iStock/Halfpoint

2 TEACHING STORIES

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

2.1 Consider where you "fit in" as you examine the overview of teachers in America

2.2 Compare your story to one of the teaching stories—in what ways do their excitement and challenges with teaching feel resonant with who you are?

2.3 Think about how the hidden curriculum affects the climate in the classroom

2.4 Explore the support systems that are in place for new teachers

2.5 Compare the lifelong learning needs of teachers with those in other professions

InTASC Standards

- Standard 6: Assessment
- Standard 7: Planning for Instruction
- Standard 9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice

Introduction

Through the stories of new and experienced teachers, this chapter provides a glimpse into the ways teachers from grades pre-K–12 make their decisions to enter the field and what they consider the most exciting and challenging aspects of their work. Their stories are designed to help you explore what Parker Palmer (2017) calls the "inner landscape of a teacher's life."

Being a teacher requires an emotional and intellectual commitment. In a typical school day, teachers can experience excitement and frustration, pleasure and angst, great leaps of joy as well as sadness. During the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers all over the country embraced resilience while navigating uncertainty. Their diligence and persistence were remarkable.

How ready you are to navigate these emotions—while at the same time staying focused on your goals for the day—is something only you can know. The stories in this chapter may remind you of yourself or of a teacher you have had.

TAKING THE ROLL CALL FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

As of the Fall of 2020, about 54.1 million students are enrolled in American public and private elementary and secondary schools with over 49.4 million students in public schools. An estimated 4.7 million students attend private schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), this number was down from the Fall of 2019 by 1.4 million students (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_203.45.asp retrieved February 20, 2022). It was the first time in the 21st century that there was a decline in student enrollment. It is unclear the extent to which the pandemic is responsible for this loss of student attendance. More research will reveal the ways that shutting schools down and then reopening in unpredictable ways affected the day-to-day lives of many students, especially those from poor and underserved communities.

In public schools, between 1985 and 2015, there was a 30% increase in elementary enrollment (pre-K through Grade 8), compared with a 17% increase in secondary enrollment (Grades 9–12). Part of the relatively fast growth in public elementary school enrollment resulted from the expansion of pre-K enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2017a).

Serving today's students are 3.7 million teachers, which includes about 500,000 private school teachers (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_208.20.asp retrieved Feb 22, 2022).

Over 76% of teachers are female while about 79% are white. The majority of public school teachers in the U.S. workforce therefore do not represent the diversity of the students attending our schools.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

While white women comprised 90% of the teaching workforce in 2001 and that percentage is far lower at this time, there is still more work to be done to create a teacher workforce that resembles the diversity of students in the United States.

Klaus Vedfelt/DigitalVision/via Getty Images

It is of great importance that more men enter the profession. Researchers have asserted that male role models are significant figures in the classroom. Black men are the most underrepresented demographic in the teaching workforce (Mitchell, 2016). Studies are exploring what it takes to recruit and keep minority male teachers in the classroom (Bristol, 2015). Many non-white men see teaching as a woman's profession, especially at the pre-K and elementary levels where the absence of men, especially non-white men, is most pronounced. The average age of public school teachers is between 41 and 44, with fewer than 15% of teachers under the age of 30. This speaks to the large number of younger teachers that leave the profession. (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1718_fltable02_t1s.asp retrieved Feb 22, 2022). It also speaks to the importance of recruiting and retaining young teachers through mentoring programs and through an emphasis on how rewarding a teaching career is and how most teachers realize satisfaction over a lifetime of teaching. In addition, over 49% of teachers have attained a master's degree, signaling the importance of lifelong learning as they continue in their careers (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_209.20.asp).

Early Childhood Education

There are many more early childhood teachers today than there were just a few years ago, paralleling the rise of pre-K classes in public and private schools. In Chapter 1, we described the National Association for the Education of Young People (NAEYC), a group that works tirelessly on improving the education of our youngest students. A national association dedicated to the early education of children highlights the significance of an auspicious beginning for a child's future learning.

