Bastrop
Independent School District

New Teacher Mentor Handbook

2025-2026

Goals and Objectives

Mission: The Bastrop ISD Human Resource Department's goal is to recruit, support, and retain the very best educators possible. The BISD Mentoring Program will provide the support and mentoring necessary for the growth and development of teachers, through ongoing knowledge-based experiences with a strong network of fellow educators to cultivate personal and professional success.

Goals:

- To ensure a rewarding and successful first year teaching experience in order to retain quality educators in the profession.
- To provide a network of professional resources for incoming teachers to access information and receive training and mentoring.
- To provide ongoing knowledge-based experiences between incoming teachers and mentors to improve teacher performance.
- To promote a sense of community and teamwork in Bastrop ISD by providing opportunities to interact with other first year teachers, district employees, and community members.
- To ensure that the needs of all students are being met.

Program Evaluation and Feedback: We will collect data each year on the program design, implementation, and outcomes to determine program effectiveness and plan for improvement.

- We will collect feedback from new teachers, mentor teachers, campus leadership, and other members of campus and district staff.
- We will utilize a variety of data, such as surveys, individual and group interviews, retention rates, and observations to determine the impact on first year teachers and their students.
- We will seek to determine levels of job satisfaction and system strengths and weaknesses in order to continuously improve the program.

Contact Information

Windy Burnett, Human Resource Coordinator
wburnett@bisdtx.org
512-772-7164

Benefits of Supporting New Teachers:

- Create a sense of belonging in Bastrop ISD
- Increase new teacher competence and confidence
- Strengthen instructional continuity and efficacy
- Build leadership skills
- Engage in professional development
- Give back to your educational community

Important characteristics of Mentor Teachers:

- Demonstrated excellence in:
    - Classroom management
    - Professional duties
    - Curriculum and instructional planning
- Demonstrated excellence in working with adults, including:
    - Good communication and interpersonal skills
    - Sensitive to the viewpoints of others
    - Open to reflective dialogue that nurtures the independence of a first year teacher
- Demonstrated commitment to the teaching profession by:
    - Presenting a sense of optimism for teaching
    - Expressing a desire to serve all students equitably
    - Engaging in continuous professional development

Roles and Responsibilities

The Mentor Teacher will:

- Attend Mentor Training at the start of their mentoring semester each school year
- Meet with mentee at least 12 hours per semester (daily for the first two weeks, weekly the first semester, and twice a month in the second semester)
- Serve as a professional role model and guide
- Act as a resource for understanding professional expectations, district and campus policies and procedures, and the educational values of our community
- Share experiences, knowledge, and expertise regarding teaching methods and instructional strategies
- Assist the new teacher in developing and maintaining effective classroom management
- Use the Knowing Teachers, 6 Indicators of a Well-Managed Classroom, and CAL tools
- Maintain confidentiality regarding all aspects of the mentoring program, including the observations, conversations, etc. with the new teacher
- Complete monthly Google Checklist and share the checklist topics **with** mentee
- Participate in an evaluation to assist in making necessary annual adjustments to the Teacher Mentoring Program

The New Teacher will:

- Attend campus meetings with other new teachers
- Play an active role in the mentoring relationship, including:
    - Reflect on his/her own practice
    - Identify areas of strength and need
    - Share professional and/or personal goals, receive feedback, and assess progress
- Seek help by:
    - Asking for support from mentor and team members
    - Communicating classroom issues quickly and honestly
    - Remaining open to feedback in order to develop as a professional
- Participate in activities organized for new teachers such as:
    - Observing other classroom teachers
    - Professional learning opportunities
    - New teacher meetings

Roles and Responsibilities

Campus Administrator (principal/assistant principal) will:

- Appoint a mentor for each new teacher (defined as any teacher who has less than 2 years teaching experience)
- Meet with the Coordinator for Human Capital Development to develop a New Teacher Plan
- Ensure that the New Teacher Campus Plan and mentoring activities are implemented throughout the year by:
    - Communicating regularly with with mentor teachers
    - Establishing a collegial school culture
    - Ensuring supportive working conditions for new teachers
    - Arranging time for mentors and new teachers to meet, observe, reflect
    - Facilitating the relationship between mentor teachers and new teachers
- Notify the Human Resources department of any changes to the mentor-mentee partnerships
- Notify the Human Resources department of any concerns/challenges with any new teacher in the program
- Participate in evaluating the New Teacher Mentor Program at the end of the year

Human Resources Department will:

- Provide a coordinator to lead the New Teacher Mentor Program
- Provide training and orientation with mentor teachers before the start of school, including:
    - A New Teacher and Mentor Handbook
    - Checklists for meeting topics and materials
- Provide professional development opportunities related to instruction and mentoring, including:
    - Collaborative Conversations and Planning
    - Differentiated Coaching, Mentoring Language, and Coaching Indicators
- Share and monitor monthly checklists to mentors
- Maintain updated list of beginning teachers and mentors
- Ensure that mentor teachers completed all required tasks to receive stipend for their services
- Communicate with campus administrators

Mentor Teacher
Job Description

Title: Mentor Teacher

Qualifications:

1. Certified Teacher with at least three years of teaching experience
2. Must have received a proficient rating or higher on the last three years of T-Tess evaluations
3. Proficient in classroom management, organization, lesson planning and implementation, and assessment
4. Willing to communicate regularly with the mentee and administration to facilitate ongoing support
5. Must have completed mentor training
4. Willing and enthusiastic to work with other teachers

Reports to: Campus Principal; Human Resources Coordinator

Supports: Classroom teacher with less than 2 years of teaching experience

Job Goal: To provide transitional assistance to teachers so that they are comfortable and confident in fulfilling their teaching responsibilities.

