

Taking Your Place in the Professional Community

A Handbook for Beginning Teachers



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Preface

This handbook is divided into two main sections.

- The first section, What Saskatchewan Teachers Believe In, is an examination of what it means to be a professional educator teaching in the province of Saskatchewan.
- The second section, What Saskatchewan Teachers Do, is intended to help you to navigate your early days in the classroom and to address some of the common concerns experienced by beginning teachers.

You will find relevant resource suggestions throughout the manual.

Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.

Confucius

The Journey Begins:

As an educator, you provide a tremendous service to society. The future of any civilization relies on the knowledge, skills and application of that knowledge and those skills to improving the human condition. Education is central to life and to our survival as a civilization.

Gentzler (2005)

What Saskatchewan Teachers Believe In

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: Vision, Mission, Values and Commitments

Congratulations! You are beginning a career that is one of the most rewarding, challenging, fulfilling, purposeful, busy and FUN possible. Up until now most of your professional preparation has fit within someone else's view of what you needed to know to be a practitioner; now you are getting ready to set out on your own journey. You may be wondering about the landscape that surrounds you, the roads you will go down, and the possible signposts, curves, detours and roadblocks you may encounter. There are many supporters who are eager to help you as you set out on your personal road trip so that you do not need to feel you are on this journey by yourself.

Every new teacher has a different point of departure and a different destination in mind when the journey begins, but there are many similar experiences along the way. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is here to assist you in your journey. This handbook is one of the many supports that the Federation provides to help you navigate your early days in the classroom and to guide you on your way.

Your professional organization, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, is committed to an expansive, holistic vision for teaching and learning in Saskatchewan that is articulated by its vision, mission and values and a set of commitments for the profession.

The identified commitments fall into four broad, interrelated themes – social justice, inclusion and equity; respectful relationships; professional responsibility; and professional stewardship. As leaders in classrooms and communities across Saskatchewan, we believe in promoting and demonstrating these commitments to the well-being of students, creating a just society and elevating the status of our profession. Throughout this handbook you will see direct reference to these commitments and the ways in which they can be realized through your classroom practice. The Federation is here to support you in the actualization of these commitments as you begin your professional journey, as well as throughout your career.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is committed to provide a public education that serves a common good that is beneficial to all of society, not just the students currently enrolled. Schools are a source of community and provincial pride which contribute greatly to the quality of all our lives.



OUR VISION

A strong collective professional voice for Saskatchewan teachers and quality publicly funded public education for the benefit of all students and society.

OUR MISSION

Inspiring and supporting teaching and learning excellence in public education.

OUR VALUES



We are caring.

Nurturing students' well being and potential and instilling a passion for learning is our calling. We value and practice compassion, acceptance and inclusivity.



We are welcoming.

Connecting with people and building strong and enduring relationships is our pride and purpose. We value and invite participation, collaboration and collegiality.



We are respectful.

Honouring diversity and creating a sense of safety, openness and belonging is our responsibility. We value and model ethical behaviour, integrity and civility.



We are learners.

Listening to people share their unique experiences and perspectives informs our service and advocacy. We value and encourage evidence-based decision-making, balance of viewpoint and objectivity.



We are teachers.

Empowering others to make informed decisions is our duty. Researching and sharing information is one part of the transformational work of teaching. We value and promote knowledge, freedom of thought and creativity.



We are professionals.

Fulfilling commitments and putting student needs first is informed by our professional knowledge, judgment and experience, and is the foundation of the public's trust in our profession. We value and lead through fairness, openness and honesty.

OUR COMMITMENTS



Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity

A commitment to provide a public education that:

- Recognizes and respects every child or youth's diversity, enriches their character and prepares them for life's opportunities and challenges.
- Is based on a student-centred, broadly based understanding of education that prepares children and youth to become confident, creative and caring individuals while gaining valuable experience and knowledge to fuel future endeavours.
- Is accessible and equitable for all children and youth, regardless of their circumstances or learning potential.
- Serves a common good that is beneficial to all of society, not just to the students currently enrolled. Schools are a source of community and provincial pride which greatly contribute to the quality of all our lives.

Respectful Relationships

A commitment to model positive values, practices and relationships that:

- Honour the dignity and roles of all individuals in the educational community and elevate the status of the teaching profession.
- Create a uniquely Saskatchewan experience in public education marked by a co-operative spirit and healthy relationships.
- Strengthen relationships with parents, communities, colleagues, employers and government in order to support student and teacher success.

Professional Responsibility

A commitment to engage in exemplary practices that:

- Demonstrate high standards of care, conduct and competence to ensure the well-being and growth of all children and youth.
- Create classroom and school cultures, which respect individual diversity, create a sense of belonging, and promote intellectual freedom and sharing by all.
- Exercise professional autonomy and agency focused on authenticated teaching and learning activities with students.
- Adapt and evolve through reflection, lifelong learning and collegiality.

Professional Stewardship

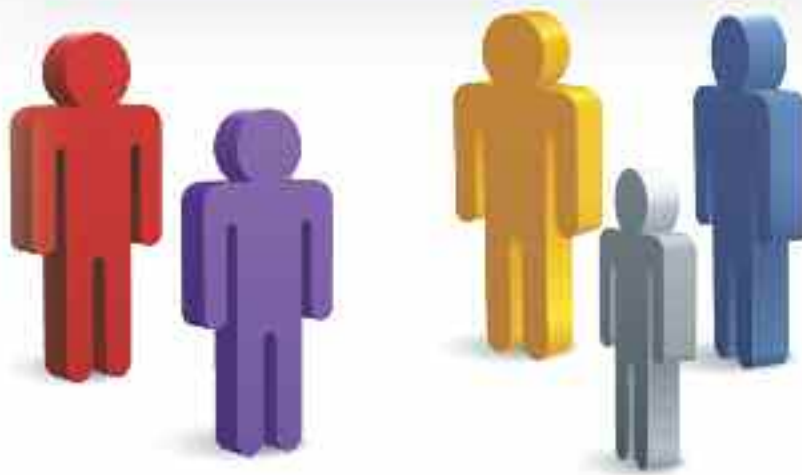
A commitment to act on shared understandings and agreements that:

- Support student and teacher success by addressing a wide range of issues and needs regarding teacher professionalism and the quality of education.
- Assure public confidence and trust in professionally led systems and standards of teacher conduct and competence.
- Ensure all teachers have working conditions and professional opportunities that will attract, nurture and retain individuals who are committed to providing high-quality public service.



Commitment to Respectful Professional Relationships

As a teacher you are constantly surrounded by people, but it takes time and conscious choice to ensure that some of those people are your teacher colleagues. Research shows that making professional connections is one of the most important activities you can engage in at the beginning of your career. This will prevent you from becoming isolated and provides the opportunity to discuss ideas or issues of concern with colleagues. Always remember that excellent teachers do not work alone.



Your Role on the Team

Harry Wong (2004) writes that being part of a professional learning community based on quality professional relationships is a significant factor in the retention of beginning teachers. The theory of individual professional growth has been replaced with the conviction that professional development, aimed at collegial teams working and learning together within the school setting, has overwhelming benefits for all concerned. Collegial interchange, not isolation, should be the norm for teachers.

You are now part of a team where everyone is expected to make contributions. As a recent graduate, you are someone whose knowledge is current and valid. While you may be reluctant to contribute to professional exchanges, beginning teachers are usually regarded as refreshing additions to the school culture. In *Principals Cultivate Support to Nurture New Teachers* (2008), Richardson states “. . . their energy and commitment can be a real shot in the arm for a grade-level team or an entire school” (p. 7). Recognize that your enthusiasm and innovative ideas can benefit everyone.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers' commitment to professional responsibility is reflected when we engage in exemplary practices that adapt and evolve through collegiality.

Don't hesitate to ask other teachers for assistance. Article 4 of the Federation's Code of Ethics states that it is the professional duty of experienced teachers to assist new members of the profession. It is both reasonable and appropriate to ask about resources and materials. It is equally true that you might be asked to share your good ideas. All teachers, new and experienced, are encouraged to work together in order to develop and share information and resources that support teaching and learning.

One valuable piece of advice to remember as you start out in your career is to “hang out” with the people that you want to become. In Breaux and Whittaker's *Seven Simple Secrets: What the Best Teachers Know and Do!* (2006), the assertion is made that one of the main things separating the not-so-good teachers from the good teachers from the great teachers is, simply, attitude. Positive, effective teachers make a difference in the profession and you can benefit from being in their company. Conversely, being around negative people is never likely to have a positive impact. *Seven Simple Secrets* sums it up in the following verse, “Always do what the professional does and stay away from the negative buzz” (p. 66).

New employees in every field need to navigate the landscape in which they find themselves. Beyond learning how to relate to students in your classroom, as an educator, you must also learn how to manage relationships with your colleagues. Developing effective relationships with other adults at school is a crucial part of each new teacher's first year.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

It is a professional responsibility to create classroom and school cultures that promote intellectual freedom and sharing by all.

Various Team Members

Within a school setting there may be a number of professionals and paraprofessionals whose main function is to meet student needs and complement the work of the classroom teacher. These include speech pathologists, psychologists, health-care providers, social workers, educational assistants, etc. Teachers may, for example, give direction, consult or collaborate with these individuals, depending on the nature of their respective roles and responsibilities or particular situational factors. Effective working relationships among teachers and non-teaching personnel are essential if students' best interests and the goals of education are to be met, so make sure you ask your principal and/or mentor about the role of each of these people. Teachers may assume that everyone is aware of the functions of non-teaching personnel, so if you don't know, please ask. You may also want to read the publication, *Effective Working Relationships With Non-Teaching Personnel in Schools* (2005) on the Federation website, www.stf.sk.ca, which sets out direction and core principles for working with non-teaching employees.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers believe in honouring the dignity and roles of all individuals in the educational community and strengthening relationships with colleagues in order to support shared student and teacher success.

Norms for teacher-support staff

- Commitment to meet students' diverse needs.
- Focus on student safety and well-being.
- Understanding about appropriate roles, responsibilities and expectations.
- Clear and timely communications.
- Appropriate sharing of information.
- Appropriate teacher behaviour during non-teaching staff's bargaining and job action.

Professional Learning Communities

In educational circles, the term “professional learning community” has become widespread. The professional learning community is seen as a powerful staff development approach and an effective strategy for school change and improvement. Central to the professional learning community is the concept that knowledge is situated in the day-to-day experiences of teachers and is best understood through critical reflection with others who share the same experiences (Haar, 2003; Vescio, Ross and Adams, 2008; Hord and Tobia, 2011).

For some time, educational researchers have been highlighting the need to consider teachers’ workplace factors when discussing effective teaching practice. The research is demonstrating that teachers who feel supported in their own ongoing learning and classroom practice are more committed and effective than those who did not receive such confirmation. Support by means of teacher networks, co-operation among colleagues and expanded professional roles increase teacher efficacy in meeting students’ needs. Research indicates that teachers with a high sense of their own efficacy are more likely to adopt new classroom behaviours and are also more likely to stay in the profession (Peters and Pearce, 2011; Supovitz and Christman, 2005). Schmoker (2004) writes that the most promising practice for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity for school personnel to function as a professional learning community.

There is a positive difference to the school culture and subsequently to student and teacher learning when teachers have the opportunities to:

- Engage in concrete and precise talk about their practice in relation to student learning.
- Explore best instructional practices together.
- Collaborate.
- Engage in focused inquiry.
- Celebrate student and staff successes.

Professional learning communities can take various configurations. In a small school all staff members could form one community, possibly with a focus on a school or a division goal. In other situations they may be grade-alike communities, interdisciplinary teams, or subject-focused groupings.

Engaging in these professional learning communities can increase your professional knowledge, add to your tools and strategies, and subsequently enhance your students’ learning. In a well-functioning professional learning community, you will be surrounded and supported by a professional culture that focuses on constructive learning. Remember again, you are an integral part of this community and, as such, are expected to play a contributing role.



Mentorship

One special form of collegiality that you may be involved in is mentorship. What exactly do mentors do? This is a question asked repeatedly by beginning teachers and mentors alike. One of the main objectives of mentorship, is to support and enhance a vision of professionalism. In a mentorship you and a partner (usually an experienced teacher in a similar context or situation) work on tasks that are important to you as you develop your professional abilities. Mentorship is increasingly being acknowledged as a critical piece in any beginning teacher induction. It is removed from any supervision or performance appraisals aspect.

Mentors serve various roles, such as:

- Assisting with orientation (tours, explanations of procedures, etc.).
- Providing opportunities for observation of lessons taught by experienced teachers.
- Working with beginning teachers in the classroom and discussing lessons afterwards.
- Identifying beginning teacher strengths and building on them.
- Sharing (or helping to develop) materials, examples of performance assessments, resources, etc.
- Facilitating reflection through collecting classroom data and conferencing.
- Facilitating problem solving around issues of planning, management and curriculum.
- Assisting the beginning teacher in understanding the norms of the school, especially in areas of interpersonal communication, roles and responsibilities, philosophy of discipline, etc.
- Listening.
- Modelling good professional practice.
- Demonstrating sensitivity towards the beginning teacher.
- Responding to the professional needs as identified by the beginning teacher: classroom management, questioning techniques, dealing with parents, etc.

The mentor relationship has been identified (Blank and Kershaw, 2009; Villani, 2006; Lieberman, et al., 2012; Lipton and Wellman, 2003) as a significant component of the induction program for beginning teachers. Mentorship can have positive benefits for all those involved – students, beginning teachers, experienced teachers, administrators and the professional teaching organization as a whole.

Did You Know?

Induction is a noun. It is the name given to a comprehensive, coherent and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support and retain new teachers as they grow in understanding of teaching as a lifelong learning process.

Mentoring is most commonly used as a verb or adjective because it describes what mentors do. A mentor is a person whose basic function is to help a new teacher. Some beginning teachers may have an assigned mentor, but may also have other informal mentors supporting their work in different areas. Mentoring is not induction; it is a component of the induction process.

Mentorship – The Benefits

The support that you receive from your mentor should be based on the needs that you identify. Possibly you don't know where to begin. You don't know what you don't know. A needs assessment (see Appendix A) may provide clarity for you and your mentor as you investigate areas on which to focus.

A formal mentorship with release time and a schedule of regular meeting times is, of course, the preferred method of mentoring, but if no such framework exists, you would be well-advised to seek out those individuals who would be willing to support you. Too often beginning teachers hesitate to reach out for help, believing that people are just too busy for them, or that asking for help is admitting they are experiencing difficulty. People want you to succeed, but also may not feel comfortable offering advice and support without first receiving an invitation to do so. Consider that administrators and other experienced teachers want to walk alongside you, but you may first need to reach out your hand.

It is essential for you, as a beginning teacher, to observe experienced master teachers in action. By watching your mentor(s) at work in the classroom, you can learn a great deal that can never be captured in a textbook.

Classroom observation describes the practice of sitting in on another teacher's class to observe, learn and reflect. Various aspects of the class can be examined, such as routines, use of time, schedule,

participation, teaching strategies, management strategies, learner interest and much more. A teacher will naturally look for support on an issue that is difficult for him or her, but it is often a great method of being exposed to a new and different approach to teaching. Observation is an important part of learning how to teach. Much of what beginner teachers need to be aware of cannot be learned solely in the university class. Therefore, classroom observation presents an opportunity to see real-life teachers in real-life teaching situations.

A mentor can:

- Answer your questions.
- Observe your lessons.
- Act as a sounding board for your ideas.
- Provide you with feedback.
- Help with your pacing.
- Encourage your reflection.
- Help you locate resources.
- Assist with your long-range planning.
- Demonstrate strategies you could add to your instructional toolbox.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers believe it is a professional responsibility to adapt and evolve through reflection, lifelong learning and collegiality.

Mentorship Benefits

Students

For students, mentorship:

- Provides teachers who are more reflective and disposed to continuous improvement.
- Provides teachers with the self-confidence to use a wider range of instructional and evaluative strategies.
- Provides increased instructional continuity from reduced teacher turnover.

For beginning teachers, mentorship:

- Provides access to the knowledge, experience and support of an accomplished professional.
- Provides a vision of theory being translated into practice.
- Provides beginning teachers with the awareness that they are “part of the team.”
- Produces an enhanced sense of confidence and competence in both their instructional and management strategies.
- Provides emotional support.
- Reduces isolation and builds a collegial network among professional colleagues.
- Reduces trial-and-error learning and accelerates professional growth.

Beginning Teachers

“Real-time feedback is the only way we can show new teachers how great teaching feels in action.”

Bambrick-Santoyo (2014), p. 72

Mentor Teachers

For mentor teachers, mentorship:

- Increases conscious reflection on their own teaching practices.
- Produces a renewed enthusiasm for the profession.
- Increases motivation to be innovative and try new approaches.
- Develops and/or enhances the specific skills associated with successful mentoring, including listening, observing, conferencing, analyzing, encouraging and providing feedback.

In the words of mentor teachers:

“Mentoring has improved my relationships with other teachers (not just beginning teachers). I have become more aware of the value of other teachers on staff, and more encouraged to share.”

“The biggest part of the learning process for me has been that the relationship is reciprocal. By collaborating we learn so much from each other.”

“Mentoring has helped me become more reflective about my own practice.”

“Working with this new teacher has rejuvenated my love of teaching.”

For administrators, mentorship:

- Provides valuable assistance for orientation and support of the beginning teacher.
- Provides increased quality of instruction for both beginning and experienced teachers.
- Enhances the function of the school as a learning community, as many features of mentorship (reflective practice, collaboration, support, teamwork, shared understandings, etc.) are also the qualities found in professional learning communities.
- Opens up conversations about professional culture.
- Reduces teacher attrition and time required for beginning teacher recruitment, development and supervision.

Administrators

“Site administrators who understand the role of the mentors and the professional development activities in which the teachers will engage can reinforce the messages that novice teachers receive. It is important that site administrators are supportive of and knowledgeable about the full range, purpose, and activities of the induction program. Site administrators who understand and support induction activities are able to work with those who also provide support to ensure new teacher success.”

Bartell (2005), p. 50

Education in General

For education in general, mentorship:

- Contributes to the retention of teachers.
- Contributes to the enhancement of the profession through improved classroom practices.
- Results in a more capable, energized staff.
- Retains experienced teachers who find a new challenge by serving as teacher mentors.
- Results in a commitment to lifelong learning.
- Facilitates the development of professionalism.

“Who better to teach novice teachers than those with the best skills in the same school with the same students?”

Donder (2011), p. 63

Relationships With Experienced Teachers

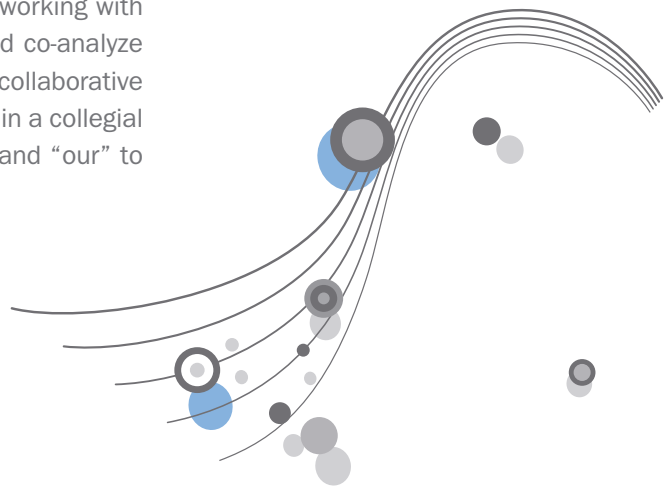
According to Lipton and Wellman (2003), you may find that learning-focused mentors will use a continuum of “stances” to support your professional growth.

Mentors may take the role of **coach**. A coach aims to increase your ability to plan, reflect and practise. A coach maintains a non-judgmental approach and supports your thinking, problem solving and goal clarification by asking questions and seeking clarification. For example, they might pose questions such as:

- What were your reasons for this approach to the lesson?
- What big idea is central to that discussion?
- If next semester you have fewer students in this course, would you consider a different approach? Why?
- What different approaches might you take?

As the person being coached, your role is to be thinking actively as you reflect, clarify and make connections.

A mentor may take the role of **collaborator**. Here you are working with the mentor to co-develop ideas, co-create instruments and co-analyze situations, learning evidence and other collected data. The collaborative stance signals respect and the expectation of participation in a collegial relationship. The mentor will use pronouns such as “we” and “our” to indicate the nature of this relationship.



The **consultant** plays the role of expert supplying information, identifying and offering analysis of what they see and hear. They share information about learning, curriculum and content, policies and procedures, and effective practices. When consultants make statements like the following, they are making their thinking transparent:

- Here's what you should focus on ...
- Consider these possible options ...
- Here is why it matters ...

As you internalize principles of learning and teaching, the consultant's expert lenses become resources for you to independently create method and solutions.

The role of **calibrator** is the most rigid of the four stances. Calibrating refers to regulating. A mentor may adopt this stance if performance standards and expectations require some adjustment. The mentor presents models and concrete examples of such standards in action. These exemplars become essential references in sometimes difficult conversations. Adopting this stance may occur if a teacher is experiencing problems and requires some more prescriptive assistance. In this stance the mentor teacher will focus on student needs, products and performances, and their relationship to teacher performance.

There is not one stance that is the **standard** for all situations. The choice of approach depends on the mentor's assessment of need in the moment or from the beginning teacher's specific request.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers model positive values and practices that strengthen relationships with colleagues in order to support student and teacher success.

Relationships With Other Beginning Teachers

When you were at university preparing for your current role, there were many people around you to bounce ideas off of, share resources or swap stories with. Keeping such a network of people in comparable situations remains of value. The opportunity to speak with other beginning teachers with similar issues and problem solve together is very useful. The networking you do now will help sustain you and, you may well find these professional relationships endure throughout your career.

Besides, it's always nice to hear that you are not alone.



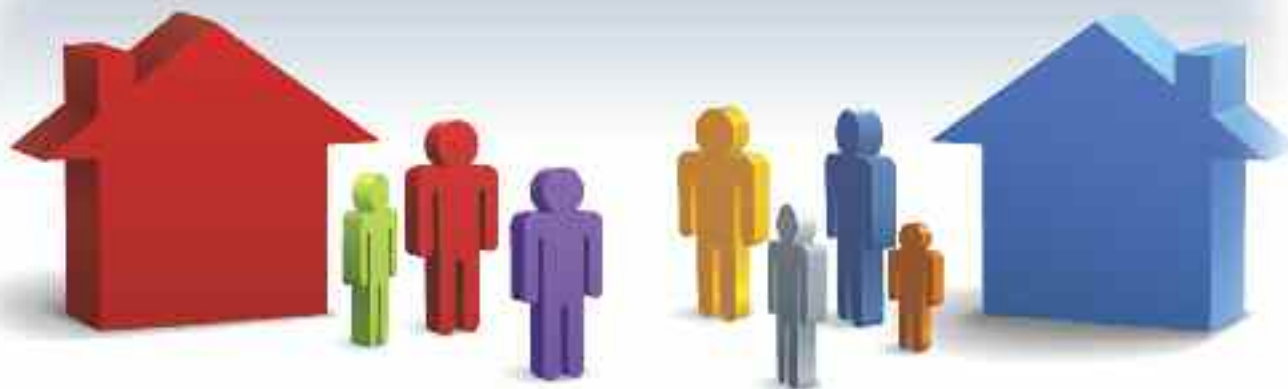
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Commitment to Respectful Home and Community Relationships

A piece of advice for beginning teachers is to cultivate good relationships with the parents, guardians and caregivers of the students you teach. Take advantage of opportunities to connect positively with these people. Keep in mind they want the same thing as you do – in other words, the very best for their children – and these shared expectations benefit everyone concerned. Schools that promote family involvement experience greater accomplishments than those that do not.