You may be wondering why so much attention is given to preschool and kindergarten through second grade. Preschool, pre-K, and kindergarten play a vital role in the development of children. What they learn and experience in their early years shapes their views of themselves and the world. Early learning programs, enrolling children as young as three years old, are seen as the key to closing achievement gaps, which we will examine later. Special sensitivities and skills are required for early childhood teaching, and they are embodied by the following teacher.

Ben Ben is a relatively new preschool teacher, working for his second year at a private preschool in a suburban community on the East Coast. He is well thought of by his peers and adored by his students, and he is fond of saying "everything is a work in progress, including me." I experience Ben as a very calm and even-tempered person, and I could picture him being very patient with his young charges.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

Ben feels the stigma on preschool teaching for women and men is unwarranted. He explains that we need excellent preschool teachers to make sure that our kids are growing up well. He explains that it is important work, and you can feel like you are making a significant difference. His current group of students includes two- and three-year-olds, and I was interested in learning how he became a teacher of small children.

iStock/SolStock

Like many teachers with whom I have spoken, Ben "fell into" preschool teaching. After being unsure of his college major, he took some education classes and eventually majored in English and philosophy. He explains:

"I always knew I wanted to teach; however, I thought I would want to teach older students. I have always liked and got along very well with my young cousins, so when a good friend, who had been teaching at this preschool and really enjoying it, suggested to me that I may like teaching preschool students, I gave it a try. The rest is history. I definitely learned on the job through professional development courses and by being coached by my peer teachers, and I discovered that working with young children is something I am good at."

When asked about the upsides of preschool teaching, he remarked:

"Understanding the impact you can make on very young children is really an important reward. I love knowing that the children are having a good time and that they are happy to see me; sometimes kids don't want to leave. Happy kids are those who are learning!"

He explained that his goals include promoting the children's social development:

"I want them to understand that their words are powerful and that they can use their words to communicate with each other. Watching the children improve in that skill is very rewarding. I also love to watch them build skills for themselves, so I am careful not to do too much for them and to encourage them to do it themselves . . . whether it be putting on their shoes or opening their lunches. I try not to do these tasks for them, and I am getting better at this every day. I show the children how to do a task and encourage them to do it themselves. It is so important to set a young child on a path where they can feel good about themselves . . . that feeling of 'look what I can do.'"

When asked what was most stressful about his work, Ben responded by explaining how difficult it was at the beginning not to do things for the children.

"I found myself learning from my students . . . the way they develop, and the challenges they are facing. It was really difficult at first not to do things for the children, but that does not help them learn for themselves."

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

Instead, Ben spends time patiently holding out the expectations that they can perform the task on their own with a bit of guidance.

> "You have to be so consistent with young children and know how important your language is. They are teaching me a lot every single day. I tell them that their words are the most important thing they have. I feel like I plant little seeds."

Often, early childhood educators are dismissed by society as glorified babysitters. This is incorrect and damaging to the profession and to an understanding of the crucial role that early learning plays in the development of healthy children and productive students. There is consistent controversy over the role of play in early learning environments. Watching young children at play reminds us of the social skills the students develop through play, such as empathy, impulse control, capacity for sharing, communicating, and problem solving. Play-based activities also enhance children's capacity to think creatively, make choices, explore their environment, and develop prewriting and sequencing skills. Learning is an interactive, social experience that requires communication between the learners and their peers as well as their teachers. Perhaps the most dominant misconception about early childhood teaching is that it is not as work-intensive as teaching in the higher grades. In fact, preparing a curriculum and activities for young children requires many hours of research and careful planning. Preschool teachers often work in teams, collaborating on a wide range of early childhood issues. Ben shares that:

> "Watching more experienced teachers work and having conversations with them has been so helpful. Everything that my peers do is in the interests of their kids. Even if you do not understand it at first, when you learn their reasoning, you know their goals are to help the children grow."

Like the teachers you will read about in the following section, Ben receives support from his colleagues and from taking professional development courses.

