

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Author	xi
------------------------	----

INTRODUCTION

First Things First	1
The Beginning Teacher's Journey	5
How to Use This Book	8

CHAPTER 1

The Anticipation Phase	13
The First Week of School	13
Classroom Strategies	16
Organizing Your Classroom's Physical Layout	17
Establishing Rules and Procedures	20
Understanding Students' Interests and Backgrounds	23
Self-Care Practices	24
Getting Adequate Sleep	24
Eating a Healthy Diet	26
Exercising Regularly	27
Reflections	29
Classroom Strategy Prompts	29
Self-Care Practice Prompts	30

CHAPTER 2

The Survival Phase	33
Mentorships Are Invaluable	34
Classroom Strategies	36
Focusing on Classroom Management	36
Displaying Objectivity and Control	38

Noticing When Students Are Not Engaged	40
Self-Care Practices	41
Practicing Mindfulness	42
Focusing on Relationships	46
Reflections	47
Classroom Strategy Prompts	47
Self-Care Practice Prompts	48
CHAPTER 3	
The Disillusionment Phase	51
What a Difference a Year Makes	52
Classroom Strategies	55
Developing Relationships With All Students	56
Celebrating Students' Successes	58
Focusing on Positive Student Behaviors	60
Self-Care Practices	61
Practicing Gratitude	61
Practicing Kindness	64
Appreciating Humor	65
Reflections	66
Classroom Strategy Prompts	67
Self-Care Practice Prompts	67
CHAPTER 4	
The Rejuvenation Phase	69
Playing Can Be Productive	69
Classroom Strategies	71
Demonstrating Intensity and Enthusiasm	72
Utilizing Physical Movement	73
Presenting Unusual or Intriguing Information	74
Maintaining a Lively Pace	75
Self-Care Practices	77
Developing a Growth Mindset	77
Picturing Your Best Possible Future Self	78
Reflections	79
Classroom Strategy Prompts	79
Self-Care Practice Prompts	80

CHAPTER 5

The Reflection Phase	83
My Favorite Lesson	84
Classroom Strategies	87
Employing Questioning Strategies	88
Demonstrating Value and Respect for All Learners	91
Self-Care Practices	92
Being Inspired	92
Writing Yourself Permission Slips	94
Setting Aside Time to Reflect	95
Reflecting With Someone Else	95
Reflections	96
Classroom Strategy Prompts	96
Self-Care Practice Prompts	97

CHAPTER 6

The Second Anticipation Phase	99
The Lazy Days of Summer	99
Classroom Strategies	102
Self-Care Practices	103
Having Fun	103
Acting Like a Kid Again	104
Reflections	105
Classroom Strategy Prompts	105
Self-Care Practice Prompts	106

EPILOGUE

The Year in Retrospect	109
-------------------------------------	-----

APPENDIX A

End-of-the-Year Activities	113
Inviting and Disinviting Feedback	113
End-of-the-Year Letters	114
Survival Guides	115
Pay-It-Forward Promises	116
Reflections	116

APPENDIX B

Mementos..... 119

References and Resources..... 131

Index..... 139

© Hawker Brownlow Education

during summer break, when you have more time to reflect, plan, and re-energize.

Again, each beginning teacher will have his or her own upswings and dips and may not follow this pattern. You may hit the disillusionment phase earlier in the year, as I did, or you may not hit that phase at all. Conversely, you may cycle through many phases rather than experiencing just one in a single year. It's all normal. I promise.

And while beginning teachers feel each of these phases more profoundly than those with more experience, I'm here to tell you that this cycle isn't unique to your first year or years. Most veteran teachers will admit that they, too, experience these dips and upswings, even after many years in the classroom. Take comfort in this. You're not alone in your feelings. Additionally, it is important to know that there is no right or wrong way to experience your first years of teaching. What's important is understanding that feeling these dips and upswings is normal—no matter when or how they occur.

How to Use This Book

Ideally, this book is a resource for you—a K–12 beginning teacher—to use on your own, especially if you don't have a formal mentor. A school or district might also utilize this book as a book study for all new teachers to work through together. Finally, if your school pairs new teachers with formal mentors or coaches, they can use this book in conjunction with my book *Supporting Beginning Teachers* (Boogren, 2015) for mentors.

I organized this book chronologically, taking you through each phase in Moir's (2011) given order. As a beginning teacher, however, you may feel overwhelmed and intimidated by the sheer volume of instructional resources, strategies, and materials available to you through your school, district, and online. Knowing this, and based on my own experiences working with beginning teachers, I've deliberately selected the classroom strategies that I believe are the *most* essential for you to focus on during each phase of your first years in the classroom. I present those strategies to you in a concise and easily manageable manner, combined with a unique focus on reflection and self-care. Because of time constraints as

a beginning teacher, you may decide not to read this book all at once. Instead, you might move from chapter to chapter or section to section as you're ready.

Table I.1 outlines the essential classroom strategies and self-care practices for each phase. The table serves as a preview to and an outline for the upcoming chapters.

