

# Principal's Guide to New Teacher Experience

## Purpose

This tool guides principals in improving the experience of new teachers at their school. It is organized around three phases of that experience:

### LAUNCHING

The period from offer letter to the first day of school

### STARTING STRONG

The most critical period from the first student day to winter break

### ACCELERATING

The second semester.

There is a checklist for principals to use at each phase. Because Starting Strong is the most critical period a complementary PowerPoint deck is provided for HC partners to use with principals or their managers. A brief check-in survey for principals to use with new teachers is also included.

## Intended User(s)

HC Partners, Principal Supervisors, Principals

## Overview

Developing and supporting new teachers is a central responsibility for principals. Districts have centralized on-boarding activities and expectations. Districts also have expectations for how principals should work with new teachers such as the formal observation schedule and process, the way performance should be documented, district resources available for training, and the process for making retention decisions about new teachers.

Beyond the district's approach, every principal should be able to clearly articulate what information they want new teachers to receive, what new teachers need to learn and how they want new teachers to feel. When the principal can articulate their approach to new teacher experience, they can implement it through their own actions, the work of other administrators and the support of mentors, coaches and teacher-leaders.

Traditional approaches to induction and on-boarding focus on developing teachers' instructional and classroom management skills. In this more comprehensive approach, we are creating a wrap-around culture of support for new teachers, connecting them with the school community, while ensuring that a foundation of instructional skills is in place before expecting a full array of planning and instructional skills.

These tools could be immediately used by principals, but they are designed to be rolled-out by HC partners or principal-managers so that they can be refined to align to the district's approach and resources while allowing for differentiated approaches by principals.

# PHASE 1: LAUNCHING

## From offer letter to the first day of school

### Purpose

- Ensure that new teachers have all the resources and information necessary to successfully plan and launch their school year.
- Begin assimilating new teachers to the community and its culture.
- Set expectations clearly enough that new teachers can self-manage while knowing how to elevate concerns and questions.

### Principles

- Use these activities to keep new teachers engaged and energized from point of hire to the beginning of the year but, whenever possible, bring new teachers together for at least one day prior to the first day for experienced teachers.
- Balance presentation and training with discussion and collaboration.
- Spread important content over time to avoid overwhelming new teachers.

### Best Practices

- Distribute as many materials and resources as soon as possible after the new teacher's district on-boarding is completed.
- Provide as much content as possible in writing so it can be referred to later.
- When possible, provide exemplars such as welcome letters for parents and students, classroom expectations, and sub plans.
- Have as many effective teachers as possible present, model, and lead discussion.
- Provide plenty of time for informal socializing and sharing.

### Checklist for Principals

#### ORIENTATION TO YOUR WORK

- Using stories and specific examples, talk about the school's vision, mission and goals and its impact on students.
- Describe expectations for teachers as colleagues, as collaborators, as contributors to school success and for new teachers as developing professionals who are bringing needed skills and perspectives.

#### MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Ensure that new teachers have access to everything they will need to plan and implement instruction including curricular materials, supplemental materials, consumable supplies, the student information system portal, and technology portals for instruction and assessment.
- Provide time for experienced teachers to orient new teachers to these materials and resources.

## CALENDARS & SCHEDULES

- Provide and discuss all the school calendars and schedules including the grading and reporting calendar, the assessment calendar, the PD calendar and the weekly schedule including planning time, teacher duties and “specials.”

## CLASSROOM PROCEDURES & ROUTINES

- Share and discuss classroom procedures and routines including transitions to and from the classroom, teaching blocks through the day, and routines and expectations for creating a strong classroom culture.
- Provide time for effective teachers to share exemplars and discuss their choices.
- If possible, walk through the school during this time to “narrate” student movement at various times of day.

## WELCOMING STUDENTS & FAMILIES

- Discuss how new teachers should introduce themselves to their students and families, including welcome letters and in-person contacts.
- Set expectations for working with families throughout the year.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES & ROUTINES

- Distribute the faculty handbook and orient participants to its content.
- Avoid going through the whole handbook but focus on essential topics such as student safety, IDEA, purchasing supplies, and planning for substitute coverage.

