in the school and offer additional support if required.

New teachers need the support of their mentors and staff colleagues and will most likely want to collaborate with other teachers. Here are some strategies for crafting a community of practice:



# Supervision and Evaluation

Supervision.....	44
Evaluation.....	45
Evaluation Process.....	46
Teacher Certification.....	47



# Supervision And Evaluation

Supervision and evaluation of beginning teachers are the most significant responsibilities of school administrators in teacher induction. School principals are charged with conducting fair and accurate evaluations of teachers to protect the public interest.

This plays out in two ways: (1) ensuring adequate support and guidance to assist beginning teachers to succeed and (2) making a difficult evidence-based decision as to whether the teachers meet or do not meet the Teaching Quality Standard. Beginning teacher supervision and evaluation is time-consuming, because principals are observing, providing feedback, coaching, gathering data and evaluating. However, when beginning teachers receive unsatisfactory evaluations, their biggest issue is that the principal did not provide enough time and/or feedback for them to improve. Clearly for the supervision and evaluation processes to be effective for both the teacher and the principal, it is important to start the process early in the school year.



For the supervision and evaluation processes to be effective for both the teacher and the principal, it is important to start the process early in the school year.

Principals should meet early in the school year with beginning teachers to review the following Alberta Education regulations to ensure that they understand the provincial standards: *Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education Ministerial Order* (#016/97), the *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5*, the *Ministerial Order on Student Learning* (#001/2013) and the *Certification of Teachers Regulation*. Copies of these documents can be downloaded from the Alberta Education website at <http://education.alberta.ca>.

Use this meeting to explain the school district supervision and evaluation policy and processes. Beginning teachers are naturally eager to receive a positive evaluation report and curious about the process. Having the principal explain the difference between

supervision and evaluation is critical to working with beginning teachers to improve their practice throughout the year.

The definitions of supervision and evaluation in the provincial *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy* are as follows:

(h) “supervision” means the on-going process by which a principal carries out duties in respect to teachers and teaching required under section 20 of the *School Act* and exercises educational leadership;

(b) “evaluation” means the formal process of gathering and recording information or evidence over a period of time and the application of reasoned professional judgment by a principal in determining whether one or more aspects of the teaching of a teacher exceeds, meets or does not meet the teaching quality standard (Alberta Education 2008).

Principals should also discuss the *Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education Ministerial Order (#016/97)* (TQS) with beginning teachers. The TQS applies to teacher certification, professional growth, supervision and evaluation and contains the descriptors of selected knowledge, skills and attributes appropriate to teachers at different stages of their careers. Section 1 contains the Teaching Quality Standard; Section 2 lists the descriptors of knowledge, skills and attributes related to interim certification; and Section 3 lists the descriptors

of knowledge, skills and attributes (KSAs) related to permanent certification.

The Teaching Quality Standard, Section 1 applies to all teachers: those with interim certificates and permanent certificates.

The Teaching Quality Standard defines quality teaching as follows:

Quality teaching occurs when the teacher's ongoing analysis of the context, and the teacher's decisions about which pedagogical knowledge and abilities to apply result in optimum learning by students.

All teachers are expected to meet the Teaching Quality Standard throughout their careers. However, teaching practices will vary because each teaching situation is different and in constant change. Reasoned judgment must be used to determine whether the Teaching Quality Standard is being met in a given context. (Alberta Education 1997)

In making a judgment about the quality of teaching being provided, principals must use reasoned judgment to determine whether the standard is met in a given context. This requires principals to consider a number of contextual variables such as the teachers' experience, the class composition and students' learning needs.

Section 2 outlines the KSAs applicable to interim certification, which principals will use to supervise first-year teachers. These KSAs will also form the criteria for

the first evaluation of first-year teachers. When, as a result of an evaluation, principals have determined that the first-year teachers have met the KSAs for interim certification in its entirety, this will be noted on the evaluation report. From that day forward, the teachers will work toward demonstration of the KSAs for permanent certification in Section 3 while maintaining competency in Section 2.

Principals will use the KSAs for permanent certification to supervise and evaluate beginning teachers who have met the criteria for interim certification. It is not necessary for beginning teachers to demonstrate the KSAs for permanent certification in their first year of teaching; however, teachers should be progressing toward meeting the standard of permanent professional certification. More information about teacher certification is provided on page 31.

