

Four Ways to Support New Teachers

The additional demands associated with recruiting, hiring, and mentoring new teachers are daunting for most principals. The time and energy that administrators devote to assimilating new hires serves only to maintain the current school culture and goals. Deeper and ongoing professional development, school improvement, and shared vision cannot be achieved or developed if approximately a third of a faculty leaves every three to five years. Principals can positively affect school climate and teacher morale—and ultimately increase teacher retention—by incorporating an invitational approach (Purkey and Siegel 2003). Here are four ways to support new teachers by using this approach.

1. Create and send a care package to new teachers moving into the area. Settling into a new position and moving to a new location can be stressful for teachers, particularly at the beginning of a school year. A carefully constructed care package that includes valuable information about the local area can help support them during their transition. The package could include free brochures about houses and apartments for sale or rent; descriptive literature and a map of the district, with the school location clearly marked; a list of utility numbers for phone, water, cable, electricity, and gas; a change of address form from the local post office; a list of moving company names and phone numbers; and a regional phone book.

2. Invite new teachers to an open house. A school typically has an open house for new students and families at the beginning of the school year, so why not have an open house for new teachers? This can be a time to meet the entire administration team, mentors, other new teachers, and important support staff. It is also a time for new teachers to learn school policies and procedures and to become familiar with the campus. Principals might consider offering new teachers a small stipend, flex or compensation time, or door prizes donated by local businesses. This also is a perfect time to present a staff t-shirt or other school mementos. Scavenger

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hunts are fun ways for new teachers to explore the school.

3. Make sure new teachers' classrooms are adequately supplied. Veteran teachers tend to scavenge vacated classrooms for supplies they need or want, leaving new teachers with rooms that often lack adequate furniture, instructional resources, and general supplies. To prevent this from happening, principals can do a basic inventory of classroom furniture and supplies, ensuring



that they are divided equally and that such basic items as a stapler, hole-puncher, markers, a school calendar, a lesson plan book, a curriculum guide, and instructional materials are placed in the new teacher's classroom.

4. Establish a new teacher club. New teachers need to know that other neophytes share some of the same feelings and experiences. A new teacher club allows socialization, support, and professional development targeted at their specific concerns. Principals can launch such a club by providing food, social outings, materials for professional growth, and guest speakers. While the new teacher club should focus on building relationships, there should also be professional development and social opportunities. The principal, with the help of mentors, should arrange monthly meeting dates and locations and decide the content and organization of each meeting, depending on the needs of the new teachers. New teachers should also be given the opportunity to voice their concerns and share their experiences in a confidential and supportive setting.

Considering the current trends in teacher shortage and attrition rates, principals must be cognizant of ways to support new teachers. Including these four tips may very well invite new teachers to remain in the profession. ■

Reference

Purkey, W.; and Siegel, B. *Becoming an Invitational Leader: A New Approach to Professional and Personal Success*. Atlanta: Humanics Publishing Co., 2003.

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