How to Connect With the Home

Possibly the best suggestion about connecting with parents, guardians and caregivers is to contact them early in the school year. Having a positive contact with home may make it less intimidating to discuss possible issues. If a problem does arise, it is important to contact the home in a timely manner. This prevents parents from being frustrated with communication about a problem that has been occurring for a period of time. It is much easier for your administrator to support you if you have had regular communication throughout the year, whether or not there is a problem. This is just good practice. Plan for regular contact with the home in order to establish relationships beneficial to all.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers are committed to strengthening relationships with parents and the community in order to support student and teacher success.

Depending on the grade level of the student, you can foster positive communication in a number of ways, including:

**you
can!**

- ✓ A letter of introduction welcoming your students (and their parents, guardians and caregivers) to a new school year (see Appendix B for an example). Be sensitive to the forms of address used (e.g., “Dear Mother and Father” is inappropriate in a vast number of cases).
- ✓ A student profile questionnaire to families (see Appendix C for an example).
- ✓ Weekly, monthly and quarterly newsletters that celebrate accomplishments and highlight upcoming events, activities and assignments.
- ✓ Class newsletters written by students.
- ✓ Phone calls and emails.
- ✓ Teacher websites.

Teacher Suggestions on Home Connections

- I ask my students to create a lesson each semester sharing all that they learned in my class. They develop skits, panels, scenarios, all kinds of things. Then I invite those at home to join us. It's a great time. Last year I had two calls from community members asking if they could come as well.
- Every time my students create a major project, I find a way to get them recognized in the local paper or on the cable network. They and their families love the exposure.
- Every semester I invite a parent, guardian or caregiver to come to school and talk for 20 minutes about anything they think is important – there is some fascinating discussion that takes place in my class. The presenters feel good too because they can share their ideas and be challenged by my students.
- I mail a regular newsletter so that those at home have an idea of what we are doing in the classroom. With computer technology this is very easy. I also post a calendar on my website indicating due dates for class assignments. Using the computer has boosted support for my class.
- On the very first day of school each year, I give each of my students a note to take home. The note is a generic one that I word-process and merge. It simply says, "Dear [name of adult(s) at home], I am happy to be teaching your child [name of student], this year. Thank you for allowing your child to be in my class. Feel free to contact me at school at any time." Then, every day, I make sure to write one note, per class, to a student's home. Again, it is a generic little note that I have pre-typed and copied, ready to go. It simply says, "Dear [name of adult(s)], I'm so proud of your child today because [fill in reason]." They take about 30 seconds to complete and every home will receive at least one positive note a month. The students' families think I'm the greatest teacher in the world! Then, when I occasionally have to contact the home with something negative, they are unbelievably co-operative.
- Parents, guardians or caregivers often express an interest in learning more about educational issues or curriculum, so create a bookshelf for them. Education has changed since many of them were in school and having books available for loan will help them to understand some of these changes. If I have to make a call or meet with parents, guardians or caregivers about something negative, I always begin the conversation with, "I know how concerned you are with your child's achievement, and I knew you would want to know what's going on. I think that if we work together, we can solve this problem." This approach underscores that as a team, we can work together for mutual goals.

Adapted from Gentzler (2005)

Most problems between the teacher and the student's home are a result of miscommunication or lack of communication.

Mandel (2003), p. 91

Access, Custody or Potential Abuse Concerns

Familiarize yourself with STF policies 1.8 (Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity) and 1.9 (Child and Youth Well-Being) in the *STF Governance Handbook* (2015), available at www.stf.sk.ca. You may want to visit the Public Legal Education Association website (www.plea.org) where you can also order free copies of their resources.

Every person who has a reasonable suspicion to believe that a child may be in need of protection shall report the information immediately and directly to a child protection worker, Ministry of Social Services or First Nations Child and Family Services Agency or police officer. Failure to report a suspected case of abuse or neglect is subject to prosecution under *The Child and Family Services Act*.

In all cases of potential familial conflict and concern there is a key rule. If in any doubt ... ask your administrator.



The following are two major legal matters to be aware of:

- **Be aware of your students' family relationships. Are there custody and/or access issues? Determine who in your school monitors this concern. Ascertain who is to receive communication from the school.**
 - **Be sensitive to the possibility of abuse. You have a legal responsibility to report cases of suspected abuse.**
-

When in doubt, always ask. I would rather be disturbed than surprised.

Secondary School Administrator

Resources

Thompson, J. (2013). *The first-year teacher's survival guide: Ready-to-use strategies, tools and activities for meeting the challenges of each school day*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.





Commitment to Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity

People often choose teaching as a career because of their desire to influence the lives of young people and thus create a better world. The principles of respect, fairness, compassion, honesty and care that help to shape us as professionals are extremely important as we consider questions surrounding social justice, inclusion and equity.



On Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity

According to the 2008 study by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, large numbers of beginning teachers describe themselves as under-prepared for the challenges of cultural and ethnic diversity. In addition, there are a myriad of other challenges as a result of poverty, discrimination, bullying, gender bias, various social problems and an unexpected number of children with a range of special needs.

However, you need to remind yourself there are both opportunities as well as challenges inherent in these situations. You can make a difference. Research is clear – the effectiveness of a student’s teacher is the most important factor in producing consistently high levels of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Wong et al., 2004). You have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young people and enhance your community at the same time.

Saskatchewan teachers are committed to provide a public education that serves a common good that is beneficial to all of society, not just to the students currently enrolled. Schools are a source of community and provincial pride which greatly contribute to the quality of all our lives.

Social justice in schools encompasses a range of matters from school culture and school policies to the specifics of teaching and learning. Teachers have long been aware of the need to address social issues in their classrooms. Core curriculum responded to this need through components such as Aboriginal content and perspectives, multicultural education and gender equity. Research now suggests that rather than treat these issues separately, teachers approach social justice in a more holistic manner and focus on making students aware of the oppression that results because of issues such as racism, sexism and ableism.

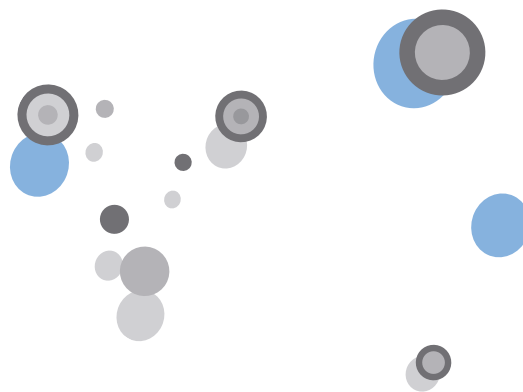
CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers are committed to engage in exemplary practices that create classroom and school cultures which respect individual diversity, create a sense of belonging, and promote intellectual freedom and sharing by all.

Our schools must be ready to positively respond to the needs that are presented by children and youth from a wide variety of backgrounds and abilities. As a teacher you are responsible for ensuring there is equity in the education provided to our children. This certainly does not mean treating each child the same; it does mean ensuring each child receives what is needed in order to be successful in school.

Both children and adults in our society are affected by discrimination and exclusion based on such things as gender, race, religious background, physical or

intellectual ability, class, sexual identity and language use. Sometimes teachers unknowingly reinforce discrimination by certain practices in their classrooms. It is important to be reflective about your practices in the sense that you are constantly reflecting on what you do in your classroom and why. Each one of us is responsible for creating an inclusive classroom where individual differences are not seen as a deficit, but rather seen as a source of richness, possibility and creative energy. This contrasts to the kind of environment where differences lead people to be perceived as “other” and “separate.”



Support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Students

Saskatchewan's Changing Face was a headline in Regina's *Leader-Post* on May 9, 2013. At that time, according to the article, there were 39,275 First Nations children aged 14 and under in Saskatchewan, which represented approximately 38 per cent of all First Nations people in the province and 20 per cent of all children in Saskatchewan.



All educators need to be committed to ensuring the success of our First Nations, Inuit and Métis students by:

- Providing equitable outcomes and higher literacy for First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners.
- Nurturing the cultural identity of our children and youth so that they feel pride in who they are; see themselves as strong, capable learners; and experience a sense of belonging in our schools.
- Ensuring all learners have knowledge and appreciation of the unique contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples to Saskatchewan.
- Developing culturally responsive and inclusive learning environments.
- Ensuring the inclusion and representation of First Nations, Inuit and Métis ways of knowing and traditional pedagogy.

Adapted from Saskatoon Public Schools' *First Nations, Inuit and Métis Education ACTION Plan*
2012-2015

“Let us put our minds together to see what kind of life we can make for our children.”

Sitting Bull, 1876

Support for English as an Additional Language

Also in Saskatchewan's Changing Face were statistics concerning recent immigration to this province. The article reported the extensive number of different cultural groups now represented in the Saskatchewan population. The fact that over a quarter of recent immigrants (27.6 per cent in 2011) is in the 0 to 14 age group has a significant impact on Saskatchewan schools and broader communities. It is to be expected that today's classrooms are increasingly diverse, as such diversity is a reflection of our society as a whole.

- ✓ Find out from your administration or your colleagues what additional supports are available in the school and the community.
- ✓ Ascertain what cultural groups are present in your school community.
- ✓ Meet with the English as an additional language teachers to discuss practices in teaching, learning and assessment of EAL learners.
- ✓ Determine what accommodations are to be made for religious holidays and whether students attend school during significant cultural celebrations.
- ✓ Find out about clothing and/or dietary restrictions.
- ✓ Exhibit cultural respect for your students and their families at all times.

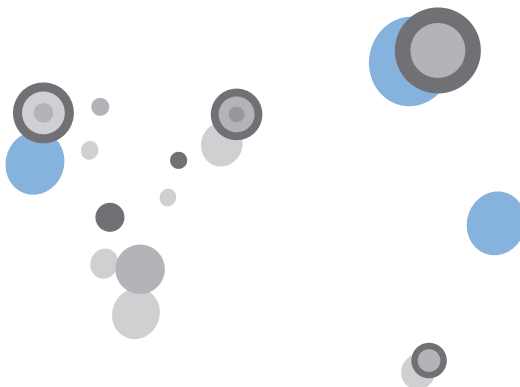
**you
can!**

The Ministry of Education has placed a variety of resources on their website to assist teachers as they find ways to support English as an additional language learners, both foreign and Canadian-born. See www.education.gov.sk.ca. As a beginning teacher, you may find EAL Effective Practice Guidelines of particular benefit.

Some specific ways to make EAL students welcome in your classroom:

- Prepare the class with the new student's name and as much information as possible about his/her previous location.
- Learn the correct pronunciation of the student's name.
- Learn some survival words in the student's language (e.g., hello, goodbye, lunch, how to count to 10, etc.)
- Partner EAL students with a classroom ambassador (possibly someone who speaks the same language) who will show the new student the washrooms, gym, locker, library, etc.
- Encourage continued use of the first language while students are acquiring English. The stronger the first language, the stronger the second. There are educational, social and economic benefits to maintaining the student's first language.
- Respect the student's silent period for up to four months. The EAL student may not speak for several months, but is processing the sights and sounds of the new environment.

*Effective Practice Guidelines: The Basics
English as an Additional Language (EAL)*
www.education.gov.sk.ca



Adapting Practices to Meet Diverse Student Needs

There are steps that you can take to ensure that your classroom reflects principles of equity and fairness. These steps encourage the development of a co-operative, caring community of learners.

**you
can!**

- ✓ Examine your practices and adapt content and instruction to ensure that students see themselves authentically reflected in the classroom and school environment, as well as in the materials and processes used in instruction. Not taking the context of students' lives into account when designing instruction creates barriers and limits student learning.
- ✓ Establish a classroom climate that values co-operation and communication over competition.
- ✓ Encourage conversation about issues regarding social justice. Explore concepts of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. Assist students in finding ways that they can "make a difference."
- ✓ Promote critical thinking.
- ✓ Examine booklets developed by the Federation on aspects of diversity. A title which may be of interest is *Safe Schools: Breaking the Silence on Sexual Difference*.
- ✓ Visit the Federation website, www.stf.sk.ca, for additional ideas and materials. The micro-site, Diversity in the Classroom: Social Justice in Schools provides new (as well as experienced) teachers with:
 - ✓ General suggestions for teaching and learning.
 - ✓ Teaching strategies to enhance social justice.
 - ✓ Specific suggestions to address social justice, inclusion and equity in particular subject areas (English language arts, health, math, science and social studies).
 - ✓ Web resources and links to videos.
 - ✓ Questions to ask when selecting resources.
 - ✓ A list of resources available from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Stewart Resources Centre.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers are committed to provide a public education that is based on a student-centred, broadly based understanding of education that prepares children and youth to become confident, creative and caring individuals while gaining valuable experience and knowledge to fuel future endeavours.

Equity goes beyond providing equal opportunity where everyone is treated the same, to fostering a barrier-free environment where individuals benefit equally.

Saskatchewan Education (2001), p. 8

Differentiation and Modification

The terms **differentiation** and **modification** are distinct. They should not be used interchangeably in our schools. To do so would create some confusion.

In order to meet the variety of students' needs, flexibility is required within the school program to enable schools and teachers to purposefully differentiate instruction to provide the most appropriate educational opportunities for all students. Differentiated instruction is used to:

- Help students achieve curriculum outcomes.
- Maximize student learning and independence.
- Lessen discrepancies between achievement and ability.
- Promote a positive self-image and feeling of belonging.
- Promote a willingness to become involved in learning.
- Provide opportunities for all students to be engaged in learning.

These purposes address a primary function of the school, that of helping students to maximize their potentials as independent learners (Ministry of Education, Core Curriculum Components and Initiatives, December 17, 2007).

The intent of differentiated instruction applies to all programs and courses of instruction. The literature on differentiated instruction is where you will find explicit strategies that support the students in your classroom.

Key variables of instruction can be differentiated. These include:

- Learning resources (what students will access in order to learn).
- Learning processes (how students will interact with the content).
- Learning products (how students will demonstrate learning and mastery of the content).
- Instructional setting or learning environment.

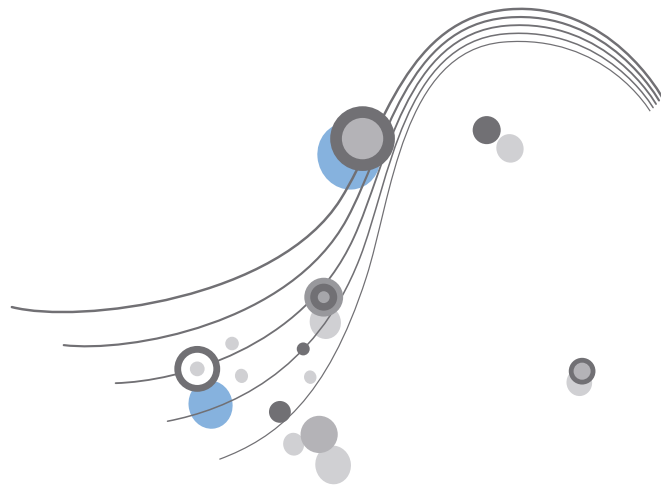
Some students may operate one or more grade levels behind their chronological peers and are unable to complete a particular regular provincial course, even though curriculum materials and topics, instruction and environment have been differentiated.

- Students in the elementary grades would be accommodated with an **Inclusion and Intervention Plan**. An IIP is a written plan for an individual student. In the IIP, student outcomes are developed and a plan for supports, strategies and interventions is outlined to optimize student achievement.
- **Modified courses** are only considered for students at the secondary level. Modified course curricula for your school division must be either approved or developed by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education.

Your school's special education teacher, school division's central office personnel or your administrators will be able to tell you about the modified courses in your division. The Ministry has developed a Frequently Asked Questions section on its website addressing the distinction between modified and adapted (www.education.gov.sk.ca).



Differentiated instruction supports the diversity of student needs and abilities in your classroom without altering instructional outcomes.



Before placing a student in a modified course, teachers, administrators and other school personnel need to ensure that:

- Appropriate differentiation has been provided with sufficient scaffolds for the student as (s)he strives to achieve the regular core course outcomes.
- Cognitive and learning skills assessments have been completed and support the decision to place the student in a modified course.
- The student and student's parents/guardians/caregivers have been informed of the planned course change, they understand any future education implications of such a decision, and they agree to the course change.
- The student is being recommended for a modified course due to learning difficulties, and not because of poor attendance, lack of motivation, poor work habits or is learning English as an additional language.

As the classroom teacher you are the one ultimately responsible for your students' instructional program; you are responsible for meeting the learning needs of all students in your classroom. Students with special needs are part of your class. As you consider the diversity of needs in your classroom, you need to be aware of the support systems in your school, your school division and in your community. Work as a team with these people, as collaboration is a key component of ensuring each child receives the best possible education. Those at home are a key part of your team; work with parents/guardians/caregivers to ensure the best for each child.



Students with special needs are part of your class. As you consider the diversity of needs in your classroom, you need to be aware of the fact that there are support systems in your school, your school division and in your community.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers are committed to an education that is accessible and equitable for all children and youth regardless of their circumstances or learning potential.

School-Based Supports

Teacher-librarians are indispensable in assisting with planning for a diverse student population. For example, they can help you locate culturally diverse learning materials or materials that address your topic but reflect a wide range of reading abilities.

Learning assistance teachers help classroom teachers in providing programs appropriate for students with particular learning needs. In some divisions, these support teachers have responsibilities for providing additional assistance to those teachers whose students have been referred because of delays in some academic area, including learning disabilities, attention problems or fetal alcohol syndrome/effect. Generally these teachers also have responsibility for gifted learners.

Learning assistance teachers are instrumental in the construction of an Inclusion and Intervention Plan. If you have a student in your classroom who has been determined to have special needs, you and the learning assistance teacher will collaborate to complete an IIP for that student. (Note: the electronic form is referred to as an eIIP.)

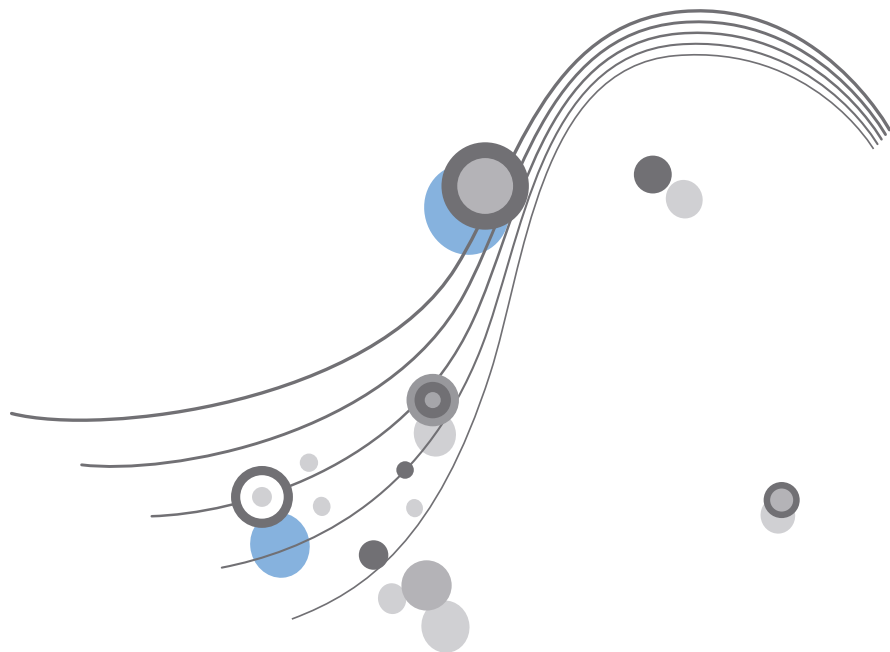
If you have a student with a particular special need, ask the learning assistance teacher for reading material to better understand that need. For example, if you teach a student with Tourette's syndrome, you need to know some of the behavioural characteristics of that condition and what you might do to best support that child.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers honour the dignity and roles of all individuals in the educational community. This creates a uniquely Saskatchewan experience in public education marked by a co-operative spirit and healthy relationships.

Educational assistants/teacher associates are paraprofessional staff hired to support the teacher in special situations. Typically an educational assistant (or teacher associate or teacher aide) is hired to assist a teacher in delivering an appropriate program to a particular classroom or a particular student with special emotional, physical, behavioural or intellectual needs. Educational assistants are placed according to policies determined at a local level. Not every child with a special learning need will have a teacher associate assigned. Ask your principal how the placement of educational assistants (or teacher associates) is determined in your division.

Educational assistants are part of school support staff and work with teachers to fulfil the programming needs that are often determined by classroom and resource teachers. When you work with an educational assistant/teacher associate, you need to clarify how you will work together. You will want to create clear communication with the educational assistant/teacher associate, the student, the parents/guardians/caregivers and the school administrative team to carry out the program for the child as determined by the IIP. Although working with an educational assistant/teacher associate may seem complex, you will benefit from the collaboration and the additional insights another pair of eyes can provide.



Outside Supports

The student's home can be your best support. You should keep in regular contact with the parents/guardians/caregivers of all your students, but particularly those students with special needs.

Consultants' roles vary from one division to another. In many cases you will have access to a consultant who, due to an expertise in curriculum, instruction, assessment or special education services, can help you design programs for both specific students and general classroom instruction.

Note: You should always consult with your principal about how to proceed if you believe that a psychologist, counsellor or speech and language consultant could be a benefit to your work with a student. Procedures for obtaining such supports vary from division to division. As well, parents will be involved in the school's decision to make these referrals.

Psychologists (perhaps referred to as Ed-psychs) are helpful in making assessments of behavioural or academic needs that students may have. They can provide information through testing and interviews, and can make useful suggestions about strategies that relate to student needs. Gifted learners, students with attention difficulties or students who display learning delays might benefit from a psychologist's intervention. Be sure to refer to the student's cumulative folder to see which services may already have been provided.