## Supervision

Beginning teachers view principals as the leaders who set the expectations for teaching and learning in the school. Knowing the principal's expectations for instructional practices, grading and student achievement is more important to novice teachers than any advice given by the mentor teacher (Colley 2002, 22).

As instructional leaders, principals need to give regular systematic feedback to beginning teachers on their pedagogical approaches, content knowledge and classroom management. Ongoing communication between novice teachers and

principals is essential to foster the developmental nature of the induction process offering emotional as well as academic support (Wood 2005, 48).

The provincial *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy* (Alberta Education 2008) outlines the purposes of teacher supervision in section 9.

### Supervision

9 A fundamental component of the policy must be ongoing supervision of teachers by the principal, including:

- (a) providing support and guidance to teachers;
- (b) observing and receiving information from any source about the quality of teaching a teacher provides to students; and
- (c) identifying the behaviours or practices of a teacher that for any reason may require an evaluation.

Principals may choose to conduct targeted observations to provide timely feedback. Discussing expectations in advance for the areas that will be observed will reduce stress for beginning teachers. These short unannounced visits can focus on such areas as lesson delivery, questioning techniques, classroom management strategies, student feedback, assessment strategies and student engagement. While in the classroom, observe for targeted skills, provide quick feedback and schedule additional observations to ensure progress.

As stated earlier principals must not speak to mentor teachers about beginning teachers' progress. If growth needs are identified and someone other than an assigned mentor is better suited to address that topic, then the principal should arrange for the beginning teacher to observe that teacher. Principals may also wish to involve vice-principals in the coaching and modelling of targeted areas for improvement for beginning teachers. These strategies can increase the network of support for beginning teachers.

## Evaluation

Researchers have found that principals' frequent classroom visits and more informal feedback, whether positive or negative, reduced isolation and fears, whereas formal observations and processes, as well as evaluation process, created frustration and anxiety (Morrison 2012, 6).

At the beginning of the year, principals should explain the difference between supervision and evaluation. After spending a period of time supervising the beginning teachers and giving them feedback, the evaluation process can start. During supervision, principals should have worked through the teachers' areas of concerns, fostered the necessary changes and now have strong first-year teachers. As noted in the literature, beginning teachers are likely to be anxious during the evaluation process. One of the keys to managing this anxiety is clear and transparent communication throughout the process.

The provincial *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5* outlines the process for conducting a teacher evaluation in sections 10 through 13.

### Evaluation

10(1) The evaluation of a teacher by a principal may be conducted:

- (a) upon the written request of the teacher;
- (b) for purposes of gathering information related to a specific employment decision;
- (c) for purposes of assessing the growth of the teacher in specific areas of practice,
- (d) when, on the basis of information received through supervision, the principal has reason to believe that the teaching of the teacher may not meet the teaching quality standard.

(2) A recommendation by an authorized individual that a teacher be issued a permanent professional teaching certificate or be offered employment under a continuing contract must be supported by the findings of two or more evaluations of the teacher.

11 On initiating an evaluation, the principal must communicate explicitly to the teacher:

- (a) the reasons for and purposes of the evaluation;

- (b) the process, criteria and standards to be used;
- (c) the timelines to be applied; and
- (d) the possible outcomes of the evaluation.

12 Upon completion of an evaluation, the principal must provide the teacher with a copy of the completed evaluation report.

13 Where, as the result of an evaluation, a principal determines that a change in the behaviour or practice of a teacher is required, the principal must provide to the teacher a notice of remediation and may stipulate that the remediation strategies stated in that notice replace the obligation of the teacher to develop and implement an annual teacher professional growth plan. (Alberta Education 2008)

After the principal discusses the evaluation process with the teacher, mutually agreeable observation dates and times, and pre- and postconference times are selected. The same subject and class may be seen on two consecutive days to observe how the instruction and assessment practices are developed. The focus should be on subject areas of strength or areas that are the bulk of the teaching assignment. A follow-up letter should be sent to the teacher with information about the dates, times and classes of the formal evaluation. The principal should not become locked into a set number of

observations. Best practices are to have a minimum of three observations for each evaluation report; however, sometimes situations will arise where more observations will be necessary after giving some direct feedback or if some extenuating circumstances affected the lesson.