## CONTACTS

- Provide the name, phone number and email address for key contacts including all the school’s administrators and administrative support staff, special education staff, mentors and others involved in new teacher support. If possible, do this during an informal lunch and invite all the contacts to attend.

## TEACHER EVALUATION

- Share and discuss the formal teacher evaluation framework and process.
- Highlight the domains and indicators that new teachers will be observed for first.

## NEW TEACHER SUPPORT

- Share and discuss the support system, structures and processes for new teacher support including mentoring, coaching, differentiated professional development, and opportunities for observing exemplary teachers.
- Provide a calendar of observations, new teacher PD, mentor visits, and feedback conferences through winter break. When possible, this session should be led by mentors or master teachers.

## FIRST DAYS

- Describe upcoming “first days” including any district-wide gathering, the opening faculty meeting at the school and the first student day.
- As much as possible, narrate the first student day:
  - How will students arrive?
  - Where should teachers be?
  - How should teachers begin the teaching day?
  - Will the schedule run normally or be modified?
  - What will student dismissal look like, including expectations for parent pick-up?

## PHASE 2: STARTING STRONG

### From the first student day to winter break

#### Purpose

Transition new teachers - many of whom are in their first professional position of any kind – through their initial excitement and anticipation to surviving challenges, pushing past discouragement, reflecting on success and rejuvenating themselves in ways that move them toward effectiveness and confidence.

#### Principles

- Connect new teachers to the school community and help them understand “how we do things around here” while also teaching them what success looks like.
- Feedback, coaching, training and intentional support will allow new teachers to develop and grow toward full effectiveness.
- At the school, an optimized new teacher experience requires support, personalization, and streamlined processes and demands.

#### Best Practices

- Intentional weekly contact by a cohort of supporters: mentors, team leaders & administrators.
- Set clear expectations while focusing on getting a foundation of skills in place.
- Follow-up on feedback.
- Always share the bigger picture.
- Take time with new teacher and his/her mentor to reflect on successes before Winter Break. Use it as an opportunity to be even better when they get back.

#### Checklist for Principals

##### CONNECT OFTEN

- Stop by at the beginning and end of the first few student days to hear how the new teacher is feeling and what support they may want. Check in at least weekly until winter break. Provide same-day positive and actionable feedback every time you visit classrooms. Use the USHCA New Teacher survey weekly to take a school-wide ‘temperature check’ of new teachers.

##### VARY YOUR INTERACTIONS

- Not every interaction needs to be focused on observation or feedback. When setting expectations, offer support. When sharing observation evidence, give actionable feedback. When checking-in, make interpersonal and community connections. Listen for whether the new teacher prefers to have support pushed in or whether they prefer to reach out for it; accommodate that preference. New teachers are often hard on themselves: listen for negative self-talk and counter-balance it with authentic encouragement.

##### ENGAGE OTHERS

- Set clear expectations for how mentors, team leaders, team mates and other administrators should interact and support new teachers. Coordinate calendars. Hold weekly meetings to discuss evidence and feedback.

## OVERCOMMUNICATE

- Reinforce expectations with written materials and exemplars. Check for understanding when setting expectations or giving feedback. Rehearse or role-play student or parent interactions whenever possible.

## FOCUS ON ESSENTIAL LEARNING SKILLS, NOT ONE THING OR EVERYTHING.

- Avoid the formal language of the evaluation system and abstract labels such as ‘classroom management.’
- When observing instruction and giving feedback use TNTP’s four essential learning skills as the foundation of excellent teaching:
  1. Use time well.
  2. Set clear expectations.
  3. Implement routines.
  4. Deliver instruction clearly.

## CHECK ON IMPLEMENTATION

- When observing teachers, watch for implementation of feedback that has been given and new skills taught during PD or training.
- Call out and correct any lack of implementation.
- Celebrate implementation at the next check-in.

## ANTICIPATE NEW CHALLENGES

- Watch for new challenges such as upcoming parent conferences, the teacher’s first IEP meeting, or enrollment of a new student in the class.
- Have mentors or team leads set expectations for these events and rehearse performance.

