

# The beginning teacher's handbook



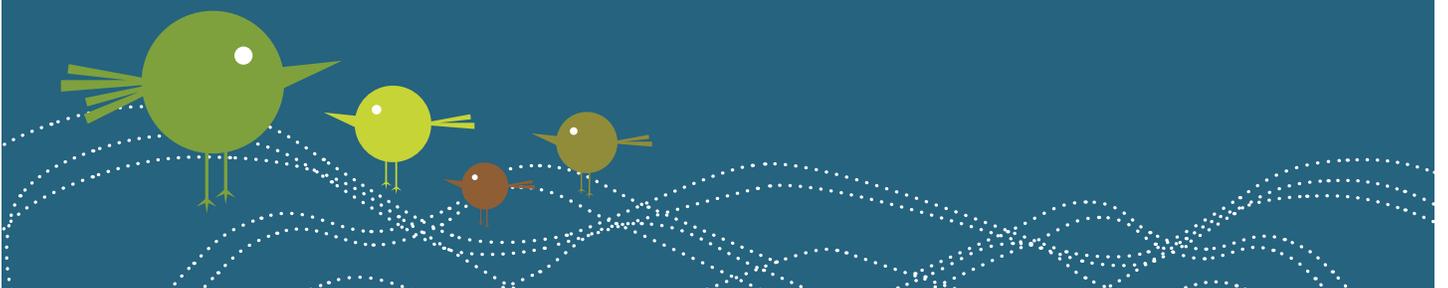
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**ts** THE  
MANITOBA  
TEACHERS'  
SOCIETY

UPDATED JULY 2025

Additional beginning teacher resources can be found on the MTS website at [www.mbteach.org](http://www.mbteach.org)

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# Welcome to Teaching

The Manitoba Teachers' Society welcomes you to the profession of teaching.

You are now a member of MTS, which is here to support you in every way possible.

We are partners in ensuring all students get the best education and that public school teachers get the best support to reach that goal.

Your organization offers a wide range of services from health care to professional development through a number of departments.

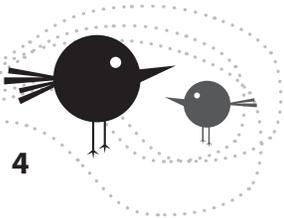
The main offices of MTS are located 191 Harcourt Street in Winnipeg. The main building is called McMaster House, named after Thomas McMaster, the organization's general secretary from 1945 to 1956. Another MTS building next door was named Bradley Square after the Society's first female general secretary, Judy Bradley.

## Contact The Manitoba Teachers' Society:

McMaster House  
191 Harcourt Street  
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3J 3H2  
Phone: 204-888-7961  
Toll Free: 1-866-494-5747  
Fax: 204-831-0877

## The MTS Disability Benefits Plan:

Bradley Square  
101-2639 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3J 0P7  
Phone: 204-957-5330  
Toll Free: 1-866-504-9373  
Fax: 204-957-5347



# MTS Services

## Professional and French Language Services

MTS encourages and helps teachers continue to learn. MTS sponsors and presents an array of workshops and seminars for public school teachers. Over 100 teachers attend functions at McMaster House (the name of the MTS building) in a typical week. MTS also provides resources and financial support for 28 Special Area Groups of Educators (SAGEs). The Society conducts various types of business in French, from collective bargaining to counselling. French Language Services provide support in both official languages.

Your PFLS department organizes a major conference just for teachers in their first five years called Fab5. The conference offers a variety of practical workshops designed that focus on day-to-day classroom issues such as student engagement, parent partnerships, working with EAs and social media. Information on the Fab5 is usually posted on the website a few months in advance of the October conference.

The department also provides presentations through its Teacher-Led Learning Team. The team is made up of everyday teachers trained in presenting workshops. Topics have included classroom management, working with EAs and Indigenous Perspectives.

A full program of PD events and other information is available under the PD section of this website.

## Teacher Welfare

### Collective Bargaining

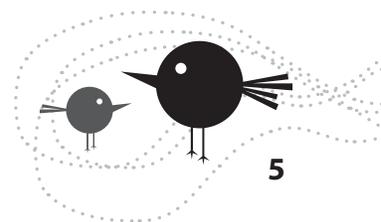
The Manitoba Teachers' Society helps negotiate collective agreements on behalf of all public school teachers and teachers in some First Nations communities. It has a group of negotiators who help local teacher associations.

