

Preface

Having agreed to “write a little book for new teachers” for SkyLight, my publisher of many years, I tried to recall the things new teachers had said to me over the years. I sat down to list my ideas for the ten things I thought teachers needed, both to succeed and to stay in the profession. I wanted to see if I could actually list *just* ten things.

I was joyful in the task and rendered my thoughts on paper as fast as I could type them. I knew I had hit the mother lode. I had discovered a way to expose the heart and soul of this time-honored gift called teaching. I had said these things many times before as I talked with teachers around the world, about the art and science of the act of teaching.

My wish for you—the reader, the new teacher, the old teacher, the math teacher, the music teacher, the favorite teacher, the remembered teacher, the substitute teacher or the “second career” teacher—is that my words speak to you and your teaching; that they guide you and inspire you to continue with this very important work called *teaching*.

A challenge from my constructivist grounding that I just cannot resist, is to invite you, the reader, to note the ten things you would put on the list. Then, as you read, you'll have the fun of seeing how well your thinking meshed or matched with mine.

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Enjoy!

—ROBIN FOGARTY

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Introduction

I am a teacher. I've been a teacher for over thirty years, knowing from the time I was ten that teaching was what I was going to do. Like many new teachers who are reading this book, I love children and gravitate to them and them to me. I love the act of creating, of inventing, of writing. Like so many teachers, I am a people person who likes to be in the midst of the action (an appropriate gift for the those who choose to be in a room with thirty busy ones) and I am well-schooled in the art and science of teaching.

My Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood/Elementary Education is from State University of New York at Potsdam (S.U.N.Y.), my Masters of Arts in Instructional Strategies is from National-Louis University in Evanston, Illinois, and my Doctorate of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction and Human Resource Development is from Loyola University at Chicago.

My vision of this little book is one of high aspirations. I see it sitting beside the great “little books” of my lifetime, such as Strunk and White’s *Elements of Style*, Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, and Laurence Peter’s *Peter’s Quotations: Ideas for Our Time*. These are the texts that fit the spirit of my vision.

I see my book becoming the well-worn desk copy, the quick reference, the on-hand authority for new and renewing teachers. I see tattered pages of yellowed paper, crimped corners and underlinings of favorite passages revisited again and again. I see teachers sharing and comparing their originals with the new editions to check for any discrete changes or to see if the new copy is really any different than that familiar old version treasured for so many years.

I hope this little book will become a cherished companion that is savored by seasoned staff and bestowed upon new

graduates as the quintessential “gift to give.” I see this little book as my gift to the profession . . . a giving back, if you will, to the courageous ones who strive to teach. It is, in my eyes, both a way of previewing the skills of teaching, and perhaps more importantly, a way of renewing the spirit of those who teach.

While not written as a detailed “how-to,” *Ten Things A New Teacher Needs* serves to open the conversation among educators ripe for dialogue about the intricacies of a complex profession. Some might see this book as a checklist of sorts that profiles the critical areas of teaching expertise.

The book’s intended audience is preservice teachers who are just learning about teaching methodology, new teachers preparing for their first teaching position, substitute teachers working their way into a first full-time position, or experts entering the profession as second career teachers. *Ten Things A New Teacher Needs* is a “slice of life” in the world of the teacher.



A Knowing Colleague as Counsel . . . About the Policies, Practices, and the Politics!

Without a doubt, a number one priority for the new teacher is to have a friend in the school, a knowing colleague on staff who is there for the “new kid on the block.” After many conversations with first and second year teachers (some who made it and others who chose to leave teaching within their first few years), I’ve noticed teachers invariably talk about the need for someone they can count on, someone they can go to when they have questions and when they need help.

While many districts have established formal “new teacher induction programs” that include an assigned mentor for each new teacher, the reality is that not all schools have the resources to do this. Therefore, with the prediction of two and a half million new teachers entering the field over the next ten years and the growing exodus of “seasoned staff” into the world of retirement, it seems wise advice for new teachers to assume responsibility for finding that someone they need: that friend, that coach, that mentor.

PROACTIVELY SEEK A MENTOR

In other words, new teachers can’t wait for someone to be assigned as mentor or for a friend to emerge from the ranks. They must proactively seek out a caring colleague. They must find someone who exhibits qualities they admire—a solid