Counsellors are helpful with assisting teachers with students who are experiencing social or emotional issues. They can:

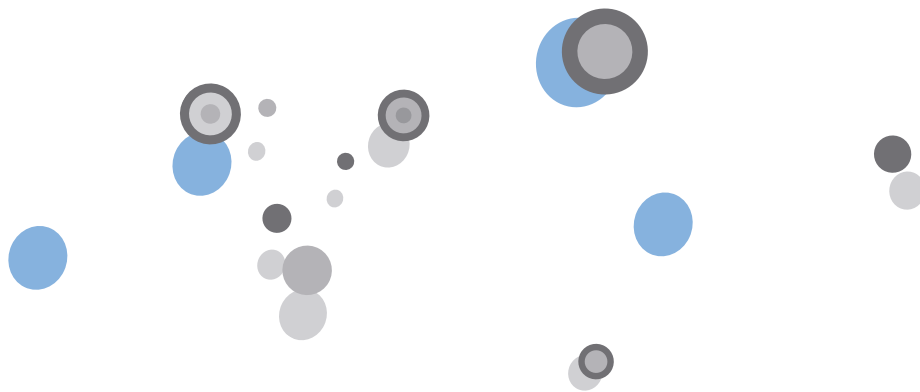
- Counsel a student directly.
- Assist the teacher in promoting social skills training.
- Teach problem-solving skills to a class.
- Work with small groups of students in training sessions.
- Help co-ordinate other community support.

Speech and language pathologists may intervene if a student is having difficulties in aspects of language development. (A possible exception would be an English as an additional language student.) Speech and language pathologists are available to:

- Consult with teachers about strategies that support students with language difficulties.
- Provide an assessment of children’s communication skills through observation and testing.
- Consult with parents.

Social workers may become involved with a student if you have concerns about a student in regard to:

- Chronic attendance problems.
- Crisis situations like an unexpected death, suicide or family violence.
- Access to community support systems.
- Suspected neglect or abuse.



Resources

The Federation has developed the Diversity in the Classroom microsite located via www.stf.sk.ca which provides both general and specific subject area support in the various aspects of diversity. The health section is particularly valuable when you discuss gender roles and gender identity. The site provides information on how to choose appropriate resources as well as links to other valuable sites.

The Stewart Resources Centre at the Federation has a comprehensive collection of resources available to help teachers with social justice, inclusion and equity.

The Ministry has helpful supports related to First Nation and Métis education including the outcomes and indicators of treaty education and a variety of video, print-based or web-based links that support treaty education. See www.education.gov.sk.ca.

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner (www.otc.ca) provides a range of learning resources including historical pictures and biographies, treaty guides and videos. There are also links to a speaker's bureau, treaty kits, workshops and other professional development opportunities.



Commitment to Examined Practice

When you are planning lessons and units of study you may find you wonder about a couple of things. How do you pull together all those things your university professors kept saying were critical – the outcomes and indicators, the broad areas of learning, the cross-curricular competencies, the adaptive dimension, the variety of instructional and assessment strategies, inquiry learning, backward design?



Planning With Saskatchewan Curricula

You understood the theory from your university classes, but how do you now translate it into practice on a day-to-day basis? Plus, the time! You may find yourself staying up late at night marking and planning. How do the other teachers do it? It may help to remind yourself that as a beginning teacher you are actually doing two jobs. You have the same, or at least similar, teaching duties as an experienced teacher, but you are also learning how to teach. You may never find planning effortless, but as you become more familiar with the various aspects of planning, such as curricula, resources and your students' particular needs, the process will become more natural and less time-consuming than it may be right now.



Broad Areas of Learning

The broad areas of learning reflect the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes Saskatchewan students are exposed to at all grade levels and in all subject areas. There are three broad areas of learning that reflect Saskatchewan's Goals of Education.

1. Lifelong Learners

Students are curious, observant and reflective as they imagine, explore and construct knowledge. They demonstrate the understandings, skills and strategies necessary to learn from subject discipline studies, cultural experiences and other ways of knowing the world. Such ways of knowing support students' appreciation of Indigenous worldviews and learning about, with and from others. Students are able to engage in inquiry and collaborate in learning experiences that address the needs and interests of self and others. Through this engagement, students demonstrate a positive disposition for learning.

2. Sense of Self, Community and Place

Students possess a positive sense of identity and understand how it is shaped through interactions within natural and constructed environments. They are able to develop meaningful relationships and appreciate diverse beliefs, languages and practices from the First Peoples of Saskatchewan and from the diversity of cultures existing within our province. Through these relationships, students demonstrate empathy and a deep understanding of self, others and the influence of place on identity. In striving to balance their intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions, students learn about themselves, their communities and the broader world around them.

3. Engaged Citizens

Students demonstrate the confidence and commitment to make positive differences in their community and the broader world in which they live. This sense of agency is reflected in informed life, career and consumer decisions. Along with this responsibility to the greater good, students recognize and respect the mutual benefits of charter, treaty and other constitutional rights and relationships. Through this recognition, students advocate for self and others, and act for the common good as engaged citizens.

Cross-Curricular Competencies

The cross-curricular competencies are four interrelated areas containing understandings, values, skills and processes which are considered important for learning in all areas of study. They permeate all aspects of planning.

The four competencies include:

- Developing Knowledge: Students need to construct an understanding of how people make sense of the world around them.
- Developing Identity and Interdependence: Students need to develop a positive self-concept and the ability to live in harmony with others, and with the natural and constructed world.
- Developing Multiple Literacies: Students need to acquire a variety of communication tools and strategies to understand, represent, explore and participate in their world.
- Developing Social Responsibility: Students need to form the positive attributes of contributing members in their various communities.

Additional information on cross-curricular competencies is found on the Ministry of Education website (www.edonline.sk.ca).

CONNECTING to the Commitments

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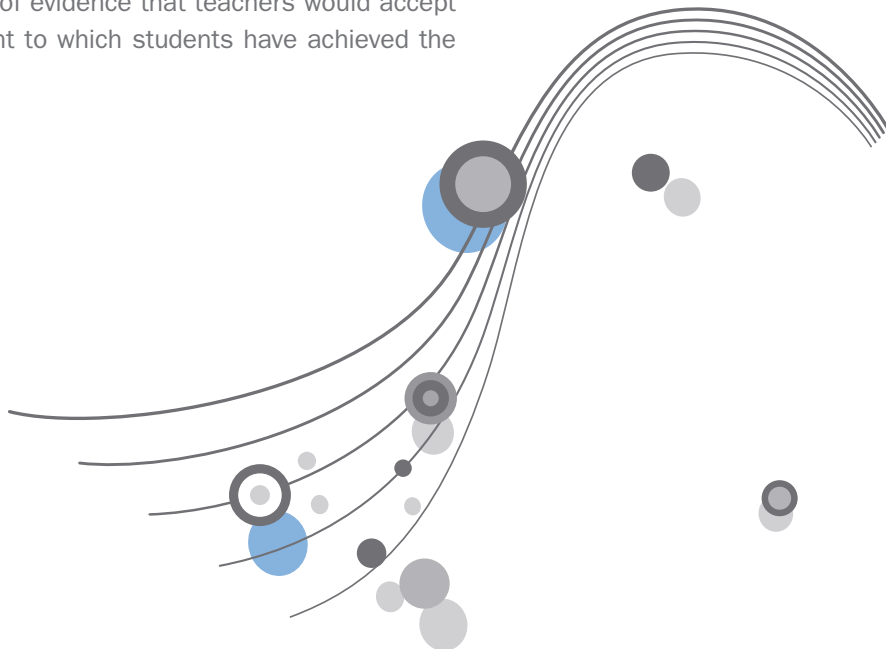
Outcomes and Indicators

Each Saskatchewan curriculum is developed around student learning outcomes and indicators of those outcomes. Student learning outcomes describe what students will learn in a particular discipline (e.g., mathematics) over a specific time frame (e.g., Grade 5). Outcomes specify the skills, knowledge and attitudes that students are expected to know, understand and be able to demonstrate.

Critical characteristics of learning outcomes:

- They focus on what students will learn rather than what teachers will teach.
- They specify the skills, strategies, abilities, understandings and knowledge students are expected to be able to demonstrate.
- They are observable, assessable and attainable.
- They are grade- and subject-specific.
- They guide course, unit and lesson planning.
- They are supported by specific examples or learning indicators.

Indicators are a representative list of what students need to know and/or be able to do in order to attain a particular outcome. Learning indicators represent the breadth and depth of the learning outcome. Indicators serve as examples of the type of evidence that teachers would accept in order to determine the extent to which students have achieved the desired learning result.



Planning for Differentiation

Differentiated instruction allows for all students in all educational settings to access curricula. It is the expectation that student diversity, as reflected in individual differences, will be a key consideration as teachers plan. When you are planning, think about the adaptations that you need to make in order to accommodate each of your students.

It is important to understand the intent of the outcome when you are planning for differentiated instruction, as certain outcomes have fixed aspects of content, process and/or product. When one element is fixed then the other aspects of learning may be differentiated. For example:

- In the Grade 4 social studies outcome IN4 (analyze how First Nations and Métis people have shaped and continue to shape Saskatchewan) the **content is fixed**. The content is about First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan. However, you can **differentiate the processes** students use to learn more about the contributions of First Nations and Métis people; they could have a conversation with an elder, watch a video or read to find information. You can also **differentiate the product**. In this case, students could create a pamphlet, an oral presentation, a poster or write a paragraph.
- In the Grade 6 ELA outcome CC6.7 (write a short report explaining a problem and providing a solution) the **product is fixed**. In this instance, you can **differentiate the process** by providing a template for those students who might need it or by providing additional support for students through conferencing. Additionally, the **content can be differentiated**; the students can determine what the topic will be for their report.

With almost all outcomes the **learning environment can be differentiated**:

- Students can work alone, with a partner or in groups.
- Timeframes can be differentiated.
- Additional supports such as computers or scribes might be provided to differentiate the ways in which students can achieve the curricular outcomes.

Ways to differentiate access to curricula:

- Reduce quantity of material to be read or assigned.
- Provide independent learning activities (learning contracts).
- Use manipulatives.
- Teach textbook structure.
- Teach note-making skills.
- Underline key points.
- Highlight directions.
- Use large-print books.
- Individualize spelling lists.
- Use books on tape.
- Use a variety of resources of varying difficulty for any theme.
- Alter time allotted to complete tasks.
- Colour code binders, notebooks or papers.

Ways to differentiate instruction:

- Use multi-sensory presentations.
- Provide organizers and outlines in advance.
- Write key ideas on the board.
- Encourage visualization.
- Use co-operative learning activities.
- Model positive self-talk.
- Ask student to repeat directions.
- Stand close to student.
- Demonstrate task.
- Provide alternative evaluations; for example, an oral exam rather than a paper and pencil exam.
- Set small goals.
- Break down assignments into chunks.

Ways to differentiate the learning environment:

- Change groupings occasionally.
- Incorporate stretch time or movement into a lesson.
- Post timetable.
- Go over the day plan with student(s).
- Use laptop computers.
- Accommodate student needs regarding personal space, vision and hearing.
- Set up a variety of classroom centres.
- Establish a fixed place for posting assignments and due dates.
- Establish a classroom library (maybe with an audio centre).

To implement the provincial curriculum conscientiously and diligently, taking into account the context for teaching and learning provided by students, the school and the community.

Article 14, Code of Ethics

Instructional Decision-Making

Consider the following when thinking about instruction.

Context

This refers to the various aspects of the learning environment influencing your practice. For example, the predominant modes of instruction in a classroom may be reading, note making and writing. Do you have students who might be advantaged in this setting? Disadvantaged? Western scientific knowledge has traditionally been presented as factual and we assume that this is the way things are. However, other cultures and faiths accept scientific knowledge on different criteria. In what ways can we honour various ways of knowing? We need to consider the multiplicity of realities present within our classrooms when planning for instruction.

Backwards Planning

Possibly the most important aspect of planning is knowing where you want to go. Start with the end in mind by identifying the specific curricular outcome you have targeted. With what knowledge, skills and/or attitudes do you want your students to leave your classroom? As you are teaching, check to see you are still on the path. Keep in mind the focus is on what the student learns rather than on what you teach. Curriculum outcomes guide your practice.

Instructional Organizers

These are the theories of cognition or learning guiding the design of our practice. There are four domains to consider:

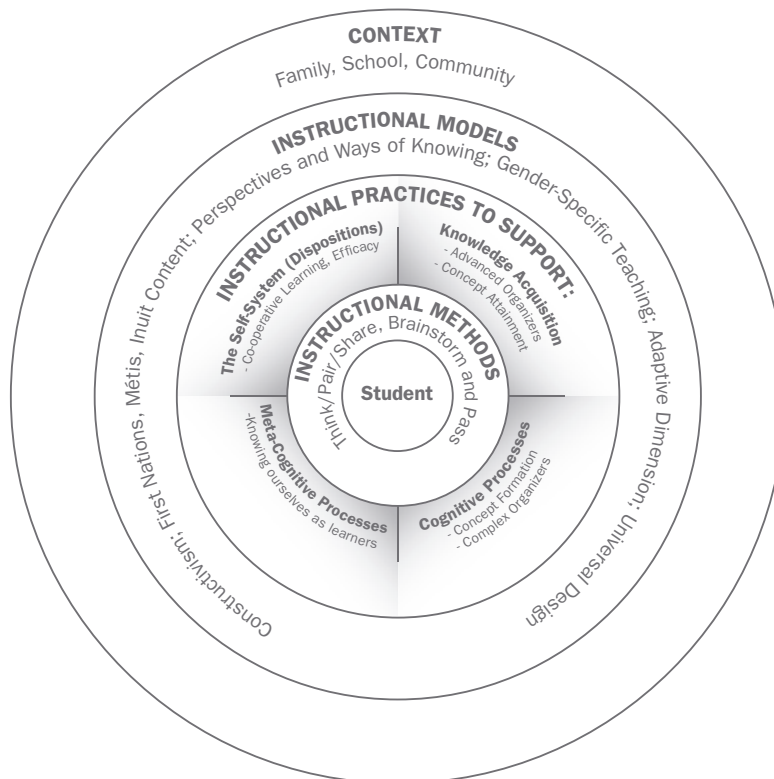
- Knowledge acquisition.
- Cognitive processes.
- Meta-cognitive processes.
- The self-system (dispositions).

Instructional Practices

These are the general descriptors for a range of instructional approaches which support thinking in each of the four domains of cognition. For example, the practice of co-operative learning supports the self-system. Effective questioning supports the acquisition of knowledge. The practice of reflection aids metacognition.

Instructional Methods

These are the many specific techniques we use in our classrooms to address the four domains. Will a jigsaw strategy be the best approach to achieve curricular outcomes in a particular situation? A think/pair/share? A mind map?



A Repertoire of Instructional Practices

Research points out that educational reform has swung like a pendulum between an emphasis on teacher-centred strategies and student-centred learning. In fact, instructional strategies exist on a continuum from most teacher-centred to most student-centred. Reflect on your knowledge of instructional strategies. Have you seen a variety of strategies demonstrated in your own schooling? Are you most familiar with teacher-centred instruction? There is research summarized on the following pages to help you build a repertoire of instructional practices.

It is appropriate that all teachers, beginners and veterans alike, reflect upon instructional strategies within teaching practice. Current research organizes instructional practice by the types of thinking it supports. In a complete cycle of instruction, student thinking would involve knowledge acquisition, engagement of both cognitive and meta-cognitive processes, as well as attention to one's learning disposition.

Teachers have a responsibility to maximize student learning and, in order to do this most effectively, we all need to work at expanding our repertoire of instructional strategies.

- Review university notes on instructional strategies.
- Learn from experienced teachers.
- Refer to some of the excellent books listed in this handbook.

Constantly reflect on the strategies you have chosen. Ask yourself if they are the best to use in order to meet the learning outcomes you have targeted. As a reflective practitioner, you should be developing the ability to explain why the instructional strategy you are using is the best one for a particular context. It is important to note that the student is the centre of all your instructional decisions and it is your responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of instructional practices and strategies to ensure students are receiving the maximum benefit from the instruction they are receiving.

Instructional Practices

Knowledge Acquisition	Cognitive Processes	Meta-Cognitive Processes	The Self-System (Dispositions)
Questioning: Designing and using effective questions to deepen understanding.	Synectics: Making the strange familiar and the familiar strange.	Planning for Learning: Analyzing the task and clarifying the learning goals.	Efficacy: Increasing students' perceptions of self-efficacy.
Advance Organizers: Creating organizational frameworks for new learning.	Graphic Representation: (Venn diagrams, etc.) Supporting student thinking using graphic representation.	Monitoring Thinking and Learning: Choosing and monitoring thinking strategies while learning.	Co-operative Learning: Working together in small groups to solve a problem or complete a task.
Note Making: Teaching students skills of effective note making.	Manipulatives in Mathematics: Mediating students' thinking as they learn abstract concepts.	Reflecting on Thinking and Learning: Reflecting on thought processes and how one best learns.	Structured Academic Controversy: Developing students' dialectical thinking.
Concept Attainment: Supporting students as they construct conceptual knowledge.	Mnemonic Devices: Using systematic procedures for enhancing memory.		
Activating Prior Knowledge: Building upon what students already know.	Concept Formation: Collecting, examining and organizing data to form concepts.		
	Complex Organizers: Concept mapping and mind mapping.		

Source: Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit (2011). *Powerful instructional practices: A resource for teachers and administrators*. Retrieved from www.spdu.ca/resources/powerful_instructional_practices.html

Aspects of Instructional Planning

The following are a few aspects of effective classroom planning.

Focus on the Outcomes and Indicators

An effective program focuses on grade-specific curricular outcomes. Indicators are a representative list of what students need to know and/or be able to do in order to achieve an outcome. Use these outcomes and indicators to guide your planning.

See the Big Picture

A big picture perspective will help you develop individual plans for the whole year. One suggestion is to use flip chart paper to sketch out the entire year or semester. You will be able to see how all of the units and the materials fit together. This bigger picture shows how everything fits together and the connections that you can make in order to segue into different units. Keep this organizer to refer to throughout the year and to make necessary adjustments for the next year or semester.

Part of the big picture perspective is to be aware that both formative and summative assessment are critical to developing the instructional plan.

The Ministry of Education has created the resource, Summarized Outcomes Across Areas of Study with documents for K-9 to support your work. A PDF version of these documents can be found at www.ssla.ca.

Understand Why

Be purposeful when constructing lessons. Make the content more meaningful by telling your students why each lesson is important to them. Encourage the question, “Why do we have to know this?” because you welcome the opportunity to make connections between learning and life. Integration of subjects allows students to see learning in a broader sense. Read a historical novel in a history class. Bring a science problem into math. Introduce more non-fiction in English language arts.

Practice Variety and Balance

Use a balance of different activities, such as reading, writing, talking and group work. This helps students retain their interest and focus, as well as developing a range of different skills. Consider the different learning preferences in any classroom and mix up the instructional strategies you use. Learning preferences include the visual learners who benefit from visual representations, the auditory learners who need to hear information, and the kinesthetic learners who learn best by getting involved, physically performing or by physically manipulating the conceptual material (e.g., sorting word cards into sentences, using math manipulatives, etc.). There are learning style surveys you may wish to administer to your students. Also, veteran teachers understand that the time of day influences a classroom. For example, middle and secondary school students may be lethargic during the first period of the day or overly energetic during the last. Vary student activities to address these student needs. It may be more productive to use their rhythms than to try to work against them.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers engage in exemplary practices that create classroom and school cultures which respect individual diversity as well as promote a sense of belonging.

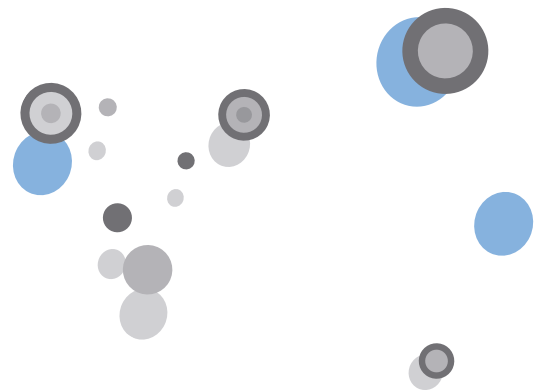
Think About a Beginning, Middle and End

You may hear the term “constructivism” in professional learning conversations. Constructivism is a theory about how people learn. People construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing situations and then reflecting on those experiences. The constructivist teacher promotes active learning strategies (e.g., real world problem solving, hands-on experiments) to create student understanding, and then encourages students to talk about their experiences and how these experiences shape their knowledge and understanding. Students are encouraged to think about:

- How these experiences integrate into what they already know.
- Possible applications of new knowledge and understandings.

The learning environment in the constructivist classroom promotes active learning. Students are engaged and making connections. You most likely focus on the middle of the lesson, but consider the beginning and end as well. There should be something at the beginning to focus your students. You might consider sharing a short anecdote, asking a question or introducing an unusual object as a starting point. Plan to create some energy and enthusiasm about what is going to happen. Closure should be planned and deliberate too. You could have students summarize the three things they learned; they could generate possible quiz questions based on the day’s class; they could repeat the assignment back to you as a check on understanding; they could discuss why their new understandings are important; or you could highlight the work the students have done using specific examples. Vary the strategies you employ, but whatever strategy you choose to use, the end of the lesson should be consciously considered and not just a reaction to the bell signaling the end of class.

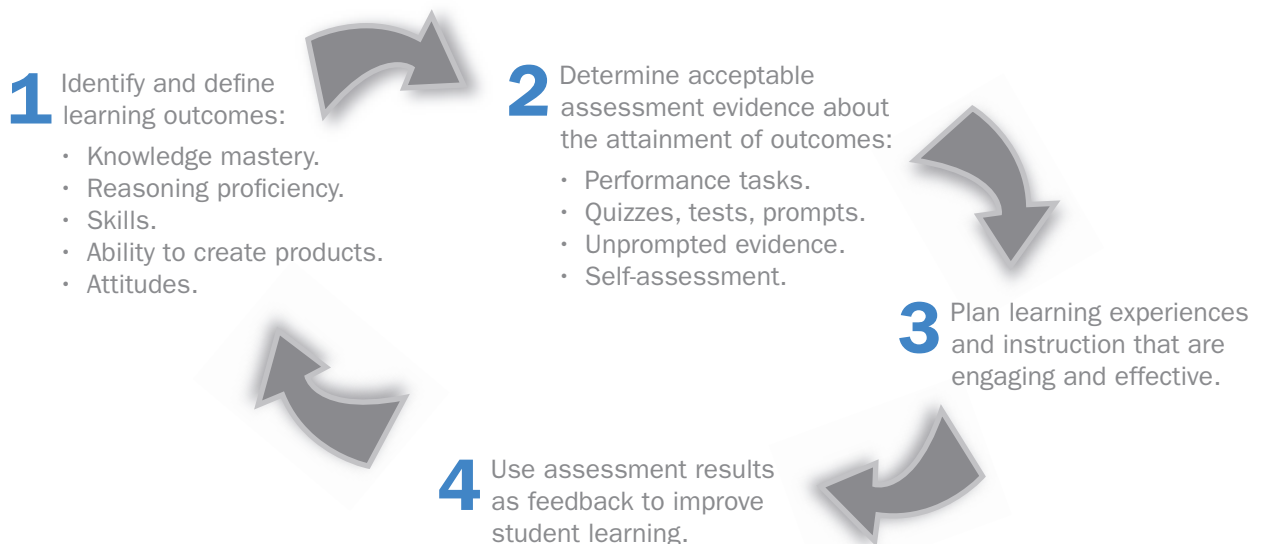
For more information on constructivism, visit www.thirteen.org.