Deciding to Become a Teacher

> *In my entire life as a student, I remember only twice being given the opportunity to come up with my own ideas, a fact I consider typical and terrible.*
>
> —*Eleanor Duckworth, educational researcher (1991)*

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' description of "Teaching for a Living" begins with the following: "If you dream of inspiring the minds of the future, consider teaching" (Vilorio, 2016). Over the years, I have often asked elementary, middle, and high school teachers from all backgrounds to talk about themselves and their attitudes toward the profession. We begin with what some of them said about their reasons for becoming teachers. Notice how, for some teachers, both new and experienced, teaching was a calling. For others, they had twists and turns in their careers before winding up in the classroom. Think about their stories as you begin your own journey.

Kathryn Kathryn is a high school biology and chemistry teacher, teaching Grades 9 and 10 in a suburban northeastern school district. She teaches in two different schools in the same district and goes back and forth between them. Her students adore her, and she works them really hard. She majored in the sciences in college and took a minor in secondary education. She just always knew that, as much as she loves scientific research, she always wanted to be a teacher:

> "When I was in elementary school, I loved being able to try new things and make new discoveries. I think I was initially taken with the idea of daily exploration in any way, shape, or form, and that trend continued well into middle and high school. Even simple things seemed magical in a classroom; tadpoles transformed in front of us; dissecting frogs became a lesson in the operating room; learning poetry turned me into John Donne. When considering college options, I knew my heart belonged in teaching. I spent much of my high school career forcing myself to master material, with the most effective method being through explanations to my peers. I had

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

heard the saying multiple times, that if you want to prove you know a subject, try teaching it to someone else. Being in school exposed me to the teaching profession, and I thrived in an environment that challenged me to adapt socially, intellectually, and emotionally on a daily basis. I knew that not every job had the potential to do that."

Helene Helene is a wildly popular French teacher, and for the last seven years has taught five classes of seventh and eighth graders as part of the world languages department of a suburban middle school in the mid-Atlantic. Born and raised mostly in France, Helene's decision to become a teacher was not easy for her, even though most of her family in France are teachers. Helene majored and then worked in business for several years before deciding to get her master's degree in education and become certified to teach Grades K–8. She had been surrounded in her early life by people who loved teaching. She wanted to instill in young people an appreciation for another language and its culture. She is known for creating a warm and caring atmosphere in her classroom. Here's how she responded when asked how she found her way to teaching:

"I entered a 10-month intensive graduate program that included two student teaching placements, and I loved them both. I knew I was making the right decision. I was one of those people who became a teacher to make a difference. I wanted to do something good. I started at the elementary level and loved it, but as I got older, I realized 'why not teach French?' It is my native language! It was a challenge to prepare myself for teaching French, especially because I am a native speaker. I was an experienced educator at this point, but I was doing something brand-new to me. I want to create a very warm and caring atmosphere in my classroom, and if you make a mistake, I will not single you out, I will hold your hand and walk you through it. The most exciting thing about my work is my relationships with students. It is at the root of my work and determines the pleasure I get out of the process. When students feel like they know you and trust you and that you care, they will do anything for you."

Jessica Jessica is an English teacher and literacy coordinator in a high school on a military base in the Midwest. She has been teaching for 15 years. As an undergraduate, she majored in dance, her first love. This is how she answers the question about deciding to become a teacher:

"I had always wanted to be a teacher. When I was growing up, I loved to play school with the children I babysat, and I would give the neighborhood children free dance lessons. After college, I decided that I didn't want to be a dancer full time, so I turned to my other love—English. From the very first day of my very first graduate class in education, I knew I had chosen the right career.

"I attribute my interest in teaching to several things: (1) a lifelong love of learning; (2) I had always loved going to school, even when I wasn't the best student (I did better in school as I got older); and (3) the fact that my mother is also a teacher, and I grew up watching her grade papers and plan her instruction."

