

thriving as a new teacher

tools and strategies for your first year



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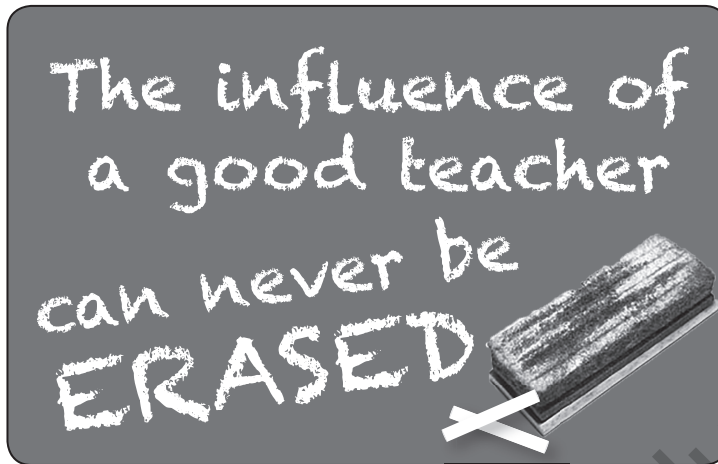
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Preparing for the First Year

It is August, and Karla, a new high school English teacher, is working to get her classroom ready for the first day of class. As she works, her mind races with thoughts of all that lies ahead: What will her students be like? How can she build relationships with them? Will she be able to engage her students in the content? How will she deal with disruptive student behavior and parental concerns, meet her principal's expectations, manage the curriculum, and accurately assess her students? There is so much Karla needs to think about for her first teaching job. She feels overwhelmed.

Karla's feelings as she approaches the start of school are common among teachers entering the profession. Teaching is a highly rewarding career, but it is a difficult one as well—one that has both rewards and challenges. Welcome to teaching!

Teaching is like a vocation because it is more than just a job; it is a lifelong endeavor for most people who enter the profession. Great teachers enter the profession because they want to make a difference in the lives of their students. It takes passion and lots of dedication to do well as a teacher. Some teachers seem to be cut out to be teachers from an early age while others find their passion and come into teaching later in their lives. When someone decides to become a teacher, he or she should know that though the profession involves many rewards, it also has many challenges. As a teacher, you are going to change lives. Historian Henry Brooks Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." Indeed, a good teacher's influence can never be erased.



Your First Teaching Job

Congratulations! You have made a successful transition from student to teacher. This transition likely seems daunting. You will encounter many challenges during your career. Some challenges will seem minor, while others will test you to the limit.

Your first experience as a teacher is crucial to your future success in the profession. This first experience will shape your perception of teaching and help you decide if it is the right career for you.

A Thriving New Teacher

Throughout this book, we use the term *thriving new teacher* to describe teachers who are reaching an optimal performance level. A thriving new teacher is someone who has comfortably moved into the profession by overcoming the initial challenges he or she encountered in order to become proficient in the skills and techniques needed to be effective in working with students. A thriving new teacher has pushed beyond feeling nervous and overwhelmed to feeling confident and effective. This new teacher understands that there is still room for improvement and that he or she has overcome some of the initial issues and challenges that can get in the way of success.

Thriving new teachers focus on several critical areas related to their teaching. These are the areas that impact them and their students the most, from knowledge and care of themselves as teachers to understanding and implementing effective assessments to working effectively with colleagues.

The Six Spheres

The areas that help new teachers thrive are represented by the six spheres. These six spheres (shown in figure I.1) provide the foundation for this book.