Effective Instruction Is ...

- **Eclectic** ... there is no single “best” way to plan instruction.
- **Flexible** ... the teacher’s judgment allows for differentiated instruction based on student need.
- **Interactive** ... students are assumed to be active participants in learning.
- **Collaborative** ... the development, implementation and differentiation of instruction occurs through reflection with colleagues.
- **Based on relationships** ... there needs to be a trust established between students and teacher.
- **Informed** ... there is an expectation of best practice as determined by research, as well as experience and knowledge of the community.
- **Cyclical** ... instruction is not linear. It is based on a feedback loop (illustrated below).

Planning for Instruction



Adapted from: McTighe, J. & Wiggins, G. (1999) *Understanding by Design*

Resources

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (2nd ed.) Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Resources.

Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit (2011). *Powerful instructional practices: A resource for teachers and administrators*. Retrieved from www.spdu.ca/resources/powerful_instructional_practices.html.

Online Resource Suggestions

ROVER

Recommended Online Video Education Resources is a video streaming service for Saskatchewan teachers and students in the PreK-12 education system. It is managed and maintained by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education.

The ROVER service is video-on-demand, which provides teachers and students with the convenience of immediate access to streamed, educational videos that support curriculum.

ROVER videos are housed on a server located in a school or school division network, so there are no bandwidth issues, resulting in better picture quality and continuous play of videos without pauses. The videos are intended for viewing on the streaming site and not for copying or downloading.

There are over 1,000 videos on ROVER that can be accessed by teachers and students to enhance learning in the classroom. All the videos found on this site have been evaluated by educational professionals and recommended to support Saskatchewan's K-12 curricula. The ROVER collection of videos continues to evolve as new videos are added annually and old videos expire.

ROVER is accessible from within Saskatchewan schools or school division offices without a login. Outside of schools, it is possible to access ROVER using a login through a Blackboard account. Every teacher and student in Saskatchewan is registered with a Blackboard account. For more information, please contact networkservices@gov.sk.ca.

Other Online Resources

A frequently asked question is where to find units that are already developed or effective teaching ideas and strategies for the classroom.

The Stewart Resources Centre is developing units online that you may download and the Ministry of Education site has many curriculum supports. In addition, your school division may have a collection of teacher-made units that are available. Ask your teacher-librarian or a division consultant to help you locate these supports. You may want to consider establishing a network of colleagues with similar teaching assignments to discuss and share units.

The website This is the Classroom (www.thisistheclassroom.ca) is a place where you can discover what other teachers are doing across the province as well as share your own successes.

A resource that many teachers in the province turn to for support is the Saskatoon Public Schools' Online Learning Centre. (See the link on the division's home page at www.spsd.sk.ca). In addition, the following school divisions (among many others of the almost 30 Saskatchewan divisions) have significant online resources:

- North East School Division (<http://curriculum.nesd.ca>)
- Good Spirit School Division (www.gssd.ca/pages/index.htm)
- Prairie Spirit School Division (www.spiritsd.ca)

Saskatchewan's Western Development Museum has an extensive website that proves valuable to an assortment of grades and subjects. See www.wdm.ca. Likewise, the Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan (www.esask.uregina.ca) provides valuable research support. Saskatchewan's science network can support K-12 science classrooms.



You should be cautious about your use of units developed outside of the province as they have not been designed to fit with Saskatchewan's curricular principles and outcomes.



Commitment to Holding *Assessment* as a Critical Aspect of Examined Practice

Effective instruction demands that student assessment is regarded as a critical part of the planning process. Instruction should begin with the end in mind.



Instruction should begin with the end in mind. What do we want students to know, understand and/or be able to do as a result of their learning? Well-developed assessment can enhance student learning and assist teachers in improving their craft.

This whole area of assessment also has an impact on classroom climate. Educators know that assessment and evaluation influences the learning environment. Too often assessment and evaluation are seen as punitive rather than constructive. Your goal must be to help students constantly improve by building on what is known rather than punishing students for what they don't yet grasp.

Issues surrounding assessment and evaluation always generate discussion amongst educators. This is an area to explore with your mentor and other experienced teachers as you work at becoming "assessment literate." To begin with, the whole area of assessment can be complicated by the terminology used. You may hear terms such as assessment, evaluation and grades used interchangeably. This is problematic for any teacher, not just one starting out.



Glossary of Assessment Terms

The following glossary provides definitions of common assessment terms.

Assessment – The process of gauging student performance in relation to set criteria.

Criteria – Detailed explanation of what students are required to know, understand and be able to do.

Diagnostic assessment – Assessment given prior to instruction to determine student understanding of curricular material about to be taught.

Feedback – Communication with students regarding their performance in relation to set criteria. Feedback informs students of what they have done well and where they need to improve.

Formative assessment – Assessment practices designed to support students when they are working to achieve the curricular outcomes.

Grade – The assignment of a value to student work based on identified criteria relative to the curricular outcomes.

Preassessment – Information gathered to provide a deeper understanding of students, in order to guide the teacher in understanding where each student stands in respect to readiness for the particular content and skills to be provided in the specific unit of study; this information is intended to support the teacher in designing instruction.

Summative assessment – Assessment designed to determine what students know and can do at the end of a particular learning process.

Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit and Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2012).
Supporting Student Learning Through Assessment and Evaluation.

Research-Based Assessment Principles and Practices

There are several research-based assessment principles and practices which have demonstrated improvement in student learning. These include:

Active Involvement of Students in the Learning and Assessment Process

There are many ways to encourage student involvement in assessment. For example:

- Let students choose the work they wish to display.
- Consider utilizing a portfolio system in which students identify the work they want to have graded.
- Give students the opportunity to submit exam questions.
- Teach students how to read their assessment results. You may wish to show them how to graph the results.
- Ensure that students are aware of learning expectations and evaluation criteria.
- Create rubrics with students.

Alignment of Instructional Goals and Evaluation Strategies

What you have determined to be the outcomes targeted in your instruction must be what your assessment instruments actually measure. You may think, of course, that this is just common sense, but research has shown that this contradiction exists in many classrooms (Wiggins, 1998; Marzano, 2000; O'Conner, 2007). For example, the outcome you have chosen to target may be developing higher order thinking skills, the activities promote the development of these skills, but the evaluation may only address basic knowledge. This is an area where you should be consciously aware of the choices you make.

Used with skill, assessment can motivate the reluctant, revive the discouraged, and thereby increase, not simply measure, achievement.

Chappuis, Stiggins, Chappuis and Arter (2011)

Variety and Balance of Assessment and Evaluation Strategies

Traditionally, teachers relied heavily on pencil and paper assessment measures: multiple choice, true or false, and short answer tests. However, assessment strategies, like instructional strategies, require a range of options to reflect students' learning. Consider how strategies such as exit slips, portfolios or oral exams might support the diverse learning needs of your students. The resources listed in this handbook include some good ideas to get you going, but don't feel you have to do it all at once. Begin by getting comfortable with a few sound strategies and expand your repertoire over time.

Choice of the Most Appropriate Evaluation Method for the Task

If your aim is to determine if students can set reasonable, attainable goals, then a fill-in-the-blank quiz would be unlikely to provide that information. However, if you want to assess whether some core knowledge has been internalized so that you can move to the next stage, then such a quick and easy paper and pencil instrument might be exactly right.

No matter how many times you weigh a pig, all you learn is how much it weighs. If you want to learn something else, you need a different assessment.

Review of Jones, Carr, Ataya (2007)

Provision of Effective Feedback

There are several factors to consider in order to make feedback helpful for your students. Try to keep comments (either written or verbal) as simple and specific as possible. Tell students what specifically was good about their essays instead of making the general comment “good work.” Indicate what specifically could be improved upon rather than “needs improvement.” Ensure student work is returned in as timely a manner as possible, as the purpose of feedback is to improve future performance. Stagger due dates for assignments if you teach more than one class, to support the provision of comprehensive feedback. Also, to maximize the usefulness of feedback, track formative assessment evidence so you and your students can see patterns of growth and areas needing attention.

Adaptation of Instruction in Response to Assessment Information

“I taught a good lesson even though the students didn’t learn it,” makes no more sense than, “I had a big dinner even though I didn’t eat anything.” (Kohn, 2008). When students are given an assessment, it’s tempting to believe the results show how much progress your students are, or aren’t making, rather than being aware that the quality of the teaching is also being assessed. If it appears your students just aren’t “getting it,” what other instructional approaches can you use? Assessment requires thoughtful planning and implementation to support the learning process and to inform teaching.

*When you tell an unsuccessful comedian to be funnier,
it is accurate but not helpful.*

William, 2011

Some Important Grading/Reporting Guidelines

- Decide on a record-keeping system that will allow you to access student results quickly and easily. What electronic gradebook does your school division use?
- Carefully document student progress. Verify that the methods you have used to calculate a final grade are valid and reliable.
- There is value in saving an electronic copy of the report card that is sent to parents/guardians/caregivers.
- Do not publicly post marks or test scores with student names or with codes that are easy to identify. Anonymity must be maintained.

If you want to appear accountable, test your students.

If you want to improve schools, teach teachers to assess their students.

If you want to maximize learning, teach students to assess themselves.

Richard Stiggins

Resources

Chappuis, J., Stiggins, R., Chappuis, S., & Arter, J. (2012). *Classroom assessment for student learning: Doing it right - using it well* (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: Pearson.

This book guides teachers as to how to create accurate classroom assessments and how to integrate assessment with instruction day to day, with a focus on student involvement.

Davies, A. (2007). *Making classroom assessment work*. Courtenay, BC: Connections Publishing.

In easy to follow steps, Davies shows teachers how to translate what research shows us we should do, to what we actually can do in our classrooms. There are lots of ideas of using assessment for learning in order to guide instruction. Davies focuses on how we can involve students, the home and the community in the assessment, evaluation and reporting process.

Jones, P, Carr, J., & Ataya. R., eds. (2007). *A pig don't get fatter the more you weigh it: Classroom assessments that work*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

This book explains how well-constructed assessments provide data that is essential to the development of learning opportunities for all students. The text includes contributions from teachers and teacher educators, classroom vignettes and alternative approaches that have been proven useful in assessing the needs of a wide range of students. This book is intended for teachers who want their assessment to be a vehicle for instructional improvement.

McMillan, J. (2007). *Classroom assessment: Principles and practice for effective instruction*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

This resource is a guide to conducting a range of quality learning assessments from portfolios to standardized testing. McMillan places assessment within the context of classroom instruction and the realities of the modern classroom. The book addresses the assessment of students with special needs within inclusive settings.

www.edutopia.org/grant-wiggins-assessment

Grant Wiggins, co-author of *Understanding by Design*, a framework for curriculum design used worldwide, shares his thoughts on authentic assessment, standardized testing and the distinctions between testing and assessment.

Wiliam, D. (2011). *Embedded formative assessment*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.



Commitment to Being a Professional

Although all teachers are individuals who have their own unique ways of teaching, they are also members of a profession bound by a social contract, in which the public gives the profession agency and responsibility for the conduct of its affairs in return for the profession's commitment to high professional standards of conduct and competence.



Supporting Teacher Success

Saskatchewan teachers recognize the interdependence between their students' success as learners and their own success as professional educators. Although you have a responsibility to offer the best possible learning opportunities for students, it may be challenging to fully achieve your professional goals at all times.

Teaching and learning, as processes that involve social, emotional and cognitive dimensions, are far too complex to guarantee competence or success in every circumstance. You must have the flexibility, for example, to try new approaches and learning resources in your work with students. Some of these trial and error methods may be better suited than others to meet students' education needs.

As with individual students, the extent of each teacher's success depends upon a wide range of interconnected contextual factors. Although some of these variables (e.g., career-related decisions) are largely within your control, many others are not (e.g., the diversity of students' learning needs, health, family situation and so on). It is essential to take this full range of factors into account when there are questions or concerns about a teacher's success generally or the individual's competence in a specific situation.

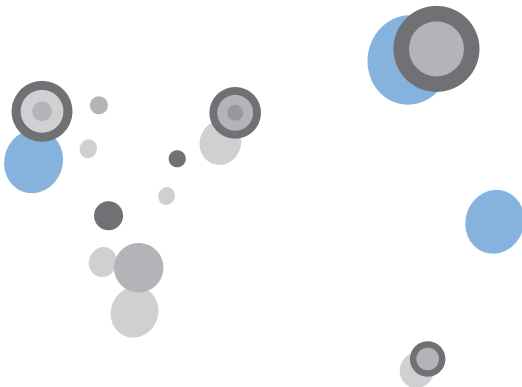
Teachers believe that they should be supported to become as competent as possible as they carry out their professional roles and to become as successful as possible throughout all stages of their careers. Questions or concerns about a specific competence matter should always be addressed within the broader context of teachers' goals and needs as successful professionals.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers are committed to engaging in exemplary practices that demonstrate high standards of care, conduct and competence to ensure the well-being and growth of all children and youth.

Throughout your career, you will likely experience various degrees of success in meeting a range of professional goals and objectives such as:

- Conducting professional relationships in ways that are consistent with the principles of equity, fairness and respect for others.
- Creating and maintaining a learning environment that encourages and supports each student to reach the highest level of individual achievement possible.
- Demonstrating a professional level of knowledge about the curriculum and a repertoire of instructional strategies and methods that are applied in teaching activities.
- Having the professional knowledge, skills and judgment to carry out the teacher's responsibility for student assessment and evaluation.
- Reflecting, individually and collectively, upon the goals as well as the experience of professional practice and adapting one's teaching accordingly.
- Working with colleagues in ways that are mutually supportive and developing to the fullest extent possible effective professional relationships with students, administrators, parents and other members of the educational community.



Professional Relationships

You will work with many individuals including students, parents and caregivers, colleagues, administrators, educational assistants, support staff and non-teaching personnel and professionals in your school. Effective relationships are essential to teaching practice, and teachers share the responsibility for the quality of these relationships.

The professional relationships among your colleagues in the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation are based on roles and responsibilities defined in legislation, provincial and school division policies, Federation bylaws, codes and standards, and provincial, local and inter-organizational agreements. Principals and teachers are colleagues within the teaching profession who should work collegially to support professional practice.

Your professional relationship with your employer carries with it a distinct set of expectations, policies and procedures from that of membership in the teaching profession or the Federation. Positive working environments that support the best possible professional service and their development are a shared responsibility of teachers, administrators, employers, government, school communities and professional organizations.

Positive professional relationships in schools are characterized by:

- Principles of equity, fairness and collectivity.
- Common focus on teaching and student learning.
- Trust in the integrity, support and collaboration of colleagues.
- Timely, frank, open and respectful communication.
- Acknowledgement of individual and collective contributions and achievements.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Members of the teaching profession are committed to modelling positive values, practices and relationships that create a uniquely Saskatchewan experience in public education.

Teacher Professionalism

Teacher professionalism and the regulation of the profession in Saskatchewan is a collective responsibility of individual teachers and their partners in education including post-secondary institutions, employing school divisions, a regulatory board and professional organizations. Working with students, parents and communities, these partners contribute to ensuring the integrity of the public education system.

Teacher regulation is interconnected and consists of six core areas:

- Teacher Education
- Certification and Registration
- Classification
- Supervision and Evaluation
- Professional Growth
- Standards and Discipline

In Saskatchewan, you must meet specific criteria to be called a teacher and hold a valid teacher's certificate in order to be employed as a teacher or principal in any publicly funded school. This includes a degree in education obtained through a university or teacher education program. As of October 19, 2015, teacher certification is no longer the responsibility of the Ministry of Education but the responsibility of the Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board (SPTRB).

The qualifications for a teacher's certificate remain the same. Saskatchewan teacher education programs and certification requirements are approved by the Teacher Education and Certification Committee of the SPTRB. This Committee consists of appointees from the SPTRB Board of Directors and other educational stakeholders including the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

You are also required to be registered on an annual basis with the SPTRB to be permitted to teach in Saskatchewan's publicly funded PreK-12 education system. Registered teachers are subject to the provisions of *The Registered Teachers Act* and the bylaws established by the SPTRB Board of Directors.

Teachers are classified for salary purposes based on their academic qualifications and the type of teacher's certificate they hold. The salary paid in each class is determined by the Provincial Collective Bargaining Agreement. Classification is done by your employing school division. It is your responsibility to furnish an official transcript confirming completion of a degree(s) to your employer when first hired. When you improve your qualifications and are therefore eligible for reclassification, it is your responsibility to apply to the employer for reclassification.

Teacher Supervision and Evaluation

The process of supervision and evaluation is a critical element in beginning teachers' growth as professionals. Teachers need to have administrators visit their classrooms frequently on both an informal and a formal basis to assist in supporting the development of professional skills. Both supervision and performance appraisals serve to provide direction and assurance for novice teachers during the critical first years.

Teacher **supervision** is a planned, developmental process intended to support teachers' career-long success and continuing professional growth. There are a variety of approaches that can be used to support a beginning teacher in planning and implementing professional growth. These include:

- Professional growth plans
- Mentoring
- Professional portfolios
- Peer coaching
- Study groups
- Cognitive coaching
- Critical friends
- Action research

All of these processes are supportive of the developing skills of beginning teachers, focus on identifying resources and additional supports, and are individually developed by the teachers as they take on responsibility for directing their own growth as professionals.

Teacher supervision is a documented and fair process independent of and distinctly different from teacher evaluation. It is enhanced by the self-reflection of professional practices and is supported by practices that encourage collaboration and collegial interaction along with the continuous support of all levels of professional staff.

Teacher **evaluation** is a planned, developmental process to support teachers' career-long success and professional growth. There is a formal written appraisal or judgment as to an individual's professional competence and effectiveness at a particular point in time. An evaluation may also serve to provide a written record of teaching service. Teacher evaluation is characterized by the specific purposes and formality of both the process and the recordkeeping that are involved.

The aim of performance evaluation is to:

- Establish a written record of professional service.
- Help celebrate teachers' strengths.
- Assist teachers to grow and to develop in areas requiring assistance.
- Assist in decisions regarding the retention of teachers.

Adapted from Regina Public School's Administrative Procedures (2007)

Each school division has its own established performance assessment policy. These vary across the province. As a beginning teacher you will want to access the policies and procedures for your school division early in the year. Your principal will be a good resource for you in explaining the entire process within your school division. The evaluation of teachers is carried out to develop, implement and maintain an effective program of education consistent with Saskatchewan's curricular requirements.

As a professional, you should embrace supervision and evaluation processes as opportunities for personal and professional reflection and growth. In doing so, you should model respectful communication and engagement.

The supervision and evaluation of teachers is best conducted in a school and work environment characterized by:

- Respectful and mutually supportive relationships that cultivate trust among teachers, principals and out-of-scope administrators.
- Transparent, fair and unbiased practices and decision-making that reflect the principles of natural justice including due process and notice.
- Policies, supports and resources that encourage teachers in achieving their own personal and professional aspirations and in meeting the expectations of the employer.

An effective teacher supervision process should:

- Include the individual teacher's personal experiences, knowledge and aspirations for their professional practice.

- Be conducted in collaboration with principals who possess the professional responsibility, qualifications and specialized training to identify the assistance and resources required to support the teacher's success.
- Be complementary to other teacher supports and processes which foster effective teaching and learning as well as student and teacher success.

An effective evaluation of a teacher's practice and performance should:

- Be informed by observations and information gathered during supervision processes.
- Be conducted by out-of-scope administrators who possess the professional responsibility, qualifications and specialized training required to carry out such employee evaluations.
- Include a process for a teacher to be heard and to appeal the judgment should he or she believe necessary.

Did You Know?

A frequently asked question is one similar to the following: My principal talks about my “supervision” and my “evaluation.” My colleagues talk about their “performance appraisal” and “developmental supervision.” I don’t understand what all these words mean. Are they different? As a beginning teacher, what do I need to be concerned about?

Different school divisions use different vocabulary to communicate similar processes. As a beginning teacher, you should expect that your principal or your superintendent will be involved in the evaluation process. The purpose of evaluation is to make a judgment about an individual teacher’s competency at a given time and in a given situation. The purpose of supervision, on the other hand, is to support teachers as they seek to improve their instructional practices. In short, evaluation is used to judge your performance and supervision is used to support improvement.

A thorny issue is the distinction between supervision and evaluation. Both are important, and they are closely related, but they are not the same thing.

Heller (2004), p. 71

Professional Growth

Professional growth refers to the change in knowledge, skills, abilities or perspectives resulting from the continuous professional learning that teachers intentionally pursue with the goal to further understand the nature of teaching and learning, enhance professional practice or contribute to the teaching profession. Teachers' professional growth benefits teaching and learning and contributes to the betterment of the teaching profession as a whole. It is an inherent part of being a teacher and is an integral part of a teacher's practice.

As a professional, you have the responsibility for seeking out professional learning and to self-direct your professional growth. You should also expect the autonomy necessary to exercise your professional judgment in related decision-making at both group and individual levels. Continuous professional learning should include a broad range of formal, informal and experiential learning opportunities that are planned, meaningful and related to the general duties, responsibilities or aspirations of the teacher.

Consistent and meaningful access to high-quality professional learning opportunities is fundamental to teachers' continued professional growth. The creation of opportunities for teachers' professional growth is a shared responsibility among teachers, employing school divisions and government that depends critically upon the provision of time, resources and other necessary supports for teachers.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is committed to achieving working conditions and creating professional opportunities that will attract, nurture and retain individuals who are committed to providing high-quality public service.

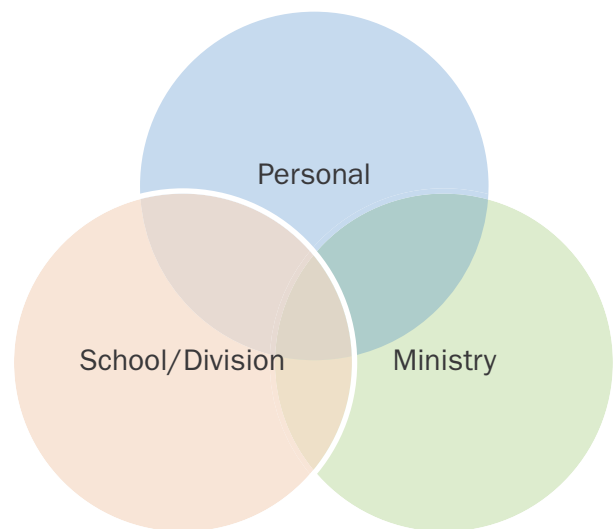
What a Professional Growth Plan Can Do for You

School divisions encourage their teachers to develop an annual professional growth plan. When used effectively, such a plan can return significant professional results for you and your students. Your plan should first be constructed as a response to your students' specific needs. As well, it should take into consideration the direction of the province. What initiatives has the province identified as pressing for the students of Saskatchewan? The school division? Your own school?