Consistent with the support role, the mentor will provide instructional assistance, coaching, and general guidance.

The mentor will not perform appraisal functions.

Performance Responsibilities:

1. Provide systems information related to procedures, guidelines, and expectations of the campus/district.
2. Help, collect, disseminate, or locate materials and resources to mentees.
3. Provide information about curriculum content and instructional strategies.
4. Provide guidance and ideas related to classroom management and establishing a positive classroom environment.
5. Arrange for observations and collaborative conferences to provide feedback and sharing of experiences.
6. Provide guidance and support related to conferencing with parents.
7. Serve as a role model and overall source of support for the mentee.
8. Attend district and/or campus in-services on orientation of the program, including district and state mandated procedures and policies.
9. Assist with preparation for T-TESS goal-setting and observations.
10. Meet with mentee at least 12 hours per semester (daily for the first two weeks, weekly the first semester, and twice a month in the second semester)

Teacher Profiles

Traditionally Trained Teachers: ● Attended an university and majored in education ● Completed classroom observations, intern classes and/or student teaching ● Formal training in pedagogy and classroom management ● Limited teaching experience supported by a master teacher	**International Teachers:** ● Experienced teachers ● Formal training in pedagogy ● Possible advanced degrees ● Varied classroom and cultural experiences ● New to the country and culture ● New to American schools
Alternative Certification Teachers (ACP): ● Coming from the workforce ● Holds a degree in a field other than education ● Minimal experience working with students in a structured environment ● Online training in pedagogy and classroom management ● Has taken and passed at least one of the teaching certification exams ● May or may not have completed classroom observations	**DOI Teachers:** ● Coming from the workforce ● May or may not have a degree ● Minimal experience working with students in a structured environment ● No formal training in pedagogy or classroom management ● May or may not have working knowledge of a public school classroom
Para Plus: ● Experience working in a school setting as a paraprofessional ● Knowledge of the campus, students, and families ● Limited training on pedagogy and technical aspects of the assignment	

Monthly Mentoring Topics

Mentor Program
CALENDAR CHECKLISTS

Monthly Calendar Checklists to be completed as a Google Sheet

The monthly calendar checklists are an integral part to the success of the Bastrop ISD Mentor Program. The mentor is to check off each item addressed with their beginning teacher. Mentors can also use the "Notes" section to add items discussed that were not listed on the checklist. .

Mentor checklists will be submitted to the Human Resources Office via Google Sheet
Mentees will give reflections via Google Form

MENTOR RESOURCES

- New Teacher/Mentor Topics Survey
- Monthly Checklists for Mentors
- Monthly Mentor Reflections
- Reflections and Feedback Recommendations for Mentees
- Coaching and Observations and Forms
- Additional Tools for Mentors

New Teacher Survey Topics

Bastrop ISD
New Teacher Mentor Topics Survey

New Teacher: _____ Mentor: _____
Please check any areas that interest you. Thank you!

Personal

_____ Making living arrangements
_____ Locating gyms and recreational facilities
_____ Where to eat, what to do in Bastrop
_____ Getting to know people on campus, in district, in the community
_____ Adult Social Emotional Learning
_____ Self-care

Professional/Human Resources

_____ Payroll, benefits, and investment information
_____ Certification requirements or additional certifications
_____ Teacher evaluation system
_____ Professional development opportunities
_____ Professional organizations

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment

_____ State learning standards and district essential standards
_____ Planning for instruction and lesson plans
_____ Instructional strategies
_____ Instructional differentiation
_____ Assessing student learning (formative and summative)
_____ Using student work and achievement data to drive instruction
_____ Using instructional technology

Organizational Systems for the Classroom

_____ Setting up my classroom's physical space
_____ Setting and teaching expectations
_____ Creating the daily agenda and objectives
_____ Organizing materials and resources
_____ Desk arrangement
_____ Setting up and teaching an acknowledgement system
_____ Managing my time and work

Getting to Know and Work with Students

_____ Getting to know students
_____ Creating a learning community
_____ Working with students to establish norms and rules
_____ Understanding and responding to student needs
_____ Teaching diverse learners
_____ Motivating students
_____ Supporting students with special needs
_____ Understanding Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and Trauma-informed practices

Collegial Interactions and Collaboration

_____ Establishing a professional relationship with the administrative staff
_____ Working as a member of a grade level/content, interdisciplinary or department team
_____ Co-teaching and collaboration between general and special education teachers
_____ Collaborating with teachers from other campuses within the district

School and District Policies and Procedures

_____ Requesting time off and getting a substitute
_____ School and district policy and handbooks
_____ Completing administrative paperwork

_____ Administration of state assessments
_____ Obtaining instructional resources and material
_____ Ordering materials and supplies
_____ Use of school library, media, technology resources
_____ Campus and district chain of command
_____ Campus and district traditions and unwritten rules (ex: “the BISD Way”)

Parents and Community

_____ Establishing positive home contacts
_____ Working with parents as partners
_____ Working with parents of special needs students
_____ Parent conferences
_____ Grading and reporting student learning

