



Teachers who accept a position for which they have been specifically trained bring to it enthusiasm and interest.

Teachers who are hired outside their teachable area or division, often have a more difficult introduction into the profession and require different types of support. Not only do they require support 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 and assess and evaluate students. Teachers lacking expertise may also require more support in complementary areas such as classroom management, discipline and 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 may differ widely based on the background experiences, confidence and comfort levels of the incoming teachers.

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. The definition attached to a beginning teacher is the important factor in the school. Providing only one year of support may be insufficient for some new teachers.

When developing a program for a beginning teacher it is necessary to consider the progress of a beginning teacher over the first year. By breaking this process into various stages, based on teacher attitudes, teacher 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 while not all first year teachers “go through this exact sequence” of first year stages, they suggest that understanding the development stages of a teacher's initial year are beneficial when planning programs for beginning teachers. Some beginning teachers pass through these phases very quickly, rarely getting bogged down in the disillusionment stage. Other beginning teachers 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, this does not mean they will not experience these same stages in years two and three.

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