The more aligned the goals are to those of the province and the division, the more focused your plan will be. For example, perhaps your students have demonstrated basic literacy deficiencies. Your personal goals are to improve your students' reading skills. You ask yourself what you can learn that would help your students to meet their literacy needs. This is also a stated goal of the school division (and consequently of your school). In addition, the Ministry of Education has indicated this as a student learning goal. There is both alignment and focus to your professional development.

Think about this as three intersecting circles – personal goals, school/division goals and Ministry goals.

There may be numerous aspects you want to include in your professional growth plan but try not to take on too much initially. Keep your goals manageable



and realistic. You want to ensure success for you and your students.

Your professional growth plan might include:

- Specific learning activities in which you will engage.
- Possible ways the learning could translate into the classroom.
- Descriptions of the impact the learning will have in the classroom.
- Description of resources that will facilitate learning.
- Action plans to direct learning.
- Measures of the success of the learning activities.
- Reflective writing.

Where to Look for Professional Guidance and Support

You are primarily responsible for the emergence of your professional identity. In other words, the impetus and the results of professional development activity lie with you. Fortunately, you will have support and guidance for the journey you choose to take.

One of the strongest sources of support for professional growth is your professional community. You may enjoy the insights offered by mentors, administrators, division consultants and colleagues in your school. In addition, you may wish to seek the assistance and empathy of other new teachers. Taking Your Place in the Professional Community, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation's conference for beginning teachers, held in Regina and Saskatoon every fall, is an excellent opportunity to develop collegiality with other beginning teachers.

Professional Growth Networks

Professional growth networks, organized through the Federation, provide another opportunity for you to learn from colleagues in other parts of the province. Some of the professional growth networks are organized around a specific discipline (English language arts, mathematics, career/work education, etc.) while others are interdisciplinary or focus on the provision of services for a particular group of students (early childhood education, middle years, Aboriginal education, etc.).

Some professional growth networks offer a complimentary one-year membership to new teachers. Look for details at the conference for beginning teachers or use the coupon in Appendix L to apply for this free one-year membership. Information about professional growth networks can be accessed through the Federation website, www.stf.sk.ca.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation supports student and teacher success by addressing a wide range of issues and needs regarding teacher professionalism and the quality of education.

Professional Growth Opportunities

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation offers a number of professional growth opportunities, supports and services to assist you in achieving your personal professional growth plan. Our staff works closely with teachers from across the province to plan and deliver a wide range of exciting and innovative professional growth opportunities.

You can find information about these opportunities, supports and services online at www.stf.sk.ca or in the STF Professional Growth Opportunities catalogues published twice annually. The catalogues provide a detailed listing of workshops, events and courses that support personal and professional growth as well as information on professional growth networks and other related activities. We encourage all members to participate in these offerings that have been developed and are delivered by teachers for teachers.

Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit

A number of professional growth opportunities and services are created and facilitated by the Federation's Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit. SPDU staff work closely with a provincial facilitator community consisting of educators from across the province to plan and deliver a wide range of exciting and innovative professional growth opportunities.

In addition to provincial offerings covering early learning, honouring diversity, literacy, numeracy, leadership or curriculum, instruction, pedagogy and assessment, SPDU works with staff in schools on topics such as instructional strategies, classroom management, developing positive school cultures, conflict resolution and professional growth planning. They also facilitate workshops at teachers' institutes, conventions and professional growth network events, and provide support in the creation of resource documents.

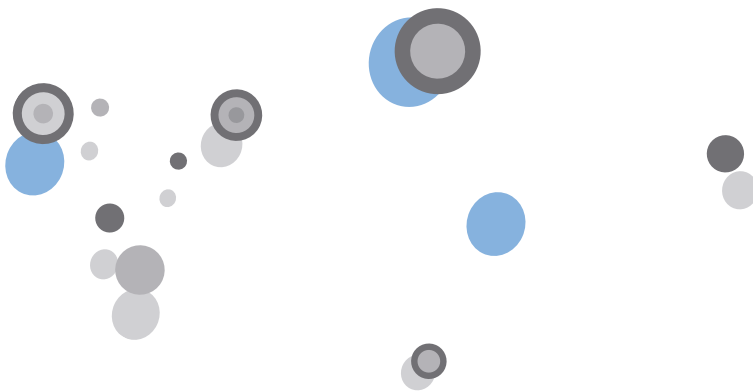
Stewart Resources Centre

The Stewart Resources Centre, located in Saskatoon, is your professional library. With a collection of over 26,000 books and audio-visual resources, 140 journals, a selection of teacher-prepared units, plus a friendly and knowledgeable staff, the Centre is able to meet your classroom, research and professional development needs.

Most materials may be borrowed by educators in Saskatchewan for a period of four weeks with the option to renew. Prepaid return mailing labels are provided for print materials sent outside Saskatoon. Requests for information and resource research or to borrow materials may be emailed to the Centre using a form available on www.stf.sk.ca. If you are looking for resources to supplement your classroom instruction, and you do not know exactly what resources are available, simply include the subject and grade level (if applicable) and the staff at the Centre will do the rest.

McDowell Foundation

The McDowell Foundation is an independent charitable organization that funds research into teaching and learning in publicly funded elementary and secondary schools in Saskatchewan. It was established by the Federation in 1991 to provide funds and supports to teachers for classroom-based research projects. You can find more information about the Foundation's programs and services as well as the results of these teacher-led projects through its website at www.mcdowellfoundation.ca. Teachers at all stages of their careers are also encouraged to attend the Foundation's annual conference, Learning From Practice, where teachers present their research results and network with colleagues.



Professional Standards and Discipline

Professional self-regulation is a privilege that is administered in the public interest and with public participation and reporting. As a certified and registered teacher with the Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board, you are subject to the professional standards of conduct and competence established in law by *The Registered Teachers Act* and in regulatory bylaws established by its Board of Directors and approved by the Minister of Education.

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation also continues to have a legislated mandate to ensure that its members maintain a high standard of professional conduct and teaching practice through the administration of its own code of conduct, standards of practice and code of collective interests.

While the various conduct, competence and collective interest principles may be intimidating for new teachers, you should view them as a starting point to think about the kinds of issues or circumstances they address. One of your responsibilities as part of a self-

regulating profession is to regularly reflect on the expectations these codes and standards confer on members and how you can use them to support your own professionalism.

All members of the teaching profession should see themselves and their work in the codes and standards. At the same time individual teachers will see their situation as somewhat unique. As you do reflect on what the codes and standards mean for your own practice and personal conduct (on and off duty), it is essential to keep exploring the complexities of teachers' professional identity, practice, contexts and relationships.

The procedures to adjudicate professional complaints by the Regulatory Board or the Federation should be based on the principles of natural justice and due process. They should be designed to focus on professional conduct and practice, not personalities, and to protect individual teachers from frivolous or malicious complaints.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers are committed to adapt and evolve through reflection, lifelong learning and collegiality, and provincial pride that contributes greatly to the quality of all our lives.

Concerns Regarding Professionalism

Questions or concerns about an individual's teaching practice or professional competence should always be raised first with the teacher. In most cases, taking this step will address the issues that an administrator, teacher colleague, parent or other individual may have.

Teachers have an ethical responsibility to take their concerns first to the colleague in question. As noted in STF Bylaw 6 (Ethics and Standards of Practice) Section 6.5.6, teachers must "... inform an associate before making valid criticism, and inform the associate of the nature of the criticism before referring the criticism of the associate to appropriate officials."

Before approaching a colleague with their concerns, teachers are encouraged to contact a Federation senior administrative staff member for advice and assistance. It is not a violation of the Code of Ethics for a member to make this request. The role of the Federation's staff in these kinds of situations is to help clarify issues and procedures, not to judge or penalize members.

If questions or concerns about an individual's teaching practice or competence continue after a discussion with the teacher has occurred, the next step is to elevate the questions or concerns to the principal and/or the employing school division.

When questions or concerns are not resolved at the school or division level, they may be reported to the Federation or Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board.

In any situation, the teacher involved should seek advice and assistance from Federation senior administrative staff.

Federation Programs and Services

As a member of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, you have access to a variety of services and supports from our senior administrative staff including advice and assistance regarding a wide range of professional matters such as teacher certification and registration, supervision and evaluation, professional growth, standards and discipline. If you are experiencing challenges at any time, senior administrative staff can assist with timely and effective coaching, alternatives and solutions that serve to resolve issues and encourage respectful relationships.

If you are contacted by the Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board in relation to a professional complaint, you are strongly encouraged to immediately contact the Federation. Senior administrative staff can provide vital information on your rights and responsibilities during SPTRB discipline proceedings and are working to ensure the system of teacher regulation in Saskatchewan remains grounded in the principles of natural justice and due process.

Teachers may wish to explore the implications of their professional codes and standards with colleagues in their school, local association or other settings. As they do so, they may want to access the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation programs and services regarding teacher professionalism. For example, the Federation:

- ✓ Encourages and supports teachers at the provincial, local association, school staff and individual levels to create and carry out professional development plans.

- ✓ Offers various professional development opportunities regarding teacher professionalism (e.g., pre-service workshops, Code of Ethics and ethical decision-making workshops, beginning teacher conferences, sessions at teacher conventions, etc).
- ✓ Promotes the professional development activities of professional growth networks.
- ✓ Maintains an extensive professional resource collection and reference service (Stewart Resources Centre).

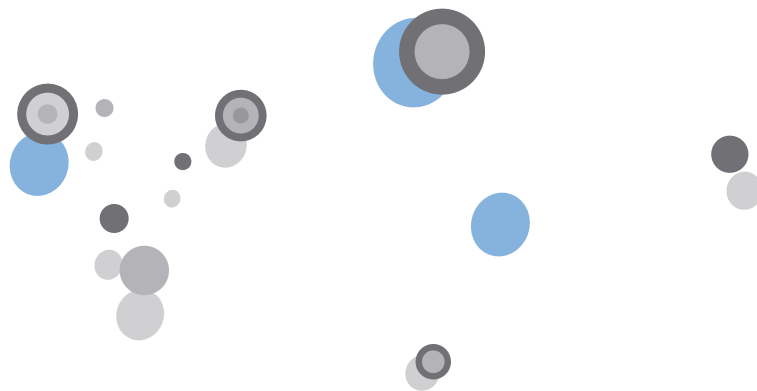
In addition, the Federation:

- ✓ Provides information and advice to members regarding professional matters.
- ✓ Promotes teachers' understanding and practice of teacher professionalism including the principles and ideals of professional competence, professional ethics and collective interests.
- ✓ Advocates strengthening teacher professionalism in various ways including promoting better understandings of teachers' professional needs by educational partners and stakeholders.
- ✓ Supports and works with various affiliates and partner organizations with a focus on teacher professionalism initiatives.

Visit the Federation's website, www.stf.sk.ca, or contact one of the offices in Saskatoon or Regina for more information on programs and services for Saskatchewan teachers.

Did You **Know?**

There are many ways for new teachers to become involved in the activities of the Federation. You may serve on committees, draft resolutions to be considered at the Annual Meeting of Council, attend Federation-sponsored professional development, avail yourself of materials at the Stewart Resources Centre, apply to evaluate learning resources, contribute articles to the *Saskatchewan Bulletin* or become a member of a professional growth network. Remember that your most important commitment to your professional organization is to strive for excellence in your practice.



Other Considerations About Professionalism

Being a teacher in the 21st century has its own set of professional issues. Teachers hold a position of trust with students and are expected to model ethical and appropriate cyber conduct. You need to be aware of your “cyber-responsibilities.” The Canadian Teachers’ Federation (www.ctf-fce.ca) has developed the site, *Cybertips for Teachers*, which provides, among other key issues related to the use of social media, guidelines for professional behaviour. The Canadian Teachers’ Federation warns teachers to be prudent both at work and at home in their use of technology.

At work:

- ✓ Maintain exemplary professional standards when sending email messages to students, parents, colleagues and administrators. Use a “teacher” voice.
- ✓ Always keep a copy of your email messages. Visit appropriate websites only.
- ✓ Keep your password to yourself.
- ✓ Refrain from sending personal email from your school’s email account.
- ✓ Remember that your employer has access to all your messages and all the sites you have browsed.
- ✓ Do not use your employer’s equipment to engage in activities related to a second job you may have.
- ✓ Ask friends to send personal messages to your personal account.
- ✓ Immediately delete private messages (and attachments) that friends may send to you on your school account.
- ✓ Use spelling and grammar checks.
- ✓ Don’t send unnecessary attachments with your emails.
- ✓ Turn off your computer when you are not around. Use a signature that includes your name, the school name and your assignment title if you have one.
- ✓ Include the subject line on emails.
- ✓ Respect all copyright laws.

At home:

- ✓ Do not use your personal computer to contact students and parents.
- ✓ Do not allow any images of yourself to be posted on any site without appropriate security safeguards.
- ✓ Do not post information about yourself on social networking sites.
- ✓ Do not post criticism of colleagues, students, administrators or your employer on social networking sites.
- ✓ Do not share information about students, colleagues or administrators.



Nothing is truly private when you use digital communication. Anything can generate unintended consequences far into the future.

Professionalism involves myriad aspects of attitude and behaviour, including some you may have never consciously considered!

- When a parent or caregiver stops you in a public place to ask about their child, you should tell them you will call or set up a time when they can come into the school. Confidential conversations are not confidential at the shopping mall.
- Dress appropriately. Ask about dress expectations at the school.
- Be on time. That's both you and your paperwork. In fact, often being a bit early can "de-stress."
- Get into the habit of using appropriate language. A teacher wouldn't teach the wrong subject matter. The same applies to language usage.
- Remember, especially if you are working in a small centre, that you live in a fish bowl. All eyes from the community are on you. You are still a teacher even if it is after hours.
- Follow the school rules and policies of the district. You are an employee of the school division and must abide by the established guidelines.
- Use the school telephone for school business only.
- Turn your cell phone off while involved in professional activities at school or set it to vibrate.
- Be respectful when speaking about your students and colleagues.
- When you begin teaching you may be only slightly older than your students. It is particularly important that you ensure that relationships remain professional and strictly teacher-student. Your students have their own friends and you are not one of them.
- Avoid the negative talk that can develop within the staff room.

Adapted from Martin and Brenny (2005)

Resources

Thompson, J. (2013). *The first-year teacher's survival guide: Ready-to-use strategies, tools and activities for meeting the challenges of each school day* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

The first section of this resource is entitled *Know What it Means to be a Twenty-First Century Educator*. The section discusses topics such as challenges of a changing profession and how to manage these challenges successfully, action research, reflective practice, maintaining sustained professional growth and learning from exemplary teachers.

What Saskatchewan Teachers Do



School Rhythms and Routines

What Happens When?

You have signed a contract and may have at least a hundred questions that you would like answered. That's normal and your future administrators expect it, but don't wait until school opens for all the answers. If good fortune is smiling on you, you know your placement in the spring and school is still in session. Go check it out. Once school starts, you will have enough on your plate. Any contacts you can establish and any information you can gather now will stand you in good stead later. Besides, if you are moving to another town, you need to make sure that you find a place to live. Make an appointment with your principal when he or she will have sufficient time to spend with you and come with your questions in hand.



When You Go to Your School for the First Time

Ask your principal:

- If there is information about **division goals and initiatives**. Are these available online or are print copies accessible? Inquire about the professional development focus for your school.
- About recent information provided to the teachers, **professional materials** that were given and books that were read by the faculty. If you have this information in advance, you will be able to get up to speed rather than playing catch-up.
- About specific **teaching and extra-curricular opportunities**.
- Whether the school division has an **electronic networking system** and, if it does, how you can obtain privileges.
- About what is involved in the professional supervision and evaluation cycle and whether there is a **mentoring** program at the school and/or division.
- About the **community** from which your students come. Ask about busing. How could the community be described? In what ways are parents or guardians involved in the school? What is the school doing in the way of partnerships?
- About **access** to the school. Keys? Security systems? Access hours?
- When a **tour** of the school could be arranged, including where you can get classroom supplies, equipment and where you can park.
- If there is an **orientation package**. The package may have a student or staff handbook that provides information about school policies and practices. Read this information carefully.

Orientation Package

If your school does have an orientation package it might include the following information. If there isn't an orientation package, you might want to ask about some of these items:

- A schedule of a typical school day, with dismissal times, recesses and breaks noted.
- A schedule of any alternate days.
- A list of staff members (with photographs?) and their assignments.
- A list of staff phone numbers and email addresses.
- The name and telephone number of your mentor or other colleagues willing to be of assistance.
- A list of paraprofessional staff (with photographs?) and the tasks for which they are responsible.
- The names, job descriptions and contact information of all support staff available (e.g., community liaisons, school counsellors, instructional consultants, psychologists, speech pathologists, social workers).
- School discipline policy.
- School assessment policy.
- School mission statement or philosophy.
- A "first-day" checklist, including ideas about storage of extra materials, classroom routines, etc.
- The location of teacher washrooms, mailboxes, supplies, photocopier, computers and telephones.
- The location of resources and equipment, including sign-out policies and procedures.
- A description of bookkeeping procedures (e.g., what expenses will be covered, how to be reimbursed for expenses, how to collect and submit fees, how to issue receipts).
- A school year calendar with dates indicated for progress reporting, parent conferences, professional development days and holidays.
- The location of student records (e.g., medical information, contact phone numbers, cumulative folders).
- Your local association directory.
- A community resource directory with contact information for agencies and organizations that might support your work with children and youth.
- Procedures around arranging for a substitute teacher.
- Maps of the school with fire exits.
- A copy of the school's Learning Improvement Plan and school mission statement.
- A copy of the division's strategic plan.
- Research articles concerning school and division goals and initiatives.
- Recent articles on instruction and assessment especially regarding the need for variety.
- The location of student records - cumulative folders, contact phone numbers, medical information.
- The school's attendance procedures.
- A list of who's who in the school division including the names and job descriptions of support personnel.
- LINC agreement.
- Guidelines for professional behaviour.
- The evaluation and reporting process timetable and forms.
- Addresses of important websites such as the Ministry of Education, the Federation, the school division.

- Planning templates.
- Samples of forms that will be encountered during the year/semester.
- Information on working with support personnel (See www.stf.sk.ca).
- Parking allocations.
- Staff room expectations.
- Information on staff funds (i.e., possibility of delaying payment until later in the year).
- _____
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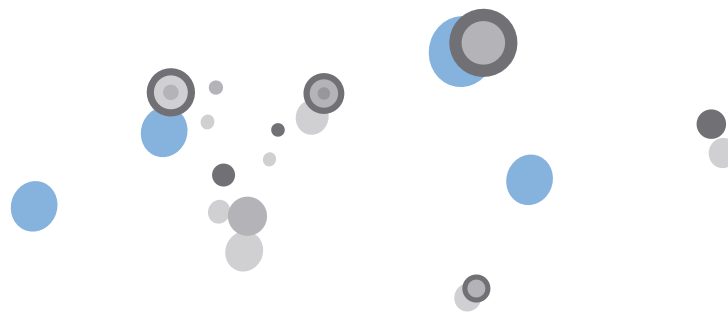
Unfortunately, the reality for many beginning teachers is that they are hired after school is already underway. If this is the case for you, then do not hesitate to find out the essentials as soon as you can. Ask your administrators to tell you the most important things they think you should know as you dive in.

Make sure you are aware of basics such as:

- School calendars, including reporting periods.
- Assessment and evaluation expectations.
- Any assessment software used by the school.
- Any division or provincial student assessments.
- School protocols.
- Teaching and extra-curricular expectations.
- Arrangements for substitute teachers (see Appendix D for a template you can adapt).

If you are fortunate to be hired before school begins, it is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the neighbourhood in which your school is situated. Walk or drive around the neighbourhood to get a better understanding of your future students' home milieu.

Make as many arrangements as you can for your own living needs. Do you want to live close to the school so you may walk? Would you prefer to find a place further away possibly creating a separation between work and home? Could anyone at the school help you find suitable accommodations?



Getting Ready

Like a road guide for a long journey, planning is vital. Planning and preparation begin the moment you accept your teaching position. If you are privileged with the good fortune of being hired prior to school opening, there are many ways you can use your time to prepare for your assignment.

You will soon discover that there is a particular rhythm associated with a school. Even though all buildings are different, there are patterns that can be predicted. This seasonal checklist is intended to alert you to some of these events in order that you can “keep on top of things.”

- ✓ Explore the school division’s website (and the school’s too if there is one).
- ✓ Explore what is offered on the website, This is the Classroom (www.thisistheclassroom.ca).
- ✓ Read the information you have obtained from your school visit.
- ✓ Check out some of the resources suggested in this handbook.
- ✓ Review curricula for your grades and subjects. (All are available online at www.education.gov.sk.ca).
- ✓ Search out resources to support your instruction.
- ✓ Consider first week (and particularly first day) plans. How will you introduce yourself? How will you establish classroom procedures? How will you physically set up your classroom? What should be included in course outlines? (See Tips for Starting Out in Appendix E).
- ✓ Create a file with some “generic” emergency lessons for those times when an assembly is cancelled or for another reason when you end up with unplanned extra time during the day.
- ✓ Create a file for each unit that you will begin at school opening.
- ✓ Begin a personal, reflective journal.
- ✓ Draft an introductory newsletter to be sent home with students on the first day.
- ✓ Consider how you will create a comfortable learning environment for you and your students.
- ✓ Begin to understand the acronyms and abbreviations used in the profession. Turn to Appendix F to facilitate your acronym literacy.

**you
can!**

Fall

August

School starts for teachers in late August, before your students arrive. Your world may be full of the “hurry scurry” of meetings, a plethora of forms, and, it seems, a myriad of details. It is during these days that you should consider the following items which may apply to your teaching situation. Even if you arrive later in the year, it is worth examining these items and attending to them as soon as you can.

September

The school division calendar specifies the first day of classes for students. Try to get some rest before the first day with students. Don't be too concerned about the butterflies in your stomach. This mixture of anxiety and excitement is absolutely normal. Many teachers admit that, regardless of how long they have been teaching, they feel some nervousness at the beginning of each new school year. Some admit they can't sleep the night before school begins. One of the biggest stressors for new teachers is often the very first few minutes with their students. Try to look relaxed and confident. That will come more naturally if you have everything as prepared as you possibly can. Also, anticipate that there are a lot of organizational details to attend to during the first few days that will eat into instructional time. Oh yes, and at the end of your first week expect to be really, really tired!

The classroom is changing. Each day is different, and each day is important. Each day, teachers adapt to meet the unique and changing needs of students. And, at the end of the day, it's the relationship between teachers and students that contributes to learning success.