Aug. Monthly Calendar Checklist

Prior to School - August

Prior to School - August - Anticipation Phase

Monthly Mentoring Topics and Tasks	Date Completed
1. Make informal contact by email, then introduce yourself in person as soon as you are both on campus.	
2. Orient NT to building and outdoor areas including: copy machines, mail, restrooms, student lunchroom, workrooms, first-aid kit, cleaning supplies, playground and other essentials. Explain/answer questions about any rules regarding these.	
3. Review the calendar and schedule weekly meetings convenient to both of you. You will want to also informally check in more often during the first two weeks.	
4. Review 1st Day/Week Procedures and plans, including: attendance, lunch, nurse/emergency, 1st day lessons, dress code, and Friday expectations, meet the teacher/open house.	
5. Review Daily Procedures and Expectations, including: daily schedule, routines, monitoring students before/after school, during lunch and transition	
6. Assist with classroom set up/organization - furniture arrangement, wall hangings, SPED student needs, guided reading area (elementary), etc.	
7. Assist with classroom technology - software/Classlink access, connecting VGA cord, connect Elmo, submitting a help ticket, process for accessing/maintaining chromebooks etc., go to the district website and walk NT through the items in the Staff Resources Page	
8. Assist with instructional expectations and resources - Textbooks, curriculum (TEKS Resource system) - all logins, lesson plans and planning, CBPL schedule, location and availability of copies, printing, getting supplies, print shop, etc., record-keeping expectations and procedures, homework, grading, and reporting policies, Skyward guidelines, input, SPED and LPAC paperwork expectations - IEP, BIP, 504, etc. Share Acronyms List	
9. Assist with behavioral expectations and resources - campus discipline expectations, discipline matrix and procedures; classroom management expectations, referral expectations, SEL curriculum and building relationships with students.	
10. Review the assessment calendar and discuss district, campus, and/or grade level assessments.	

Notes:

First Two Weeks of School

1. Leave notes of encouragement and check in daily.	
2. Assist with joining campus culture - welcoming committee, invitation to lunches, games, after school gatherings, plan to sit next to NT at all group meetings and lunch, if possible, etc.	
3. Review process for obtaining a substitute and procedures for preparing for a substitute.	
4. Review district RtI and Sped referral process and expectations.	
5. Assist with parent communication system and expectations - tips for success, create or organize parent log and how to document.	

Notes:

Sept. Monthly Calendar Checklist

September - Survival Phase **September Mentor Reflection Sheet**

Monthly Mentoring Topics and Tasks	Date Completed
1. Be available to listen and continue to assist with joining campus culture. Check in daily or weekly, be helpful, share professional and personal experiences in order to develop trust and confidence, introduce new staff to support staff.	
2. Review Teacher evaluation procedures (T-TESS), handbook, calendar, goal setting, professional development plan (PDP) and any certification obligations (ex: Alt Cert Program), and answer any questions about observations and walkthroughs, pass any questions you can't answer along to a campus admin or HR.	
3. Revisit lesson planning - answer questions about instructional strategies (Big 8), student grouping, manipulatives, essential standards, YAG progress, time management and prioritization.	
4. **Revisit grading and assessments** - answer any questions, discuss student progress reports, report cards, campus and district assessments, scoring, grading, looking at data and protocols.	
5. **Observation 1**: **"Observe" classroom environment and debrief** with mentee. (6 Indicators Observables)	
6. **Revisit RtI, LPAC, ARD meeting expectations and protocols.**	
7. **Revisit Parent communication** - if applicable, conference techniques - how to plan and conduct parent conferences.	
8. Review procedures for emergency drills.	
9. Schedule October focus and time for new teacher to observe you.	

Notes:

Oct. Monthly Calendar Checklist

October - Survival Phase **October Mentor Reflection Sheet**

Monthly Mentoring Topics and Tasks	Date Completed
1. Schedule meeting times, reaffirming your accessibility. Review the characteristics of the Survival Phase of Teaching for your own information, and share helpful experiences. Discuss coping strategies for stress. Find out if there are any new concerns and make plans to address them.	
2. Acknowledge your mentee - surprise your mentee with a small gift or note, be supportive at all times, praising him/her openly to others and keeping areas of concern to yourself.	
3. Discuss traditions and/or field trips - describe traditions that take place between now and winter break.	
4. Discuss concerns about struggling students - identify interventions that may be effective at Tier 1 and Tier 2, review procedure for RTI recommendations and/or progress monitoring. Review the discipline procedures and any concerns about campus systems of support for behavior.	
5. Let the mentee observe you and debrief together. Set a focus before the observation, and let the mentee share what they noticed or what their takeaways were. If possible, have a mentee plan to put one thing they learned into practice.	
6. Check in on curriculum and instruction - discuss progress toward curriculum goals, any upcoming assessments, data, student engagement, Big 8 or MCP, T-TESS goals or observation, and share anything.	