## Evaluation Process

Before each classroom observation, the principal meets with the teacher to determine the learning objectives for the lesson, what was taught prior that relates to this lesson and if any pertinent handouts are available. The principal should describe what he or she will be doing during the observation, such as scribing the lesson, recording specific data or looking at student work. Ask the teacher where best to sit in the classroom and suggest that the teacher inform the students about the observation.

The principal should arrive at the classroom at the predetermined time and stay for the full lesson period without interruptions or phone calls.

At the postconference debrief, the principal will provide copies of any data or notes that were assembled during the observation, discuss the lesson and give the teacher the first opportunity to provide a perspective on the lesson. The principal's observations should relate as much as possible to the Teaching Quality Standard. Strengths and stretches (areas for growth) should be highlighted and suggestions for improvement provided. The postconference should be concluded by confirming the next observation date and time.



The principal must be present in the teacher's classroom for several days to write specific descriptive comments for each descriptor in the Teaching Quality Standard. Evaluation templates that turn the KSAs into a simple checklist in which descriptions are rated have been proven to be problematic and flawed. The evaluation report can also be supplemented by information from postobservation conversations with the teacher when the principal asks for examples of how the teacher is meeting some of the criteria that could not be or were not being observed in the classroom. If the principal has any questions about the teacher's ability, the principal should ask the teacher to construct a lesson that demonstrates that skill in the classroom or give evidence of a situation so that item can accurately be reported on.

When the final evaluation report has been drafted, the principal should meet with the teacher to discuss the report. The contents of this report should not be a surprise but rather a culmination of all the discussions with the teacher during the evaluation process. The teacher will sign the evaluation report at the receipt of a copy and add written comments if desired.

Principals are reminded that an evaluation of a teacher's professional practice is a judgment of teaching quality and must not be influenced by budget conditions that may impact teaching contracts. At the conclusion of the evaluation, principals are often asked to make a recommendation with respect to future

employment. This recommendation must be based solely on the observed elements of the evaluation. Any decision with respect to the teacher's contract rests with the district.

A principal should call ATA Member Services for advice on how to proceed with the evaluation if there are concerns about a teacher's performance. As well, if a teacher has any concerns about the evaluation process or report, they should call ATA Member Services for individual advice. In all situations the principal and teacher will be assigned to different Member Services staff officers to ensure confidential, unbiased support.

## Teacher Certification

The first two years of a teacher's career are the last step to becoming a full-fledged member of the profession. Under the *Certification of Teachers Regulation*, school principals are given the responsibility to evaluate teachers for permanent certification, then forward the report to the superintendent of schools who will make a recommendation to the Registrar. This is a responsibility that principals must take very seriously. It is on your recommendation that this teacher will be granted a permanent teaching certificate. More information about teacher certification is available on the Alberta Education website at <http://education.alberta.ca> and from ATA Member Services.



# Conclusion

Conclusion.....	50
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## Conclusion

**As in the induction literature, beginning teachers indicated that “the principal was the primary reason they did not quit teaching” (Brock and Grady 1997; Richards 2004).**

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that new teachers receiving no induction support have a 41 per cent predicted turnover rate at the end of their first year. New teachers receiving basic induction support (mentorship and supportive communication) have a 39 per cent predicted turnover rate. New teachers receiving basic induction support plus increased collaboration (common planning time and orientation for beginning teachers) have a 27 per cent predicted turnover rate. New teachers receiving basic induction plus increased collaboration, affiliation with an outside support network and extra resources had only an 18 per cent predicted turnover rate (Brown and Wynn 2007). Qualitative research studies also shows that principals' support in mentor-

ing and induction plays a significant role in teachers' decisions to stay (Morrison 2012, 6–7) (ATA 2013). As in the induction literature, beginning teachers indicated that “the principal was the primary reason they did not quit teaching” (Brock and Grady 1997; Richards 2004). They “held on” because of the encouragement and personal and emotional support that the principal extended to them. Although they frequently wanted to quit teaching, they did not because of the “caring words and emotional support of their site principal” (Wood 2005, 56). These studies support the belief that the school principal can have a major impact on the success and retention of beginning teachers by planning and providing a comprehensive induction program at the school level.