Amanda Amanda is a third-grade teacher in the rural Northeast. When I first entered her classroom, I was struck by how quiet it was. She apologized profusely for the silence, remarking that the students were usually noisier and more actively engaged in groups, but this time they were just finishing independent reading. She promised that soon I would see the real class! So often we think of good classes as silent, but learning often happens in social exchanges with others, as we will see in later chapters. When asked why she entered teaching, Amanda said:

"Teaching has always been my calling. Ever since my first week of kindergarten, I knew that teaching would be my chosen path. That first day, I came home exclaiming to my mom, 'I want to be a teacher just like Mrs. Seguin!' I spent the rest of my elementary school days playing teacher with my sister, my friends, and even my stuffed animals when no one was available. I had grade books, lesson plans, and homemade worksheets, and I made signs for my door that indicated my room was now 'Miss Riggs's 1st grade class.'

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

iStock/M-image

> "Even though I have always been drawn to the profession, it wasn't until my first year of college when I was taking an education course that I began to fully understand why I wanted to be a part of education. My dad was never what one might call a reader or a writer. The only book that I saw him read was the Bible, and I remember him asking me for help in spelling different words starting in second grade. Yet it was my dad who showed me the responsibility of being an educator. I was talking with him about a literacy lesson that I needed to prepare for class. I shared the many techniques that I had learned and how I was going to have the kids first participate in a hands-on activity and then draw the knowledge out from the activity. My father changed my outlook on education forever when he said, 'I would have learned how to read and write if my teachers had taught like you.' It was then that I realized I wanted to be a teacher to reach those kids who couldn't learn through traditional teaching methods. I wanted to find a way so that every student 'clicked' with literacy and gained the skills to make his or her life one of continuous learning."

Cheryl Cheryl has been teaching elementary school for 19 years and is currently a sought-after and beloved teacher in a K–5 elementary school on the east coast. Formerly a third-grade teacher, this is her first year teaching second grade, and she is enjoying the challenge. According to Cheryl, staying in one grade for too long can make you stale. She loves working with a new team of colleagues and a new curriculum. While Cheryl works in an affluent community during the school year, she teaches during the summer in a high-needs area where the challenges and rewards are very different. Cheryl's path to becoming a classroom teacher went like this:

> "Going into teaching was a comfort level for me. As the oldest of five children, we were always around a lot of children, and I had a high level of comfort and confidence with children. At family gatherings, I was always the leader. I studied early-childhood education when I went to college and then when I moved to another state I went back to school for another certification for older grades. I would say I fell into teaching because of the comfort level and because, when I was volunteering, I realized how much I enjoyed working with students. As a young mother, I volunteered in my children's elementary school and was approached by the principal to consider being a full-time teacher in that school. I had not thought of making the commitment at that time; however, I was encouraged to get certified and join the full-time teaching force. I'm so glad I did."

When speaking with Cheryl, one gets the impression that her "falling into teaching" was a natural extension of her life and her education. As we can see, this is not always the case. Often when teachers

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

are asked why they decided to enter the profession, they say, "I love children" or "I love kids." These answers echo the findings of many formal studies. Another burning reason for deciding to become a teacher is an individual's love of learning. The most successful teachers I know—like the ones featured in this chapter—typically talk about how they "loved learning." That is not to say they do not also love children, but teaching is a complex activity. In the words of educational researcher Jackie Grennon Brooks (2002):

> "Common thinking is that teaching is simple. But teaching isn't simple. It's a highly sophisticated intellectual activity that requires, among other things, a centered presence in the classroom, good negotiation skills, understandings of pedagogy and psychology that inform one another, and sensitivity to sociological factors in learning." (p. 11)

Jennifer Jennifer is a second-grade teacher at an urban elementary school where she has taught for twenty years. During that time, she also taught kindergarten and grades 3, 4, and 6.-. She has been a second-grade teacher for 12 years, ten of those as the teacher in the gifted and talented program. She feels blessed to be in a wonderful school community because there is strong collaboration between teachers and administrators. In this enormous school system, she has landed in a school that values and respects teachers' contributions to decision-making about curriculum, schoolwide goals, and parent and community relationships.

