



New Teacher Guide

OEA

OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH &
MEMBER ADVOCACY DEPARTMENT

Your Advocate. Your Partner. ***Your OEA.***

**We're working together
to provide a quality public
education to every student,
regardless of zip code.**

Every student has a basic right to a great public education. That's why your Association is about more than salary and benefits. It's about creating schools and supporting the educators who are growing tomorrow's inventors, thinkers, artists, and leaders.



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Congratulations on your new teaching position!

As your OEA staff, we would like to welcome you. We hope this booklet provides helpful tips and resources in a variety of areas related to your profession. If you have questions, please contact your Local Association officers, representatives, or OEA Labor Relations Consultant for assistance.



Who We Are

The Ohio Education Association (OEA) represents over 120,000 teachers, faculty members, and support professionals who work in Ohio's schools, colleges, and universities to help improve public education and the lives of Ohio's children. OEA members provide a wide range of professional education services in communities throughout the state.

Our members teach in kindergarten classrooms, high school labs, and university halls. They counsel adolescents and help students carve out career aspirations. They coach athletes and transport students to and from the schools and extra-curricular events. Members provide professional services to benefit students, schools, and the public in virtually every position needed to run Ohio's schools.

OEA members are dedicated to students and public education. Since 1847, OEA has been working to make schools better and improve public education. Our Association is dedicated to working in partnership with parents, community leaders, and elected officials to help Ohio's students and improve public education.



OEA Core Values

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Our Core Values represent our Association’s most deeply held beliefs. They are the fundamental forces that drive us. They are what we believe, and they are why we act with passion and steady commitment. Core values give us guiding principles.

DEMOCRACY

The foundation of a strong democracy is high-quality public education, which is essential for an educated citizenry.

COLLECTIVE ACTION

When we unite as one voice, we are strong advocates for learners and our profession.

FAIRNESS

A high-quality education, accessible to all, promotes a fair and just society.

INCLUSION

We respect and embrace the diversity of all communities.

INTEGRITY

By holding ourselves to the highest standards, we promote good citizenship and maintain the public’s trust.

PROFESSIONALISM

Professional judgment and the expertise of educators are critical to student success. Educators deserve the status, compensation, and respect given to all professionals.

13 Ways to Beat Your First Day Jitters

Preparing for your own classroom

Your classroom is part of a larger community—hundreds or even thousands of individuals engaged in teaching and learning in buildings scattered across a city, town, or region. To be efficient and effective in a classroom, you must be able to navigate the system.

1. FIND OUT WHERE

The place to start is your work site. Familiarize yourself with the building and learn as much as possible about the: layout, location of your classroom, storage areas, work areas, fire exits, lounge, cafeteria, gymnasium, auditorium, restrooms, offices, phones, media center, computer facilities, guidance office, and nurse's office.

2. KNOW THE RULES

Get acquainted beforehand with school policies and procedures, such as opening and closing hours, attendance procedures, fire drill regulations, lunchroom regulations, etc. Set up a binder to hold official notices, policies, and schedules.

3. INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Meet the teachers around you. They can be especially helpful in the first few weeks of school. Take time to say "hello" to your other colleagues as well: the librarians, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, office workers, and custodians.

4. DECORATE YOUR ROOM

Make sure your classroom is friendly and inviting for opening day.

5. USE TRADITIONAL SEATING

Start with the traditional arrangement of desks until you've established procedures and know your students' names. Keep traffic patterns in mind when arranging desks, work areas, etc.

6. HAVE ALL MATERIALS

You'll need supplies for getting your classroom ready: paper, pencils, books, etc. Obtain blank forms, such as hall passes. Test your equipment to make sure it works. If you are a floating teacher, prepare a means of moving materials from room to room.

7. STORE SUPPLIES

Go through the storage and filing cabinets and decide where to store things to which students will have access and things to which only you will have access.

8. SCHEDULE YOUR TIME

Make a detailed schedule for the first few days, including times for each subject, restroom and lunch breaks, etc.

9. PLAN, PLAN, PLAN

Create lesson plans for the first few days. Plan at least twice as much you think you can cover. Write down everything. Detailed plans will provide you a feeling of security when facing the class for the first time.

10. GET THERE EARLY

On the first morning, arrive early so you will have time to ask any last-minute questions, go over final plans, and relax before the students come in.

11. GREET YOUR STUDENTS

Be in your room when the students arrive. Have your name written on the board. Greet them with a smile and a pleasant "good morning." Encourage them to be seated and arrange their space.

12. GO OVER THE RULES

Introduce your students to classroom rules and procedures on the first day, such as: getting books and materials, sharpening pencils, entering and leaving the room, and so forth.

13. START THE LEARNING

Make the first day of school a real one. Accomplish some constructive learning with your students. A good start yields big dividends later on.



Questions to Ask During the First Days of School

Make your life easier by learning school procedures early

To make the first few months easier, find the answers to these questions by the end of the first two weeks. Put the information in a place where you can easily retrieve it.

- Where and how do I secure supplies?
- Where can I get free or inexpensive materials?
- What machines are available for me to use (copier, computer, DVD player, LCD Projector, SMART Board, etc.)?
- With whom should I consult as I make decisions on the use of supplemental materials?
- How do I check out regular and supplemental texts?
- How do I sign my class up for the library, computer lab, or other common areas?
- What are the procedures for taking a class to an assembly?
- How do I make arrangements for a field trip?
- What do I do with any money I collect?
- When am I responsible for locking my room?
- What should I do if I must leave my room during class?
- How do I use electronic data systems for reporting?
- What are the grading guidelines for the school system? What documentation must I provide?
- What student records must I maintain in cumulative folders?
- To whom do I report serious problems with a student's health or behavior?
- How do I handle a fight between students?
- How do I report a disciplinary problem?
- What procedures do other teachers in my school follow for contacting parents by letter, phone, or email?
- What should I expect from a parent conference?
- What should I do in case of a medical emergency in my classroom?
- What are the procedures for emergency situations, such as: fire drills, lockdowns, tornadoes, or inclement weather?
- What is my personnel file and what is in it?
- Where do I go if I am having trouble?
- Are there any unwritten rules for teachers in my school?
- What is my salary and what deductions are taken?
- How do I apply for personal, professional, vacation, or sick leave?
- How do I arrange for a substitute?
- What is my school district's policy for the acceptable use of technology for staff and students?



First Day Activities

Elementary:

- Greet the children at the door as they come in and give them name tags that are easy to read and affix.
- Allow them to choose desks, then tape an identical name tag to the desk.
- Explain procedures for entering the room each morning: where to hang coats, when to be in their seats, and how much conversation is permissible.
- Tell students how they should start each day, then guide them to do it.
- Let them know how you will start each day as well.
- Describe how the lunch count, attendance, and other daily tasks will be handled.
- Read the specific rules for behavior along with consequences and rewards. Point out where they are listed.
- Give students a tour of the room and show them materials they may use.
- Establish a specific location for daily schedules, homework assignments, and reminders of events and deadlines.
- Discuss and outline the basis on which students' grades are determined.
- Schedule a restroom break early in the morning the first day.
- Explain what students should do if they finish their work early.
- If you plan an activity period, demonstrate the procedures for getting out materials and putting them away.
- Tell your class what is about to happen before they leave for physical education, lunch, or other outside-of-the-classroom activities.
- Tell younger children how you want them to line up and have them practice.
- Vary activities and the pace of lessons every day.
- Use take-home folders to distribute notices to parents.
- Reserve the last 15–20 minutes the first day to clean up and review what has been covered.
- Explain procedures for dismissal and bus loading. *Bus loading can be confusing, and buses must leave at scheduled times.*

Secondary:

- Stand at the door to greet students as they arrive.
- Introduce yourself, including your background and special interests in your subject.
- Hand out any notices from the school office and have students complete any forms that are required by the school.
- Outline your procedures for recording attendance and tardiness, giving assignments and collecting papers, make-up work, and hall passes.
- Post rules for classroom behavior and review them with each class.
- Establish a uniform heading for papers.
- Discuss and outline the basis on which students' grades are determined.
- Tell the class your objectives for the week and year.
- Allow a short period of time for each class to ask questions about what is expected of them and any of the procedures that you have established.
- Under certain circumstances, it is wise to extend privileges. The teacher allows certain behavior that is normally forbidden, but at the same time makes the parameters clear.

Surviving & Thriving

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The first few weeks of school, there will be many new demands made of you: new texts, new techniques, new schedules, new students, and a new way of life. It's an exciting as well as a stressful time for you. All this excitement can lead to stress, and people who don't deal positively with stress can become ill unless they have mastered some coping techniques.

LEAVE YOUR STRESS AT SCHOOL

We know you will have homework, but leave the stress of the day behind.

RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT YOUR LIMITS

Many of us can set unreasonable and perfectionist goals for ourselves. But, we can never be perfect (or even come close), so we often have a sense of failure or inadequacy no matter how well we perform. Are your goals achievable?

FIND A FRIEND

This could be someone in your work site who can be a "trusted" listener.

EXERCISE!