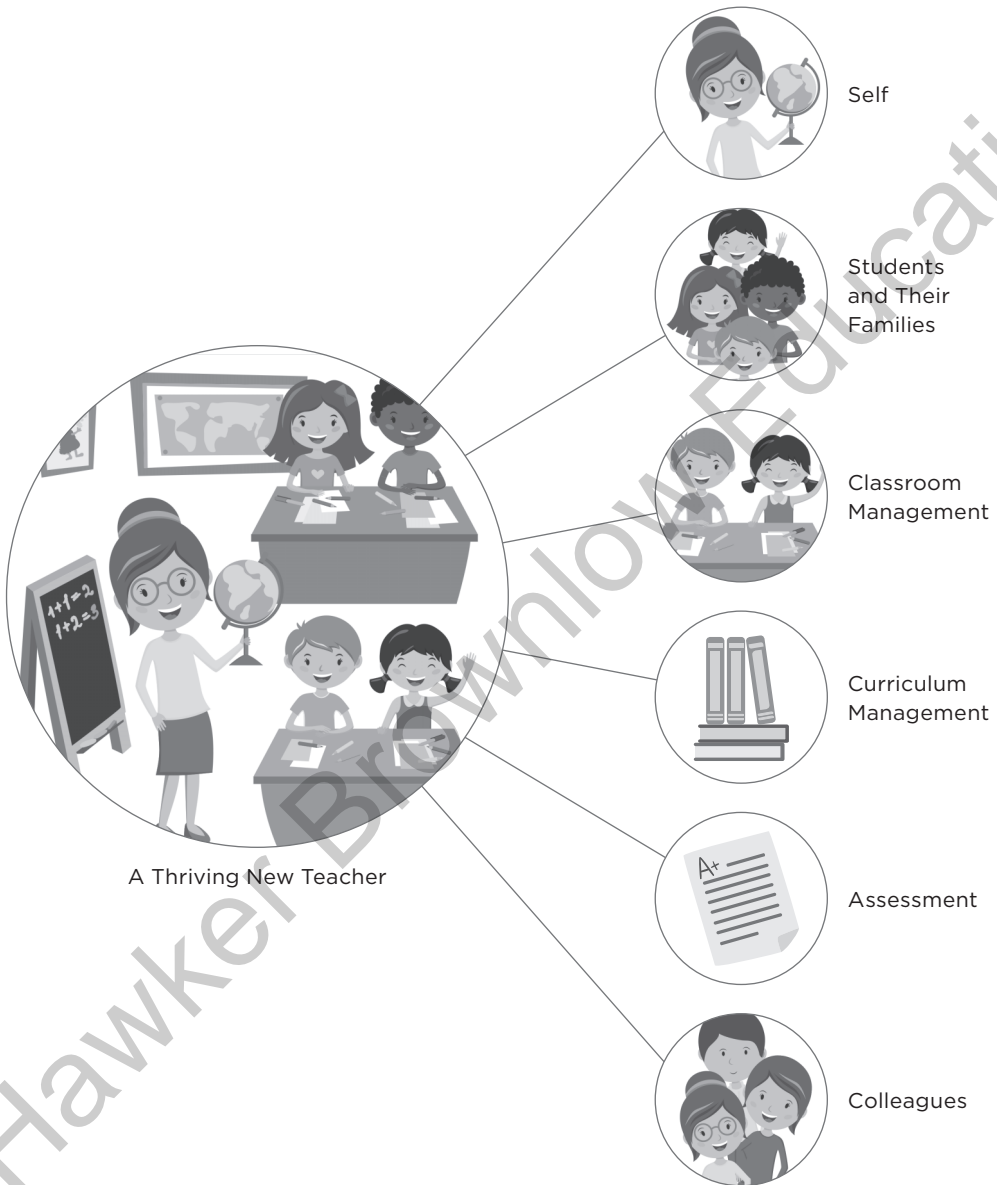


Figure I.1: Six spheres of focus for thriving new teachers.

In this book, we provide skills and strategies to support each sphere. A brief description of each sphere follows.

- ▶ **Self:** Thriving new teachers have a positive attitude and good self-esteem, and are able to build rapport with others. They possess good communication skills.
- ▶ **Students and their families:** Thriving new teachers believe that students, along with their families, can be successful and are interested in learning and growing. These teachers build on student strengths and help them experience success and involve their families as partners.
- ▶ **Classroom management:** Thriving new teachers structure their classroom procedures for success so that students can learn in a safe environment. These teachers operate their classrooms in a consistent and fair manner. They know how to prevent disruptions, but if they occur, they know how to quickly deescalate them.
- ▶ **Curriculum management:** Thriving new teachers make content learnable, interesting, and relevant to their students. They know how to pace the content so students can learn. They also understand the importance of the right learning targets and learner-appropriate methods to maximize student growth and achievement.
- ▶ **Assessment:** Thriving new teachers design effective assessments to measure their teaching effectiveness and their students' growth. They use these assessments to make instructional decisions for future learning targets and teaching methods for their students. The assessment strategies they implement include regular, formative methods coupled with culminating, summative methods.
- ▶ **Colleagues:** Thriving new teachers understand the importance of collegial relationships, learning from their peers, and supporting them as interdependent team members. These teachers also understand and follow school policies and procedures. In addition, they have a clear focus on ethical professional practices and engage in professional development to maintain and refine their teaching skills and strategies.

In the chapters that follow, you will find information, strategies, and tools to develop your essential skills in these six spheres to become a thriving new teacher.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into chapters that incorporate the six spheres model outlined in the previous section. In chapter 1, you will examine yourself and the gifts you bring to teaching. This information will help provide the “rudder” that will guide you on your journey to becoming a thriving new teacher. In chapter 2, we examine the importance of your first days as a teacher and making a positive and lasting impression with students and families as well as colleagues. Chapter 3 outlines the importance of moving beyond the initial impression and developing long-term relationships with students. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the important topics of classroom management and working successfully with difficult students. These chapters provide the foundations for success as a new teacher. Chapter 6 outlines information about managing the curriculum and your course content. Chapter 7 deals with formative and summative assessment, and chapter 8 provides you with a multitude of strategies designed to help make learning active and keep students engaged and interested in learning. All of the chapters work together to help you thrive as a new teacher.