> "I never started out wanting to be a teacher. I wanted to be a rabbi and then I went to work at an overnight camp, worked with a synagogue youth group, and became a teacher in the religious school. At camp, the people in charge asked me, 'Why aren't you aspiring to be a teacher?' They said, 'This is what you are "supposed" to do.' They noticed something about the way I interacted with kids and said that my communication skills were a good fit for teaching, however, I did not recognize the qualities that my supervisor observed at that time. I was influenced by her observations, however, and I went to graduate school to study to become a teacher. It was there that I realized that this was, indeed, something I was 'supposed to' do. Teaching became my calling as I recognized that I had a gift for relating to children and helping them become learners. During my teacher education experience, those qualities were reflected to me by my professors. Once I began learning about how to become a teacher, I sought opportunities to become a better teacher."

When beginning education students talk about entering teaching because they love kids, I learn from talking with them that they have been babysitters and camp counselors and that they have enjoyed these responsibilities. That is a fine start, but these informal experiences with children or adolescents are different from the more structured experiences found in classrooms and the demands of teaching. At this point in your education, you may have already visited one or more classrooms and observed teaching in action, so you are aware of the vast differences between the formal and informal settings in which we interact with youngsters. It is interesting to note that Jennifer's story started out as a success experience in informal settings that translated to success in the formal classroom. Notice how she credits her work in teacher education as aiding her on this journey.

In addition to loving learning, people pursuing teaching careers often also loved school. Notice especially what Kathryn said about the inspiration provided by daily exploration and experimentation.

Sometimes, a future teacher will tell me that he or she finds the profession appealing because they like the hours! One visit to the Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals the following: For many teachers, the workday starts early and ends late. Job duties vary by subject and grade level, but teaching involves class preparation, instruction time, and after-school duties. The idea of teaching as a 9 to 3 job is a myth.

Another major reason secondary teacher candidates cited for becoming educators was prior experience as a high school tutor or peer teacher. Some teacher candidates were motivated to teach because of positive experiences in informal teaching settings, and some had early religious training that affected their desire to serve others and teach.

What about Helene's story? She started working in business, as some of you may have, and then realized she wanted to make a difference for young people. Not everyone who enters the field has had a lifelong calling to teach. Yet life as a teacher becomes fulfilling when there is a good match between the person and the demands of the profession. This is what I referred to as goodness of fit in Chapter 1.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

EXCITEMENT AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHING

Every September, every teacher proceeds into foreign territories.

—Maxine Hong Kingston, distinguished writer and professor

When teachers are asked about the most exciting aspects of their work, invariably their answers relate to student learning. In this section, we explore what some teachers say really excites them about their work, and then we examine some difficult challenges.

What Are the Most Exciting Aspects of Teaching?

JGI/Jamie Grill/Tetra images/via Getty Images

Kathryn "When I started teaching, I lived for the light bulb moments—the times when difficult concepts finally clicked for a student. I liked being challenged to think of explanations and analogies that were outside of the box. As much as you plan and try to perfect your lesson, there will always be something that can totally derail a class. People are unpredictable, and the spontaneous moments show both the students' and the teacher's true colors. A lot of the profession is having the flexibility to handle whatever situation arises. I love being able to say that not a day goes by where I do the exact same thing. Good teachers change their lessons, try new techniques, master skills that work, but nothing is ever the same—guaranteeing that every day will be exciting."

WRITING & REFLECTION

"I Like the Hours"

Sam wakes up one morning and says, "I want to be a teacher." When asked why, Sam answers, "I like the hours."

This is an uninspiring reason, and it is misguided as well. Did you know that teachers work much longer than the traditional 9:00-to-3:00 day? Look at the following data the National Education Association (NEA, 2006) gathered from its teacher members:

Twenty-first-century teachers

- spend an average of 50 hours per week on all teaching duties,
- teach an average of 21 pupils in a class at the elementary level and 28 pupils per class at the secondary level,
- spend an average of $443 per year of their own money to meet the needs of their students, and
- enter the teaching profession to help shape the next generation.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

"I don't like the clock. The students in my building have a unique set of challenges, and I do the best I can to let them know they are safe and supported in my classroom. When students know you care, they are willing to go the extra mile for their teacher, and that's what makes my job so exciting. To have your 'work' thank you is probably the most rewarding feeling ever."