Negotiations in Manitoba are done on a division-by-division basis, unlike most provinces where negotiations are done province-wide.

All collective agreements and comparisons between divisions are available under the bargaining section of this website.

### Personnel Services

The Society provides a staff to help with myriad personnel issues that face teachers in their day-to-day work and dealings with school division administrations. Staff officers handle hundreds of personnel cases each year, settling problems themselves or bringing in legal counsel when required.



## Benefits

The Society also offers help to members who need to use any of the many health benefits enjoyed under collective agreements. With some differences between local teachers' associations, these benefits include a dental plan, deferred salary leave plan, health insurance and life insurance.

## Pension Plan (TRAF)

The teachers' pension plan is known as TRAF, the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund. A board manages the defined benefit pensions for Manitoba's public school teachers.

The Society and the Government of Manitoba, through the Pension Task Force, discuss pension issues, and recommend changes to The Teachers' Pensions Act.

330–25 Forks Market Road Winnipeg, MB R3C 4S8

Phone: 204-949-0048

Toll free: 1-800-782-0714

Fax: 204-944-0361

info@traf.mb.ca

www.traf.mb.ca

## Communications

The Manitoba Teachers' Society is committed to making sure its membership is informed about the activities of the Society and keeping members abreast of news in education.

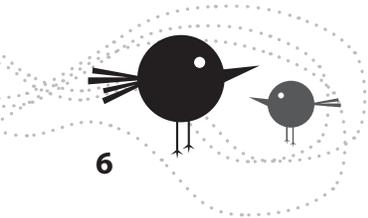
To that end, the Society publishes the MB Teacher magazine that goes out free to all members three times during the school year.

The Society also administers an extensive website, mbteach.org that encompasses all areas of MTS activities and offers current education news, professional development and other items of interest to members, parents and the general public.

Each year MTS creates various publications, brochures and handbooks to help teachers in different aspects of their work.

As well, the publications department is responsible for the design and printing of most Special Area Groups of Educators (SAGE) journals and newsletters.

All publications are available in the MTS Library section of this website.



## **Éducatrices et éducateurs francophones du Manitoba (ÉFM)**

ÉFM is an MTS agency that represents teachers who work in the French language or in French immersion programs, about 2,100 members of the Society.

Visit [www.efm-mts.org](http://www.efm-mts.org) for EFM events and news.

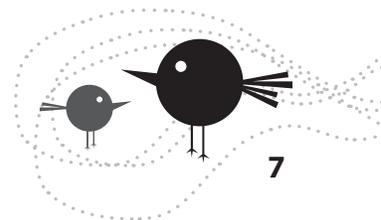
### **Disability Benefits Plan (DBP)**

The MTS Disability Benefits Plan is an insurance plan, for both short and long-term disability, owned and operated by The Manitoba Teachers' Society. Participation is mandatory for all members.

When members experience illness or injury, on or off the job, the Plan will assist with medical and vocational rehabilitation to ensure the earliest possible return to work. Where an absence extends beyond 80 working days or meets the qualifying criteria, the Plan provides income replacement during the period of disability while continuing to assist the claimant with rehabilitation and where appropriate, return to work services.

The Early Intervention Program provides services which assist teachers at risk of having to discontinue work due to a medical condition, to remain in the workplace while assisting them in addressing their health issues.

The Plan is dedicated to assisting members through periods of disability in a manner that attempts to assure, in a consultative approach, maximum rehabilitation medically and vocationally and assisting members, when possible, to return to work, while providing financial security at a cost reasonable to premium paying members. Some benefits provided by the Plan are: early intervention/prevention services; wage replacement benefits/TRAF contributions; vocational rehabilitation services.



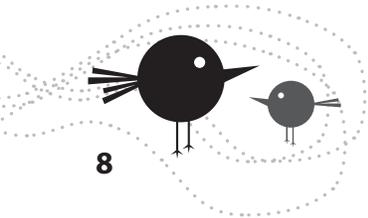
# Knowing the Code

## The Code of Professional Practice

One of the responsibilities of all public school teachers in the province is adherence to the Code of Professional Practice. The Code of Professional Practice establishes the required standards of conduct for all members of The Manitoba Teachers' Society, whether acting in an employed position under a Collective Agreement, or acting in an appointed or elected position. A member's professional behaviour must reflect the spirit as well as the letter of the Code.