## SHELTER WHENEVER POSSIBLE

- Simplify the job of the new teacher whenever possible.
- Provide lesson/unit plans from master teachers rather than have the new teacher develop them.
- Buffer duplicative or low-level requests from district staff.
- If possible, provide a substitute teacher for one day each grading period to allow the new teacher to spend time organizing materials and resources.

## MAKE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Be intentional in the design of faculty and team meetings so that new teachers can learn, clarify and contribute no matter what the activity.
- Point new teachers to colleagues who can support them.
- When you observe a new teacher doing something innovative or creative ask them to share it with specific colleagues.

## APPEAL TO VISION, MISSION AND PURPOSE

- Do not over-value the “what” and “how” of good teaching. Be sure new teachers also understand the “so what and now what” as well as the “why” of good teaching.
- Continuously reinforce the contributions they making to the school’s success and the impact they are having on students.

## PHASE 3: ACCELERATING

### Second Semester

#### Purpose

- Make strong, informed retention decisions.
- Encourage new teachers choose to stay at the school.
- Accelerate the path to effectiveness. As necessary, remediate struggling new teachers.

#### Principles

- Ensure that all new teachers understand the process and standards for being retained.
- Coordinate observation and feedback so that teachers are getting clear messages and can focus their improvement efforts.
- Tighten social and community connections.

#### Best Practices

- Observe and give feedback based on the evaluation standards that will be used to make retention decisions.
- Provide opportunities for differentiated PD and observation of master teachers based on observation evidence.
- Identify any credentialing issues and ensure that a plan is in place for completing all requirements.
- Publicly celebrate success and encourage more participation and voice from new teachers.

#### Checklist for Principals

##### LEVEL-SET

- Using multiple measures and evidence from everyone who has observed the new teacher, have a level-setting discussion about progress to expectations at mid-year.
- Focus on the formal evaluation standards but include other expectations such as professionalism and collaboration.
- Celebrate growth and strengths.
- Identify high-leverage growth areas.
- Pay special attention to rookie teachers who were hired late and experienced teachers who needed to align to the school's academic expectation and culture.

##### RE-SET

- With the assistance of mentors and team leaders, support new teachers in resetting their classroom rules, routines and procedures as school begins after winter break.

##### CLEAR OBSTACLES

- Work with HR and other district staff to identify any obstacles to contract renewal such as credentialing or coursework requirements.
- Document these obstacles in writing with the teacher and co-develop a plan for timely removal of the obstacles.

## BUILD A PATH TO RETENTION

- With the principal-manager and HC partner, create a calendar of specific steps to contract action and retention, including any activities or deadlines to be completed by the new teacher.
- Connect these to growth areas discussed during the level-setting discussion and review the plan with the teacher. Identify any areas where the teacher may need additional support.

## TEACH DATA-DRIVEN INSTRUCTION

- Begin teaching new teachers the skills and processes of data-driven instruction using interim/benchmark assessment data. These skills may be taught to groups of new teachers but conduct at least one 1-on-1 data analysis with each new teacher before making the retention decision.

## PREPARE FOR STATE TESTING

- Ensure that new teachers understand how state testing works: the schedule, the procedures, which standards are tested, how items are constructed and scored.
- During classroom observations look for evidence of assessment-aligned tasks and work with the teacher to increase the rigor of tasks and clarity of feedback to students.

## DIFFERENTIATE

- Based on the strengths and growth areas identified during steps 1-6, above, work with the district PD team, mentors and team leads to identify high-leverage training opportunities for each new teacher. These should include opportunities to observe and debrief with master teachers.

## ENCOURAGE

- Beyond the teacher-performance discussions and check-ins leading up to the retention decision, check in with each new teacher at least weekly to offer precise praise and encouragement about their growth and progress.
- Ensure that others are also doing this.

## INCREASE VOICE & VISIBILITY

- Push new teachers who are on the path to likely retention to increase their voice and visibility during common planning time and at team and faculty meetings.
- Call attention to their contributions and build on their comments and ideas.

## CELEBRATE RETENTION

- Publicly celebrate the accomplishment of meeting the standards for contract renewal and retention. Be specific about each new teacher's growth and progress. This celebration welcomes the new teacher to the full school community while also signaling the standards for success and the importance of continuous improvement.