Notes:

Nov. Monthly Calendar Checklist

November - Disillusionment Phase

NovemberMentor Reflection Sheet

Monthly Mentoring Topics and Tasks	Date Completed
1. Meet with your mentee to share. Share "tricks of the trade" to get through the upcoming weeks and prevent burnout. Keep the characteristics of the disillusionment phase in mind. Show an interest in the mentee's personal life as a way to help him/her/them with the work-life balance. Talk about time management and the importance of taking care of themselves (rest, something fun, spend time with family, be thankful for the opportunity to influence their students in a positive way, eat better, using small blocks of time wisely, etc.)	
2. Collaborate on student engagement/motivation. Discuss how busy both professionally and personally it is between Thanksgiving and Winter Break, and how to keep the students engaged and productive. Recognize that, as a recent student, your mentee may have knowledge from which you could benefit.	
3. Discuss cultural differences - including how to handle holiday celebrations, gift giving, school holiday programs, special days (ex: grandparents' day).	
4. Revisit parent communication - Failing students communication expectations - administration, parents.	
5. Schedule an observation of the mentee and debrief - Let the mentee set the focus - consider observing a category of the 6 Indicators of a Well-Managed Classroom, one of the Instructional strategies (Big 8), or just a section of the lesson - the warm-up, think-aloud, closure. Then praise, praise, praise at least three things specifically and ask your mentee what they would've changed and use that to help with a goal.	

Notes:

Dec. Monthly Calendar Checklist

December - Disillusionment Phase **December Mentor Reflection Sheet**

Monthly Mentoring Topics and Tasks	Date Completed
1. Continue to be available and meet. Invite and encourage him/her/them to attend any extracurricular events such as performances or sports. It's a busy time, but share vacation plans, family traditions to continue to foster friendship and build a sense of belonging.	
2. Review end of semester assessments, grading, and procedures - including any exams, grades, report cards, including the exam schedule, how to prepare students for exams through review, and use of time once students are finished.	
3. Preview the spring semester - make sure your mentee has all necessary materials for new classes or upcoming units. Strive to resolve any technology or maintenance issues before winter break. Review the procedures for bad weather and communication procedures over the break.	
4. Assist with goal setting for second semester - Discuss changes the mentee would like to make after break. Assist with overload & assist in determining priorities. If applicable, discuss support for at-risk students who are not being successful, RTI process. Help your mentee keep a strong focus on student learning.	
5. Encourage your mentee to take a well deserved break and to rest. Smile, they finished a full semester, and you're a great mentor :-)	

Notes:

Jan. Monthly Calendar Checklist*

***if you begin mentoring a new teacher at semester, go back and make sure to address the topics on the August/1st Two Weeks of School checklists**

January - Rejuvenation Phase - National Mentor Month! THANK YOU! **Jan. Reflection Sheet**

Monthly Mentoring Topics and Tasks	Date Completed
1. Schedule mentoring meetings for the second semester. Review the characteristics of the Rejuvenation Phase of Teaching to help inform you in your mentoring practice. Discuss what mentor activities have been the most/least helpful, and make changes accordingly.	
2. Review curriculum and planning for the upcoming semester. Help your new teacher make any necessary adjustments. Analyze student data to inform decision making. Discuss strategies for working with struggling students, including positive acknowledgements in the classroom and via communication home.	
3. Review spring assessment preparation, procedures, and policies. Include MOY screeners/Mock STAAR/TELPAS/STAAR and campus and district assessments. Even if you are not a tested subject, review ancillary roles in testing, such as monitoring, and campus procedures.	
4. Check in on T-TESS Review and support. Revisit the goals the mentee set.	
5. Schedule another observation cycle. Schedule a time to observe another teacher together and debrief, or plan for the mentee to video him/herself for their own self-reflection, then debrief after. Be sure to have the mentee set a focus for the observation, and offer to support or collaborate with any ideas or changes the mentee would like to make after the observation.	

Notes:

Feb. Monthly Calendar Checklist

February - Rejuvenation Phase February Mentor Reflection Sheet

Monthly Mentoring Topics and Tasks	Date Completed
1. Build your mentee's self-confidence and independence - Do something to acknowledge your mentee for something wonderful they have done or something they worked hard to accomplish. Help them to set goals, find resources, and/or explore new topics and become proactive by asking "What challenges do you anticipate this month?" "How will you handle them?"	
2. Revisit assessments - Review testing strategies for student success and how to teach them, help your mentee begin an in-depth analysis of individual student success in order to help him/her assist students who may be struggling, and discuss learning resources to suggest to parents when asked how they can help support their student's learning.	
3. Continue T-TESS Review and support - check in on how the process is going and talk with your mentee about extra duties, time management, ethics, and professionalism.	
4. Conduct another observation cycle. Schedule a time for you to observe your mentee, or to watch a video of them teaching, and debrief. Or, role play/practice your mentee's lesson planned for the administrator observation. Be sure to have the mentee set a focus for the observation, and offer to support or collaborate with any ideas or changes the mentee would like to make after the observation.	

Notes:

March Monthly Calendar Checklist

March - Rejuvenation Phase March Mentor Reflection Sheet

Monthly Mentoring Topics and Tasks	Date Completed
1. Check schedule for mentoring meetings for second semester and continue to meet. Review the characteristics of the Rejuvenation Phase of Teaching to help inform you in your mentoring practice. Encourage your mentee to keep a log of his/her successes and goals for improvement. Assist them in self-reflection and progress toward meeting goals for the second semester.	
2. Discuss curriculum pacing - Remind mentees that students think school is out after spring break so be very organized with planning when students return. Review strategies for parent conferences and retention decisions (if applicable).	
3. Review T-TESS and contract procedures - help ensure your new teacher understands how this process works.	
4. Conduct another observation cycle. Schedule a time for you to observe your mentee, or to watch a video of them teaching, and debrief. Or, schedule a time for them to observe another teacher. Be sure to have the mentee set a focus for the observation, and offer to support or collaborate with any ideas or changes the mentee would like to make after the observation.	
5. Review standardized testing procedures and expectations as needed. Even if your mentee is not in a tested subject/grade level, discuss what campus-wide impacts the testing has on classes, lunches, intervention schedules, etc.	