Table I.1: Beginning Teacher Phases—Strategies and Practices

Phase	Classroom Strategies	Self-Care Practices
Anticipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Organizing your classroom's physical layout ◆ Establishing rules and procedures ◆ Understanding students' interests and backgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Getting adequate sleep ◆ Eating a healthy diet ◆ Exercising regularly
Survival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Focusing on classroom management ◆ Displaying objectivity and control ◆ Noticing when students are not engaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Practicing mindfulness ◆ Focusing on relationships
Disillusionment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Developing relationships with all students ◆ Celebrating students' successes ◆ Focusing on positive student behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Practicing gratitude ◆ Practicing kindness ◆ Appreciating humor
Rejuvenation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Demonstrating intensity and enthusiasm ◆ Utilizing physical movement ◆ Presenting unusual or intriguing information ◆ Maintaining a lively pace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Developing a growth mindset ◆ Picturing your best possible future self
Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Employing questioning strategies ◆ Asking all students in-depth questions ◆ Demonstrating value and respect for all learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Being inspired ◆ Writing yourself permission slips ◆ Setting aside time to reflect ◆ Reflecting with someone else
Second Anticipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Deciding how to arrange your classroom for next year ◆ Creating things like charts, game templates, and posters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Having fun ◆ Acting like a kid again

One chapter is dedicated to each phase. Each chapter begins with a personal essay that I wrote during my own first few years in the classroom. In my essays, some of which first appeared in my book *In the First Few Years: Reflections of a Beginning Teacher* (Humphrey, 2003), I share insights in hopes of helping you feel less isolated. Then I ask you to consider some thoughts before getting into the actual strategies and practices. These prompts will help you understand how each phase is playing out for you personally.

Next, I provide the specific classroom strategies and self-care practices to focus on during this particular phase. It is both well documented and common knowledge that the most important factor in student achievement is the teacher—not the curriculum, or subject-matter knowledge, or the standardized test, or the technology resources available but the actual teacher in the classroom (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1998; McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002; Sanders, Wright, & Horn, 1997). Therefore, having the pedagogical skills to increase student achievement starting in these, your first years in the classroom, is essential. Classroom strategies will increase your expertise and significantly impact student achievement. While all the strategies are important and work any time of year, I've carefully prioritized them to correlate with the phases.

The self-care practices help prevent you from losing yourself in the midst of all these new demands. Many situations at this point in your life—even positive ones, such as a new job—lead to stress. Overwork also leads to stress, which makes us more prone to illness (Salleh, 2008). That, in turn, raises teacher absenteeism. More frequent teacher absences lead to lower student achievement (Miller, Murnane, & Willett, 2007). To compound these issues, research indicates that “many beginning teachers are reluctant to reveal problems or ask for help, believing that good teachers work things out for themselves” (Feiman-Nemser, 2010, p. 1033). That can lead to feelings of isolation, despair, and disillusionment, which in turn “are associated with high levels of stress [and] depression” (Southwick & Charney, 2012, p. 108). This reality highlights the importance of self-care for beginning teachers. Many authors who write books designed for you overlook such practices or view them as afterthoughts. I take a firm stand that self-care practices are *as essential* as the classroom strategies

because if you are not your best self, you will not be sturdy enough to face the challenges that appear during your first few years in the classroom. You can easily incorporate these suggestions into your schedule. I do not want it to feel as if you're just adding to your already overflowing to-do list. I will offer gentle reminders and daily habits that can help you feel more stable during this often turbulent time.

To increase your impact on student achievement, you must be a reflective practitioner. Reflection is an essential part of developing expertise and increasing one's pedagogical skills. As you come into your own as a professional educator, it is imperative that you reflect on what's working, what's not working, and why—for both you and your students. Research supports this as well:

Reflection, as a thoughtful and a caring act, goes to the heart of the instructional relationship. It is not only a tool of skilled practice, but also a feeling that helps educators to teach effectively and intelligently rather than unthinkingly, dogmatically or prejudicially. (Roskos, Vukelich, & Risko, 2001, p. 617)

Finally, in each chapter I provide you with reflection questions relating to both the classroom strategies as well as the self-care practices presented there. To make reflection as easy as possible, I've included space at the end of each chapter and in the margins where you can record your thoughts so you don't have to keep track of a separate notebook or journal. By using this book *as* your journal, you'll have the strategies and your reflections all in one place. That being said, you know yourself better than anyone else. Do what works for you—use a separate notebook, type your notes in a Google Doc, or make an audio recording. The medium doesn't matter. What matters is that you have a place to record your thoughts. You may choose to share some of your reflections with a mentor or coach, or you might keep them to yourself; again, it's up to you. The important part is pausing, checking in, and recording your current observations and feelings so that

you can actually *see* yourself grow, change your perspective, and improve—alongside your inevitable frustrations and setbacks.

You may focus on what is *not* going well when you reflect, but it is important to acknowledge and reflect on successes as well. Kendyll Stansbury and Joy Zimmerman (2000) point out, “Recognizing and understanding their successes not only provides an enormous boost in confidence, but helps beginning teachers build on those strengths” (p. 9). Like the balance between the professional and personal, I encourage you to focus on what is going well along with areas for growth and improvement. Reflection questions remind you of this during each phase.

In addition to prompts throughout the book, I encourage you to record anything else that you want to remember. Consider picking up a glue stick while you’re at the store so you can paste in notes from students, parents, administrators, or colleagues, current events that occurred during the year, photographs of your first classroom, your first students, your first holiday gift, your first confiscated note between students, and the like. (You can glue those mementos to the pages in appendix B, on page 119, of this book so you’ve got everything in one place.) If you are using a Google Doc or other online application, you could save notes there. Years from now, when you look back on your reflections, you will be humbled and astonished at how far you’ve come. You might even be ready to pay it forward and use your experiences to lend a hand to the next generation of beginning teachers.

Now take a deep breath.

You’ve got this; you’ve so got this.