Regular exercise, like walking, helps keep the body and mind clear.

GET PLENTY OF SLEEP

Go to bed early if you are tired.

BE GOOD TO YOURSELF

What could do more for your self-esteem than to take yourself out to dinner or buy yourself a treat? Always have something to look forward to. This will lift your spirits.

DON'T SCHEDULE ALL OF YOUR LEISURE HOURS

You live by a schedule all day long. Leave yourself some "open space."

DON'T FEEL YOU HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING

You can't and you won't.

OBSERVE GOOD EATING HABITS

Eat a healthy diet of vegetables, fruit, and protein.

DON'T PROCRASTINATE

Do the things you have to do.

Bulletin Boards

To be effective, bulletin boards should be simple, attractive, functional, appropriate, and frequently changed. Little commercial advice is available on what to do with bulletin board materials when you remove them.

Save yourself some time and frustration by adapting these filing guidelines to meet your needs:

- School month files (months, periods of time like "Back-to-School")
- Alphabetical order
- Holidays (alphabetically or chronologically)
- Subjects (academic or other)

Regardless of the file method you use, include a computer file or notebook in your system. Jot down bulletin board ideas for future use, and don't let a brainstorm slip by. Store bulletin board letters in shoe boxes. Don't throw sets of letters away; keep them for a repeat of the same board or a slight variation. Use your students' work. Explore the possibility of commercial materials. Check with retiring teachers, as many have useful materials they would rather share than throw away.

Classroom Management

All teachers share the same goal: To help students monitor and govern their own behavior in ways that help them learn. There are a number of things you can do to promote positive interactions and expectations in the classroom. Start by following your district's adopted discipline policies and procedures. Be the kind of person children respect and trust: firm, fair, friendly, courteous, enthusiastic, and confident. Above all, keep your sense of humor.

Classroom Management Tips

Before problems arise:

- Get to know your students. This will help you anticipate problem situations.
- Show courtesy to every student, and display trust and confidence in all of them.
- Be consistent in the application of discipline and be fair in your requirements and assignments.
- Teaching strategies and an attractive classroom reinforce a mutually respectful relationship with your students.
- Give clear verbal and written directions.
- Keep your classroom cheerful and orderly.
- Make learning fun, interesting, and relevant to the students' lives.
- Establish no more than five classroom rules with student ownership—and enforce them.
- Be fully prepared every day.
- When students disrupt learning, use the LEAST approach to discipline (see page 11).
- Provide a list of expectations and consequences to parents and students. Make sure they are consistent with district and building policies.
- Begin class on time and in a precise manner.
- Let the students know you care. Show interest in what they say, whether or not it pertains directly to the lesson.
- Keep your voice at a respectful level.
- Grade assignments and return them as soon as possible.
- Make sure all students can easily see you when you are presenting information. Ensure that all students can see you as you deliver instruction.
- Keep potential distractions—such as windows, doors, or animals—in mind.
- Leave plenty of room around desks so you can get to each student easily while you are monitoring individual work.
- Diversion and restructuring are great tools. When one activity has gone too long, students get bored and restless. Stay alert, anticipate trouble, and change your strategy even if it requires some flexibility in scheduling.
- Some students may encourage each other to get into trouble. Regrouping the students immediately without comment is key.
- Provide hurdle help. Sometimes when a student cannot proceed with a task in which they are experiencing difficulty, you may provide an explanation or a "hint" that enables the student to go on.
- It is sometimes helpful to remind students to control their impulses when they may be tempted to misbehave. Show encouragement. Tell the student, "This has been such a good day; you read so well this morning . . . Come on, let's keep that up." Students work better if they anticipate some positive activity or experiences as a reward. However, the promise should be extra, rather than the only incentive for good behavior. Class goals and rewards can provide encouragement (i.e., extra free time...).



After problems arise:

- Allow a student to tell you his or her side of the situation. Be willing to consider mitigating circumstances.
- If you've made a mistake, admit it and apologize.
- Make sure consequences are appropriate for the misbehavior.
- Signal a student through a gesture, look, or brief signal that their actions are unacceptable.
- Provide a transition period of drawing, singing, etc. that releases tension after an exciting or tense experience.
- Sometimes a student may do something impulsively and is not sure what the teacher will do as a consequence. React with humor and understanding; the student will be greatly relieved and assured of being accepted.
- When a student is about to explode in anger, tears, or uncontrolled laughter, he/she may need to be removed from the situation so that he/she can gain control of himself/herself. You may use some pretext, such as asking the student to run an errand, help with some task, or get a drink of water.
- Don't talk about the problems encountered except to those who have a right to know.
- Don't argue with students.
- Don't accuse, threaten, or humiliate a child.
- Don't use school work as punishment.
- When attractive nuisances, such as yo-yos or balls, are confiscated, it is wise to tell the student that the situation is temporary and that the student can reclaim his/her possession later when it is not distracting to the class.
- Constructive criticism should focus on what is required for improvement.
- When teasing becomes more painful than playful or a free-for-all develops, a clear cut "No!" may provide a welcome stoplight to a student who is getting further into trouble than he/she means to. The teacher substitutes her/his authority for the student's self-control, which is temporarily out of commission. The effectiveness of this strategy increases if it is used only rarely.
- If you feel classroom management has been a disaster the first couple of weeks, don't worry—you still have time to try other practices which may work for your classroom environment.



After a situation has occurred —the *LEAST* approach is to:

LEAVE THINGS ALONE

when a brief and minor disturbance occurs with no danger of it continuing or interrupting learning.

END THE ACTION DIRECTLY

when learning is disrupted. Let the student(s) involved know you're aware of what's going on through expression or quiet action.

ATTEND CAREFULLY

when a high level of emotion is evident. Ask the disruptive student(s) what's going on, and respond appropriately.

SPELL OUT DIRECTIONS

when a situation threatens to get out of hand or risk harm to someone. Explain to the students involved the consequences of their actions, and follow through.

TRACK STUDENT PROGRESS

by keeping a record of students' behavior. This is a way of checking out the effectiveness of established consequences.



Homework Tips

Develop your own philosophy about homework, but make sure you are not in conflict with district policy. Consider these ideas:

- Understand that not all homework assignments are equally valuable for all students.
- Explain the purpose of every homework assignment.
- Listen to what students and families say about their experiences with homework.
- If you expect students to do homework, make sure it is worth doing. Otherwise, they will assume that none of what you assign is of value.
- Acknowledge and be thankful for students' efforts to complete homework.
- Encourage students to ask their parents to help with homework.
- Offer to help students before and after school with homework unless the assignments are really ones that can be completed independently.
- Make every effort to acknowledge completed homework assignments; and, if you grade them, grade and return them right away.
- Remember, education means developing the mind, not stuffing the memory.
- Don't give homework as punishment.
- Don't give spur-of-the-moment homework assignments.
- Don't assume that because no questions are asked when you give the assignment that students have no questions .
- Don't expect students (even your best ones) to always have their homework done.
- Don't confuse excuses for incomplete homework assignments with legitimate reasons.

Effective Questioning Techniques

- Effective questions are asked in a clear, non-ambiguous manner.
- Purposeful questions lead to the achievement of the lesson.
- Effective questions are brief, using specific language.
- The wording of effective questions is adapted to the level of the students in the class.
- The appropriateness of using lower-level questions and higher-level questions depends on several factors, including lesson objectives, content, and learner characteristics.
- Effective questioners avoid using yes/no questions which may confuse lesson focus, waste time, and encourage guessing.
- Fill-in-the-blank questions should be avoided.
- By not repeating questions and student responses, you may develop better student listening habits and more attentive behavior.
- Questions should not be answered by the one asking the questions.
- It is very important to establish the expectation that every question asked requires a response.





Families as Partners

How they can be your best allies

Educators know what an important difference family involvement can make in a child's education. But what can you do to show family members the role they play and make them a strong and lasting school ally? The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) asked educators involved in successful dropout prevention programs nationwide how they enlist and energize families as partners.

Here's what they had to say:

- Take the initiative to involve families. They want to be active in their child's education.
- Schedule one-to-one conferences and ask parents what they want to know. Then share your knowledge, guidance, and support.
- Schedule home visits. Families are apt to be more open and at ease in their own homes.
- Encourage families to spend time at school.
- Give families a chance to share their talents and experiences in the classroom or on field trips.
- Remember to say "thank you" to families for their efforts with a call or a note.
- When parents are not available, reach out to grandparents, foster parents, or community volunteers who are serving as mentors to your students.
- Publish a newsletter to keep families informed.
- Share positive as well as negative feedback.
- Give families a hands-on role by requiring a signature on homework and permission slips for activities.
- Turn "Back-to-School night" into "family night" and invite students and families to come together to discuss what will be expected of students, families, and teachers.
- Encourage families to provide their children with a quiet study area, a good breakfast, a time to read together, and supervision over television viewing.
- Send a letter to families to begin the year. The sample letter on page 23 was drafted by a fifth grade teacher. Her colleagues found it useful and adapted from it in drafting their own letters. You may as well.
- One word of caution: Most building principals will expect to see a copy of any letter before sending it home with students.