Notes:

Apr. Monthly Calendar Checklist

April: Reflection Phase April Mentor Reflection Sheet

Monthly Mentoring Topics and Tasks	Date Completed
1. Continue to meet. Review the characteristics of the Reflection Phase of Teaching to help inform you in your mentoring practice. Encourage your mentee to keep a log of his/her successes and goals for improvement. Share strategies for stress relief. Assist them in self-reflection and progress toward meeting goals for the second semester.	
2. Support after final evaluation & student testing - If your mentee does not receive a teaching contract for the next year, offer support, be a listening ear, and, if applicable, offer a letter of recommendation and help in preparing a resume.	
3. Review End-of-year schedules/ceremonies, activities, and procedures - In addition, discuss the school's policy on student retention and/or summer school eligibility, and the procedure for recommending the student for retention, if necessary.	
4. Discuss student engagement - Collaborate on strategies for dealing with spring fever, senioritis, and post standardized testing.	
5. Reflect and plan - Reflect on a positive instance when a student has overcome a challenge. Work together to compile a list of topics/activities for future use. Also discuss things the mentee would or would not repeat in the following year. Help conduct a year end self-assessment and help him/her get a jumpstart on planning for next year. Discuss summer professional development.	

Notes:

May/June Monthly Calendar Checklist

May/June - Reflection and Anticipation

EOY Mentor Reflection Sheet

Monthly Mentoring Topics and Tasks	Date Completed
1. **Schedule a reflecting conversation**. Focus on the learning that has occurred and how the second year will be even better. Identify goals/needs for next year.	
2. **Assist in analyzing performance data**	
3. Check for clarification on **closing out the school year** and review procedures.	
4. If applicable, **review summer professional development** expectations and procedures.	
5. **Identify successes of the year and CELEBRATE!**	

Notes:

"We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience."-
John Dewey

Reflections and Feedback
(for Mentees)

5 Benefits of Self-Reflection:

1. Professional Growth
2. Keeping Up-to-Date and Innovative
3. Understanding Learners
4. Developing a Reflective Classroom Culture
5. Humility

(Adapted from iRIS Connect)

Top Reasons to Give Feedback

1. Feedback improves district systems and performance
2. Feedback strengthens our relationships
3. Feedback allows your voice to be heard

With this in mind, we will be sending new teaching staff feedback and reflection forms monthly. These voluntary forms, in conjunction with monthly campus meetings will help the district improve our ability to recruit, equip, and retain high quality teachers. As a mentor, encourage your mentee to submit their feedback so we can improve as a district.

Thank you!

Coaching and Mentoring

The Bastrop ISD New Teacher Mentor Program focuses on supporting new teachers through coaching and mentoring centering around teaching practice and student learning. The following resources will help mentor teachers efficiently and effectively engage in coaching/mentoring cycles with new teachers.

- See It, Name It, Do It
- TTESS Look For Feedback Form
- 6 Indicators of a Well-Managed Classroom Walk-Through

Tools for Mentors

- Coaching Log Template (Track observations, goals, and action steps)
- Look-For Checklist (Aligned to district priorities and T-TESS)
- Phases of First Year Teaching
- You Got Questions
- Preparing for Subs
- First Parent Communication
- Successful Parent/Teacher Conferences

See It, Name It, Do It Strategy

Phase	Mentor Actions	New Teacher Actions	Example Topics
See It	Model effective instructional practice or co-observe an exemplar teacher	Observe instruction, take notes on strategy and student impact	Classroom routines, small groups
Name It	Debrief observation/modeling, identify 1-2 key practices to implement	Reflect, ask clarifying questions, co-create success criteria	Wait time, cold call, clear modeling
Do It	Support implementation (co-plan, co-teach, or give immediate feedback)	Practice the strategy in own classroom, collect student evidence	Turn and talk, anchor charts

Observation/Feedback Form

T-Tess Domain	Look-Fors	Observed	Notes
Domain 1: Planning	Lesson objectives aligned to TEKS; evidence of planning for differentiation Clear learning outcomes and success criteria	Observ… Observ…	
Domain 2: Instruction	Student engagement strategies (e.g., turn and talk, questioning) Checks for understanding (e.g., CFUs, exit tickets, visual cues) Modeling and practice before independent work	Observ… Observ… Observ…	
Domain 3: Learning Environment	Positive, respectful classroom culture; clear routines and expectations Smooth transitions; time used efficiently Student voice and ownership in learning	Observ… Observ… Observ…	

6 Indicators of a Well-Managed Classroom Walk-Through

When to Use It: Beginning of the year, before the first day of class, or, if the new teacher has a problem of practice that classroom management or environment might help to solve.

How to Use It:

Beginning Of Year: This is a great first, low-risk way to start mentoring/coaching your new teacher as you help them set up and organize the classroom. You could use it in several ways. First, you could have the new teacher visit your classroom, take notes on each look for, then discuss and use the ideas to help the new teacher set up their own space. Second, you could use it to take notes as you look at the new teacher's space as a "needs assessment" before helping the new teacher set up. Third, you could offer it to the new teacher as a kind of "checklist" to use as they set up.

