

Welcome to Jefferson City School District

The Staff, students and parents of the Jefferson City School District are very glad that you have decided to begin your professional teaching career with us. You are very important to our community, especially our children.

Researchers predict that 17 percent of educators will leave teaching after one year, 30 percent after two years, 40 percent after three years, nearly half after five years, and up to 80 percent after 10 years. These statistics demonstrate the importance for the need of a quality beginning teacher program that will help you to become a very successful professional educator. It is the belief of this district that mentoring and professional development is crucial to becoming a good teacher.

The Beginning Teacher/Mentoring Program of the Jefferson City School District is based on several guiding principles.

- Every beginning teacher benefits from guidance and support, no matter when they enter the profession.
- Communication between mentors and beginning teachers is open and confidential. Quality mentors make a tremendous difference in establishing new teachers' trust and respect for their colleagues and profession.
- All staff members provide informal support for the beginning teacher.
- The program is systemic and ongoing and is reevaluated regularly by all stakeholders.
- Mentoring is a priority in the district.
- Time for the program is essential.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of all teachers are varied and numerous. As a beginning teacher in the Jefferson City School District, you have responsibilities not only to your students, but also to your district, your profession and to your mentor. Your mentor will help you to understand and to meet your responsibilities, and in return you have some responsibilities to him or her and to the program.

- **Communication** – share mutual respect with your mentor and engage in both formal and informal communication.
- **Assistance** – seek support and assistance on a regular basis and reflect with your mentor and colleagues.
- **Answers** - engage in in-depth conversations while seeking answers to questions.
- **Problem solving** – use a team-based approach to solving problems.
- **Time** – expect and welcome your mentor into your classroom for observation (NOT evaluation).
- **Records** – document reflections, as well as activities, keep a log of professional development, use the checklist of certification requirements, keep copies of PDP's, performance-based teacher evaluations, higher education assistance program certificate, and other professional records.
- **Portfolio** – maintain a portfolio of all professional papers and share with mentor and other colleagues when it is appropriate.

“You are not expected to know all the answers,” remembered a teacher. “At first that was hard to let go of – I wasn’t used to others knowing I didn’t know what I was doing all the time. But no one goes without making mistakes. Those who got in trouble hid their mistakes.”

“Another big mistake I made was thinking I was doing it the right way. For example, at the building where I student-taught, you were expected to make all the arrangements for field trips. But at my new school, the procedures and policies were quite different. Luckily, I had talked to my mentor to find out if I was handling the situation correctly.”

“Document, document, document. I can’t tell you how many times, this was said to me. My mentor helped me set up a system for documenting student progress and behavior, parent communication, my professional development plan, and my mentoring reflections and meetings. I referred to that information several times in tight situations.”

Helpful Hints

You have landed your first teaching job, and now you're facing a classroom of students all your own. As with any new experience, the first days and weeks of teaching will be both exciting and probably a bit scary. Relax. You've put in the necessary time and preparation, you have a mentor and other staff anxious to help and you're ready to go.

If only I had known.....

(tips from teachers reflecting on the first year)

- Ask lots of questions.
- Get to know your fellow teachers and principals; they are a great source of support.
- Visit the school early so you can get what you need.
- Get copies of your curriculum and textbooks so you can start making plans.
- Use positive reinforcement and time-management techniques.
- Make seating charts.
- Establish classroom rules early, and enforce them consistently.
- Learn your students' names right away; it gets their attention.
- Expect a lot from your students.
- Have a variety of teaching activities on hand so you never get caught short.
- Introduce yourself to your fellow teachers and to other important people in your building such as the secretaries, custodians, and school nurses.
- Keep a booklet or file of daily forms and procedures.
- Find one good thing about each day, no matter how horrible it seemed.