# References

References.....	52
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# Appendix A

Teacher Mentorship Program:.....	56
Mentor Confirmation Form	



NAME OF DISTRICT: \_\_\_\_\_ NAME OF LOCAL: \_\_\_\_\_

**TEACHER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM: MENTOR CONFIRMATION FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level(s) taught: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentorship is an opportunity for new teachers to improve their skills and confidence through participation in an effective professional mentoring relationship. The desired outcomes are enhanced knowledge and skills for new teachers, and a collaborative and professional environment in Alberta's schools. The mentor is critical to the success of a teacher mentorship program. The mentor serves as a role model, coach and advisor to the new teacher, sharing his or her experience and knowledge about teaching on an ongoing basis. This mentoring relationship is based on trust and confidentiality.

**The following criteria will be considered in the selection of mentors:**

- Member in good standing with the Alberta Teachers' Association
- Completed a minimum of three years of successful teaching in the district
- Possesses a permanent Alberta Professional Teaching Certificate
- As experienced teaching professionals, skilled in working with both adults and students
- Knowledgeable about curriculum and skilled in current teaching/ learning strategies
- Excellent role model within the teaching profession
- Committed to the intended goals and principles of the mentorship program
- Willing to participate in professional development activities, over the course of the year, to enhance their mentor skills
- Demonstrated problem-solving skills
- Committed to being a lifelong learner
- Effective communicator, a listener and receptive to the views and feedback of others
- Demonstrated effective interpersonal skills and a positive outlook
- Flexible team player

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ TEACHER SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

*I support the nomination of \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the collaborative District ATA Local Teacher Mentorship Program.*

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PRINCIPAL SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note:** Mentors should be aware that nomination does not guarantee assignment of a protégé. Mentor and protégé partnerships are based on a variety of factors such as appropriate grade level assignment, subject area, geographic location and the number of interested applicants.

# Appendix B

A Principal's Calendar to Support Teacher Induction.....	58
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# A Principal's Calendar to Support Teacher Induction

Even though each school is different, there are practices to the school year that can be universally predicted. This monthly checklist can serve as a to-do list for the many things principals should be alerting beginning teachers to in the course of the year. There are many other aspects of our professional culture that could be discussed during those early days, but be conscious of beginning teacher overload. Consider what is just-in-time learning, absolutely needed and what can possibly go on the wait-awhile list.

## JUNE

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a beginning teacher orientation package.</li> <li>• Explain the mentorship program to staff and invite teachers to volunteer to be a mentor teacher.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage professional development sessions for mentors.</li> <li>• Provide interested mentor teachers with a confirmation form to complete.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange for materials that beginning teachers will need, such as access cards, keys, access to e-mail and staff portions of the school and district website, office and classroom furniture, photocopier codes, etc.</li> <li>• Decide on the agenda for the first orientation meeting (held at the beginning of the school year).</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange for a meeting prior to the start of the year with beginning teachers when you can give your full attention. This meeting may also include a school tour and introduction to key staff members.</li> <li>• Remind beginning teachers to apply for a Statement of Teacher Qualifications from the ATA and to provide proof of their application to the district.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform beginning teachers about the ATA Beginning Teachers' Conference and approve their registration through the ATA website at <a href="http://www.teachers.ab.ca">www.teachers.ab.ca</a>.</li> <li>• Inform beginning teachers of the resources for beginning teachers and the professional growth plan module on the ATA website.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct beginning teachers to the Alberta Education website for current copies of the programs of study.</li> <li>• Inform beginning teachers about school summer hours, access to the school and security protocols.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage beginning teachers to visit the district and school websites to review the current Annual Education Plans.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide mentors' contact information to beginning teachers and vice versa.</li> </ul>   |