Responding to Parent Concerns

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Parents care deeply about their children and how they're doing in school, and most often parents are reasonable, respectful, and cooperative when communicating with teachers. However, when problems arise, here are some basic guidelines to follow.

ASK QUESTIONS

Check to see if the district has a policy on parent complaints.

TRY NOT TO BE DEFENSIVE

You share a common goal with parents: to help their children succeed in school. Try to approach every conversation with that in mind.

UNREASONABLE REQUESTS

If a parent makes an unreasonable request, respond in a friendly, firm manner and try to work it out. For example, a parent wanting you to call every night to report on a child's performance can be informed: "I'm sure you understand I have 90 students and am not able to provide nightly updates. However, I have a suggestion..." Or, if a parent shows up at the door of your classroom, politely explain that you can't talk right now and suggest he/she call back after classes and make an appointment.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Keep a log of all parent contacts (phone calls, visits, letters, etc.), noting date, time, place, and what was discussed. Keep copies of all documents. If a parent complains to you, consider going to your Association/ Worksite Representative or your principal and tell him/her about the complaint.

MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

Don't talk about other students to any parent, and discourage parents from doing so. Never mention other students' names, even if in their child's social group. Talk about their child's behavior only.



Tips for Conferences

- **Contact parents early in the year.** Outline your curriculum and expectations, and let parents know how they can reach you.
- **Invite both parents.** But, be sure to find out first if a student comes from a single-parent home and if both parents should be invited or if the appropriate guardian is someone other than a parent. You will also want to be aware of any joint custody arrangements which require dual notification.
- **Allow enough time in the conference.** If you are scheduling back-to-back conferences, give yourself a “cushion” of time in between.
- **Prepare in advance to answer specific questions** parents may have about their child's ability, skill levels, and achievements. Sending a simple questionnaire home prior to the conference asking parents if there's a specific concern can help you to be prepared and not caught off guard.
- **Get organized before the conference.** Assemble your grade book, test scores, student work samples, and attendance records.
- **Plan ahead.** Have in mind a general—but flexible—outline of what you're going to say, including a snapshot of student progress, review of his or her strengths and needs and proposed plan of action.
- **Greet parents at the door.** Also, you'll help parents feel welcome and relieve their anxiety if you greet them by name. Check records in advance to make sure you have names correct.
- **Avoid physical barriers.** Don't sit behind your desk or ask parents to perch on uncomfortable chairs.
- **Open on a positive note.** Begin conferences on a warm, positive note to relax everyone. Start with a positive statement about the child's abilities, school work, or interests. Show some of the child's work.
- **Structure the session.** As soon as the parents arrive, review the structure of the conference—the why, what, how, and when—so you'll both have an “agenda.” (Remember that parents often come with their own agendas or questions they want answered, so you'll need to be flexible.)
- **Be specific** in your comments and suggested course of action.
- **Offer a suggested course of action.** Parents appreciate being given some specific direction. If a student is demonstrating immature behaviors, it might be helpful to suggest that the parents give her a list of weekly chores, allow them to take care of a pet or give them a notebook to write down assignments to build responsibility. (When you offer advice, ask parents if they've noticed the same behavior at home and for any suggestions they may have.)
- **Forget the jargon.** Try not to use “edubabble” and acronyms because it sounds like doubletalk to most parents.

- **Hear parents out.** In routine parent conferences, it's unusual to run into parents who are abusive and hostile. But it can happen. Try not to be rude, whatever the provocation. Hear out the parents in as pleasant a manner as possible, without getting defensive.
- **Ask for parents' opinions even if the comments are hostile or negative.** Thank them for offering input and feedback.
- **Focus on strengths.** It's very easy for parents to feel defensive, since many of them see themselves in their children. It is helpful if you review the child's strengths and areas of need, rather than dwelling on criticism or stressing weaknesses.
- **Use body language.** Non-verbal cues set the mood of the conference. Smile, nod, make eye contact, and lean forward slightly. You'll be using your body language to let parents know you're interested and approachable.
- **Stress collaboration.** Let the parent know you want to work together in the best interest of the child. A statement like "you need to see me as soon as possible to discuss Johnny's poor study habits" only arouses hostility, while "I'd like to discuss with you how we might work together to improve Johnny's study habits" gets the relationship off on the right foot.
- **Listen to what the parents say.** Despite the fact that we spend nearly a third of our lives listening, most adults are poor listeners. We concentrate on what we're going to say next, we let our minds drift off to other concerns or we hear only part of what a speaker is saying . You'll get more out of a parent conference if you really listen to what parents are saying to you.
- **Ask about the child.** You don't want to pry, of course, but remember to ask parents if there's anything they think you should know about the child (such as study habits, relationship with siblings, any important events in their life) which may affect their school work. Ask about hobbies or interests that can be connected to throughout the school year (writing topics, etc.).
- **Focus on solutions.** Ideally, all parent conferences would focus only positive events. Realistically, many conferences are held because there's an issue or concern somewhere. Things will go smoother if you focus on solutions, rather than on challenges. Discuss what you and the parents can do to help improve the situation. Plan together a course of action.
- **Don't judge.** It may not always be possible to react neutrally to what parents say—their values may be very different from your own—but communicating any judgments of parents' attitudes or behaviors can be a roadblock to a productive relationship with them.
- **Summarize.** Before the conference ends, summarize the discussion and what action you and the parents have decided to take to support the student.
- **Wind up on a positive note.** When you can, save at least one encouraging comment or positive statement about the student for the end of the conference.
- **Meet again if you need to.** If you feel you need more time, arrange another meeting later, rather than trying to rush everything before the conference time concludes.
- **Keep a record of the conference.** You may find it helpful later to have a brief record of what was said at the conference, what suggestions for improvements were made and so forth. Make notes as soon as possible after the conference, while details are fresh.



Special Education

Your district will assume that you are familiar with the broad spectrum of laws governing special education and inclusion. The details of the identification and referral process for special needs children, the names of the individuals responsible for the program, and the location of required forms is information provided by your district. If this is not part of an orientation, ask.

It is highly likely that students who have already been identified as having special needs will be in your class(es). It is critically important that you know who they are and have copies of their Individual Education Plans (IEPs) / 504s. IEPs/504s should clearly identify any modifications in learning strategies or materials required for these students. IEPs should also identify who is responsible for delivering the student's specially designed instruction (SDI). If you are responsible for delivering the SDI, please be sure to consult with the intervention specialist regularly about student progress towards meeting the goals of the IEP. Consult with the intervention specialist to confirm what data you will need to collect for IEP progress reporting. It is your legal obligation to meet the terms of the IEP/504s from day one.

Your colleagues who specialize in supporting students with special needs will connect with you to discuss how you can work together to meet student needs. However, they have an extraordinary workload at the beginning of the school year. Clarify all questions relating to special education with your intervention specialist(s).

If you are providing services to special education students, you should be a part of the student's IEP planning meeting and annual review meeting. Consult with your intervention specialist(s) to ensure that you are available to attend these meetings.

Inclusion

Until recently, many support services have been provided in settings separate from the regular education classroom. The current approach, however, is greater inclusion or fuller integration of regular and special education. There is considerable disparity among districts in the levels of support for inclusion. You can expect to find more students with severe needs placed in regular education classrooms than you remember from your own K-12 days.

Succeeding in the inclusive classroom is a major challenge for all. We are all striving to meet this challenge. Current Ohio law emphasizes inclusive practices for special education students, and all school districts implement these practices differently. There is a wealth of opinion and research, and an abundance of hands-on guidance.

Seek out professional development activities on this topic, and ask colleagues about strategies that work for them.





English Language Learners

As communities across the United States are becoming more diverse, many new teachers are finding that their responsibilities include teaching both academic content and language skills to English Language Learners (ELL).

Regardless of the type of setting you're in, remember that it's your responsibility to deliver instruction to students in a way that is understandable. That means organizing your teaching practice to meet their needs, as well as navigating the system to ensure that students are getting the services, such as extra support for taking tests, that they need .

As a starting point, find out what kinds of services your school offers to support English Language Learners and you as their classroom teacher. Ask your administrators, colleagues or district bilingual/ELL office for resources and support. Then do your own research about English Language Learners and how their needs can best be served.