ThisIsTheClassroom.ca

- ✓ Create a personal wellness plan and adhere to it. (Please read the section, Life Balance: What About My Needs? in this handbook.)
- ✓ Obtain up-to-date class lists.
- ✓ Determine who your Federation school staff liaison is.
- ✓ Talk to other teachers with similar assignments to plan and share ideas.
- ✓ Review the cumulative files, which inform about special considerations that students may present (e.g., medical information, special learning needs, recommendations from feeder schools, etc.) as well as reviewing files from special education teachers.
- ✓ Ask your mentor (or an experienced teacher if there is no mentor) to meet and review your plans for the first few days of classes.
- ✓ Set up regular times to meet with your mentor.
- ✓ Meet with educational assistants to discuss expectations.
- ✓ Meet with English as an additional language teachers to talk about how you will collaborate.
- ✓ Arrange to meet with your principal to discuss the supervision and evaluation plan for the year. Be sure you understand the difference between “supervision” and “evaluation.” Possibly schedule monthly meetings, as it is desirable to spread out your developmental supervision over the school year.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with resource room services, counselling procedures and course modification, especially as these services might apply to students with special needs or students who may be considered as “at-risk.”
- ✓ Polish your newsletter to the parents, including any information you are told by your principal to provide.
- ✓ Create a welcome package to hand out to your students on the first day. This could contain a welcome letter from you, a student information sheet, a letter for the parents/caregivers, a course syllabus (secondary schools), and one or more handouts that outline classroom and homework procedures. An opening day package will look different according to the grade or subject taught, but at the elementary level it may include forms from the principal, your polished newsletter and a supply list.
- ✓ Ensure you understand the financial policies and procedures for such things as fee collection.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with audiovisual resources.
- ✓ Become familiar with the school’s photocopying and videotaping policies.
- ✓ Locate and organize all necessary classroom supplies.
- ✓ Designate bulletin boards for displaying student work, a calendar for students’ assignments and reminders, and a homework board.

**you
can!**

- ✓ Set up the physical layout of your classroom, making sure there are enough chairs, desks or tables for each student (see Appendix G for suggestions). Also set up any special areas of the classroom (e.g., learning centres, classroom libraries, computer areas).
- ✓ Locate all necessary textbooks and handouts.
- ✓ Finalize (and rehearse) your first lessons.
- ✓ Review emergency procedures. (Fire drills are very common in the fall before it gets cold, so make sure you know the exit routes.)

Your Commitments as You Begin Your Journey

- Focus on your students. Tell them a little about yourself (but not your life story).
- Remember to move around the classroom. Objects like podiums create barriers between you and your students.
- Learn student names as quickly as possible and make sure you are pronouncing and spelling names correctly. Plan an activity that centres on learning each student's name and something about each student.
- Firm up your long-range curricular plans for the year keeping your students' interests and needs in mind.
- Begin collecting copies of assessments and records of student grades.
- Save a copy of all handouts, exams, etc., to place in your files. Ask teachers if they would share some of their favourite materials for your files. Even if you are not teaching that grade or subject now, you may be in the future.
- Ask your principal to support your attendance at the Federation's conference for beginning teachers, Taking Your Place in the Professional Community, held in Regina and Saskatoon in the fall.
- If your school has parent volunteers, now is the time to organize them.
- Set up a time to observe a lesson taught by your mentor (or other experienced teacher).
- Ask your principal or your mentor about the way in which events are celebrated in your school. Some assemblies, school dances or other activities (e.g., Halloween, Remembrance Day) may exclude students. Be careful to ensure that you avoid planning important events, such as field trips or exams, on sacred days that your students celebrate. Be aware of holidays that students and their families may not celebrate.
- Check the accuracy of your first month's paycheque and then enjoy.

October

School is in full swing by **October** and you will have the sense that there is never enough time to do everything you want to do. However, be sure to find your way to the staff room for some social interaction.

- Attend Taking Your Place in the Professional Community, a conference for teachers in the first five years of their career.
- Standardized tests such as the Canadian Test of Basic Skills and Canadian Achievement Tests are often administered in the fall. Ask your principal for the names and dates of any such testing that may occur. If standardized tests are to be administered at your grade or subject during the year, find out all you can about these tests. What is being measured? What is the window for administration? Are there any students who are to be exempted? When are the results available? How are results shared with parents?
- Are other provincial assessments administered at your grade level? For example, if you are teaching Grade 12, your students may be writing provincial examinations at the end of each semester. Take a look at the Ministry of Education's Assessment site: www.education.gov.sk.ca/programs-services. Ask your principal or mentor for more information about these evaluations.
- October marks World Teachers' Day and Education Week in Saskatchewan. Be sure you are aware of any plans for your school's recognition during this week. Accept any affirmations that you receive during this time (and anytime).
- Connect with your administrator or teacher mentor for help preparing the progress reports. Also, read through the section on progress reporting in this handbook.
- Prepare for parent, or in many schools, three-way conferences (see Appendices I, J and K for related templates). After the conferences, think about (and record) things you might want to change for next time.
- Ask your principal or mentor about professional development opportunities and how to apply for funding to attend these events.
- Read the *Saskatchewan Bulletin*.

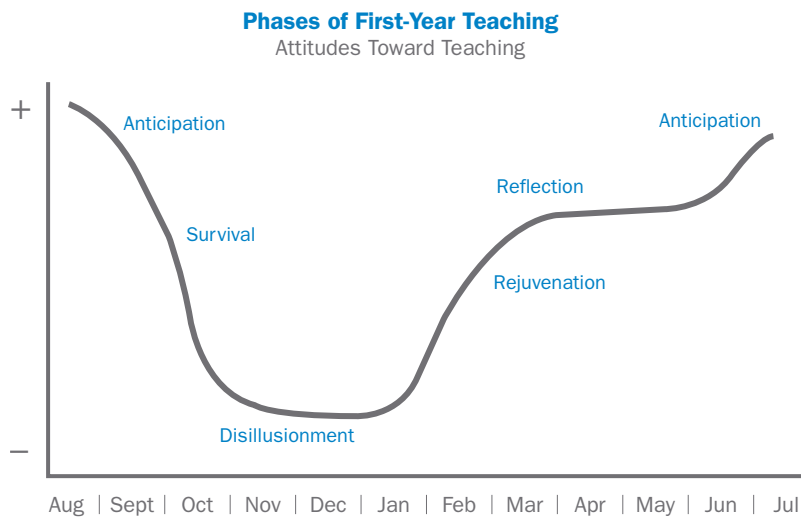
Some Advice

Regarding classroom management, sometimes you need to choose your battles. New teachers often mistake discipline issues (i.e., truly disruptive behaviour) with offensive behaviour (i.e., "Math is so boring, I just hate it!"). The disruptive behaviour demands your attention, but some comments do not. Devote your management time to behaviours that do not allow all students to learn in a respectful manner. Try not to take the boring comments too personally.

When students ask why they have to take this stuff, the reflective teacher will seize upon this as an opportunity to articulate the reasons, having thought it through previously.

November

By November, beginning teachers are well into their first year as a teacher but not yet at winter holidays. Ellen Moir captures the Phases of First-Year Teaching (1990), illustrated below. A new member of the profession may 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.” Reassure yourself that it is not just you trying to cope. Others have felt this way too. This would be a good time to maintain your connections to the other beginning teachers you met at last month’s conference. These teacher cohorts can offer important personal and emotional support and encourage reflection, as well as become a forum for problem solving.



Phases of First-Year Teaching (Moir, 1990)

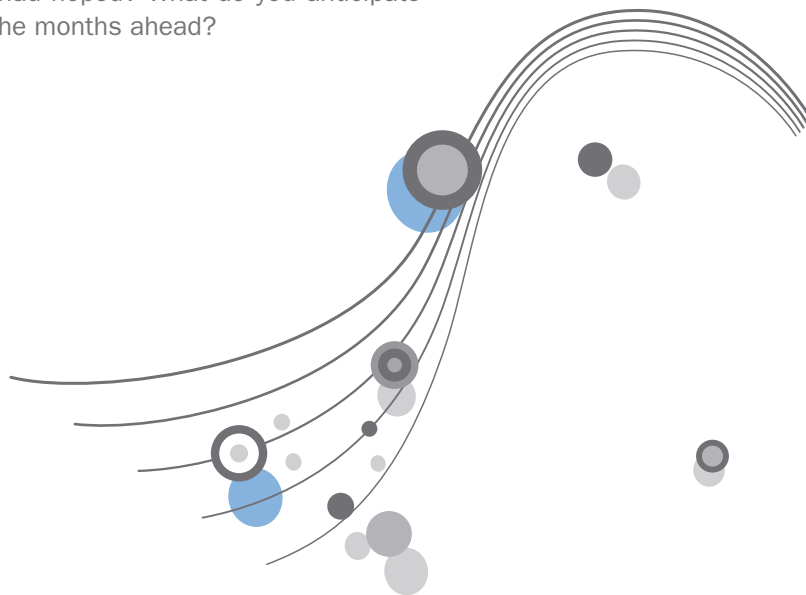
You have been teaching for over two months and it may be time to revisit your wellness plan. It also seems new teachers particularly are often prone to catching every bug going around the school. Trying your best to stay healthy and keep your life in balance may help you through what can be a rough period. First and foremost, look after yourself. Think about flight attendants who tell you to don your air mask first, before helping children with theirs. The same idea can be applied to your world. Look after yourself first so that you are better able to help others.

A couple of months into the school year is a good time to pause and reflect.

- Reflect on the variety of instructional strategies that you have used thus far.
- Reflect on how you have implemented assessment tools in the first term. What would you like to modify for the next reporting term?
- Reflect on the missteps you may have made thus far. Accept that you are human, learn from them and then move on. Remind yourself that teachers who never fail in their lessons are the ones who rarely try anything new or innovative. Cowley (2003) tells us to keep a sense of humour at all times and never take ourselves too seriously. “After all,” she says, “even in your worst lesson, nobody dies” (p. 19).
- Reflect on the mentor relationship that you have established. Is it going in the direction that you had hoped? What do you anticipate will be some areas of focus in the months ahead?

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers are committed to adapt and evolve through reflection, lifelong learning and collegiality.



Winter

December

December is a time where, regardless of the grade level taught, there are bound to be interruptions. Be patient and flexible. Also, remember that for many of our students, this may well be the most stressful time of their year.

- Think about how you can celebrate the diversity of students in your class(es) as you approach the holiday season. Are all your students included in winter festivities? How can you ensure they are?
- Think about how you can organize projects and assignments so that you can have a “little or no work” vacation.

January

January is the beginning of a new year and you have come back rejuvenated and ready to give your all again.

- Discuss the progress of your supervision and evaluation cycle with your principal.
- Review November’s assessment and evaluation modifications with your principal or mentor.
- If you are teaching at the secondary level, you may be preparing and administering final exams. Is there a common exam for your subject? If there is no common exam, ask your mentor to review your examination instrument(s) with you. If you are teaching Grade 12, there will be provincial examinations to be administered.

February

February is a short month but usually a busy one. Secondary teachers begin a new semester starting new classes and meeting new students.

- Ask about any outdoor education opportunities that might be available to your students in the spring. Find out how to register for them.
- Ask your principal if you are to complete and submit any documentation for student placements for the following year (e.g., admission into special programs, recommendations for Grade 9 placements, etc.).
- Begin preparing for farewell or graduation programs and events, if applicable.
- Mid-year professional development activities are common during this month. Make sure you are aware of these events.
- Consider asking your principal to support your attendance at a professional conference in the spring or summer. Find out how funding for conferences works in your school and in your school division. Numerous conferences are advertised in the *Saskatchewan Bulletin*. Plan to attend a summer short course or workshop. These short courses are very popular with the province's teachers and will give you a chance to meet teachers from other school divisions who share your interests.

March

March signals reporting time again. If you have been carefully monitoring and documenting student progress all along, you will find this period less time-consuming and conferences less daunting.

- Initiate any conferences with parents or guardians that you think are necessary at this point in the term. Parents need to hear about problems while there is still time to address them. A parent conference should not be the first time a parent learns there are issues. Regular teacher contact throughout the year prevents this situation.

Spring

April

In April, you begin to realize that spring is just around the corner and you start to wonder how you can get everything done before the end of the year.

- Determine future options. Ask for advice about plans and possibilities for next year. Possibly meet with the school division's human resources department to discuss options.
- If you are expecting that you will be teaching in a different setting, begin to collect ideas and resources to support your change.
- Review pre-assessment information in order to support your students.
- Start to organize year-end field trips.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation provides professional opportunities to support individuals committed to providing high quality public service.

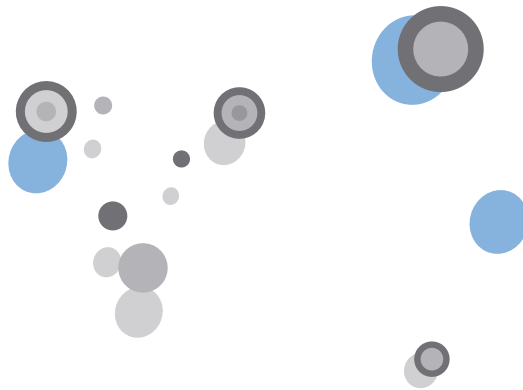
May and June

Your first year as a classroom teacher is coming to an end in May and June. You may well marvel at how much you have learned. There are several things you should be doing at this time.

- Meet with your principal and superintendent (if possible) to review your evaluation for this school year. Be sure you read your evaluation carefully and think about what growth it might prompt for you in the months and years ahead.
- There may be a lot of excitement in your classroom with the anticipation of holidays, but learning should still be taking place. Maintain the same expectations, rules and, as much as possible, the same routines.
- Praise your students for their hard work and accomplishments over the year.
- Ask students to supply feedback to you as they reflect on their year. Depending upon grade level, have them write you a letter, answer a survey, draw a picture, etc.
- Look for opportunities to serve your professional community by participating in your local association, a professional growth network or advisory committee in an area of special interest.
- Prepare for the final student reporting for the year.
- Ask your principal for a copy of the year-end procedures that you are expected to complete.
- Send a thank-you note to the people who helped you out during the year.
- Organize your files, place confidential files in a secure place and pack your things away so that the custodian will be able to thoroughly clean over the summer.
- Meet with your mentor and your principal to evaluate the induction program. What works? What could be improved?
- Offer suggestions to your principal regarding the content of the orientation package and the first-day-of-school checklist. He or she will appreciate another perspective and another “set of eyes.”

Summer

This is the time for you to celebrate your year, relax and recharge! You have earned your “time out.”



STF Website

Set some time aside to explore the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation website, www.stf.sk.ca, during your first month of teaching. You will find a wealth of information and ideas on teaching in Saskatchewan including:

- The Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice and Code of Collective Interests.
 - Teacher professionalism.
 - Advice and assistance.
 - Professional resources.
 - A specific section for beginning teachers.
-

So, Where Does My Paycheque Go?

Gross Pay – This is the amount you are paid before any deductions are removed. Complete pay grids are available on the Federation website, at www.stf.sk.ca.

Net Pay – This is the amount that you receive after all the deductions from your gross pay have been taken.

Canada Pension Plan – This is the deduction for the contributions that you make to the Canada Pension Plan.

Group Life Insurance – As a member of the Federation, you are eligible to receive coverage under the Teachers' Group Life Insurance Plan. You may read more about the life insurance plan by requesting an information pamphlet from the Federation or by visiting www.stsc.gov.sk.ca/group.

STF Income Continuance Plan – The Income Continuance Plan allows for a teacher with a long-term disabling condition to receive a portion of his or her salary. Complete information is available from the Federation office.

Professional Fees and Dues – The monthly deduction for STF fees is used to support the work of the Federation.

STF Contingency Fund – The Contingency Fund is used to provide financial support in a variety of circumstances.

Saskatchewan Teachers' Retirement Plan – Teachers make contributions to a retirement pension plan on a monthly basis. The contributions to your pension are managed through the Saskatchewan Teachers' Retirement Plan. You should fill out a Beneficiary Designation form to name a beneficiary for survivor benefits. To learn more about your pension plan, contact the STRP office (1-800-667-7762; or 306-373-1660 in Saskatoon).

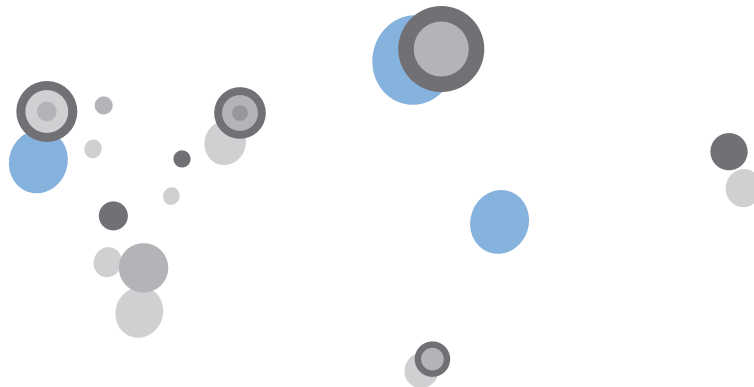
Charitable Donations – You may be asked if you want to make monthly donations to non-profit organizations from your cheque, (e.g., the work of the McDowell Foundation, which supports teacher research).

Monthly and Incidental Payments – Some divisions may request that you indicate pay for some services in cash or by payroll deduction. Your parking fees or your local association fees may be collected in this way.

Did You **Know?**

**A frequently asked question
is what is “reconciliation on a paycheque”?**

From time to time, employers need to make an adjustment on your cheque that might reflect a change in the amount that is paid or deducted. This may happen if the number of teaching days changes or if a rate of deduction needs adjustment. Example: if your employment insurance contribution changes.



Saskatchewan Bulletin

The *Saskatchewan Bulletin* is the regular tabloid newspaper of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation devoted to topics of interest to teachers in their professional lives. It provides timely news stories, features and photo coverage about important activities in Saskatchewan's K-12 education sector.

The *Bulletin* is distributed to school principals, teachers, substitute teachers, associate members, teachers on education or sick leave, supervisory assistants, superannuates (upon request), directors and secretary-treasurers of school divisions, school trustees, Ministry of Education officials, members of Parliament, MLAs, provincial teacher organizations, libraries, education college faculty and students, and others interested in education throughout Canada. It is available free of charge.

Contributed material for the *Bulletin* is welcome and will be used when possible. All material is subject to editing. Opinion pieces, in the form of letters to the editor or personal viewpoints, are also welcome. Letters should be kept to a maximum of about 200 words and viewpoints to about 600 words. They may be subject to editing.

All submissions must include the writer's name, address and phone number. To be considered for a particular issue, contact the *Bulletin* at 1-800-667-7762 (306-373-1660 in Saskatoon) for the copy deadline.

Requests for coverage by *Bulletin* staff should be made at least three weeks before the event.



Life Balance

What About My Needs?

Wellness is often something that we only consider when we become ill or are facing a crisis in our lives. Then we can hardly wait to become well, vowing that we will never again let ourselves get run down or ignore what is important. However, wellness depends on daily lifestyle and life choices, and the first months of teaching can play havoc with those choices.



As a first-year teacher, you are going through a transition from being a student to being a professional educator. A transition like this involves a redefinition of your own identity. You are probably recognizing that this new set of professional expectations is demanding. It is not unusual for beginning teachers to feel overwhelmed by a workload that at times involves working late into the night, on weekends, over lunch and at recess. Does this sound like you? Are you possibly getting pressure from your family to spend more time with them? Do your friends wonder why you're not meeting them for coffee anymore? When you do catch up with them, do you find your mind drifting to what you are going to do in your second period class?

Sometimes visualization is useful. Imagine your life as a pie chart. Diagram the slice of the pie that would be exercise. Add the slice that would be your social activities. The slice that would represent rest. (You remember rest?) Now draw in the piece that would correspond to work and work-related activities. Does the pie chart look balanced to you?

Striking a balance may not be easy, but it is a fundamental component of personal wellness. The University of Regina's Instructional Development Unit conducted research in 2013 entitled, *The Challenges of Intensification Confronting Saskatchewan Teachers' Professional Time*. One theme that emerged from this research involved the increasing pressures on teachers' personal lives and on their health and well-being. Early in your career you should be addressing wellness issues in order to establish that required balance of social, physical, mental and spiritual, as well as professional needs. A summary of the Saskatchewan Instructional Development Unit's research is available at <http://ourspace.uregina.ca>.

We all know the first year of teaching can be very stressful. There's a steep learning curve.

Dr. Ron Martin, University of Regina, as quoted in the *Regina Leader Post*, April 3, 2014



The first years of teaching are filled with high expectations, excitement, anticipation and lots of change. You are facing a challenge that all beginning teachers face – striking a balance. Balance in our lives does not happen incidentally; it needs to be planned for.

This Concept of Balance Applies to Various Aspects ...

Personal Life and Work Life

There is so much to do and learn. Your work can consume you. One's personal life often suffers in the first year of teaching. Exercise is forgotten and there is no time to meet new friends, let alone join them for activities outside of school. You say you are too tired at the end of the day, yet it is exercise and social interaction that maintain energy levels. Try to be diligent about scheduling in your social activities and exercise, and not leaving them to chance, because it won't happen. Make a commitment and then stick with it. Set boundaries. No one expects you to be on call 24 hours a day.

Perfectionism and Surviving

Recognize right from the onset that to always have the perfect lesson and the perfect class, where all students are working up to their potential all the time, is impossible. In fact, there may well be students in your classroom with so many personal and/or home problems that no matter how your lessons are planned, or what you do, they will not be motivated. Do not take this personally. It does not mean you are not a good teacher. Look for the help of more experienced teachers when you need support and ideas. All teachers need help at some time or other – don't be afraid to ask.

Keep your worries in perspective. Try to focus on the positives instead of constantly replaying troubling aspects of the day or obsessing on what you could have done or said differently. Learn from these incidents, reflect and then move on.

Tips for Long-Term Survival

- Know how and when to say NO.
- Make a clear division between school and home life.
- Accept that you're human – you will make mistakes. Learn from them and then put them behind you.
- Pace yourself. Know when to give yourself a break.

Cowley (2003), p. 6

You cannot be perfect all the time. Remember that you are doing two jobs right now – teaching and learning to teach. Surviving your first year means that you have to let go of thinking you have to be able to do it all, all the time. Think instead of the proverb, “Make haste slowly.”

Annette Breaux (2011) writes about a simple concept with special rewards. She suggests creating an “I am special” folder to keep notes from students, thank-you cards, letters of appreciation, etc., all together. On those difficult days when you are questioning yourself, take out the folder to reaffirm that you are indeed making a positive difference in the lives of others.


Saying “YES” and Saying “NO”

It is all right to say no to too many requests and extracurricular opportunities. Beginning teachers often think they have to do everything that is asked of them (and do it well). There are just so many hours in a day and you have only so much time and energy. If it is too much for you, then say so. It does not help anyone for you to be so stretched that you cannot do anything well or you are not getting the sleep you need. You need to set priorities and stick with them. Time is your most precious resource right now. Spend it wisely.