As a Focus for a Coaching/Mentoring Cycle: If the new teacher is working on one of the Coaching Indicators that involves classroom management or environment, this might be a good tool to help narrow the focus and reflect on specific steps or strategies to take. It's a great tool because it can be used when students aren't in the room - before or after school, or during a conference period.

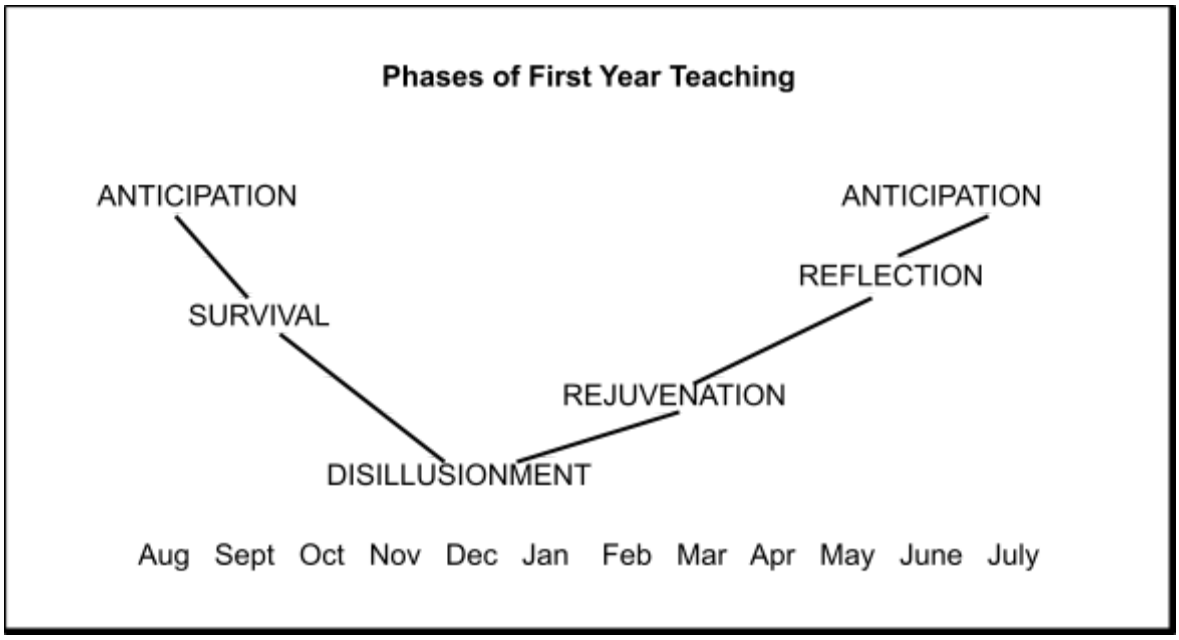
For instance, if the teacher wants to "promote learner agency," take a walk around the room together and take notes on each look for. Materials management can often help students be more active in their own learning routines, by allowing them to participate in distributing or turning in work and supplies. Desk arrangement can also either facilitate or prohibit self-directed learning.

Or, if the teacher finds that the warm-up is taking half the class period because students can't settle down to work, they may need to better "co-establish safe and efficient routines, procedures and norms." An after school walkthrough with this tool can help find places where the expectations, agenda, or acknowledgement system could be refined.

6 Indicators of a Well-Managed Classroom Environmental Observation	
Look for	Notes
Classroom/class period expectations are posted and visible	
Agenda is posted, visible, and current	
Materials have a designated area/space (ex: calculators, supplies, journals)	
Materials are labeled and easily accessible (ex: where to turn in completed work, sponge activities, missed work, make-up work, etc.)	
Desks are arranged so that the teacher can “check in” with all students and actively monitor	
Classroom is free of clutter so students can move independently throughout the space	
Classroom is clear of too many distractions (ex: stacked boxes, posters/pictures all over)	
Academic material is presented at the student’s instructional level	
Acknowledgement system is established, visible, and current (ex: brag board)	

PHASES OF FIRST YEAR TEACHING

Adapted from Moir, E. (1990).
The stages of a teacher's first year.
In M. Scherer (Ed). A Better
Beginning: Supporting and
Mentoring New Teachers.
Alexandria, VA: ASCD



Anticipation Phase
The anticipation phase begins during the student teaching portion of preservice preparation. The closer that student teachers get to completing their assignment, the more excited and anxious they become about their first teaching position. They tend to romanticize the role of the teacher. New teachers enter classrooms with a tremendous commitment to making a difference and a somewhat idealistic view of how to accomplish their goals. *"I was elated to get the job but terrified about going from the simulated experience of student teaching to being the person completely in charge."* This feeling of excitement carries new teachers through the first few weeks of school.

Survival Phase
The first month of school is overwhelming for new teachers. They are learning a lot at a rapid pace. Beginning teachers are bombarded with a variety of problems and situations they had not anticipated. Despite teacher education courses and student teaching experience, the realities of teaching on their own catch new teachers off guard. There is so little time and so much to learn. *"I thought I'd be busy—something like student teaching—but this is crazy. I'm constantly running. It's hard to focus on other aspects of my life."*

During the survival phase, most new teachers struggle to keep their heads above water. They become consumed with the day-to-day routine of teaching. It is not uncommon for new teachers to spend up to 70 hours a week on school work. They have little time to stop and reflect on their experiences.