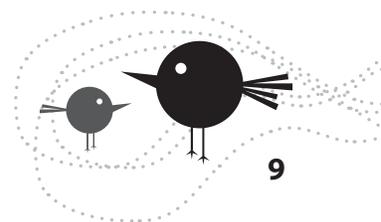
**Members are bound by the following principles and each Member's professional behaviour must reflect the spirit as well as the letter of these principles:**

1. A Member's first professional responsibility is to the Member's students;
2. A Member acts with integrity and diligence in carrying out professional responsibilities;
3. A Member avoids involvement in a conflict of interest, recognizes that a privileged relationship with students exists and refrains from exploiting that relationship for material, ideological or other advantage;
4. A Member's conduct is characterised by consideration and good faith. The Member speaks and acts with respect and dignity, and deals judiciously with others, always mindful of their rights;
5. A Member respects the confidential nature of information concerning students and may give the information only to authorized personnel or agencies directly concerned with the individual student's welfare;
6. A Member first directs any criticism of the professional activity and related work of a colleague to that colleague in private. Only after informing the colleague of the intent to do so, the complainant may direct in confidence the criticism to appropriate officials through the proper channels of communication. A Member shall not be considered in contravention of this Article in the following circumstances:
  - a) consulting with the Society or the Member's Local president;
  - b) taking any action that is allowed or mandated by legislation;
  - c) where the Member is acting in good faith and without malice in the discharge of the legitimate duties of the Member's appointed or elected position;



7. A Member does not bypass immediate authority to reach higher authority without first exhausting the proper channels of communication;
8. A Member makes an ongoing effort to improve professionally;
9. A Member adheres to collective agreements negotiated by the Society and its Local;
10. A Member or group of Members makes only authorized representations to Outside Bodies on behalf of the Society or its Locals. Without the express permission of the Society, no Members conferring with Outside Bodies may explicitly or implicitly claim that they represent the Society or its Locals; and
11. A Member upholds the principles and protections outlined in the Manitoba Human Rights Code, and develops an environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, hate, and oppression

*(The Society approved new Bylaws at its 2024 AGM. Bylaw IV includes the Code of Professional Practice that applies to all teachers who are members of the Society. Bylaw IV also outlines what constitutes professional misconduct and how the Code is enforced. The Society's Constitution and Bylaws outline the remedies or sanctions that can be imposed against any teacher who violates the Code of Professional Practice.)*



# Working with Others in Schools

It is the teacher's responsibility to diagnose learning needs and prepare materials and lessons. The teacher directs the work of all the other adults in the classroom.

## Educational Assistants

Regulations of The Public Schools Act stipulate that educational assistants "shall perform duties as the principal assigns to him or her", but those duties shall not include:

- the organization and management of the classroom
- the planning of teaching strategies or
- the direction of learning experiences including the assessment of individual needs of the pupils

Educational assistants and community volunteers:

- Ensure that tasks you ask assistants and volunteers to do are within school board and MTS policies
- Stress that absolute confidentiality is to be maintained at all times
- Define and clarify roles
- Aim to develop a climate of trust
- Provide support and encouragement

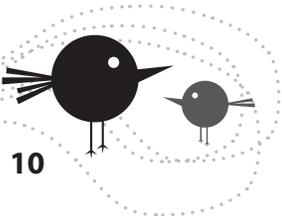
More information can be found in the handbook *Teachers and Educational Assistants: Roles and Responsibilities* available in the MTS Library section of this website.

## Volunteers

Parents and other volunteers often assist with a wide variety of tasks that need to be done every day.

Volunteers wish to be accepted as part of the team, but remember that, as the teacher, you are the team leader. Careful preparation and organization on your part will result in a worthwhile and meaningful experience for the volunteer. Teaching is a very demanding and occasionally an extra person in the classroom can be an additional burden for a first-year teacher. So, when you feel comfortable, invite volunteers to come in for short stints to do specific tasks.

Planning is the key to success. Be certain to involve the principal in any planning before you invite volunteers. Arrange for an orientation session where you can match the skills and interests of the volunteer with tasks that need to be done. Remind volunteers that, although they might be qualified to perform certain tasks, it may actually contravene division or MTS provincial policy for them to do so. Also, it is most important to stress that absolute confidentiality must be maintained.



## Preparing for a Substitute Teacher

Students should be aware of your expectations for behaviour when a substitute teacher is in charge of the class. You may want to inform your students ahead of time that you will be absent. If possible, preview the coming day's assignments. This preparation demonstrates to them your confidence that they can handle your not being there.

