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A HANDBOOK FOR BEGINNER TEACHERS

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Preface

This handbook is designed to be a practical field-experience guide and methods text for pre service and beginning teachers, K-12. It is a concise, reader-friendly volume that addresses the developmental needs of new teachers as they encounter the complex realities of a contemporary classroom. It describes and explains basic skills and strategies that will enable entering teachers to deal creatively and responsibly with the substantial new challenges that they face.

It is carefully tailored to meet the needs of four groups in particular:

- Those doing their initial field-based course, as a continual source of reference in making sense of what they encounter
- Those preparing to become teachers, for their introductory methods courses
- Those doing their student-teaching, as preparation for their classes, and for use in their student-teaching seminars
- Those at the very beginning, or in the early stages, of their teaching career, as a guide, a reference, and an up-to-date refresher.

It can thus serve students throughout their education program and provide a coherent frame of reference for viewing and guiding their experiences from their first entering the program to their eventual work in the first days and weeks of their professional career.

Main Features

The handbook's directness, down-to-earth practicality, and wealth of detailed classroom and personal applications have made it popular with students, a "must-keep" as one student characterized it. Its specific features include:

1/ A strong emphasis on learning to work productively with young people in today's school settings. Besides separate chapters devoted to classroom management, interactive teaching, and becoming established with new classes, this handbook pays particular attention in the opening chapter to one of the most pervasive and potentially wearing, but least recognized and understood experiences of being a teacher - being with students for extended periods of time.

2/ An accent on proactive attitudes and behavior that will help teachers function as creative professionals in a school environment, including a comprehensive set of strategies for making a healthy and productive accommodation to a modern school organization. The book emphasizes a teacher's need to derive satisfaction from what he or she does and to rise above the mindless routine and boredom that have become increasingly prevalent in today's classrooms. It provides highly practical and detailed ways in which teachers can minimize the inevitable stress of teaching and avoid occupational burnout.

3/ Concentrated attention on the dynamics of lively teaching, including succinct descriptions of basic interactive maneuvers that allow teachers both to conduct learner-paced instruction and to manage student groups effectively. Together with chapters offering guidelines for classroom motivation and teacher explanations, these sections provide beginners with a manageable, intuitively appropriate framework for building a repertoire of teaching behaviors.

4/ An implicit constructivist psychology of adult learning and continuing teacher development. Teachers are addressed as self-motivating persons whose behavior is a function of their purposes and needs as people. As such, this handbook attempts to address the needs of developing teachers as they encounter the new challenges of teaching. The two opening chapters are intended to assist beginners in accurately sizing up the nature of the work and the milieu in which they will be working, and in beginning to build attitudes and strategies for maintaining their stamina and sense of purpose in an organizational setting. The book also incorporates a psychology of classroom management that sees class control as a means to educational ends to which the teacher is fully committed, and includes a final chapter that strongly emphasizes the need for beginning teachers to pay close and continuing attention to their own professional development.

Throughout the book the reader will encounter short verbatim commentaries of teachers at various levels of professional development. These statements, primarily from student teachers and first-year teachers, were obtained by the lead author from personal journals and personal interviews with contributors to the book.

Organization

There are three parts to this handbook.

Part One contains four chapters devoted to **Preparing for Teaching**, the first two chapters being primarily conceptual and orientational.

Chapter 1 identifies basic but intangible features of modern teaching that will have an important bearing on a teacher's professional growth and job satisfaction.

Chapter 2 focuses on the teacher's relationship to the system itself. It shows teacher development to be integrally related to the kinds of adaptations teachers are able to make to dominant organizational realities. Both chapters offer the new teacher suggestions for making positive accommodations to these prevailing conditions.

Chapter 3 provides basic guidelines for preparing instructional objectives, and

Chapter 4 consists of fundamental ideas and strategies to help beginners organize for instruction.

Part Two, **Conducting Classroom Activity**, includes five chapters, each of which centers on a major dimension of skilled classroom performance.

Chapter 5 focuses on the dynamics of teacher-group relations and offers entering teachers rules for developing sound working relationships with their classes.

Chapter 6 explores ideas and tactics for engaging students actively and genuinely in school learning. It emphasizes motivational techniques that appeal to students' intrinsic motivation to learn.

Chapter 7 focuses on the teacher as explainer. It features teacher explanations as basic ingredients of good teaching and treats this fundamental skill in considerable depth.

Chapter 8 details the specific interactive tactics good teachers use to establish effective two-way communication as a medium for in-depth classroom learning.

Chapter 9 describes an approach to classroom management that makes the control function an integral part of a teacher's instructional pattern. It presents a series of low-profile maneuvers for achieving and maintaining order in the classroom.

Part Three, **Following up Instruction**, is devoted to two crucial pre- and post-instructional responsibilities with which all teachers must come to terms.

Chapter 10 provides a conceptual framework for approaching the evaluation of classroom learning, together with practical methods for testing and grading.

Chapter 11 introduces basic communication strategies for productive parent conferences and effective one-to-one interaction with students. The final chapter offers ideas for managing one's own professional development as a new teacher. It recommends techniques for self-evaluation and self-development in several important areas.

A Message to Teachers in Training

You are entering teaching at a crucial time in the history of American education. As a classroom teacher you will likely be called on to design learning experiences for increasingly diverse, non-academically oriented populations of young learners. From all indications, you will need to prepare yourself to teach greater numbers of nontraditional and educationally disadvantaged students than encountered by previous teachers. Consider the following demographic patterns:

1.   As the general population ages, the proportion of young who are members of minority groups - particularly African-Americans and Hispanics - will expand dramatically. Some states can expect to have a "minority majority" in their schools by the beginning of the twenty-first century. California is already at that stage in its elementary schools.

2. The gap between rich and poor in the United States continues to increase. As this gap grows wider, a larger and larger percentage of children will fall below the poverty line. Forty percent of the poor in the United States are children, and this situation is likely to worsen because the median income of families headed by a person under the age of 25 has declined steadily over the last 20 years.

3. Fewer than 5 percent of U.S. households now conform to the standard model family of past decades: a working father, mother at home, and two or more school-age children. Indications are that 60 percent of the children born in 1983 will live in one-parent homes before they are 18 years old. As shifts in the traditional patterns of marriage and child rearing continue, fewer children will have the emotional and educational advantages of a two-parent family, parents who are themselves educated, and close supervision after school.

These social trends will undoubtedly have dramatic implications for American teachers of the future. For one thing, classroom teachers will need to possess a working knowledge of alternative learning patterns, together with schemes for engaging non-academically inclined youngsters in new learning. As we move toward the twenty-first century, teaching will require more personalized, learner-centered techniques for teaching the highly diverse mix of students who will enter U.S. classrooms.

Future teachers will need to be able to summon the personal stamina and resourcefulness to face an ever more complex and formidable set of teaching responsibilities. As a means of coping with the complexity of teaching and the heavy demands on your energy it will make, you will need strategies for working within the present-day school organization that will help you to avoid being devitalized by the system, and patterns of professional involvement that will allow you to make best use of your creative capacities.

This handbook is designed to help you size up the challenge facing you as a new teacher in today's schools. It will assist you in preparing yourself to work effectively and productively with the young people you will be expected to teach. It is also intended to help you cope with the demands of the school system and at the same time to maintain high levels of professional competence and creativity in your work.

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Thank you for reading!

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