



Teachers who accept a position for which they have been trained bring to it enthusiasm and interest. However teachers who are hired outside their teaching area or division often have a more difficult introduction into the profession and require different types of support. Not only do they require help with the content material, they may often require assistance to understand the developmental stages of students.

The larger the gap between a teacher's area of expertise and current teaching position the more time it takes for them to:

- prepare lessons
- find resources
- assess and evaluate students.

Teachers lacking expertise may also require more support in complementary areas such as:

- classroom management
- discipline
- individualizing student programs.

The incoming teacher may come with a wealth of experience and may require little support to learn the procedures and cultural norms of the school. Other teachers may have limited or no experience. The program that the principal provides for incoming teachers needs to differ widely based on their:

- background experiences
- confidence
- comfort levels.

Beginning teachers are often defined as those teachers who are within their first two or three years of teaching. Some school districts narrow this definition even more – to those who are in their first full contract position. How a school defines a beginning teacher and the attendant expectations for that teacher are important factors in the teacher's ultimate degree of success. Providing only one year of support may be insufficient for some new teachers.

A support program for a beginning teacher requires knowledge and understanding of the teacher's progress during the year. By breaking this process into various stages, based on teacher attitudes, the teacher's expectations and needs can be analyzed with greater precision.

Ellen Moir, director of the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project, developed a model which reflects the changing attitudes of teachers during their first teaching year. Moir and her colleagues indicate that

Unique Teachers

"Although there were teachers who were receptive about being approached for advice and/or would freely offer advice there was no official mentoring program at the school. Often I received advice that was stated as blanket strategies for classroom management or discipline; however they were a "wrong fit" for me or inappropriate for the philosophy of other schools - where I later got regular supply (day-to-day) work."

Moir's Phases for Beginning Teachers



The Development Stages for Beginning Teachers

while not all first year teachers “go through this exact sequence” of first year stages, understanding the development stages of a teacher’s initial year are beneficial when planning teacher support programs.

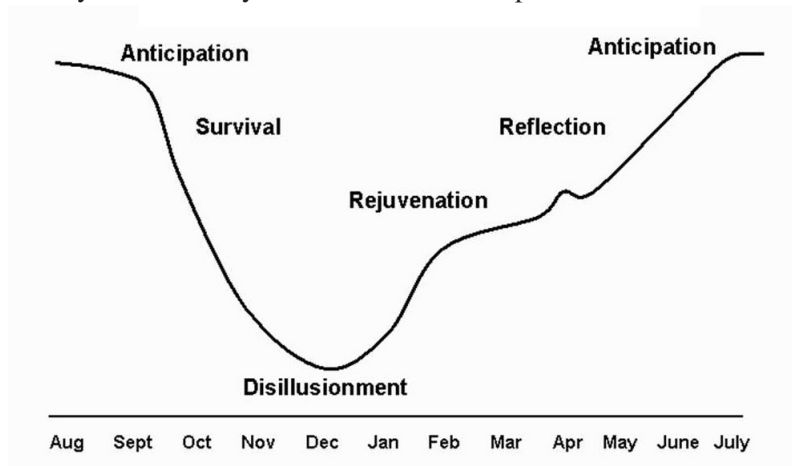
Moir’s stages of development are:

- anticipation, which actually begins in their preservice teaching assignments as they anticipate how they will teach
- survival, as new teachers struggle to cope with situations they did not anticipate as well as learning routines
- disillusionment, a time when beginning teachers question themselves as they experience parents’ night for the first time and their first teacher evaluation procedures
- rejuvenation, characterized by an improvement in attitude after a winter break with the end of school in sight
- reflection, during the final weeks of the first year in which beginning teachers plan for year two, which brings them to a new phase of anticipation.

Some beginning teachers:

- pass through these phases very quickly, rarely getting bogged down in the disillusionment stage
- may take a long time to work their way through different stages.

Although teachers may experience some type of rejuvenation period at the end of their first year, they may experience these same stages in years two and three. The following graph demonstrates beginning teacher attitudes over time. Not all teachers will follow this path exactly, nor will they follow it in a lock-step manner.



From *The Stages of a Teacher’s First Year*, by E. Moir, 1999, In M. Scherer (Ed.), *A better beginning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Development (p. 21).