Particularly overwhelming is the constant need to develop lesson plans and all defined in the plan. Veteran teachers routinely reuse excellent lessons and units from past years. New teachers, still uncertain of what will really work, must develop their lessons for the first time. Even when they depend on textbooks and prepared curriculum, teaching unfamiliar content is enormously time-consuming.

"I thought there would be more time to get everything done. It's like working three jobs: 7:30 – 2:30, 2:30 - 6:00, with more time spent in the evening and on weekends." Although tired and surprised by the amount of work, first-year teachers usually maintain a tremendous amount of energy and commitment during the survival phase, and they harbor hope that soon the turmoil will subside.

Disillusionment Phase

After six to eight weeks of nonstop work and stress, new teachers enter the disillusionment phase. The intensity and the length of the phase vary among new teachers. The extensive time commitment, the realization that things are probably not going as smoothly as they would like, and low morale contribute to this period of disenchantment. New teachers begin questioning their commitment and their competence. Many new teachers fall ill during this phase.

Compounding an already difficult situation is the fact that new teachers confront several new events during this time frame: back-to-school night, parent conferences, and their first formal evaluation by the site administrator. Each milestone places an already vulnerable individual in a very stressful situation.

Back-to-school night means giving a speech to parents about plans for the year that are most likely still unclear in the new teacher's mind. Some parents are uneasy when they realize that the teacher is a beginner, and they may pose questions or make demands that intimidate a new teacher.

Parent conferences require new teachers to be highly organized, articulate, tactful and prepared to confer with parents about each student's progress. This type of communication with parents can be awkward and difficult for beginning teachers. New teachers generally begin with the idea that parents are partners in the learning process, and they are not prepared for parents' concerns or criticisms. These criticisms hit new teachers at a time of waning self-esteem.

The first formal evaluation by the principal also arrives during the disillusionment phase. Developing and presenting a "showpiece" lesson is time-consuming and stressful. New teachers, uncertain about the evaluation process, and anxious about their own competence, question their ability to perform.

During the disillusionment phase, classroom management often becomes a major source of distress. *"I thought I'd be focusing more on curriculum and less on classroom management and discipline. I'm stressed because I have some very problematic students who are low academically, and I think about them every second my eyes are open."*

At this point, the accumulated stress on new teachers, coupled with months of overwork, provokes complaints from family members and friends. In the disillusionment phase, new teachers express self-doubt, have lower self-esteem, and question their professional commitment. Getting through this phase may be the toughest challenge they face as new teachers.

Rejuvenation Phase

The rejuvenation phase, which generally begins in January, is characterized by a slow improvement in the new teacher's attitude toward teaching. Having a winter break makes a tremendous difference for new teachers. The free time allows them to resume a more normal lifestyle, with plenty of rest, food, exercise, and time for family and friends. The break also offers an opportunity to organize materials and plan curriculum. This breathing space gives new teachers time for reflection and a chance to gain perspective. Most of all, it provides hope.

Putting past problems behind them, new teachers return to school rested and reinvigorated. They now have a better understanding of the system, more acceptance of the realities of teaching, and a sense of accomplishment at having made it through the first, and hardest, part of the school year. Although still months away, the end of school becomes a beacon of hope. By now, new teachers have also gained confidence and better-coping skills to prevent or manage problems that they will encounter. During this phase, new teachers focus on curriculum development, long-term planning, and teaching strategies.

"I'm really excited about my story-writing center, although the organization of it has at times been haphazard. Story-writing has definitely revived my journals." The rejuvenation phase tends to last into spring, with many ups and downs along the way. Toward the end of this phase, new teachers begin to voice concerns about whether they can accomplish everything by the end of the school year. They also wonder how their students will perform on tests, once again questioning their own effectiveness as teachers. *"I'm fearful of these big tests. Can you be fired if your kids do poorly? I don't know enough about them to know what I haven't taught, and I'm sure it's a lot."*

Reflection Phase

The reflection phase begins during the last six weeks of school. These final weeks are a particularly invigorating time for first-year teachers. Reflecting back over the year, new teachers highlight events that were successful and those that were not. They think about the various changes that they plan to make the following year in management, curriculum, and teaching strategies. The end is in sight, and they have almost made it; but more importantly, a vision emerges about what their second year will look like, which brings them to a new phase of anticipation. *"I think that next year I'd like to start the letter puppets earlier to introduce the kids to more letters."*

It is essential that we assist new teachers and ease the transition from student teacher to full-time professional. Recognizing the phases that new teachers go through gives us a framework within which we can begin to design support programs to make the first year of teaching a more positive experience for our new colleagues.

YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS…

(new staff commonly asked questions)

- Who is my **mentor**? Where is his/her classroom? When is his/her conference period?
- Who is my **team leader/department head**?
- Where is my **room**?
- What are the times of my **work schedule**?
- Do I have **keys** to my room, desk, closet? What is the procedure for coming into the building after hours?
- What is the **building schedule**? How are **tardies** handled? How are **absences** handled?
- What is **my schedule** (lunch, activities, duties, etc.)? Are there any assigned **duties**?
- What are the rules for **leaving campus** during the school day?
- Where do I eat **lunch**?
- When can I use the phone?
- What is your campus definition of **dress code** for teachers?
- What do I do if I need to leave my classroom?
- Do I have the necessary **furniture**: desks, bookcases, tables, chairs, teacher desk/chair, filing cabinets, a podium, computer?
- When do I receive my **class list**?
- What **expendable supplies** are available, and what are the procedures for obtaining them? (i.e., tape, chalk, staples, paper, calendars, etc.)
- Where are **textbooks** located? How do I check them out?
- What is the **gradebook system**?
- How do I have **materials copied**?
- Where are **curriculum guides/scope and sequence**?
- What are the procedures for the **arrival and dismissal** of students?
- Where do students go before school starts? After school?
- What time can students enter the building? Classroom?
- How do I **check attendance**?
- What is the procedure for sending a student to the **nurse**? What is the student **medication** policy?
- Who is my building **custodian(s**)? What are the responsibilities of the custodian, and how do I contact that person(s)?
- Where do I **park**?
- Where are the **teachers' lounge(s)** and **restroom(s)**? What is the **coffee** procedure?
- Who is my **T-TESS evaluator**?
- Who is on the Campus Improvement Committee?
- How do I find out about **staff development** opportunities? How do I document professional growth?
- What is the procedure for **classroom visitors**, including parents?
- When are **faculty meetings**?
- When are **PTO meetings**?
- What other school events am I expected to attend?
- Where is the district or building information posted?

- How do I use **interschool mail**?
- Where is the **Professional Library**, and what are the guidelines for its use?

YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS… (continued)

- Who is our Site **Technology Contact Person**? Our librarian? When does my class go to the computer room and the library? What audiovisual equipment is available, and what are the procedures for obtaining it (videos, filmstrips, overhead projector, listening centers, books, education journals, etc.)?
- What is the District's policy regarding **copyright laws**?
- How do I arrange **field trips**?
- How can I **locate/check out materials** (textbooks, manipulatives, etc.)?
- How do I **laminate** materials?
- How do I complete **progress reports, report cards, and/or grade sheets**?
- How do I complete records concerning **discipline management, attendance**, and **parent contacts**?
- What are the procedures for referring a student for **special education**?
- What **programs** are **available for special needs students** (Dyslexia, Gifted and Talented, Reading Recovery, Bilingual, ESL, etc.)? What do I do about the lessons they miss while attending these programs?
- What are the **school policies** about rules, consequences, suspensions, and keeping students after school for make-up work or detentions?
- Where **is time-out/detentions/ISS**, and how are **assignments** handled?
- What are the **emergency procedures** for evacuating the building, a hostage situation, or preparing for a weather emergency?
- How do I request PTA or parent **volunteers**?
- Where can I go to '**vent**?'
- When is **MY conference period**?
- When is the **first holiday**??????

PREPARING FOR SUBSTITUTES

Prepare a substitute folder ahead of time. Your building may have a standard folder for all teachers. Sub folder may include:

- list of students/seating chart
- daily schedule
- classroom routines, including arrival and dismissal
- discipline procedures
- referral/detention forms
- lunch counts, attendance counts, duties, nurse passes
- students in pull-out programs
- helpful students, neighboring teachers, special needs/modification folders
- where to find lesson plans, materials, books, etc.
- list of extra activities
- procedures for emergencies (fire drill, disaster drill, lock-down)
- School Info such as name of administrations, office staff, contact information for office or other supports

Additional Preparations/Considerations:

- Have a talk with students about the level of behavior you expect any time a sub is in the room. Make clear the consequences of inappropriate behavior.
- Try not to schedule a major test when you expect a sub.
- Do not assume the sub will be knowledgeable in your content area.
- You may want to request a particular sub. Ask for recommendations and procedures.
- Recommend students who would be helpful to the sub.
- Telephone or meet with the sub prior to your absence if possible.
- Have a buddy teacher who can welcome the sub and offer help. Return the favor.

FIRST PARENT COMMUNICATION

Establishing expectations includes communicating and building a rapport with parents. A consistent joint effort on the part of the parents and the teachers is the key to maintaining self-esteem, building skills, and promoting positive behavior in children.

A letter/email of introduction at the beginning of the year will let parents know that you want to include them as partners in your students' learning.

Keep your letter under a page in length and make the tone enthusiastic and positive. Consider including:

- personal information (your professional background, personal interests, etc.)
- ways to contact you when necessary - planning time, telephone numbers, email, etc.
- upcoming events - for example "Meet the Teacher Night"
- course overview
- a statement expressing your confidence in the success you expect for all your students.
- a copy of your discipline plan/classroom procedures

Follow up with a POSITIVE phone call, note, or email during the first six weeks of school.

REMEMBER: COMMUNICATION IS KEY TO STUDENT SUCCESS

SUCCESSFUL PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Be Prepared

Be familiar with a student's prior academic record. Be informed if a student has special services.
Have examples of student's work.
Have educational classroom visits ready.
Outline two or three areas of focus.

Welcome Parents

Be positive about the student, and communicate your willingness to do whatever it takes to ensure student success.
Thank the parents for coming.
Use direct eye contact.
Smile.
Use an upbeat tone of voice.
Convey your excitement and enthusiasm for your classroom.

Be Positive

Avoid labeling.
Avoid educational jargon.
Convey your helpfulness about a student's potential.

Listen

Let the parents talk.
Ask general guided questions, such as, "What can we do about…?" or "How can I help with…?"

Conference Steps

Stress the importance of a student's potential.
Discuss areas of improvement.
Set goals.
Make a plan for home and school.
Review.

Remember: Begin and end conference on a positive, upbeat note