## AUGUST

- Organize and conduct the first orientation meeting. Be sure beginning teachers are clear about what happens during non-instructional days and the first day of school.
- Discuss and/or highlight school and community diversity.
- Provide beginning teachers with their orientation binder and review key items.
- Decide on the dates and topics for follow-up orientation meetings held during the year.
- Take the teachers on a school tour (if not done in June).
- Introduce beginning teachers to their mentors.
- When preparing the teacher assignment schedule, provide common prep times for beginning teachers and mentors, if possible.
- Encourage beginning teachers to develop a wellness plan and emphasize the importance of personal work–life balance.
- Discuss your philosophical and practical expectations for student discipline and classroom management.
- Assure beginning teachers that you will be touching base frequently and that this attention doesn't indicate a problem. However, if a potentially serious problem arises, you expect to be the first to know. It's better not to be surprised.
- Discuss district and professional protocols regarding use of school technology and e-mail.
- Discuss community expectations and other "off-school" behaviours, such as Facebook, Twitter and other social media.
- Emphasize the need for long-term (year) plans and provide any necessary templates.
- Review the paperwork that is required for school startup.
- Discuss FOIPP requirements.
- Review the school calendar.
- Provide information about classroom supplies and teacher professional development budgets.
- Discuss how collaborative communities of practice function within the school.
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of support staff and parent volunteers.
- Ensure that beginning teachers have access to all necessary school technology.
- Take beginning teachers to see their classroom and discuss classroom organization.
- Ensure that beginning teachers have their mentor contact information.

## SEPTEMBER

- Support registration and attendance at the ATA Beginning Teachers' Conference.
- Discuss other professional development opportunities, approval processes and funding.
- Introduce beginning teachers at meet-the-teacher night and to members of the school council.
- Monitor how many extracurricular activities beginning teachers volunteer for.
- Meet with mentors and ensure that they know their roles and responsibilities.
- Plan to provide as much classroom release as possible for the mentors and beginning teachers to do classroom observations and curriculum preparation.
- Conduct an orientation follow-up meeting.
- Discuss classroom management and offer practical tips.
- Assist beginning teachers with planning for field trips.
- Discuss the district harassment policy.
- Discuss the importance of First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives in all curricula.
- Ensure that beginning teachers have classroom support for inclusion and developing IPPs.
- Provide each beginning teacher an opportunity to discuss supervision and evaluation procedures.
- Remind beginning teachers to review their paycheque amounts and deductions for accuracy.

## OCTOBER

- Provide support for student assessment and evaluation in anticipation of the first reporting session.
- Explain the student evaluation and reporting procedure and your expectations for comments and parent communication.
- Discuss upcoming school celebrations and events. How are holidays observed in the school community? Are there any special considerations or guidelines the teachers need to know?
- Meet with beginning teachers to discuss their professional growth plan or mentorship plan (whichever they have chosen).
- Review the parent-teacher interview format, times, scheduling procedures and location of meetings. Assist teachers in preparing for meetings by anticipating certain situations, and role-play how to handle those situations. Offer to attend any parent conferences that may benefit from your attendance. Remind teachers not to tolerate any intimidation or abuse. Any such behaviour should be documented and shared with the principal.

## NOVEMBER

- Find authentic opportunities to affirm the strengths of beginning teachers.
- Reassure them that many beginning teachers feel disillusionment at this time during the school year. When they question their competence and commitment, encourage them to “hang in there” and to take full benefit of their experienced mentors.
- Encourage beginning teachers to review their wellness plan with their mentors.
- Encourage staff to spend informal time together.
- Meet with the mentorship team to discuss what you can do to support them.
- Arrange a meeting with beginning teachers to review the Code of Professional Conduct and how it applies to students and colleagues.
- Draw teacher attention to publications available on the ATA and other stakeholder websites.
- Assist teachers to plan for winter holiday events that respect diversity and the school community.

## DECEMBER

- Check in to ensure that beginning teachers had the opportunity to observe and practise new instructional strategies with a mentor or colleague.
- Emphasize that student learning is still the focus despite the increased holiday excitement.
- Remind secondary teachers that final exams take place early in the new year and advise them of end-of-semester procedures.
- Review the diploma exam and school exam procedures.
- Encourage beginning teachers to plan for a relaxing holiday involving little or no school work.

## JANUARY

- Plan to meet beginning teachers to discuss the teacher evaluation procedures.
- Secondary teachers will finish one semester and start a new one. Plan to support teachers through this busy transition time.
- Discuss attendance requirements for the annual teachers' convention.
- Develop a plan to support beginning teachers who may be hired for second semester.