You are responsible for preparing the information folder for the substitute teacher

Prepare an information folder that will help organize a successful day for both the substitute and the students with:

- Class list with phone numbers
- Class rules, expectations and responsibilities
- Collection of some interesting supplementary material that the substitute could use as additional resource material
- Daily and weekly timetable, showing class times
- Homework assignments and policy
- Information about students with special needs
- List of classroom routines, procedures

Show you appreciate your substitute teacher:

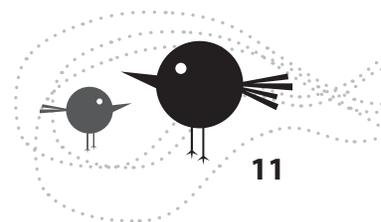
- Before your absence, speak to the substitute teacher to communicate your expectations and to share information about any extraordinary circumstances they should be aware of.
- Following your absence, contact your substitute teacher to talk about what was accomplished and to acknowledge their special role in the teaching profession. When you return, also ask the students and the "buddy" teacher how the day went. Follow up on any disciplinary events and then put the day behind you and begin anew. Remember, you do not have control over what the substitute does or does not do.

## Resource Teacher and Guidance Counsellor

Plan to meet with each of these colleagues early in the year to discuss how you can work together. They may have information or advice to assist you in your work with students. Each of them can provide information about their programs and services for students. Ask about services being provided to individual students in your class.

## Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Pathologists, Social Workers and Reading Clinicians

Ask your principal to provide you with information concerning which of your students have been working with specialists. It is important to find out about how to refer other students for assessment and assistance and about services available for students who may need them.



## **Principals/Vice-principals**

A principal and vice-principal are important parts of your support network. Don't wait for them to ask you how things are going let them know. Use their assistance to gain a broader understanding of school operation.

## **Librarian/Library Technician**

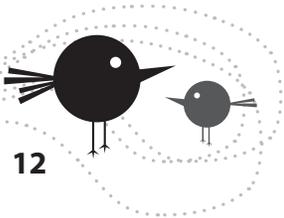
A librarian not only looks after a collection of library materials but can also assist you with research-based projects. Familiarize yourself with using the library effectively. A librarian may also assist with ordering student and teacher resource materials.

## **School Secretary**

Requests made of you by the school secretary are probably for information required by the principal or by the school division. Your working relationships may be enhanced by being prompt in responding to these requests. Ask your principal about which secretarial services might be available for teachers.

## **Custodial Staff**

Ask the principal about the custodial staff responsibilities. Introduce yourself and discuss ways in which you can work together to keep your classroom a pleasant place. Aim to assist students in taking responsibility for keeping the classroom tidy.



# Parental/Guardian Involvement & Communication

You can welcome parents and guardians as partners by creating conditions where parents can assume roles as advisors, collaborators and supporters. In these meaningful roles, parents are not mere spectators – they are active participants in the teaching- learning process. Trust, respect and honesty are necessary conditions for parent/guardian-teacher relationships to flourish.

Enlisting the assistance of them is an important strategy to employ. Very few object to a teacher approaching them with an idea that might help their child if the idea shows the teacher’s commitment to the success of that child. Consider them as part of the support for a mutually agreed upon solution to discipline problems.

## Meet the Teacher Night

The first formal introduction to guardians and parents will usually be in the form of a “Meet the Teacher” activity. This may have different names, but usually it is a time to introduce yourself and your curriculum.

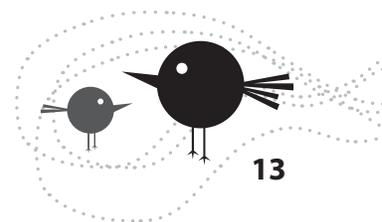
Be prepared to instill confidence regarding your instructional abilities. Talk about your relevant experiences (camp counsellor, club sponsor, etc.). Let your enthusiasm show.

This is a good opportunity for you to identify how home and school can work together. Inform parents of when, where and how you can be reached and discuss how guardians and parents can best support their child’s learning out of school.

## Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences

Successful parent-teacher conferences provide a balance of teacher-talk and listening, as well as positive comments and suggestions for improvement. When you discuss a problem, be truthful, sincere and objective. They will respect your integrity.

It is helpful for you to recognize and validate guardians and parents as the student’s primary teachers. Thus, offer plenty of opportunities for questions and observations. Remain focused and reiterate that you and they have a responsibility to work together for the sake of the student.