Strategies for Improving Instruction for English Language Learners

- **Speak slowly, audibly, and clearly in whatever language you use in the classroom.** Avoid asking students in front of the whole class if they understand. Instead, ask students to volunteer to repeat the instructions in their own words, in English or in the students' native language.
- **Prepare English Language Learners for challenging whole-class lessons ahead of time.** In a small group, teach the second-language vocabulary that students will need to know. In addition to vocabulary, introduce the concepts that the whole class will be learning. Use materials that are geared for the specific group of English Language Learners (i.e., materials in the students' home language and/or in English that are appropriate for the students' English reading level). When you teach the whole class lesson, English Language Learners have a head start because they've already been part of one comprehensible lesson on the topic.
- **Use lecture and lengthy verbal instruction as little as possible.** Use visual cues, such as posters, electronic presentations, videos, and illustrated books. Use active methods of learning, such as games, skits, songs, partner interviews, and structured conversation with classmates. Where support is available, translate text from worksheets and books when necessary. Finally, be prepared to spend additional time helping English Language Learners do the work. To keep things in perspective, try thinking about how your performance on the assignment would change if you were doing it in a language in which you were not yet fully proficient.
- **Use whole class instruction as little as possible.** English Language Learners sometimes get lost and/or tune out during this kind of lesson. Whenever possible, work with small groups of children, or get students working on an assignment and circulate among them as they work.
- **In reading class, use literature—in English or the students' home language—that features the students' language/cultural groups.** Give English Language Learners lots of attempts to be successful in a low-stress environment. Choral reading, echo reading, and partner reading all allow students to work on fluency and pronunciation without putting them on the spot. Rehearsing a sentence, paragraph, or page before reading it aloud to a group can help students to improve fluency one chunk of text at a time. Plays and skits provide a wonderful opportunity to encourage students to practice the same lines over and over until they master them, and presenting a play or skit in their second language gives students a great sense of accomplishment.
- **Encourage students to maintain and develop their first language at school, at home, and in the community.** Research shows that students learn English more effectively and don't lag as far behind their English-speaking classmates in other subject areas when they do more academic work in their native language. And when students are pushed to learn English only, and aren't given the chance to continue learning their home language, they lose the opportunity to be bilingual—a skill that's increasingly valued in society.
- **Don't assume a student has special education needs just because they're struggling academically.** It could just be that they lack the academic vocabulary or language skills to successfully complete more academic work in English. At the same time, don't ignore potential special education needs either. Seek out resources in your school, district, and community to help you determine what is going on with a particular student who may be struggling to meet academic expectations.



Sample Letter

(modify appropriately)

Dear Parents:

I am your child's 5th grade teacher, and I am delighted to have your child in my class this year. I'm looking forward to a very successful year, and I know you are too. I have high expectations for your child, and I will be doing all that I can to help your child achieve those expectations.

You can help. I will be expecting all work assigned in class to be completed. Of course, all children do not work at the same pace. Some children will get their work done in class and some will not.

Whether or not a child gets his or her work done in class has no effect on his or her grade. If your child does not complete an assignment in class, he or she will be required to complete it at home. The way you can help is ask your child every school day if school work needs to be done and, if so, make sure your child completes the assignment.

I want you to be aware of the following policies:

- *Work may be turned in one day late; however, an assignment turned in one day late will receive an automatic penalty of minus-20 grade points.*
- *If assigned work is not turned in, or turned in after the one-day late period, the grade for that assignment will be recorded as "zero".*
- *Within each six-week period, the single lowest grade (just one) will not be averaged.*
- *Work is due at the time the teacher asks for it on the assigned day. If the student is not prepared at that time, but finishes the assignment later in the day, the assignment will still be considered late.*
- *Absences will be dealt with on an individual basis.*

In addition, I will be assigning projects in various subjects throughout the school year. Projects are to be completed at home. Your help and support will not only make your child more successful in school this year, but will instill good study habits that will last a lifetime.

Finally, I want you to know that one of my most important goals this year is to keep the lines of communication open with you. Please do not hesitate to call me at school. I am available to talk to you every day between 9:00 a.m. and 9:45 a.m. and between 3:00 p.m. and 3:40 p.m. Your child's daily schedule and the class expectations are attached. Please review these together with your child.

Sincerely,
Your Name

Professional Issues

Whether you are a new teacher just out of college or someone who has entered the profession as a second career, you have embarked on a journey to make a difference in the lives of children. The education profession can be a rewarding yet challenging adventure. Understanding your professional rights and the organizational resources available will help you navigate through your career.

About Your License

Ohio Teaching Licensure is the responsibility of the educator. Therefore, each educator must ensure that he/she meets all licensure renewal requirements and timelines. Each educator must also understand all of the policies and practices that are part of educator licensure in the state of Ohio.

You are responsible for obtaining your license and ensuring it is current and valid. If you are new to the teaching profession, you will be issued a four-year Resident Educator License. The Resident Educator Program supports the activities and requirements of the Resident Educator License.

- During years one and two of the Resident Educator Program, teachers participate in mentoring activities that are designed to support their transition into the teaching profession and to prepare them for the third year of the Resident Educator Program.
- During year three of the Resident Educator Program, the teacher completes and submits the Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA), a performance assessment that is scored by independent assessors. A passing score is required on the RESA to maintain educator licensure in the state of Ohio.
- During year four of the Resident Educator Program, teachers complete leadership activities. After a teacher completes all Resident Educator Program requirements, passes the RESA, and completes four years on the Resident Educator license, he/she is eligible to advance his/her license to a five-year professional license.

The Resident Educator program is required by Ohio law, and is implemented at the local level. Please connect early in the school year with your Resident Educator Program Coordinator to begin completing your Resident Educator Program requirements. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) maintains a website with educator licensure information.

For more information, please go to: <http://www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Licensure>

Code of Conduct for Ohio Educators

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In fulfilling their obligations to the profession, educators shall act as follows:

1. Educators behave in a professional manner realizing that one's actions reflect directly on the status and substance of the profession.
2. Educators maintain a professional relationship with all students at all times, both in and outside the classroom.
3. Educators accurately report information required by the local Board of Education or governing board, state education agency, federal agency, or state or federal law.
4. Educators adhere to federal, state, and local laws and statutes regarding criminal activity.
5. Educators comply with state and federal laws related to maintaining confidential information.
6. Educators serve as positive role models and do not use, possess, or unlawfully distribute illegal or unauthorized drugs.
7. Educators ensure that school property, public funds, or fees paid by students or the community are used in the best interest of students and not for personal gain.
8. Educators fulfill all of the terms and obligations in their employment contract.

<http://www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Conduct/Licensure-Code-of-Professional-Conduct-for-Ohio-Ed>





Prepare for Evaluation

Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES)

As professionals, we have an ongoing responsibility to keep up-to-date in our field and to sharpen and improve our skills. To help meet this responsibility, we need expert feedback on our performance. Evaluations can result in a positive experience, which opens lines of communication and improves the quality of our instruction and/or job performance.

Through the evaluation process, specific strengths as well as areas for improvement can be identified in positive ways, encouraging growth and professional development. Everyone is more successful when an effective evaluation system is in place and used effectively.

Within the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, state law indicates that each school district must select either the original or an alternative framework. By using either, districts can monitor educator performance and student growth measures—and use this information to continually improve student achievement.

For more information, please go to: <http://www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Evaluation-System/Ohio-s-Teacher-Evaluation-System>

Before the Evaluation

Assemble and review the following materials:

- Negotiated collective bargaining agreement/board policy and procedures for evaluations
- Your job description
- Previous observations and evaluation reports
- Notes on lessons observed
- Any annual reports
- Letters of recommendation—SAVE ALL PRAISE
- Positive examples of what you are doing
- Other data on which you want to focus

Consult your Association Representative to find out how supervisors conduct conferences, what types of improvement plans are proposed, and how supervisors generally write up conferences.

During the Evaluation

We recommend that you conduct yourself in the following ways:

- Come to the conference clearly having in mind what you want to accomplish.
- Keep accurate notes, especially important positives and negatives.
- Situate yourself physically so you are comfortable.
- Guide the discussion with your supervisor when appropriate.
- Establish the “initial premise” early in the conference. If not indicated by the supervisor, establish this yourself by stating (for example): “It appears that my overall performance continues to be highly satisfactory and it appears that this is your conclusion, too.”
- Listen attentively.
- Clarify by questioning—when desired, when necessary.
- Expect and request positive reinforcement and constructive suggestions.



Support Tools and Resources

Works4Me

Practical classroom tips from teachers like you! The free Works4Me weekly e-newsletter brings you practical classroom tips written by teachers, for teachers. Each week you'll receive other teachers' best ideas on classroom management, teaching techniques, curriculum content, peer and student relationships, and more. The Works4Me website contains more than 1,800 tips that have appeared in the newsletter over the last 10+ years. The Works4Me online discussion board will connect you with other educators and serve as a place to find answers to everyday classroom dilemmas.

For more information, please go to: <http://www.nea.org/works4me>

edCommunities

NEA's edCommunities is a premium online professional practice and learning area where educators can:

- **CONNECT** with virtual learning events for professional development opportunities
- **COLLABORATE** with other educators and education professionals
- **SHARE** classroom-ready resources, assessments, and instruction materials
- **ENGAGE** with those who share your commitment to student success

Joining NEA edCommunities means sharing your commitment and dedication through an open exchange of strengths and resources with thousands of other education professionals. Free and open to all, NEA edCommunities is driven by you to foster student success.

