
Introduction

What New Teachers Really Want to Know

Aliya was an energized first-year teacher. Teaching had been her dream, her calling, her goal ever since she was a little girl. She graduated from a top teacher education program and was hired after her second interview. She was ready for and excited about her first year of teaching.

But the reality of the classroom was quite different from what she expected.

The large city district in which she was employed provided monthly new-teacher workshops. She enthusiastically attended the August meeting, two weeks before school began. There they taught her all about the state standards.

What Aliya really wanted to know was, “What do I need to do my first week of class?”

The district response was either to ask someone at her school, or to use her mentor teacher (who would not be assigned until the third week of school). After all, she was informed, new-teacher meetings were for the “important material,” and nothing was more important for a new teacher than knowing the state standards.

Aliya disagreed but remained quiet, not wanting to get into trouble. She stumbled through her first month in the classroom.

Frustrated, and a little scared, Aliya looked forward to the new-teacher workshop for the month of September. At that meeting, the subject was “Creating Rubrics to Match the State Standards.”

What Aliya really wanted to know was how to conduct her first parent-teacher conference, scheduled in two weeks.

In response to her questions, she was directed to concentrate on the material at hand.

Aliya disagreed but remained quiet, not wanting to get into trouble. Consequently, she felt her first parent-teacher conference was a fiasco, and she left in tears.

Frustrated, scared, and unsure of her abilities, Aliya went to the new-teacher workshop in October. She was concerned because it was taking her hours to prepare

her first report cards. In addition, she was dissatisfied with those she had finished. She was still looking for answers. But the workshop's topic was "How to Begin Preparing for the Spring Standardized Exams."

Aliya disagreed, but this time, she decided to keep her mouth shut.

Aliya skipped the November new-teacher workshop.

New teachers often exit their university education programs and enter their own classrooms having been taught "everything they need to know." Through their coursework and in-class experiences, they have learned how to teach a poem, introduce long division, or set up a science experiment. Teachers employed based on an emergency teaching license may not even have that information.

Districts often provide additional inservice help in areas such as how to

- align the curriculum to the state standards,
- teach to the state standards, and
- prepare students for the state standardized tests.

As our new teacher, Aliya, discovered on her own, these topics do not address the classroom reality.

A REALITY CHECK

During my tenure as a mentor teacher, I have rarely been asked questions about teaching methodologies or about teaching to the standards. Rather, I most often hear the following questions:

- What do I need to do to prepare for the first day?
- Why can't I get my students to behave in class?
- What's the best way to arrange my classroom?
- Why does it take me so long to prepare my grades?
- What can I do about parents who are upset about their child's grade?
- How can I alleviate the stress?

Many education classes and district new-teacher programs address the following topics, but unfortunately on a limited basis:

- Daily classroom management techniques
- Developing a fair and easily organized grading system
- Working with parents
- Keeping your sanity

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

This book is designed to provide you with practical solutions and ideas in the areas listed previously. Written by an everyday classroom teacher, in consultation

with other mentor teachers, this information is concise and easily adapted to most classrooms. You do not need to read the full text to locate relevant information; nor do you need to buy into a particular educational philosophy. This book is eclectic, practical, and adaptable. Some of the ideas in these pages will directly relate to your teaching situation; some will not. Choose only the advice that specifically interests you and is helpful to your particular situation.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each part is divided into chapters with easy-to-follow subsections:

- A real-life anecdote, introducing the problem
- The basic issue the chapter addresses
- The grade levels to which the chapter's issue is most applicable (not every issue is relevant to every grade)
- A timeline for when you should focus on this issue during the school year
- The idea for addressing the issue (note: this section is not titled "Solutions," for there are no absolute solutions; all ideas need to be adapted to your particular situation and your individual teaching style)
- Concluding thoughts: a summary of the major points presented
- A few recent, excellent resources for further reading on this subject, if you want to go into greater depth in this particular subject

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS EDITION

In the six years since the first edition of *The New Teacher Toolbox*, I have received hundreds of comments and suggestions on how to make this book even better. The following are areas new to this edition:

- *Updated Information for Today's Classroom in the Age of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*. When this book was originally written, NCLB was relatively new. Since then, virtually every classroom in the country has been affected by its requirements and consequences. Material throughout the book has been updated to reflect this new reality, and what it means for the new teacher.
- *New Ideas and a New Chapter*. I have included many of the wonderful ideas offered over the past six years, adding to what was already here, and substituting better ones when appropriate. For example, the new chapter, "Making It Through Your Teacher Evaluation" (Chapter 22), is a direct result of new teacher feedback on the first edition.
- *Updated Internet Sites and Resources*. A lot has changed in six years—links have been updated or replaced, and new resources added.

- *More Resources for In-Depth Study.* It is impossible for this introductory book to go into great detail for every subject presented. However, there are some areas where you may want additional information or alternative ideas. This section will supply a couple of additional resources for those teachers who want to go into greater depth in a particular subject.

As you read this book, remember that every teacher is different; every teacher is unique. The ideas presented in this second edition must be stylized, adapted, and molded into what works for *you*. The ideas are generalized, with emphasis on the underlying transferable philosophies. As a result, this book will fit every teacher's individual situation.

Above all, you need to make the material in this book work for your individual teaching environment. It's your classroom and your life for almost seven hours, five days a week.