



MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAM

Washoe County School District
Staff Development Services

The Brown Center

www.washoe.k12.nv.us/mentorteach

PHASES OF FIRST YEAR TEACHING

First year teachers will move through a number of developmental phases. While not every teacher goes through this exact sequence, these phases are very useful to assist you in the process of supporting your new teachers. These teachers move through several phases from anticipation, to survival, to disillusionment, to rejuvenation, to reflection; then back to anticipation. Here is a look at the stages through which new teachers move during this first crucial year.

ANTICIPATION PHASE



New teachers enter with a tremendous commitment to making a difference and a somewhat idealistic view of how to accomplish their goals. One new teacher is quoted as saying, “I was elated to get the job but terrified about going from the simulated experience of student teaching to being the person completely in charge.” This feeling of excitement carries new teachers through the first few weeks of school.

SURVIVAL PHASE



The first month of school is very overwhelming for new teachers. They are learning a lot and at a very fast, rapid pace. During the survival phase, most new teachers struggle to keep their heads above water. They become very focused and consumed with the day-to-day routine of teaching. There is little time to stop and reflect on their experiences. It is not uncommon for new teachers to spend up to seventy hours a week on schoolwork. New teachers, still uncertain of what really works, must develop their lessons for the first time. Although tired and surprised by the amount of work, first year teachers usually maintain a tremendous amount of energy and commitment during the survival phase, harboring hope that soon the turmoil will subside.

DISILLUSIONMENT PHASE



After weeks of nonstop work and stress, new teachers enter the disillusionment phase. The intensity and length of the phase varies among new teachers. The extensive time commitment, the realization that things are probably not going as smoothly as they want and low morale contribute to this period of disenchantment. New teachers begin questioning both their commitment and their competence. Many new teachers get sick during this phase. During this phase, classroom management is a major source of distress.

At this point, the accumulated stress of the first year teachers, coupled with months of excessive time allotted to teaching, often brings complaints from family members and friends. This is a very difficult and challenging phase for new entries into the profession. They express self-doubt, have lower self-esteem and question their professional commitment. In fact, getting through this phase may be the toughest challenge they face as a new teacher.

REJUVENATION PHASE



The rejuvenation phase is characterized by a slow rise in the new teacher's attitude toward teaching. It general begins in January. Having a winter break makes a tremendous difference for new teachers. It allows them to resume a normal lifestyle, with plenty of rest, food, exercise, and time for family and friends. This vacation is the first opportunity that new teachers have for organizing materials and planning curriculum. It is a time for them to sort through materials that have accumulated and to prepare new ones. This breath of fresh air gives novice teachers a broader perspective with renewed hope.

REFLECTION PHASE



The reflection phase is a particularly invigorating time for first year teachers. Reflecting back over the year, they highlight events that were successful and those that were not. They think about the various changes that they plan to make the following year in management, curriculum, and teaching strategies. The end is in sight, and they have almost made it; but more importantly, a vision emerges as to what their second year will look like, which bring a new phase of anticipation.

It is critical to assist new teachers and ease the transition from student teacher to full-time professional. Recognizing the phases new teachers go through gives you the framework within which you can design your support program to make their first year of teaching a positive experience for everyone.