In the words of a first-year teacher:

I try to manage my stress by doing what I need to do for school, but always leaving time to do something outside of teaching in the evening. It is important that I try to maintain a balance that allows me to be a teacher, but also who I am as an individual outside of the classroom.



Thompson (2013), p. 32

Considering Stress

Sometimes life does get out of balance and you may end up feeling stressed. Beginning teachers may very well respond in a stressful manner to any of a variety of situations, including classroom management, time pressures, unrealistic expectations, evaluation by a director or principal, feelings of isolation, communication with parents, etc. You are not alone. Take some comfort from knowing other beginning teachers have had these issues as well.

If you find that you are struggling to create or sustain a balance between your concerns and your ability to manage them, you are encouraged to contact the Federation and ask for the individual on “intake.” The individual on intake can provide guidance as to available supports.

Did You Know?

Portaplan

Portaplan is a voluntary life insurance plan. The premiums that you would pay under this plan vary with age, gender and smoking status. If you are interested in the extra coverage that Portaplan will provide, contact the Federation office for a brochure. For more information, visit the Federation website, www.stf.sk.ca.

No one told me that other beginners had these problems. I was planning to quit because I thought I was a bad teacher.

Brock and Grady (1997), p. 13

Recognizing Stress

People show moderate levels of stress in a variety of ways. Some signs of stress can include:

- Crankiness or irritability.
- Excessive fatigue.
- Sadness and crying.
- Changes in eating habits, often eating “on the fly” or not eating.
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep.
- Feeling that you are being driven.
- Experiencing physical symptoms such as headaches or indigestion.
- Increases in smoking, drinking or other drug use.

Other signs can be seen in interactions with others such as:

- Withdrawal from friends, family and colleagues.
- Angry interactions with others.
- Touchiness and heightened sensitivity.

Mandel’s *The New Teacher Toolbox* (2003) concludes, in the chapter entitled How to Maintain Your Sanity, that one of the most important things you can do as a new teacher is to learn to control stress. This can be accomplished by:

- Thoroughly preparing your lesson and ensuring you know the material.
- Seeking advice from both experienced and other new teachers in order to eliminate feelings of isolation.
- Making a list of things to do on a weekly basis.
- Enjoying recreational activities with colleagues and with family.
- Maintaining a divide between home and work.
- Accepting that it is OK to make mistakes.

“Stress is the trash of modern life – we all generate it but if you don’t dispose of it properly, it will pile up and overtake your life.”
Terri Guillemets

Relax

The main combatant against stress is relaxation. There are several ways to make sure you get the relaxation you need. Stress-reduction techniques and an exercise regimen such as yoga, meditation and tai chi are all great methods to introduce some relaxation that your body craves. These activities can literally take your mind and body away from the demands of your everyday life without you physically travelling somewhere far away. No matter how draining your day is, dedicating a certain amount of time per day to focus on relaxation and not caring about what is happening around us is very beneficial.

Surround Yourself With Friends

A top stress buster is laughter. No sane person can genuinely laugh by themselves for any apparent reason. Therefore, if you want your stress levels to go down, go out and laugh with friends. Surrounding yourself with friends who care about you is one great way to keep stress away.

Spending time alone may at times be good, but being cooped up on your own most of the time can be detrimental to your mental and heart health. At the very least, being alone all the time will make it harder for you to keep negative thoughts at bay and stress will drown you.

Understand You Are a Work in Progress

One thing that none of us can be is perfect, no matter how hard we try. Striving for something that cannot happen immediately can be stressful. The more you strive to be perfect, the more you will become frustrated. This unhealthy behaviour can drain you of energy.

Did You Know?

During his career, Babe Ruth hit 714 homeruns. He also struck out 1330 times.

Resources

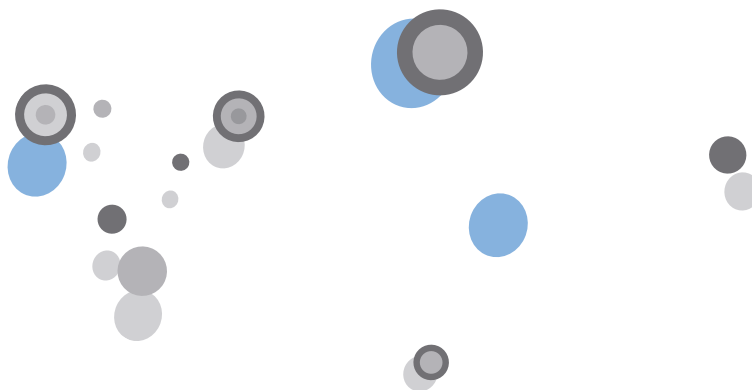
www.apa.org/ed/schools/cpse/activities/teacher-stress.aspx

The first few years in the classroom can be the most difficult for a new teacher who may feel overwhelmed by the complexity and responsibilities of his or her new role. This module, developed by the American Psychological Association, is primarily aimed at pre-service teachers and new educators. It examines definitions and causes of teacher-related stress and provides strategies for recognizing, preventing and coping with stressful situations, events and triggers as they occur.

Mandel, Scott. (2003). *The new teacher toolbox: Proven tips and strategies for a great first year*. Chicago, IL: Zephyr Press.

Easy to read and practical, the topics cover how to arrange a classroom, a beginner's guide to figuring grades, parent-teacher conferences, modifications for students with special needs and how to maintain one's sanity. The format follows a beginning teacher through her first year of teaching.

Natural News offers suggestions as to how to keep stress at bay. www.naturalnews.com.

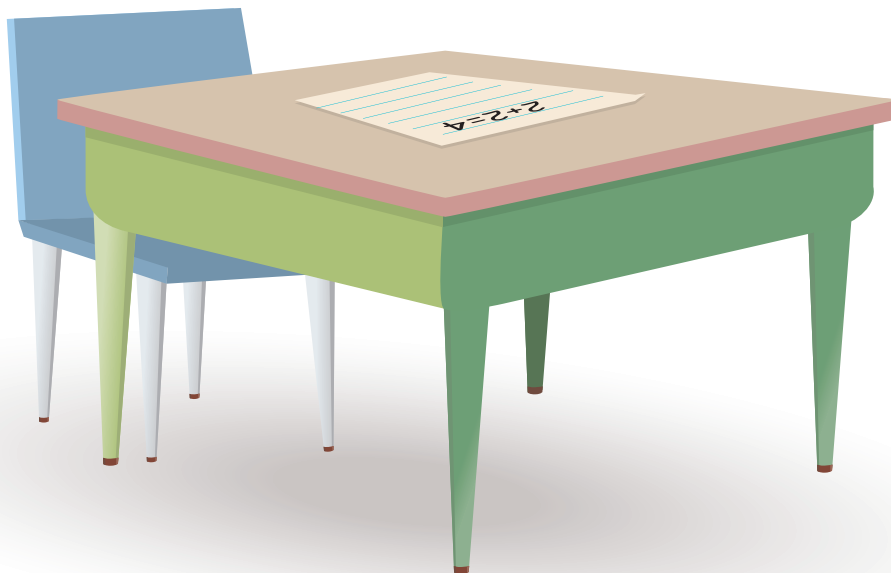




Classroom Management

How Do I Create Community?

Today's effective teachers embrace the social nature of the classroom by understanding it as a community of learners, with all its resulting benefits and responsibilities.

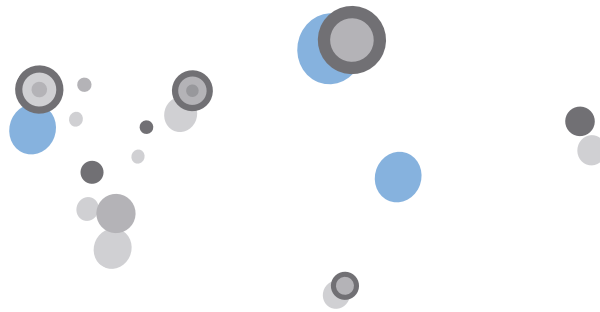


Life in a classroom is a social experience. Day after day, students and teachers work together in a dynamic and vital school society. Seeing the classroom as a community encourages the students to play a more active role, publicly sharing ideas and taking risks in a caring, collaborative climate.

This collaborative quality brings with it a set of characteristics that teachers can use as a framework for planning classroom instruction, curriculum and management. This section encourages you, as a beginning teacher, to think of how you want to create a community of learners for you and your students. And remember, as an educator you will always be a “student of teaching.”

When learning takes place in a community you will see some of these characteristics:

- The focus is on lifelong learning rather than job preparation.
- The focus is on constructing meaning by relating learning to personal, relevant and authentic experiences.
- The focus is on respect, support and collaboration.
- The focus is on the student. The teacher facilitates but does not dominate the learning. Teaching involves being “the guide on the side” rather than always being “the sage on the stage.”



Frame your classroom management plan around a courteous, caring, respect-filled vision. Students who perceive you care about them will perform better academically, are less likely to have behaviour problems, and are more likely to be motivated. Take that vision, and fashion it into guidelines.

Martin & Brenny (2005)

Students can be taught the social skills involved in living in a community. A T-chart can be used to help students understand productive behaviours and assess whether or not these behaviours are being demonstrated. The sample T-chart below illustrates how listening skills might be addressed in group discussion and could be adapted in numerous ways in your classroom.

Effective Listening

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Students are positioned so that they are close to one another.	Students are completely exhausting their idea before another student speaks.
Students are making eye contact with the speaker.	“So, what you mean by that is ... ”
Students are making non-verbal gestures that support listening (e.g., nodding, smiling).	“I understand what you are saying.” “I wonder what you think of ...”

CONNECTING to the Commitments

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation promotes student-centred classrooms that prepare students to become confident, creative and caring individuals while gaining valuable experience and knowledge to fuel future endeavours.

Be Proactive in Creating Community

When you reflect on your classroom as a learning community, you will want to think about the development of acceptable and productive behaviours. Many of the issues that new teachers face in school are related to relationships. When relationships are going well, difficulties that arise from time to time (and it happens in all classrooms) can usually be worked out based on the “deposits” that we have put into building these relationships. If relationships have not been positively established, then these deposits have not yet built up and it is more difficult to work through issues that arise. There are numerous things that you can do to build positive and productive relationships.

- ✓ Listen to your students. Ask for their opinions. Ask for feedback.
- ✓ Take an interest in your students. Know something about each student’s interests and talk about those things. It doesn’t always have to be about school either.
- ✓ Be culturally responsive and sensitive to students’ ethnicities and backgrounds.
- ✓ Value individual differences.
- ✓ Before class begins each day, stand at the door and greet students by name. Add a compliment or a positive comment. You are telling your students they are significant in the classroom community and that you care that they are there.
- ✓ Model the behaviour you expect from your students. Your “pleases,” “thank yous” and smiles send a positive message. What you do is as important as what you say.
- ✓ Be fair. Be consistent.
- ✓ Celebrate student accomplishments.
- ✓ Be sensitive to your students and their reactions.
- ✓ Remember that everything you do – facial expressions, body language, tone of voice – sends a message. Make sure it’s the message you want sent.

**you
can!**

Building positive relationships is an important teacher skill; so is classroom management and the two are closely related. They work together to create the fabric of the learning community.

Competent classroom management is one of the keys to your success as a teacher. Classroom management includes all the daily patterns and procedures you use in the classroom in order to enhance learning. It includes the routines and structure you use to organize the classroom. Your role is to organize your classroom to ensure a positive learning environment and thereby maximize student learning opportunities.

Beginning teachers often cite classroom management as their most serious concern. How do I manage the student who misbehaves? How do I maintain order in my classroom? How do I keep my students involved, listening and on task? Classroom management also includes the consequences of students not adhering to the established procedures, and the ways in which you respond to a situation caused by a student (or students). There is no one set of rules that will suit all teachers and all teaching situations, but there are certainly some standards that can guide your practice. For a start, turn to the school's discipline policy as well as the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice on the Federation website, www.stf.sk.ca. You can also look at some of the resource recommendations listed later in this section of the handbook.

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers engage in exemplary practices that demonstrate high standards of care, conduct and competence to ensure the well-being and growth of all children and youth.

I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal touch that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a student's life joyous or unpleasant. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. It is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or resolved, and a child humanized or dehumanized.

Adapted from Haim Ginott

Accept from the onset that all teachers at some time will experience classroom management problems. However, research is clear that classroom management issues arise less frequently when students know what is expected of them. Gentzler (2005) believes that being proactive is the answer. As much as possible, anticipate situations before they appear. Appendix H provides a listing of possible situations and asks you to consider what you would want your students to do in each case. Share your expectations with your students and, depending on the situation, involve your students in developing these procedures with you. Breaux and Whitaker (2006) write about how teachers waste valuable instructional time putting out fires instead of putting their energy into practicing fire prevention.

Sometimes, even if you have carefully planned interesting and relevant lessons, you have sound management strategies in place, and your expectations are clear and fair, you may still encounter situations where students fail to become engaged with school experiences and act in disruptive and non-productive ways. It is important to realize that this may happen because of needs the student may have that you might not be able to address. It may help to remember that sometimes success with very needy students may come in small steps. Train yourself now to look for small successes, not radical conversions. Learn to accept those successes and continue to plan for the next success with a challenging student.

Positive reinforcement is a great motivator. Develop a repertoire of phrases that you might consider using in order to recognize student effort. Consider using some of the following:



Great teachers establish clear expectations at the start of the year and follow them consistently as the year progresses. Great teachers expect good behaviour and that is generally what they get.

Whitaker (2011)

When you are feeling uncomfortable with classroom management issues, ask yourself these questions to try to isolate or identify areas where changes may make a difference:

- Did I communicate expectations and consequences ahead of time?
- Are the expectations and consequences fair and reasonable?
- Am I consistent with expectations?
- Did I construct a situation where the student was guaranteed to succeed?
- Did I make the necessary adaptations or modifications to the student's program to meet learning needs?
- Did I knowingly allow a situation to escalate before I intervened?
- Do I have a contingency plan for a disruptive student so that the flow of the lesson is not lost?
- Did I use adequate physical cues during the lesson to let the student know he or she was acting inappropriately? (Physical cues could include standing close to the student, maintaining eye contact, slowly shaking your head or whispering to the student as you pass by.)

You may wish to consult with the previous year's teacher(s) and, when appropriate, resource teachers about successful strategies. In secondary schools, it might be helpful to determine what strategies work for the student's other teachers. Parents need to know that there are issues as well. Request a meeting with parents to discuss your concerns.

Sometimes new teachers need support seeing what they're missing. You may want to ask your mentor or colleague to help you identify a problem through data collection. Another teacher objectively collecting data about behaviour may help you better understand a situation and ways to resolve it. It may be useful to share such observational data with students and their parents.

Remember when the problem is resolved, it is over. Children are usually forgiving; you need to strive to be forgiving too.

Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you will help them become what they are capable of being.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

What Effective Classroom Management Looks and Sounds Like

What Effective Classroom Management Looks and Sounds Like	What Ineffective Classroom Management Looks and Sounds Like
The classroom looks organized. There is a place for everything.	There is random stuff everywhere.
Lessons are filled with enthusiasm and excitement on the part of the teacher and, consequently, among the students.	Lessons lack enthusiasm and excitement on the part of the teacher and, consequently, among the students.
The students do most of the talking and doing, prompted by the teacher's questioning and guidance.	The teacher does most of the talking and the students do little listening.
Routines and procedures are evident. Students know exactly what is expected of them.	There is little, if any, evidence of structured routines and procedures.
There are few teacher warnings for misbehaviour. If a rule is broken there is a consistent consequence.	There is a lot of warning regarding student misbehaviour.
There are almost no interruptions of the lesson for the purpose of re-establishing control.	There are numerous interruptions of the lesson for the teacher to try to re-establish control.
The teacher is proactive.	The teacher is reactive.
Lesson plans are well written. Any teacher could pick up the plan and know what to do.	Lesson plans are vague and often confusing.
The objective of the lesson is clearly established for the students. They understand what they are learning and why they are learning it.	Learning objectives are vague.
There is constant teacher movement around the room.	There is little teacher movement around the room. The teacher is generally at the front of the room.
The teacher never openly shows frustration. Problems are handled calmly. The teacher appears in control.	The teacher shows frustration. The consequences for any given infraction lack consistency. The consequence is usually proportionate to the teacher's anxiety level.
The lessons are varied.	The lessons are "one-size-fits-all."
There is constant positive reinforcement.	There is little positive reinforcement.
The teacher often smiles.	The teacher rarely smiles.

Resources

Breaux, A. (2011). *101 "answers" for new teachers and their mentors* (2nd ed.). Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

This resource provides suggestions as to how to handle difficulties new (and not-so-new) teachers may experience.

Breaux, A., & Whitaker, T. (2013). *50 ways to improve student behaviour: Simple solutions to complex challenges*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Practical techniques are presented for improving student behaviour and increasing student co-operation, participation and achievement. Strategies can be applied in classrooms at all grade levels and subjects. Strategies include learning what to overlook, nipping potential problems in the bud, establishing expectations and procedures, and how to make students more responsible for themselves.

Cushman, K. (2003). *Fires in the bathroom: Advice for teachers from high school students*. New York, NY: New Press.

Cushman understands how important it is for a teacher to see the world from students' eyes, which is exactly what this resource captures. The book explores a variety of secondary school issues, including student engagement, classroom behaviour and creating a culture of success. She has also written for the middle years in the 2005 book, *Fires in the Middle School Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from Middle Schoolers* (2008).

Whitaker, T. (2011). *What great teachers do differently: 17 things that matter most* (2nd ed.). Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Whitaker writes, when a student misbehaves, great teachers have one goal: to keep that behaviour from happening again. Various sections in this resource deal with classroom management, particularly Chapter 5, "Prevention Versus Revenge."

Wormeli, R. (2012). *Good feedback=active learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.middleweb.com/1600/ricks-fundamentals-part-2>.

Wormeli's website has numerous articles that would be beneficial for beginning teachers. In this article he provides examples of specific feedback for active student learning.

Planning for Progress Reporting

How to Communicate Student Learning

Progress reports serve two major purposes: they give a student and the home feedback on student learning that has taken place and provide direction for future learning. They are sometimes the only communication the home has with a teacher; certainly they are a major source of information.



There needs to be more on a progress report than simply a mark or a grade. The comments that you write or choose for each student are important in that they provide more information than any number or letter can. Always attempt to view the comments through the eyes of the parents, guardians or caregivers. What do they see as they read the comments? Are the comments understandable? Are the comments free of teacher jargon? Are they compatible with the grade received? Comments should be respectful, meaningful and accurate. The comments should address a student's areas of strength, areas where there could be improvement and any ways that learning could be supported.

Also, remember a report card is a significant document. As such, it should look professional. Make sure all aspects of spelling, usage and punctuation are totally correct.

Conferences

Conferences are an opportunity to connect and build relationships. A face-to-face meeting will allow you to share your professional observations and allow parents, guardians or caregivers to ask questions and perhaps find ways to support you as you work with their child. The downside is that these conferences are demanding. They require you to be organized, tactful and articulate for a number of hours. Remember that there will also be followup after the conference, which is an essential aspect as well.

Different schools may approach conferences differently even within the same school division. Talk to your principal and to other teachers in the building to ensure you are aware of specific aspects of the conferences, such as the format used.

There are a number of things you can do before, during and after the conference to maximize the session's productivity.

Preparing for the Conference

- Give the home plenty of notice about the upcoming conferences.
- Consider what questions will likely be asked and be prepared to discuss these areas with some degree of specificity. For example, there will be the need to know what students will be learning and how they will be evaluated. There will be the need to know how the home can complement what is happening in the classroom. Adults at home will want to know how any special needs and interests their child may have are being accommodated in the classroom. In addition to the academic aspects, they may want to know how their child is doing socially and behaviourally.
- Know how to interpret any standardized test scores that are reported to the home. Ask for help from the resource teacher if you are unclear how to interpret the results.
- Remember confidentiality. You may only share information with a child's parents, guardians or caregivers. Arrange the material you will share so only that child's mark, work or records are showing. Wherever the conferences take place, ensure that the conversation is between you and the family you are speaking to at the time.
- Prepare an inviting environment. You may not have considered it, but some of the parents, guardians or caregivers are going to be intimidated by you. Try to put yourself in their position. It may be an act of courage for some individuals to come into a school at all. If they have a child who struggles, they may only have had negative experiences at interviews. Do everything you can to make the space assigned for the interview welcoming. For example, replace child-sized desks, which would be uncomfortable, with a regular-sized table and chairs.
- Be good to yourself. Try to find some time between the end of class and the beginning of scheduled interviews to take a break.
- Consider those who will be waiting (and new teachers do seem to attract a curious crowd). Have an adequate number of chairs. You may want to have the latest class newsletter available for people as they wait for their scheduled time, or possibly copies of the student handbook or a bulletin board of student art.
- Greet your guests with a smile and a warm handshake. Remember you are the host in this situation.

During the Conference

- Always begin a conference by saying something positive about the child. This simple practice promotes goodwill and makes it apparent that you care for the child. Parents, guardians or caregivers want to hear positive comments about their child. Beginning a conference like this puts everyone at ease.
- Make sure you really listen to the parent, guardian or caregiver. Listening is important. Don't feel you need to do all the talking.
- Think about what you are going to ask, as well as what you are going to say. Ask what they can tell you about their child. Ask for their impressions about how they believe things are going. Make sure you ask if they have any questions.
- Highlight areas where improvement can be made and discuss concrete action plans for that improvement. Involve the home in developing a plan.
- Treat parents, guardians or caregivers as allies.
- Make sure they know you see them as valuable resources.
- Be objective. Do not say anything you cannot defend. Use facts and specific examples.
- Keep the discussion focused. This is particularly important if you have a large number of people to see. Keeping people waiting for a long time suggests a lack of professionalism. (Also, you don't want to still be there when the principal turns off the lights and everyone else has gone home.)
- Be empathetic. Be sensitive. Be diplomatic.

After the Conference

- Summarize the main points made, especially any followup plans. Were there time frames involved that should be restated? Were you to send any materials home? Are there additional meetings or calls that need to be scheduled? Always record any actions or followup you agreed to and then followup as soon as possible.
- Thank everyone for being there. Make sure they know how much their interest and support is appreciated.

Student-Led Conferences

More and more school divisions are encouraging increased student involvement in the progress conferences by having the student make a presentation at the interview. This is a format with which you may not be familiar, but which has distinct advantages over the traditional parent-teacher interview. It encourages students to talk about their school experiences, celebrate their successes and take responsibility for their own learning. It places the focus on the student, where the focus and ownership should be. It also prevents miscommunication over what is said at the conference and during the subsequent discussion that occurs at home.

