

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THE FIRST YEARS MATTER!

If you are reading this, you are a first-year teacher beginning your career or a 2+ year teacher in a follow-up mentoring program to further develop your teaching skills. Let me begin by saying, thank you for choosing to be a teacher. You have made a commitment to students and their success in school.

As a teacher, you are responsible for your students' instruction as well as their social and emotional development. Whether you are teaching a content area or a special subject you must engage students. You are not just teaching a subject or a skill; you are interacting with human beings to help them learn and be successful in life—a big job! By putting students at the heart of your teaching you are intentionally creating a community of learners where everyone is respected. In this book, you will be encouraged to use mindfulness as a way to stay focused on your goal of being an effective teacher.

Mindfulness *noun* **mind·ful·ness** \ 'mīn(d)-fəl-nəs \

1. the quality or state of being mindful
2. the practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis; *also*: such a state of awareness

By being mindful and paying attention to what you are doing, you can purposefully apply what you are learning with your mentor, so you can help your students succeed. An important key to mindfulness is nonjudgment. Don't blame yourself for not knowing what to do. You are “learning” how to teach and choosing what works best for you in your classroom. To make those choices, you need to pay attention to your emotions and thoughts, so you can put your best ideas forward.

The goal of this book is to offer you a monthly structure, many strategies to try in your classroom, and end-of-month reflections to deepen your practice. You will be learning so many things at once, and it may get overwhelming at times. This book, along with the Novice Teacher Journal on the companion website, provides you with a place to mindfully reflect on what you are doing so you can help your students succeed in school.

Are You Prepared to Teach?

Some teachers enter teaching through traditional pathways in formal teacher preparation programs and others enroll in an alternative fast-track route. Think about the route you took and if it prepared you for the challenges of the classroom. Ask your mentor to differentiate your mentoring based on your needs. If you didn't complete a formal student teaching program, you can read this entire book and see what the year is all about. Then, as you review month-by-month, you won't be surprised by the expectations teaching brings.

I have a passion for this work. I have been a teacher and a teacher educator for more than forty years. During my visits to schools, my talks with novice teachers led me to create this second edition. My intention is to offer you an updated resource that supports you in being the most effective teacher you can be.

Enjoy your year!

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