# Professional Development

Professional development encompasses all activities that teachers undertake to direct their own learning and to enhance their professional practice. Teacher Autonomy in professional development is both a right and a responsibility of the individual teacher.

It is the responsibility of the school division to provide mechanisms and resources to ensure both individual teachers and groups of teachers have equitable access to professional development.

You have a professional responsibility to keep on top of new developments in education and take part in ongoing professional development.

## Fab 5

The Fab 5 Beginning Teachers' Conference, to be held in Winnipeg and Brandon, is designed for teachers in their first five years of teaching. Plenary sessions are balanced with a selection of breakout workshops intended to build knowledge and strategies in the areas of classroom management, student engagement, team work, building parent partnerships and supporting diversity.

FAB 5 offers new teachers an opportunity to network with other beginning teachers and develop skills to support their day-to-day classroom practices. Registration is minimal – only \$40.00! In addition, The Manitoba Teachers' Society will provide some financial assistance for travel and accommodation for participants who are MTS members.

Contact your local association to find out more about how teachers might access funding for PD opportunities in their division.

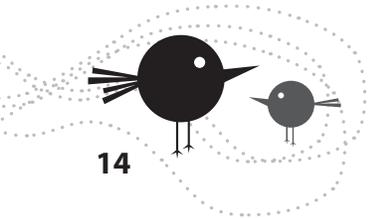
## Professional Community

Teachers are members of a professional organization that encourages collegiality, collaboration and trust. Within each school, these attributes are essential to the development of standards and priorities that guide professional activity and action.

## Professional Knowledge

Teachers possess a professional expertise that is marked by the interrelationship between two kinds of knowledge:

1. Knowledge of a discipline (such as the acquisition of content in a particular discipline, and the set of skills that are associated with learning within that discipline)
2. Pedagogical knowledge (tacit, implicit knowledge that helps teachers “reach” children, or helps them to know how to respond to a learning need).



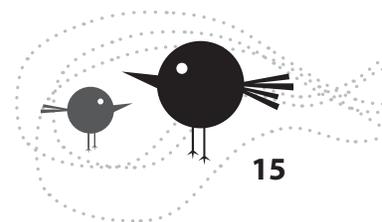
## **An Educator's Professional Autonomy**

Exercise professional autonomy by:

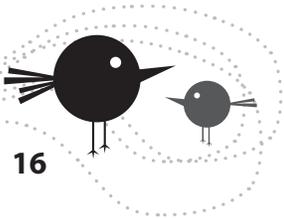
- To exercise professional autonomy is to exercise professional judgment. To be able to reflect and act upon one's judgement is an important source of strength in the public education system and key in meeting the diverse needs of our students.
- Professional development is most effective when it is chosen by educators to meet their needs and support educators in making professional decisions.
- Good teaching and development of good teaching practices do not happen serendipitously. Purposeful professional development over one's career guides the acquisition of new skills and knowledge in an endeavour to improve as an educator and leader. It is also important to recognize that to exercise one's professional autonomy does not necessarily mean that one is to learn in isolation. In fact, when educators engage in professional learning opportunities with their colleagues, there are opportunities to share, mentor and support each other.
- The professional development (PD) of Manitoba educators is regulated by legislation. Collective agreements, school division policies and The Manitoba Teachers' Society's Constitution, By-laws and Policies also regulate equitable access to PD opportunities and funding for Manitoba teachers.

## **50 Ways to Develop Professionally**

1. Read an article on the mbteach.org website
2. Apply for a Reflective Professional Practice Grant
3. Read a pamphlet
4. Attend a workshop
5. Talk with colleagues
6. Read an article
7. Join a Special Area Group of Educators (SAGE)
8. Watch a video/DVD
9. Conduct an action research project
10. Read a book/e-book
11. Watch a television program
12. Attend a grade level meeting
13. Acquire a new software program
14. Participate in a podcast/webinar
15. Read a journal
16. Serve as a co-operating teacher for a university student teacher/teacher candidate
17. Join a professional organization
18. Attend a Manitoba Teachers' Society workshop/conference