You can maximize the effectiveness of the student-led (or three-way) conference by actively preparing your students. This can be done in a number of ways. Consider if some of the following are appropriate to your teaching situation:

- Students can write invitations to those at home.
 - Students work through a self-evaluation of their progress (see Appendices I and J for examples of templates you could use or adapt).
 - Students practice the conference in class. The teacher models a conference and then pairs of students rehearse.
 - Students confer with you prior to the conference. Discuss what the student will share at the conference as an example of work he or she wants others to see. Perhaps a student can create a portfolio of work completed.
- Consider who might be the audience in a student-led conference if a parent or guardian is unable to attend. Suggest a grandparent, an aunt, an older sibling, the principal, etc.

Make sure the home is aware of the format so people are not expecting the usual teacher-driven conference. You may want to send additional information home, such as *Making the Most of Your Three-Way Conference* (Appendix K).

The following agenda could form the outline for a three-way conference:

1. The student and teacher highlight strengths noted in the student self-evaluation. The student shares work that he/she has done during the term. Parents, guardians or caregivers are invited to share information about strengths at home or in other activities.
2. The student and teacher highlight areas for improvement noted in the student self-evaluation. Parents, guardians or caregivers are invited to share their perspectives, ask for clarification, etc.
3. All participants contribute to a discussion about learning goals, how to reach those goals and ways in which both home and school can support the student.

What About if People Are Angry?

There may be cases when there is confrontation despite everything that you have done. Do not engage in a power struggle. Whatever the reason for the hostility, listening and responding in a professional manner may help to diffuse negative energy. Your position must always be to find a way to do what is right for the child. If academic performance or misbehaviour is the problem, then you search, with the parent, for a way to correct it. Defensiveness is not helpful. The issue must constantly be the child's welfare and you must repeatedly bring the discussion back to that.

One teacher, as reported in Breaux and Whitaker (2006), suggests that “you let the other person say what he/she has to say and then reply with, ‘I can tell that you’re really upset, which tells me you’re concerned. And I just want you to know that even if you and I don’t agree today, I respect you for caring so much and feeling so passionate about your child’s education.’ It’s amazing to see how well this works in changing attitude and how we can actually talk to each other regarding the child.”

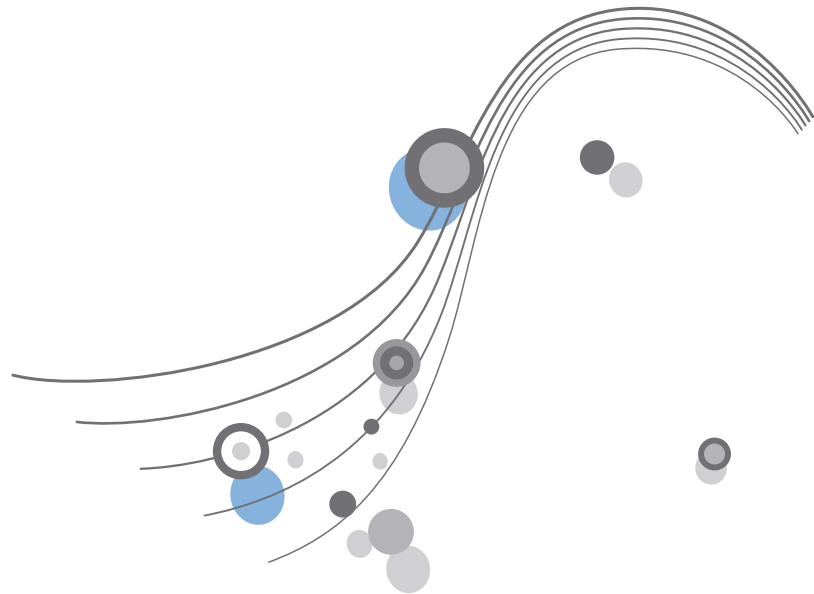
CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers are committed to model positive values, practices and relationships that honour the dignity and roles of all individuals in the educational community and elevate the status of the teaching profession. Teachers strengthen relationships with parents in order to support student success.

Suggested actions to take when dealing with a confrontational parent/guardian or caregiver:

- Listen to the other person with respect and total attention, as sometimes all a person wants is to be heard.
- Paraphrase the concern and move on. For example, say “You’re angry and want to get this issue settled. So, let’s talk about how we can solve this.”
- Agree with what you can and what is credible. Say something similar to, “I agree this is a problem for you and for your child and it needs to be resolved.”
- Extricate yourself from the situation if the situation continues to deteriorate. If the other person will not disengage, stand up and say respectfully, “I know there is a solution to this, but I don’t think we are going to be able to resolve it ourselves, so I am going to get my principal to come and assist us with this.” Then leave the room and get an administrator.

You are not to tolerate any abuse. Period. Report any such incidents to your administration, being accurate and specific. Record the actual words that were used. Keep a copy for your files as well. Then, for your own peace of mind, focus on all the good and supportive people you have met and stop obsessing on the one unpleasant experience. You are a professional and you know that you behaved in a professional manner.



Resources

Mandel, S. (2003). *The new teacher toolbox: Proven tips and strategies for a great first year*. Chicago, IL: Zephyr Press.

Easy to read and practical, the topics cover how to arrange a classroom, a beginner's guide to figuring grades, parent-teacher conferences, modifications for students with special needs and how to maintain one's sanity. The format follows Aliya through her first year of teaching.

Fiere, D., & Whitaker, T. (2013). *Dealing with difficult parents: And with parents in difficult situations*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

This book helps teachers develop a repertoire of strategies for effective interaction with parents. It provides specific phrases to use with parents to help you avoid using "trigger" words which inadvertently may make matters worse.



Reflecting on Practice

How Do I Improve My Instruction?

Effective teachers reflect on their teaching in order to grow in their practice. The process of examination and judgment prompts the reflective teacher to ask the question “why” in addition to “how.”



In your first years of teaching, you will hear people talking about the teacher as a reflective practitioner and encouraging you to become such a teacher. A reflective practitioner is one who honours the practical knowledge that is accumulated from day to day, considers how this knowledge influences student learning and then adjusts practice based on that thinking. A reflective practitioner is one whose routines include consciously taking the time to look back upon what was, in order to modify what will be.

You will be aware soon after you start in your classroom that teaching is time-consuming. Even experienced teachers can become overwhelmed by the daily demands and find themselves working at an almost automatic level just to handle the tasks required. However, these routines can become a rut if routine tasks are never consciously evaluated or improved upon. The antidote to unexamined practice is the type of self-conscious reflection that moves teaching from a trade to a profession.

Most of you were introduced to the concept of reflection in your education classes at university, which required reflection as a regular part of course requirements. You now have a real classroom and real experiences to reflect upon.

Reflection can be a valuable part of your ongoing work with your principal, mentor or other trusted colleagues. Sharing your reflections allows you to use feedback as a means for modifying behaviours and practices. It helps you become more aware of your teaching strengths and the areas you need to develop. Talking over your reflections requires that you articulate the rationale behind classroom decisions.



Research tells us that in order for growth as a teacher to take place, experience is not enough. It is the reflection on that experience which produces professional growth and development.

Decide what format your reflections might take. Some people find maintaining a journal a valuable method. Journals are a place for you to celebrate successes, pose questions, consider possibilities and make sense of your experiences. You might want to develop templates to organize your reflection. This will keep your reflections brief enough to be manageable but still useful. (See the following examples for potential formats to adapt to your needs.) You may wish to consider videotaping to support reflection. You could tape a number of classes throughout the year and look for patterns of strengths, as well as areas for growth and improvement.

Whatever format for reflection you employ there are two central aspects to keep in mind:

1. Reflect on a continuous basis. Reflection based on memory is not nearly as effective as reflection based on the present situation. You may think that you will remember how you want to modify a lesson for next term, but the reality is that you likely won't unless you take a few minutes now to record your thinking.
2. Understand why you are reflecting. It is done in order to evolve into a thoughtful practitioner. Reflection is not to be done as a hoop to jump through or as another thing to check off of your "to do" list at the end of the week.

Think about what went well and what you would do differently next time. You need to remember that we all have "failed" lessons from time to time. Instead of looking at it as a failure, think about it as a lesson and learn from it. As teachers, your education and learning is ongoing. There is always more to learn and know about in order to strengthen your teaching skills. Keep reflecting on your work and educating yourself on what you find are your "weaknesses" as we all have them! The most important part is recognizing them and being able to work on them to improve your teaching skills.

Lam, C. (2014)

Examine the difference between reflective and non-reflective teachers by considering this scenario:

A student in your class always shouts out answers to questions without waiting to be called upon. In order to be heard, other students are now reverting to the same behaviours.

A **non-reflective teacher** might solve this problem by simply writing the name of the student on the board, giving a detention at noon or after school, or by yelling at the offender. For a non-reflective teacher, such calling out is viewed as a simple rule violation. A **reflective teacher** determines that the problem is more complex and the major consideration has to be the instructional results of the calling-out behaviour. Students who are impulsively shouting out answers are not taking the time to develop thoughtful responses. They may be giving the answers they think the teacher wants to hear in order to move the lesson along, or answering to get the teacher's attention.

A reflective teacher wants students to become good thinkers and problem solvers. Such a teacher would help students slow down their responses by encouraging them to think before they respond. To do this, the reflective teacher would provide "wait time" so that students are given time to provide a thoughtful response. The teacher might tell students to keep all hands down until everyone has thought of an answer. The reflective teacher would also want to encourage respect for all students by providing time for everyone to have a chance to answer – not just the fastest and the loudest students.

The non-reflective teacher looks for the fast, simple solution while the reflective teacher thinks about instructional implications. The non-reflective teacher is reactive; the reflective teacher is proactive, in this case modelling the instructional behaviour desired.

Adapted from Campoy (2005), p. 46

CONNECTING to the Commitments

Saskatchewan teachers are committed to engage in exemplary practices including adapting and evolving through reflection.

Lesson Plan Reflection

Subject:

Grade:

Date:

Objectively summarize what we did in class.

On a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the highest, how engaged were students?

Were the instructional goals met? Give evidence.

Did I adapt my instructional plans as I taught the lessons? Why? Why not?

If I were to teach this lesson again, what changes would I make?

What did I learn from teaching this lesson? (About myself? My students? My instructional practices?)

Adapted from Alberta Education (2001)

Reflection Basics One

Subject:

Grade:

Date:

What I did:

Why I did it:

What I would do the next time:

Adapted from Lipton and Wellman (2003)

Reflection Basics Two

Subject:

Grade:

Date:

Here's what? (Describe the event using specific facts and observations only.)

So what? (Analyze and interpret the event.)

Now what? (Identify next steps and ways in which you will apply your new learning.)

Adapted from Lipton and Wellman (2003)



Appendices



Appendix A

Teacher Needs Assessment

Part A

Please choose the response for each item that most clearly indicates your level of need for assistance.

Possible Responses:

- A. **Little or no need** for assistance in this area.
- B. **Some need** for assistance in this area.
- C. **Moderate need** for assistance in this area.
- D. **High need** for assistance in this area.
- E. **Very high need** for assistance in this area.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. _____ Communicating with parents. | 12. _____ Using a variety of instructional and assessment methods. |
| 2. _____ Organizing and managing my classroom. | 13. _____ Facilitating group discussion. |
| 3. _____ Maintaining student discipline. | 14. _____ Understanding the division's teacher growth process. |
| 4. _____ Obtaining instructional resources and materials. | 15. _____ Understanding my legal rights and responsibilities as a teacher. |
| 5. _____ Planning for instruction. | 16. _____ Dealing with stress. |
| 6. _____ Managing my time and work. | 17. _____ Dealing with contractual issues. |
| 7. _____ Diagnosing student needs. | 18. _____ Developing long-range instructional plans. |
| 8. _____ Evaluating student progress. | 19. _____ Understanding the culture of the school. |
| 9. _____ Motivating students. | |
| 10. _____ Assisting students with special needs. | |
| 11. _____ Understanding the curriculum. | |

PART B

Please respond to the following:

List any professional needs you have that are not addressed in the preceding list.

Adapted from the Alberta Teachers' Association, *Mentoring Beginning Teachers* (2001) pp. 41-42

Appendix B

Sample Letter of Introduction

School Opening News From Grade 2

I am delighted to welcome your child into my Grade 2 classroom and am looking forward to an exciting school year with the 13 boys and 12 girls who have registered. Five of these students are new to our community and we will all do our best to make these children feel particularly welcome.

I believe strongly in the importance of communication between home and school, recognizing we have a common purpose in providing the best possible education for your child. I invite you to take a few moments and write a letter introducing your child to me. What are his or her interests? Dislikes? Strengths? What are your hopes and concerns as we approach the school year? Tell me what you think I need to know about your child. Help me to see your child through your eyes.

In turn, let me introduce myself to you. I completed my internship at East Heights last year and was offered a position here at River Valley Elementary last spring. I was thrilled to accept as I have heard wonderful things about this community. I have a bachelor of arts in music and mathematics from the University of Saskatchewan. I received my bachelor of education from the University of Regina. I am married to a grain farmer and have one daughter. She is going into kindergarten this fall.

I look forward to meeting you on our Curriculum Night (September 12 at 7:30 p.m.). At this time I plan to provide information about our schedule, future units of study, classroom expectations and opportunities for parent volunteers.

Feel free to contact me at the school, 306-555-5555. I am almost always at school by 8:15 a.m. You could also email me at ateachr@ssd.sk.ca.

Sincerely,
Amy Teacher

Appendix C

Student Profile Questionnaire

Dear Parent, Guardian or Caregiver:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get to know as much as I can from you about your child. I would appreciate your perceptions. This information is confidential for school use only. Your input is valued and will enable me to establish a foundation for our learning process.

1. Student's full name

2. Brother(s) name(s)

Age(s)

3. Sister(s) name(s)

Age(s)

4. Friends

5. Hobbies/interests/talents:

6. Responsibilities at home:

7. Expectations for:

School work/homework

Behaviour

8. Home discipline:

Rewards

Consequences

9. Language(s) at home

10. Health concerns

11. Other

Thank you,
Amy Teacher

Appendix D

Substitute Information

Thank you for taking over my class. I have provided information which should be helpful. There is also a school map attached.

Please join the staff for coffee in the staff room at break (to) and over the lunch hour (to).

Location of staff room

Location of staff washrooms

Staff names:

Principal

Vice- or Assistant Principal(s)

Educational Assistants

Secretary(ies)

Caretaker(s)

Teacher-Librarian

Library Technician

Resource Room Teacher

Teacher next door

School policies that you need to know:

Where to find:

- Lesson plans
 - Class lists
 - Seating plans
 - Equipment (audiovisual, computers, texts)
-
-

Attendance procedures:

Students with special needs and/or timetables:

Students with allergies and/or other medical needs:

Class schedule:

Bathroom, hall or phone pass procedures during class time:

Dismissal procedures:

Bus students (Y/N):

Class rules or routines:

Management routines:

Discipline routines:

Emergency procedures:

Photocopier location and procedures:

Other relevant information:

Before you leave please ... :

Appendix E

Tips for Starting Out

Below is a list of some things to consider during your preparation for the school year. Identify your ideas beside each item that applies to your particular teaching situation.

What I Need to Consider	What I Plan to Do
Classroom Procedures	
• Introducing myself	
• Introducing the course contents	
• Introducing course requirements, including materials, supplies, books, etc.	
• Classroom management	
• Discipline procedures	
• Evaluation procedures	
• Student questions	
• Student feedback	
• Leaving the room	
• Waiting for dismissal	

What I Need to Consider	What I Plan to Do
Classroom Policies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk or table placement, including the placement of your desk 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seating arrangements 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borrowing materials 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who are late or absent 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing or late assignments 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline infractions 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cellular phones 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laptops 	

What I Need to Consider	What I Plan to Do
Curriculum Considerations	
• Outcomes and indicators	
• Instructional themes or frameworks	
• Instructional strategies or activities	
• Assessment and evaluation	
Learning Resources	
• Sources of materials	
• Organization of materials	
• Storage of materials, student work, portfolios, files, etc.	
• Procedures for accessing resources	
Supplies	
• Student supplies	
• Teacher supplies	
• Budget	
Labs	
• Reserving labs	
• Reserving media equipment	

Adapted from *A New Teacher's Guide to Best Practices* (2005)

Appendix F

Glossary of Acronyms

Sometimes it may seem like staff members in your school are speaking a totally foreign language. There certainly is educational jargon and there are numerous acronyms to make it even more difficult to catch what is being said.

The following is a list of common acronyms you may hear. No doubt you will add to this list.

- ADD:** Attention Deficit Disorder
- ADHD:** Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- EA:** Educational Assistant (also referred to as TA or Teacher Associate)
- EAP:** Employee Assistance Plan
- EAL:** English as an Additional Language
- ELA:** English Language Arts
- ESD:** English as a Second Dialect
- FAE:** Fetal Alcohol Effect
- FAS:** Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
- IIP:** Inclusion and Intervention Plan
- IPP:** Individualized Personal Program
- L2:** Refers to a second language
- LAT:** Learning Assistance Teacher
- LD:** Learning Disabilities or Learning Disabled
- LINC:** Local Implementation and Negotiation Committee
- LIP:** Learning Improvement Plan
- PLC:** Personal Learning Community
- PPP:** Personal Program Plan (ePPP is electronic Personal Program Plan)
- ROA:** Record of Adaptations
- TL:** Teacher-Librarian
- UbD:** Understanding by Design

Appendix G

Physical Layout of Your Classroom

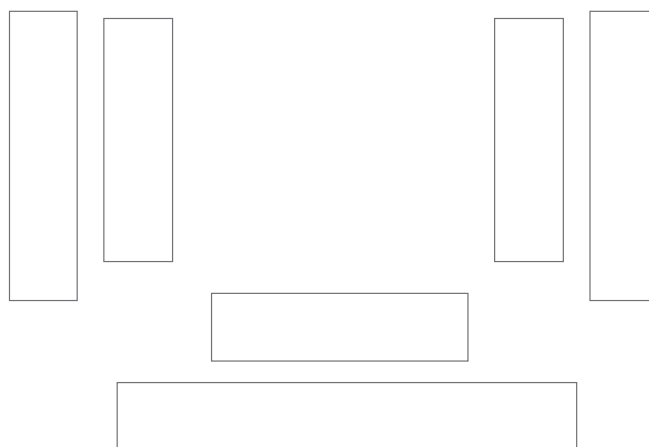
Student desks have traditionally been arranged in straight rows across the classroom. However, this arrangement does not maximize teacher-student interaction, nor does it make the best use of available space.

Scott Mandel in *The New Teacher Toolbox: Proven Tips and Strategies for a Great First Year* (2003) suggests arranging chairs and tables (or desks if that is the only option) into a U shape (with an occasional second row on the inside if class size and room demand).

Single row – good for classes of 15 to 24 students:



Double row – good for classes of 25 to 32 students:



In these arrangements you not only teach at the front of the class, but also in the large middle sections, and every student is in the first or second row. You can move around the room while talking, therefore providing continual personal contact with each student. The space is also adaptable, with students easily moving desks or tables around to allow for smaller instructional groupings.

Locate your desk outside the main teaching area. Effective teachers do not teach from behind their desks. Consider moving your desk to the back of the classroom to create an area where students can conference one-on-one with you in a more private area.

Desk arrangement is only one consideration when preparing your classroom. Also consider:

- Matching the room layout to the age of the children and the curriculum activities they will be undertaking.
- Organizing to accommodate children with special needs, abilities or other special groupings.
- Creating good traffic flow.
- Maintaining health and safety standards (e.g., not blocking fire exits).
- Providing a clutter-free, aesthetically pleasing atmosphere (e.g., plants, posters, reading area, classroom library, etc.).

Appendix H

Classroom Management

What Students Should Do When They ...

Enter your classroom	
Prepare for the class (e.g., open books, gather materials, instruments, pencils, etc.)	
Complete work early	
Have a question	
Want to get your attention	
Work in pairs or groups	
Turn in assignments	
Take tests and exams	
Need to make up assignments	
Miss a class	
Miss a test	
Prepare and clean up from labs	
Leave the room	
Respond to a classroom guest	
Arrive late	

Adapted from A New Teacher's Guide to Best Practice (2005)

Appendix I

Student Self-Evaluation

Name:

Date:

I am proud of ...

I want to get better at ...

My goal for next term is ...

Things to show at the conference are:

Adapted from *Together is Better: Collaborative Assessment, Evaluation & Reporting*, Davis (1992)

Appendix J

Student Self-Evaluation

A personal accomplishment or discovery this term:

My strengths as a student:

What I need to work on this term:

My teacher can help me by:

I can help myself by:

My parents can help by:

Student's Name: _____ Student's Signature: _____

Appendix K

Making the Most of Your Three-Way Conference

The three-way conference is very important. It establishes a valuable relationship, which helps ensure the best possible education for every child. Progress reports, classroom newsletters and notes are important; however, nothing is better than getting together face-to-face to discuss a child's progress and needs. Actively involving the student makes it better yet as that involvement celebrates accomplishment and builds ownership for setting future goals. Your conference is [place details of time and location here].

The conference is an opportunity:

- For you to see your child's work. To celebrate your child's strengths.
- To hear your child identify areas which need attention.
- To discuss with your child and his or her teacher action that can be taken to improve learning. For you to ask questions.
- For you to share information so your child's teacher will better understand your son or daughter.

You can prepare for the three-way conference by:

- Sitting down and talking to your child. Discuss what he or she likes or dislikes about school.
- Reviewing any work your child has brought home from school.
- Making a list of questions you may have.

Don't hesitate to ask questions. Some questions may be:

- Is my child working to the best of his or her ability?
- What books is he or she currently reading?
- Does he or she get along with classmates?
- Does he or she participate in class activities?
- Are there any discipline concerns?
- Is he or she ever late?
- Have there been any changes in behaviour?

Towards the end of the conference, the teacher will:

- Review and discuss action plans which may help your child do better.

When you get home:

- Talk the action plan over with your child.
- Start right away on any action you have decided to take.
- Be positive! The better children feel about themselves, the better they do in school.

Appendix L

Professional Growth Networks Free Membership Offer for Beginning Teachers

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation supports 28 professional growth networks. This affiliation provides members with publications, networking and other professional growth opportunities.

Professional growth networks have been established in a variety of subject fields, service areas and interdisciplinary groups. The general purpose of professional growth networks is to support professional growth and lifelong learning of their members.

The success of each professional growth network is measured by teacher interest in becoming members and taking an active role in the work of the networks. Membership is not limited to teachers, but includes any person with a professional interest in the activities of the networks.

Several professional growth networks offer beginning teachers a free one-year membership. Complete the voucher below to receive a membership to the professional growth network of your choice.

Forward completed voucher to:

Professional Growth Networks
Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation
2317 Arlington Avenue
Saskatoon SK S7J 2H8

Further information on professional growth networks can be found on the Federation's website, www.stf.sk.ca, or contact the Federation, 306-373-1660 or 1-800-667-7762.



This voucher entitles you to a one-year free membership in a professional growth network of your choice.

Teacher: _____

Teacher's Certificate Number (required to confirm STF membership status): _____

Home Mailing Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Email: _____

I would like a free membership to the following professional growth network: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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