For more information, please go to: <http://www.nea.org/home/edcommunities>

supportED

SupportEd is a leading voice for educators, providing the essential tools, resources, and support to help you. It delivers some of the best professional support and development opportunities, articles, events, and communities from across the universe of NEA online properties:

- **NEA.org** provides information about the association and education issues and policy.
- **NEA Today** brings you the latest take on what's happening in the world of education news.
- **Education Votes** engages and recruits activists in the fight for public education, higher education, and strengthening the middle class.
- **EdJustice** engages and mobilizes activists in the fight for racial, social, and economic justice in public education.
- **My School, My Voice** includes resources and information on how teachers can make the most out of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- **NEA Member Benefits** help enhance the lives of NEA members and their families through advocacy, service, and information.

For more information, please go to: <http://www.supported.nea.org>

Breakout Edu - <http://www.breakoutedu.com>

Bring all the excitement of an escape room to your classroom in a small wooden box with this immersive learning games platform.

Class Dojo- <http://www.classdojo.com>

A safe and simple communication app for teachers, parents, and students.

Classcraft- <http://www.classcraft.com>

Helps teachers manage, motivate, and engage their students by transforming their classroom into a role-playing game.

Kahoot- <http://www.kahoot.com>

A free, game-based learning platform that makes learning fun – any subject, in any language, on any device, for all ages.

Lesson Plans – <http://www.nea.org/tools/LessonPlans.html>

Master Teacher Project – http://www.betterlesson.com/master_teacher_projects

The Master Teacher Project is committed to building a body of knowledge around authentic instructional practice. We recruit and select high-performing teachers across the country to share their rich, comprehensive lessons and effective strategies with teachers across the globe.

Pinterest – <http://www.pinterest.com>

Teachers post free print outs, pictures of beautiful classrooms, and links to resources. Don't forget to follow NEA Today!

Poll Daddy – <http://www.polldaddy.com>

Quickly and easily set up a survey or poll for your students. You can see the answers instantly—no tallying required.

Quora – <http://www.quora.com>

If you have a question, Quora has an answer.

Remind – <http://www.remind.com>

Free text messaging app that helps teachers, students, and parents communicate quickly and efficiently.

Skitch – <http://www.skitch.com>

Skitch is a quick and easy photo-editing application.

Think Link – <http://www.thinklink.com>

Turn a picture into a visually appealing cluster of links. Tag people in a photo and link to articles about them or cover an infographic in links for further information. Then post the image to your class's web page!

Wordle – <http://www.wordle.net>

Type in verbiage and see a visual interpretation of all the words used.

Wordpress – <http://www.wordpress.org>

Make your own page using Wordpress. If your students subscribe, they'll receive an email every time you post something new.

Protect Yourself and Your Career on the Internet

“Never put in electronic form anything that you wouldn’t want viewed by a million people, including your colleagues, students, and supervisors—and your mother.”

—Michael D. Simpson, NEA Office of General Counsel

With the rise of technology, educators have many new opportunities to use the internet to communicate in ways we never thought possible. However, with new technology comes pitfalls. As a school employee, you must exercise extreme caution when you engage in blogging or other forms of internet communication. In fact, future teachers need to take action to protect their careers and reputations well before they start their first teaching job, starting with the day they open a social network account. **What you post on the internet as a teenager or college student may prevent you from getting the job you want someday.**

Keep in mind that your First Amendment rights can be limited by virtue of your position as a school employee. **The general rule is that school employees can be disciplined for off-duty conduct if the school district can show that the conduct had an adverse impact on the school or the teacher’s ability to teach.** And it wouldn’t be too difficult to make that showing if the teacher’s blog includes sexually explicit or other inappropriate content and is widely viewed by students. Consequences can be severe, from a written reprimand to a suspension or termination of employment to suspension or revocation of one’s teaching license.

U.S. SUPREME COURT DECISION

GARCETTI ET AL. V. CEBALLOS

“When public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties, they are not speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline.”



Internet Protection Tips for Prospective Educators

1. What you post on the internet is, for all intents and purposes, there forever. If you have questionable content on the internet, by all means remove it NOW. Be wary, though, that once you have removed content from the internet, it might still be there preserved by an image—capturing the historical documentation site which takes daily screen captures of random sites on any given date and time. Also, removing something from the internet doesn't mean someone else hasn't printed it or taken a screenshot and saved it prior to your removing it.
2. Minimize the risk associated with internet communication by limiting access to your blog, social network, or website page using a "friends only" or similar restrictive setting. If you are using Facebook, review the privacy options and choose the most restrictive ones. This will make sure only trusted individuals can see the information you are posting. Use extreme caution when "friending" relatives or other individuals who may have connections to students. You may need to revise their access privileges to your site or social network while you have students connected to them in your school.
3. Don't "friend" students and NEVER GIVE A STUDENT ACCESS TO YOUR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE. Most districts have policies or directives that prohibit staff from inviting or accepting invitations from students to be "friends" on a social network. Check your district's policies and make sure your internet habits are in compliance with them. Review the policies with your OEA Labor Relations Consultant. As social networks become more integrated into daily life and learning, some schools are starting to allow the use of social network sites for maintaining a classroom community. If you are in a district which allows this, make certain to maintain separate networks for your personal life and your classes—and never allow the two to commingle.
4. If visitors can post to your blog or Web page, monitor postings constantly and remove any that are inappropriate. Most blogging sites give blog authors and administrators the ability to review and approve blog comments before they are posted. We recommend you use this option if it is available to you.
5. Do not blog or post about your job duties, colleagues, supervisors, or students even in passing. This will reduce the danger that you might disclose confidential information, share information about a private workplace complaint, or otherwise carelessly or unintentionally engage in speech which could affect your future employment.
6. If you choose to blog or post as a citizen about a non-job-related matter of public concern (i.e., the elections, terrorism, or environmental issues), take care that what you say will not impede your employer's effectiveness or efficiency or otherwise disrupt the workplace.
7. If you are blogging or posting about innocuous information (i.e., your favorite football team or family genealogy), you still must be careful not to engage in comments that could adversely affect your employer (i.e., damage the employer's reputation) or interfere with your ability to carry out your job duties.
8. Do not blog or post about personal subjects (i.e., dating, romance, or drug or alcohol use). Your blog or Web page should not contain any references to sexual subjects, or contain vulgar, graphic, or profane language. If your blog or Web page were a movie, it should be rated "G."
9. Blogging and posting anonymously does not protect you. Names of bloggers, Web page authors, and other internet users can be discovered through litigation.
10. Be very careful about posting pictures of yourself or family on the internet. Scrutinize every photo before deciding to post it. Avoid party photos. If others have tagged you in questionable photos on their social networks or websites, ask them to remove them immediately. On Facebook, you also have the option of blocking the tags identifying you, even on someone else's page. If you are allowed to maintain a site or social media profile for classroom purposes, before posting any student photos, make sure you follow district procedures and/or seek written permission from those in photos before posting them.

DISCLAIMER: This document is not meant to be comprehensive or a substitute for common sense when using social networking sites, and it is not intended to provide legal advice. For additional information, members should contact their Labor Relations Consultant (LRC).



What To Do When You Are The Target of Internet Speech

If you discover you are the subject of inappropriate student cyberspeech:

- 1. Print, screen capture, or email the page.** It is important for the speech to be preserved, if possible. Either print a hard copy or save an electronic copy of a web page by printing to .pdf or another image writer. If possible, save it to your own personal flash drive or computer or email it to a personal account.
- 2. Inform the school administration.** School administrators should really work with you in these situations. Disciplinary action against the offending student may be appropriate in certain cases. Also, you do not want the administration coming after you if the page is not obviously a fake.
- 3. Contact your OEA Labor Relations Consultant or Local President for assistance.**
- 4. Contact the host of the information, such as facebook.com, snapchat .com, plus.google.com, or ratemyteachers.com to have the page removed** if the profile is fake or the content or conduct on the site violates the guidelines for the site.

5. **The ability to track the creator of the information should not be lost by requesting the page be removed.** The host will help to identify who posted or created the information, but not without a subpoena, which will require the assistance of local law enforcement.

To report an imposter profile, abuse/misuse, or cyberbullying for:

Facebook.com

- Go to the imposter profile and click "Report/Block" in the left column below the friends list.
- Check the appropriate boxes and add comments.
- Click Send.
- Be sure to add a valid web address (URL) leading to the real profile so that Facebook can review the information, such as: <http://www.facebook.com/help/?page=798#!/help/?faq=14240>

Snapchat.com

- Click on "Support" at the bottom of the home page or go to: <https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/i-need-help>
- Select your problem from the drop-down menu.

Ratemyteachers.com

- Search for "imposter profile," "cyberbullying" or "abuse" and follow the instructions.
- There are "flag this" links next to the ratings, which will allow someone to file a complaint and/or ask for the comments to be removed.

Google+

- Left click on the gear icon in the top right corner of your Google+ home page.
- Select "Google+ help."
- On the next page under "Fix a Problem," select "Report Issue".
- Select your problem from the drop-down menu and follow the instructions.

6. **Contact local law enforcement.** The creator of the content may have committed a crime, or you may want to seek a restraining order.

7. **Be wary of companies offering to rehabilitate your reputation.**

Info and data taken from: NEA Today, Rights Watch, "The Whole World (Wide Web) is Watching," April 2008, and from The Educator's Advocate, "Blogging 101." December 2008/January 2009. Adapted from and printed with permission of the Pennsylvania State Education Association Legal Division. September 2008.