Amanda "Tome, the process of teaching and learning is exciting—the look on a student's face when he or she finally gets it, watching a student move from confusion to understanding, fielding a question you did not expect and do not know the answer to. It has been my greatest joy to see that student who struggled so much in an area work hard and become successful.

"There are many times when I struggle with presenting difficult material so that all students can grasp the 'big idea' of the lesson. I can go through four or five activities in my room, and sometimes there are a handful of kids who just cannot make sense of the material. Finally finding a way to reach those kids—now that is exciting.

"The classroom is a complex roller-coaster ride in the dark; you never know what will happen next. From scheduling changes to student needs, environmental factors (try teaching about fractions in 90-degree weather!), and even your own moods, no plan is ever left in its original state. An educator must roll with the needs of his or her students, and those needs are ever changing, every day. I find that exciting."

Jessica "The most exciting aspects of being a teacher are the possibilities that come with each new day. I teach adolescents, and they truly are different people every day. Watching them change and grow from the first day of the school year to the last is like watching a transformation right in front of your own eyes, and it is very exciting and challenging."

Helene "What fills me up is when I see increased self-confidence in the students and when the students feel comfortable using the language and taking risks. I am most surprised by how much I care about the kids. I get choked up about it because as a student, I had a lot of negative experiences. I want the students to enjoy learning and enjoy being in school; if you enjoy learning, you will persist through it."

Cheryl "I love the 'ah-ha' moment where you can watch kids connect the dots and have them recognize what they are really good at. Then they can start liking themselves and show pride in their accomplishments. My favorite part of the day is when the kids are so excited to get into the classroom, and when I hear the bell ring and when those kids walk in the door, I feel their excitement. They are happy to be in my room. They tell me their news since last we were together: 'I painted my room last night.' 'Today's my father's birthday.' They know I care."

Jennifer "For me, observing students' growth during my time with them is thrilling. Watching students integrate the ideas you discuss with them, expand upon them, and make them their own is very rewarding. I learn a lot from my students every day. I rejoice in their accomplishments and help them deal with their sorrows. Creating a community is a huge goal in my teaching. I enjoy imparting my personal wisdom and empathizing with their struggles as I celebrate their victories. I learned that you must be your authentic self to genuinely connect with your students. Indeed, you truly teach who you are. I know when to apologize to them and when to point out my own mistakes. All I ask is that they do their best job every day."

Rewards of a Teaching Life

The following observations about teaching provide an overview of these teachers' beliefs based on their experiences and their hopes for the profession as they continue. You can think of these observations as the "teaching ideas behind their stories."

- For these teachers, the idea of meeting new students every year and, in Jessica's case, feeling like there are new students almost daily, is a stimulating aspect of being a teacher. Each day is different, requiring a sharp and attentive adult presence in the classroom. These teachers enjoy the challenge.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

- Kathryn also loves that every day is a new challenge and that nothing is ever the same.
- Amanda notes that the process of teaching is exciting. Like Amanda, many teachers try different approaches to content material to make sure they reach the various types of learners in their classes.
- Kathryn, Amanda, Helene, Cheryl, Jessica, and Jennifer talk about the excitement of reaching the children and recognizing that they "got it" as it related to new knowledge construction.
- These teachers, typical of most, work actively on their teaching preparations and constantly challenge themselves to come up with novel ways to engage students in their own learning. They remind me that "to teach is to learn." Kathryn tells us that she really understands a concept when she has to decide how to teach it.

What Are the Most Difficult Challenges for Teachers?