19. Develop a professional newsletter
20. Observe a teacher in action
21. Join a study group
22. Plan a staff/association workshop.
23. Volunteer to serve on your local association
24. Develop a curriculum resource
25. Visit a teacher resource center
26. Serve as a mentor
27. Attend a summer institute of your choice
28. Write a grant application for a new initiative
29. Serve on a planning committee for a divisional PD day
30. Write an article for a journal
31. Partner with other community organizations to develop new programs
32. Develop a professional growth plan/ portfolio
33. Volunteer to sit on a committee with The Manitoba Teachers' Society
34. Become a peer coach
35. Enrol in a university course
36. Implement a new instructional/ assessment strategy
37. Pilot a new program/series
38. Participate as a community organization board member
39. Develop new technology skills
40. Join a formal network within or outside your school division
41. Contribute to a Special Area Group of Educators (SAGE)
42. Volunteer for a Department of Education committee
43. Join the Manitoba Teachers' Society Teacher Led Learning Teams
44. Search the internet for information on an issue
45. Participate on a school-based committee
46. Discuss educational resources with a friend
47. Enrol in a distance education program
48. Volunteer for a local community organization
49. Develop a pamphlet on an educational issue
50. Write a book



# Special Area Groups of Educators & MTS PD Day

## Special Area Groups of Educators

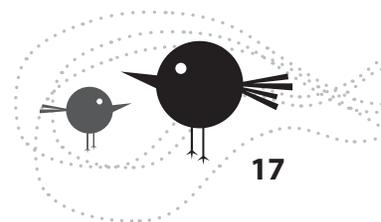
Special Area Groups of Educators (SAGEs) are organizations affiliated with The Manitoba Teachers' Society. Most focus on a specific discipline, such as math or music or drama. Others focus on general learning for particular students such as middle years or elementary years. There are more than 34 SAGEs associated with MTS.

You can see a complete list of SAGEs with information about joining and fees on the SAGE section of MTS website.

## MTS PD Day

One of the highlights of the year is the annual MTS PD Day, organized through MTS and presented by the assorted SAGEs. The one day event, encompassing dozens of workshops and seminars, is held in October. In late August a program for all activities is posted on this website with details on workshops and information on costs and how to register for an event. Online registration is available for most SAGEs.

As a teacher, you have an opportunity to join one or more SAGEs and take part in many of the PD activities organized by them. As well as organizing other PD events, SAGEs produce, through the MTS publications department, newsletters and journals.



# Teacher Evaluation

Check your collective agreement and the school division policy on teacher evaluation.

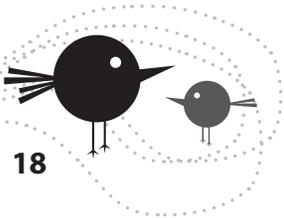
In most schools, you will be evaluated during your first year. Ask your principal to clarify objectives, expectations and process. Obtain information about the process, the nature and timing of the reports and the expectations that will be placed on you. Obtain information about help available from other teachers.

The most frequently used criteria for teacher evaluation are:

1. Planning instruction and assessment
2. Classroom culture, classroom management
3. Instructional methodology including student engagement and ability to adapt for student needs
4. Professional responsibilities including collegial relationships and communication with families

If you are experiencing difficulty in your first year, do not hesitate to ask a teacher mentor or buddy to provide assistance as soon as possible during the year. If classroom management poses a difficulty, ask for a peer coach to observe and assist you.

*Do not resign under pressure. When you need help contact your local teachers' association president or a staff officer at The Manitoba Teachers' Society in Winnipeg for assistance: 204- 831-3055 or 1-800-262-8803.*



# Looking After Yourself

Your work can consume you. There is so much to do and learn. Your personal life can often suffer in the first year of teaching. Find time to relax and exercise to relieve stress and make your transition easier. It keeps you healthy. Exercise and meeting friends will help to maintain your energy levels.

You may experience a roller coaster of emotions, but it is important to stay connected with what is really going on. Experience it fully and act accordingly. Everyone has a first year. Laugh at yourself and enjoy yourself.

## Perfectionism and Surviving

To have the perfect lesson and the perfect class where all students are working to their potential all the time is impossible. Look for the help of more experienced teachers and your principal when you need support or ideas.

No one expects a first-year teacher to be perfect. Surviving the first year depends on letting go of thinking you have to be able to do it all, all of the time.

Situations or concerns may come up that you do not know how to handle. Ask others and ask early. You do not have to reinvent the wheel in your teaching. Teachers rely on each other for support.

## Saying Yes and Saying No

It is reasonable to say no to extracurricular activities or assignments. First-year teachers need to focus on instructional tasks and honing their teaching skills. There are just so many hours in a day and you have only so much energy. If it is too much for you, say so. It doesn't help anyone for you to be so stretched that you either cannot do anything well or you are not getting adequate sleep.