Teach but Don't Touch

- **Whenever possible, never be alone with a student.** A student's allegations made when there are no other witnesses hinge on credibility, and authorities often tend to favor the alleged victim in these circumstances. So, don't be alone with a student in a house or a car, and never give a student a ride home. To the extent possible, avoid being alone with a student in a classroom. Risky situations include: one-on-one tutoring, counseling, after-school or recess detention, and make-up tests. If you can't avoid being alone with a student at school, keep the door open and stay in plain sight.
- **Always maintain a professional demeanor and distance.** That means: no flirting, teasing, or joking about sex. Don't socialize with students or treat them as "pals" or "friends." Never give gifts, unless you give one to every student, and don't single out any one student for constant special attention or flattery.
- **Never send emails, text messages, or cards to students unrelated to schoolwork.** Don't ask students about their social lives or comment on their personal appearance, and avoid discussing intimate details of your own private life. Don't hire students to babysit or allow them to visit your home. Be the adult and maintain boundaries.
- **Avoid physical contact with students.** This is a particularly difficult area. Younger children often seek and need physical comfort from their teachers who, sadly, may be the only source of compassion and love that some students have. In the early elementary grades, an occasional hug is probably OK. But as a general rule, it's best to avoid most forms of physical contact, especially kissing, hair stroking, tickling, and frontal hugging. And use common sense: a "high five" to acknowledge a job well done is fine; a slap on the bottom is not.
- **Male teachers have to be especially careful when it comes to physical contact of any sort.** While a female teacher's touch may be perceived as comforting, a male teacher's may be viewed as sexually suggestive and male employees are far more likely to be accused of inappropriate contact with students than female employees. According to one expert, accusations involving female teachers and male students make up less than five percent of the cases.
- **Avoid using physical force to enforce discipline.** When students are misbehaving or out of control, avoid touching or grabbing them to get their attention. Instead, use verbal commands and other disciplinary methods. There may be a rare occasion when you will have to use physical force in self-defense or to prevent injury to others. If that happens, use the minimum force necessary to prevent harm and immediately call for help. Also, if this is a persistent problem, you may want to ask your district for special training.
- **Never allow a student to obsess over you.** While a crush can be flattering, it also can be fatal, so always nip it in the bud. An unfulfilled fantasy can result in a student acting out to gain attention or retaliating for being ignored. If a student expresses a love interest, respond with an unambiguous "no." Don't equivocate and certainly don't encourage the student by acting pleased by the attention. It's also advisable to share this information with another adult and your Association Representative. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to tell your supervisor and ask that the student be transferred.
- **Be particularly wary of "troubled" students.** This is a tough one. Some students come to school with a host of emotional needs and chronic problems, and they may confide in their classroom teacher and ask for support and guidance. Particularly for a student with emotional problems, a teacher's efforts to help unfortunately can be misconstrued as something more and may lead to an infatuation or dependence. Plus, you don't have the skills or training needed to assist.
- **While you can and should express concern and compassion, don't take on the role of confidant or counselor.** Instead, refer the student to the school counselor, a trained professional who has both the expertise to assess what services the student may need and the experience to know how to arrange for the delivery of those services to the student.
- **Be especially vigilant if you hold certain teaching positions.** Anecdotal evidence suggests that employees who perform certain jobs are at increased risk of false allegations. These include athletic coaches and performing arts teachers—drama, band, chorus, and debate as well as publications advisers. This trend may be the product of the intense nature of such activities, which may weaken teacher/student boundaries, coupled with a substantial amount of after-school, weekend, and off-campus interactions.

Recognizing and Reporting Sexual Harassment

Federal law and a series of court decisions require that all work places and schools be free of sexual harassment.

In the workplace

Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects all public employees from discrimination in employment (including hiring, promotions, salaries, benefits, training, and on-the-job treatment). Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments protects employees and students by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex in educational institutions, educational programs, or other institutions that receive federal funds.

Federal regulations define sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- *submission to such conduct is made whether explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment,*
- *submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or*
- *such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.*

Involving students

In working with young people, there is sometimes a tendency to dismiss inappropriate behavior as "just being kids" or "teenage flirting." In general, if an individual feels harassed, it is likely that a violation of policy and law has occurred.

All school districts must have written policies that address student-student, staff-student, staff-staff, and student-staff sexual harassment. They designate individuals to be consulted with or reported to and establish appropriate processes. Such policies are generally distributed annually (possibly in your orientation materials) and should be read carefully. Teachers are expected not only to exercise good judgment over their own actions, but to protect students from being victimized.

If you have any doubts about a situation, consult the district's designated person or your Local Association Representative.

What should a target of sexual harassment **DO**?

- **Do tell the harasser that you dislike the behavior and that you expect it to stop.**
- **Do keep a written record of all harassing acts.**
- **Do tell others about the problem** so they can observe and, if necessary, corroborate your claims.
- **Do make sure that school, college, or university officials are aware** that you have been sexually harassed.
- **Do report the problem** to your Labor Relations Consultant for assistance.

What should a target of sexual harassment **NOT DO**?

- **Don't ignore the harassment.** Ignoring it will only encourage the harasser. Tell the harasser to stop.
- **Don't delay addressing the problem.**
- **Don't blame yourself.** Harassment is unwanted and can make you feel trapped, confused, helpless, embarrassed, or scared. You certainly didn't ask for any of those feelings.
- **Don't be embarrassed to share the problem.** Tell someone you can trust, and ask her or him to help you take the necessary action.



Identifying and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Recognizing the fears and sensitivities of our children is very important for today's education employees. Children who have been or are currently being subjected to abuse outside of school will be more likely to misinterpret actions that other students would not. A child who shows no outward signs of abuse may still be living in terror of being touched or may have an emotionally devastating reaction to a simple verbal reprimand.

Being aware of some of the signs of abuse may save you and the child from unnecessary turmoil resulting from an innocent action or statement.

There are several behavioral clues that may lead you to suspect that a student is being abused. Of course, one sign or symptom does not necessarily indicate child abuse, but there are some clues that may lead you to suspect it.

Watch for a Child Who

- appears nervous, disruptive, or hyperactive;
- has a pattern of unexplained injuries or an inordinate number of “explained” ones;
- comes to school inappropriately dressed for the season;
- is habitually late or often absent from school;
- arrives early or leaves late because he/she is reluctant to go home;
- is unusually fearful of adults and other children;
- is unusually shy, withdrawn, or passive;
- goes to the bathroom with difficulty;
- is constantly tired, thin, or shows evidence of malnutrition

Teachers, counselors, school administrators, and school nurses have a mandatory duty to report child abuse and may be found guilty of a misdemeanor if they knowingly fail to make an immediate report by telephone or other method to the proper authorities. Check your school district policy on child abuse reporting. If you are not absolutely sure what the policy requires of you, get your questions answered right away. *The Ohio abuse reporting law (ORC: 2151.421)*

For more information, go to: <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2151.421>

10 Steps to Stop and Prevent Bullying

Bullying is systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt and/or psychological distress on one or more students. Bullying is not child's play, but a rather terrifying experience many American school children face every day. It can be as direct as teasing, hitting, or threatening or as indirect as in rumors, exclusion, or manipulation. Bullying can no longer be explained away—as some adults are inclined to do—as a normal part of growing up. Bullying in children can develop into sexual harassment in older students.

Whether you are a parent, an educator, or a concerned friend of the family, there are 10 steps you can take to stop and prevent bullying:

- 1. Pay attention.** There are many warning signs that may point to a bullying problem, such as unexplained injuries, lost or destroyed personal items, changes in eating habits, and avoidance of school or other social situations. However, every student may not exhibit warning signs or may go to great lengths to hide them. This is where paying attention is most valuable. Engage students on a daily basis and ask open-ended questions that encourage conversation.
- 2. Don't ignore it.** Never assume that a situation is harmless teasing. Different students have different levels of coping; what may be considered teasing to one may be humiliating and devastating to another. Whenever a student feels threatened in any way, take it seriously, and assure the student that you are there for them and will help.