Kathryn "I've always prided myself on staying organized and on top of all responsibilities. Sometimes it's incredibly easy, and other times you don't know how you will make it through the day. There are just so many facets to being a good teacher that require all of your attention, that multitasking alone isn't possible. The paperwork, the grading, the extra help, the lesson planning, the phone calls, the make-up work, the list goes on and on, and it all adds up to an incredible amount of time. Finding time to complete everything to my personal level of satisfaction is hard. Not every new teacher is prepared for that when they walk in the door—I know I wasn't. I still give up Saturdays and end up having 13-hour Thursdays, but every minute is worth it when I know my students are becoming productive members of society and developing skills that will serve them throughout their life. I know that planning is so important for the success of the lesson.

AJ_Watt/Moment/via Getty Images

"At first, I was intimidated by my colleagues and was afraid to ask for help. Your fellow teachers are your greatest allies. Any sports team will work better when they rely on each other, and teachers of any discipline learn that together they make better lessons. Each person has a unique set of talents, and every student deserves access to that. I have found that, in collaborating, we have motivational, engaging, exciting lessons that reach all levels of learners."

Amanda "I find that the most difficult challenge is staying focused on my purpose. I am not in the room to raise test scores, to be a child's best friend. I am there to help students go beyond their potential and gain skill sets needed for a successful, learning life. Many distractions are found in the school environment—often created by those who are well meaning. Stick to what you know is best for your students despite what others around you might think. Planning is everything . . . it helps keep you focused on your goals for the kids.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

"One year, my room was across the hall from a teacher who shouted a great deal at her students. These outbursts not only damaged her class but mine as well.

"A good educator knows how to instruct students about expected behaviors and not shout about bad behaviors. No matter how frustrated, disappointed, or exhausted I become, I am here as a teacher and a learner, and learning happens mostly by my example—a good example or a poor one."

Cheryl "Teaching, like children, is not 'boxy.' Every day is different, and you need to make your own decisions in your own classroom. Now there are unannounced 'walk-throughs' all the time by administration because there is a movement for uniformity that does not match the challenges of teaching a diverse population. Teachers have to be strong and be advocates for yourself and your students."

Cheryl talks about having the students sit on large yoga balls instead of chairs, and recently she wrote a paper to make a case for the students sitting in this way. The county in which she worked wanted her to go back to chairs; however, her paper convinced the higher administration that sitting on these balls has many benefits for the children's posture, attentiveness, and readiness for learning.

Jennifer "I feel that class size is the inherent challenge in teaching in a crowded urban area. There are at least 32 students in my second-grade class, and it is challenging to address so many students' needs. This constraint is the greatest obstacle to my work. The students are all so different and require different types of emotional and intellectual support. There is an overwhelming need to be a data-driven educational system and a lot gets lost when you just focus on the numbers. Test scores do not tell the complete story of a child's learning trajectory. Teachers put in a great deal of time after school hours. They plan, prepare, record, reflect and are not always in charge of the required assessments, the results of which do not always reflect the students' accomplishments as learners."

Jennifer talks about the ritual of standardized testing in English language arts and mathematics in the elementary school. These tests have become an integral part of education in public schools. We will visit this issue in Chapter 3.

Teaching and Learning

By a "learning life," Amanda refers to a desire to know more and to have the skills to acquire new knowledge when the need and desire arises. Amanda herself has a "learning life," and by example and through practice, she engages her students in what it means to be a learner. Previously in the chapter, the quote from Jackie Grennon Brooks introduced the concept of the teacher as a "centered presence" in the classroom. Amanda's understanding of her role in the classroom and her goals for her students helps her establish this centered presence. She is prepared and capable and has high expectations for her students. When Amanda says that learning happens by example, she means that she models to her students—demonstrates through her own behavior—what it looks like to be a learner. She learns about the content areas she teaches through her own research; she learns about her students through the interactions she has with them; and she learns about herself as she strives to refine her practice and to discover what works best for her students.

Other opportunities are available for teachers who specialize in meeting the needs of students with a range of learning and physical disabilities. These teachers are often called *special education teachers*, and they are uniquely prepared to help students who have special needs. As well, teachers may become reading specialists, working with small groups of students to enhance literacy instruction in several classes each day, typically in an elementary school. Other teachers pursue gifted education, spearheading programs in schools that are designed to meet the needs of students considered performing well above their grade level. These special areas of concentration are discussed in later chapters.