## FEBRUARY

- Review the teachers' convention program with beginning teachers and highlight sessions of interest. Discuss teacher obligations in relation to teachers' conventions. Encourage mentor teachers to attend some teachers' convention sessions with their beginning teachers.
- Alert beginning teachers to the February blues that affect some students and teachers and how to deal with this.

## MARCH

- Continue to dialogue with beginning teachers about student progress.
- Talk to beginning teachers about the school district procedures for awarding teaching contracts.
- Arrange for beginning teachers to meet with district personnel.
- Start the evaluation process.

## APRIL

- Continue the evaluation process.
- Meet with the mentorship team to discuss how you can support them.
- Review provincial achievement exam procedures.

## MAY

- Complete the evaluation process and submit the teacher evaluation report to central office.
- Encourage beginning teachers to reflect and articulate how their professional identity has emerged throughout this formative year.
- Review the role of the ATA and encourage beginning teachers to pursue opportunities to be involved in the local ATA and specialist councils.
- Discuss year-end procedures.
- Revise orientation and mentorship packages with input from beginning teachers and mentors.
- Share your mentorship program successes and challenges with administrator colleagues.



## JUNE

- Review beginning teachers' professional growth plans or mentorship plans.
- Encourage beginning teachers to prepare for their next assignments by setting curricular, instructional and professional growth goals.
- Provide support and guidance to beginning teachers whose contract will not be renewed for the coming year (letter of reference, networking, tips for interviewing).
- Review school closure activities, cleaning of classrooms and returning school property.
- Develop the orientation binder for the next school year.
- Invite experienced teachers to volunteer to become mentors.



# Appendix C

Beginning Teacher Orientation Package.....66



# Beginning Teacher Orientation Package

Orientations can take the form of a binder specifically designed for each individual school. Beginning teachers can add to the binder during the year. Such resources are valuable to have when beginning teachers come into a position during the school year. It should be reviewed and updated yearly.

## ORIENTATION BINDER SAMPLE CONTENTS

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map of the school (with fire exits)</li> <li>• Division and school calendars with important dates indicated such as progress reports and conferences, professional development days, holidays, etc</li> <li>• School timetable, including any alternate timetables</li> <li>• Staff lists with contact numbers and assignments</li> <li>• Fire drill procedures</li> <li>• Emergency lockdown procedures</li> <li>• Building security and accessing the school after hours</li> <li>• Copies of relevant school policies</li> <li>• Staff handbook</li> <li>• Student handbook</li> <li>• Copy of the school mission statement</li> <li>• Copy of the division's three-year plan</li> <li>• List of the school trustees</li> <li>• Research articles concerning school and division goals and initiatives</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student evaluation procedures and reporting guidelines</li> <li>• Recent articles on assessment, especially regarding the need for a variety of authentic formative and summative assessment tools</li> <li>• Location of student records: parent phone numbers, medical information (especially severe allergies), cumulative folders</li> <li>• Student attendance procedures</li> <li>• List of who's who in the school district including the names and job descriptions of support personnel</li> <li>• The ATA local directory</li> <li>• Addresses of important websites: Alberta Education, the ATA, AAC, 2Learn and Regional Consortium</li> <li>• Planning templates</li> <li>• Accident reporting procedures</li> <li>• Field trip approval and consent forms</li> <li>• Fundraising approval and procedures</li> <li>• Extracurricular policy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of school and district technology</li> <li>• Staff absence and booking substitute teacher</li> <li>• Professional development approval process, release time and funding</li> <li>• First-day checklist (first week, first month, first semester)</li> <li>• The location of important materials: media carts, photocopiers, art supplies, computers, telephones, etc.</li> <li>• Instructions regarding access to professional materials and resources</li> <li>• Information on working with parent volunteers and teacher assistants (see <a href="http://www.teachers.ab.ca">www.teachers.ab.ca</a>)</li> <li>• Information on classroom finances</li> <li>• Procedures regarding accessing and spending school funds</li> <li>• Parking allocations</li> <li>• Staff room expectations</li> <li>• Guidelines for professional decorum including attire</li> <li>• Information on coffee and social funds</li> </ul> |
|---|---|---|