- 3. When you see something, do something.** Intervene as soon as you even think there may be a problem between students. Don't brush it off as, "Kids are just being kids. They'll get over it." Some never do, and it affects them for a lifetime. All questionable behavior should be addressed immediately to keep a situation from escalating. Summon other adults if you deem the situation may get out of hand. Be sure to always refer to your school's anti-bullying policy.
- 4. Remain calm.** When you intervene, refuse to argue with either student. Model the respectful behavior you expect from the students. First make sure everyone is safe and that no one needs immediate medical attention. Reassure the students involved as well as the bystanders. Explain to them what needs to happen next—bystanders go on to their expected destination while the students involved should be taken separately to a safe place.
- 5. Deal with students individually.** Don't attempt to sort out the facts while everyone is present, don't allow the students involved to talk with one another, and don't ask bystanders to tell what they saw in front of others. Instead, talk with the individuals involved—including bystanders—on a one-to-one basis. This way, everyone will be able to tell their side of the story without worrying about what others may think or say.
- 6. Don't make the students involved apologize and/or shake hands on the spot.** Label the behavior as bullying. Explain that you take this type of behavior very seriously and that you plan to get to the bottom of it before you determine what should be done next and any resulting consequences based on your school's anti-bullying policy. This empowers the bullied child—and the bystanders—to feel that someone will finally listen to their concerns and be fair about outcomes.
- 7. Hold bystanders accountable.** Bystanders provide bullies an audience, and often actually encourage bullying. Explain that this type of behavior is wrong, will not be tolerated, and that they also have a right and a responsibility to stop bullying. Identify yourself as a caring adult that they can always approach if they are being bullied and/or see or suspect bullying.
- 8. Listen and don't pre-judge.** It is very possible that the person you suspect to be the bully may actually be a bullied student retaliating or a "bully's" cry for help. It may also be the result of an undiagnosed medical, emotional, or psychological issue. Rather than make any assumptions, listen to each child with an open mind.
- 9. Get appropriate professional help.** Be careful not to give any advice beyond your level of expertise. Rather than make any assumptions, if you deem there are any underlying and/or unsolved issues, refer the student to a nurse, counselor, school psychologist, social worker, or other appropriate professional.
- 10. Become trained to handle bullying situations.** If you work with students in any capacity, it is important to learn the proper ways to address bullying. Visit <http://www.nea.org/bullyfree> for information and resources. You can also take the pledge to stop bullying as well as learn how to create a Bully Free program in your school and/or community.



10 Steps to Stop and Prevent Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the term applied to bullying over the internet, via email, text messaging, and similar technological modes of communication. Cyberbullying includes sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression. This form of bullying is more intense as it can occur around the clock, and the text or images can be quickly and widely disseminated—well beyond the school grounds.

Cyberbullying is growing rapidly among youth. Whereas bullying used to be confined primarily to the schoolyard, young people are being bullied on their computers, cell phones, and with other technology. A good way to tackle the issue of cyberbullying is to stop it before it ever starts.

How to stop and prevent cyberbullying:

- 1. Implement and enforce an anti-bullying school code of conduct** that includes both bullying and cyberbullying. Spell out what behaviors and actions will not be tolerated and the consequences that will follow.
- 2. Have students sign an anti-bullying and cyberbullying pledge** where students pledge not to bully others and to speak up if they know someone is being bullied.
- 3. Create a safe place for students to voice concerns or problems**, and encourage students to come forward and speak to someone.
- 4. Learn how to tell the warning signs that a child might be being cyberbullied** and how to get the child appropriate help. Educate teachers and staff on the warning signs and what they should do to help a student.
- 5. Talk with students about cyberbullying:** what it is, the impact it has, and its consequences. Let them know cyberbullying is a serious issue that will not be tolerated.
- 6. Educate parents on cyberbullying.** Let them know what signs to look for at home and how to talk with their children about the issue. Invite parents to talk with you about cyberbullying and send home resources.
- 7. Learn and teach conflict resolution and anger management skills.** Help students practice applying them in everyday life.
- 8. Develop and sustain a network** with health care, mental health, counseling, victim services, and social work resources in your community. Make sure all staff know how to connect students with available resources.
- 9. Encourage and sponsor a student-led, anti-bullying program.** Work with students to help raise cyberbullying awareness within the school through student-led clubs, assemblies, or posters.
- 10. Stay informed!** Stay up-to-date with the latest internet and technology trends.





LGBTQ+ Students

LGBTQ+ students are more likely to face bullying and harassment in school—leading to poor grades, dropping out of school, and even homelessness. LGBTQ+ students at the college level also report feeling unsafe and unwelcome.

Educators are uniquely positioned to address these issues and work toward creating a safe, supportive, and affirming school environment for LGBTQ+ students. Every student deserves the right to attend a school that fully embraces them for who they are and allows them to achieve to their full potential.

Every student deserves a safe, supportive, and affirming school environment. As a caring educator, pledge to create that space for LGBTQ+ students.

- Talk to and share resources with colleagues to educate them on the needs of LGBTQ+ students.
- Advocate for safe, supportive learning environments for LGBTQ+ students.
- Collaborate with colleagues, parents, administration, community, and most importantly, students to ensure students have access to LGBTQ+-related supports and resources.

Advocate for the rights of transgender students and stand in opposition to anti-transgender legislation, policies, and practices.

For more information on sexual orientation and gender identity, please go to:

<http://www.nea.org/tools/18846.htm>

https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/20184_Transgender%20Guide_v4.pdf

Avoiding Gender Bias

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Findings indicate that many classroom teachers are guilty of gender bias and are totally unaware of what they are doing.

Here are some suggestions for avoiding gender bias in your classroom:

- Use inclusive language. “You guys” may be a popular way of addressing a group, but it’s an example of gender bias.
- Make sure your expectations are the same for all of your students. Both genders can succeed in math and reading, for example.
- Use examples that are gender balanced. If there are none in your textbooks, do some research.
- Avoid stereotyping jobs for students, such as having girls clean up and boys carry things.
- Screen books, posters, and other materials for balance.
- Try to put girls and boys in nontraditional situations.
- Make the classroom atmosphere one where both girls and boys are paid equal attention, encouraged, questioned, and reinforced.
- Expectations and discipline consequences should be the same for boys and girls.
- Pay the same attention to compliant students as you do to assertive students.
- Actively integrate groups by not allowing self-segregation.
- Never use gender to group students.
- Model gender balance by what you say and do.

Recognizing Trauma Impact on Student Learning

"Trauma can impact an individual in many ways, and an individual's response to a traumatic event can vary. Circumstances of the event such as when, how, where, how often, and the responses of others can impact an individual's response. Children may experience symptoms related to brain development, learning and behavior — all of which impact academic success." – Ohio Department of Education

According to 2015-2016 data from the Kids Count Data Center, 27% of Ohio's children have experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs.

Those adverse experiences are defined as:

- Frequent socioeconomic hardship
- Parental divorce or separation
- Parental death
- Parental incarceration
- Family violence
- Neighborhood violence
- Living with someone who was mentally ill or suicidal
- Living with someone who had a substance abuse problem
- Racial bias

The national average for all children experiencing adverse childhood experiences is 22%. Ohio's percentage places the states' children in the top quartile of all states when measuring for adverse childhood experiences; only five states have higher rates of adverse incidences for their children.

According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, when children do not have consistent safety, comfort, and protection in their homes and communities they often develop coping mechanisms that help them to survive in stressful and traumatic environments. Should the stress and trauma continue for extended periods of time, these coping mechanisms can inhibit a child's ability to develop cognitively, socially, and physically. Ohio's professional educators are reporting that they see more children each year who exhibit stress and behaviors in their school communities. Without adequate training in trauma and its effects on children, these dedicated teachers and educational aides are seeking support and assistance for their students.

Major symptoms of trauma include:

Cognitive delays

A delay in normal brain development process

Inability to predict and make inferences

Difficulty understanding cause and effect

Inability to process relationships and emotions

Difficulty forming or maintaining relationships

Wariness of the future

The future feels unpredictable and out of control

Trauma-Informed Support for Students

We believe that all schools can benefit from a trauma-informed model of education, and that all schools should have state and local funding to support this school reform effort. Safe and supportive schools are healthy learning and working environments, and educators must be empowered to create and implement dynamic trauma informed schools where all students, including those who have been affected by traumatic events can learn and thrive.

Educator objectives to support students who have/may be experiencing trauma include:

- Creating a safe space and nurturing healthy relationships for students
- Helping kids identify their emotions as a first step toward getting calm and centered
- Using exercises that help mind-body connections to help kids manage their emotions
- Helping students learn self-regulation strategies to help them calm down during a trigger experience
- Noticing changes in student behavior and working with a guidance counselor or school social worker to bring in additional support
- Championing healthy, trusting relationships by connecting each student with at least two other caring adults
- Helping students understand how their brains work so they can be aware of how they learn
- Helping students build a vocabulary for the emotions they feel themselves and observe in others

Fortunately, there are resources available in Ohio for our educators. The Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services Trauma-Informed Care Initiative is working state-wide to deliver professional development for those who are in contact with children who have experienced trauma. The Ohio Department of Education website references the effects of trauma and offers resources that describe Trauma-Informed Schools as places where students and staff feel safe, welcome, and supported, and where the impact of trauma is at the center of the mission of delivering education content and policy development for the functioning of the school.

Resources

Adversity in Childhood and Childhood Trauma

<http://www.tinyurl.com/adversity-in-childhood>

The Impact of Trauma on Students

<http://www.tinyurl.com/impact-of-trauma>

Ohio's Trauma-Informed Care Initiative

<http://www.tinyurl.com/care-initiative>

Understanding the Traumatized Child - OSU Opioid Overdose Family Support Toolkit

<http://www.tinyurl.com/overdose-toolkit>

How to Handle Complaints

- If you are called to a meeting with administrators and the meeting becomes an accusatory proceeding, do not discuss the matter with anyone or attempt to defend yourself alone. Request an adjournment of the meeting to consult your Association Representative, then call immediately. Trained Association Representatives are in your work site or as close as a phone call to your Local President or OEA Labor Relations Consultant.
- Until you have a chance to discuss the situation with your Association Representative or your Labor Relations Consultant, do not make any spontaneous replies to any charges presented to you.
- It is important that you get advice early. Don't wait to "see what happens." Your Labor Relations Consultant will see to it that you have the benefit of legal advice and counsel, if needed.
- Do not submit any written statements to administrators unless they have been reviewed by your Association Representative.
- Be sure to keep copies of all written correspondence, including postmarked envelopes.
- An Association Representative should accompany you to all meetings. The Association Representative should be your Worksite Representative, a grievance committee member, a local association officer or your Labor Relations Consultant.
- The individual who accompanies you should agree beforehand to testify for you in administrative hearings or court proceedings, if necessary.
- Do not agree to any proposals offered without first checking with your association. Under no circumstances should you submit a resignation unless at your own insistence and without first conferring with your Labor Relations Consultant.
- The media may try to get you to make a statement. Do not make any public statements whatsoever. Again, confer with your Labor Relations Consultant to determine the best way to deal with the media.
- Remember, the Association ensures due process for its members.

What to Do if the Unthinkable Happens

Even if you follow the advice in this publication, there's no guarantee that you won't be the victim of false allegations. And if that happens, here are some suggestions about what to do and what not to do:

- First, call your Association Representative. Depending on the Local, that person may be a Worksite Representative, the Association President, or a Labor Relations Consultant. Your Association Representative can provide advice and help you obtain legal representation under various Association programs.
- Don't talk to school administrators or law enforcement officers. Even innocent statements can be misconstrued and misused. The decision whether to meet with these officials and what, if anything, to say to them should be made only after consulting with your legal and/or other Association Representative. In most circumstances, your Representative should accompany you to any meeting.
- Don't sign anything. It goes without saying that this will be an enormously stressful time, and you should not make any decision about signing a statement or other document without first discussing it with your Representative.
- Don't talk to the media unless and until you and your Representative decide that it is in your best interest to do so.
- Don't resign from your job. No matter how bad things look, resigning will not help, and it may be interpreted as an admission of guilt. You should not consider this option until you have consulted with your Representative.



Legal Services Program

One of the benefits provided by NEA and your state Association is job rights protection under the Kate Frank/DuShane Unified Legal Services Program (ULSP). The ULSP is a jointly-sponsored NEA and state affiliate program that provides appropriate legal assistance to members who are subjected to discipline or discharge by their employer.

But did you also know that NEA provides two other important benefits that may be available to members who are falsely accused? Some cases involving very serious allegations can result in criminal charges being filed against you and may require you to retain a criminal defense attorney. If the charges arise in the course of your employment and you are fully exonerated or all the charges are dropped, then the NEA Educators Employment Liability (EEL) Program will reimburse you up to \$35,000 for attorneys' fees. *(Note: If the criminal charges are limited to corporal punishment, there is reimbursement even if you are not exonerated.)*

Be sure to contact your state Association before retaining a criminal defense attorney. Your state Association may be able to recommend a reputable attorney who has experience with your legal issues.

You also might be sued for damages by the alleged victim and/or the parents. Under the EEL Program, all NEA members are covered for claims up to \$1 million in civil lawsuits against them for damages and attorneys' fees arising out of their employment activities. The policy kicks in after any insurance available through the school district and is subject to several exclusions. Check with your state Association for additional information about the scope of coverage under the EEL Program.



Experienced Teachers Share Their Insight

“I’ve learned to be consistent, to offer students routines and discipline. Kids need that kind of security in the classroom—an environment where there are rules that are shared by all.”

“I never raise my voice to get the attention of students. Instead, I use hand signals that students can copy. They become so busy trying to duplicate my hand movements, they forget to talk.”

“I rely on my two favorite teaching tools: zip-up bags and the cardboard cases soft drinks come in. The bags are good to corral anything you don’t want to wander around loose. And the cardboard boxes, when cut down, make great trays for passing out materials. “

“I wish I hadn’t felt obligated to deal with what was in my lesson plans all the time. When kids really wanted to know the answer to something, I’d put that motivation on the back burner because it didn’t fit that plan, and I lost out on some opportunities.”

“I wish I’d known not to sweat the small stuff.”

“I wish I had been better prepared in writing.”

(From an elementary teacher who now gives writing workshops to others in her school.)

“I’ve learned to give kids time to think after I ask a question.”

“I don’t think enough can be said about the use of peer tutoring. Too often, teachers feel that the teaching must come from the adult in the classroom. Don’t be afraid to share some authority and responsibility for classroom learning.”

The Value of Membership

Reach, teach, and inspire.

You're never on your own. Your membership gives you access to some of education's most sought-after authorities who provide new and innovative programs you can use in your classroom. With resources that cover classroom management and support, to more in-depth professional development provided by your local, state, and national affiliates—you have a team supporting you.

Make your voice heard.

As trusted professionals, educators are best equipped to make school and classroom decisions to ensure student success. It's our mission to ensure educators have a seat at the table when education policies are made. As members of the Association, educators have a powerful voice in creating the policies that affect our students, our schools, and our classrooms.

Grow your network.

We're a community of experienced professionals. Through a variety of online and off-line tools, you enjoy access to valuable resources on classroom management, lesson planning, and a host of other topics. Plus, you'll make connections with the educators at your school, in your local, and among our more than 120,000 members statewide.

Enjoy what matters most.

Membership means less worrying for you and more action from us. With representation at the bargaining table, liability insurance, and so much more, OEA provides advice and professional advocacy on the range of issues you face as an educator: salary, working conditions, evaluation support, contract compliance and enforcement, and retirement.

Belong to OEA: <http://www.ohea.org/join>



Membership Benefits

Legal Representation and Protection

OEA/NEA Legal Services Plan

Educators Employment Liability Insurance provides you with:

- \$1 million in coverage for civil claims brought against you, representation or reimbursement for the defense of criminal charges*
- OEA/NEA Legal Services Program for the defense of your employment rights, including retirement interests*
- OEA/NEA Attorney Referral Program, which provides you quality legal services for personal matters at reduced rates*

**Note: Terms and conditions of coverage are set forth in program documents. Contact your OEA Labor Relations Consultant to obtain additional information.*

Professional Development

- Information about your profession and the activities of your Local Association through publications such as *Ohio Schools* magazine and *NEA Today*, as well as OEA, and NEA websites at <http://www.ohea.org> and <http://www.nea.org/index.html>.
- Leadership in dealing with major state and national education issues.
- Free and open to all, NEA edCommunities is the place online where educators, school support professionals, and community members join forces to improve student success. <http://www.nea.org/home/edcommunities.html>
- The free NEA Works4Me e-newsletter has been a staple of teachers' professional lives for years, providing ideas and tips for student success across all subjects. <http://www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html>

Economic Benefits

OEA has a proven track record of achieving higher pay, improved benefits, better working conditions, and protection of retirement interests. Such gains have been made possible through years of skillful negotiations with school boards and lobbying efforts by OEA.

Through NEA Member Benefits (www.neamb.com), members are also eligible for:

- Life Insurance
- Casualty Insurance
- Savings, Deposit, and Investment Services
- Credit Programs
- Mortgage and Personal Loans
- Special Discounts

By taking advantage of just one or two NEA Member Benefits programs, you can often recover the entire cost of your annual dues.

Know a student teacher?
Invite them to belong to the Ohio
Student Education Association.



www.ohea.org/osea
osea@ohea.org

 @OhioStudentEA

1

**EXPLORING
EDUCATOR**

Future educators are supported as they begin to explore the teaching profession and consider teaching as a career.

Ohio Student Education Association (OSEA) and Ohio Education Association (OEA) assists initial developmental support to potential educators as they learn about the rewards of teaching and developing a foundation of experiences prior to entering a teacher preparation program.

2

**ASPIRING
EDUCATOR**

College students preparing to be educators are supported through belonging to the Ohio Student Education Association.

OSEA provides pre-service educators with resources and supports around four core values: Social Justice, Teacher Quality, Community Outreach, and Political Action.

3

**EARLY
EDUCATOR**

Educators within the first 10 years of their teaching careers are supported through the Ohio's New Educators' (ONE's) network of professionals.

ONE is a unique community within OEA supporting early career educators. This statewide network engages and empowers educators to become successful, active, and visible in their profession and community through collective action.

4

**CAREER
EDUCATOR**

Ohio Education Association supports over 120,000 members by advocating for educators and the learners they serve.

OEA strives to embody the values of Democracy, Collective Action, Fairness, Inclusion, Integrity, and Professionalism as they support safe learning conditions and working conditions.

5

**RETIRED
EDUCATOR**

OEA-Retired supports post-career educators by working for the future of education.

OEA Retirees advocate for public education professionals to unite our members and communities to ensure every student has a great public education.

OEA

OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

| EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH &
MEMBER ADVOCACY DEPARTMENT

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