While teachers' salaries have, in fact, risen considerably over the past few decades, many teachers are underpaid in the United States. While the national average K–12 teacher salary is **$64,524,** this varies significantly by state. Unfortunately, many teachers are underpaid for taking on one of the most important tasks for a new generation: educating our youth.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

Some of the best states for teachers' salaries are New York, Washington, Utah, New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. Of these states, New York, Washington, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania are among the ten highest-paying states for teachers (https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/teacher-pay-by-state retrieved Mar 3, 2022).

Challenges and Opportunities

When asked to discuss the challenges in their professional lives as teachers, responses overwhelmingly focused on the demands from the school community, outside of meeting the needs of the students. Jessica sums it up here:

Jessica "One of the most difficult challenges for teachers stems from data collection and management. I knew that lesson plans, student handouts, and student work would be much of the workload of a teacher. In addition to those items, there are constant requests for information from the office, the nurse, the psychologists, special education teachers, parents, administrators, and even people in the community that must be dealt with promptly and regularly. The amount of paperwork required for a classroom observation, or a field trip, or a school play, can be mind boggling."

WRITING & REFLECTION

Begin a Teaching Journal

Start now to keep a professional journal for yourself. If you have not had a lot of practice journaling, starting a reflective journal can be daunting. You may want to begin by inserting the writing activities from Chapter 1: drawing yourself as a teacher and your metaphor or simile for teaching, as well as your educational autobiography and a memory of a favorite teacher. You can keep your journal in a notebook, a blank book, a binder, or digitally on your computer or online—any method that is most comfortable and inspiring to you.

Being a reflective teacher is a theme we will return to again and again in this text. Reflective teachers take careful note of how their teaching practice is going and modify their methods accordingly. Because you are just embarking on teaching, your reflective journal should include how you are experiencing being an education student and what you are learning about teaching and yourself.

You can continue to fill your journal as you read this book, using as inspiration both the guided "Writing & Reflection" activities found in each chapter as well as your own thoughts and ideas on questions and topics presented. As you journal, try to let your thoughts flow, without trying to edit them or get them down perfectly, and see where they take you. Your true feelings are more likely to surface this way.

Here are a few questions to help you begin your teaching journal:

- How are you experiencing the introductory education course you are taking?
- What are you discovering about the teaching profession that you did not know previously? Are there any surprises?
- At this point, how do you feel about a career in teaching?

Remember: You are on your own journey of growth and change, and the journal is a good record-keeping device for this process. Getting into the habit of journaling now can serve you well into your future career as a teacher.

Teachers manage a great deal of data in their work, and for some teachers, the task is daunting. These include attendance reports, progress reports for each student, and evidence of student work. Elementary school teachers often keep work folders for each student, whereas in the middle and upper grades, student work is often handled using computer software programs. Science teachers usually have lengthy lab reports to evaluate, and language arts and social studies teachers evaluate analytical essays, term reports, book responses, and creative writing. Fortunately, digital technology, when available, makes handling data for especially large numbers of students much more manageable. We will visit those systems in Chapter 7.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

Dealing with parents is part of a teacher's responsibility. We serve the children, but they are not ours. Jessica is conflicted about her communication with parents. Of course, parents are affected by what happens at their child's school and in their child's classroom. Communication between teachers and parents is important, and it is fostered through school practices that we will explore later in this text. These practices include a class web page, email communication, as well as letters home. The "paperwork" responsibilities are often "electronic communication" responsibilities. Not only can parents influence decisions made about their child's education at school, but they can also contribute to the governance of the school through a parent–teacher association or similar group. It is always a good idea to reach out to parents and invite them to become part of your classroom community as helpers and contributors. In some school districts, parents are a frequent presence in classrooms. In other communities, parents are not available as often because of work responsibilities, but it is still important to invite them to contribute whenever possible. In other communities, parents are not a frequent presence either at school or electronically. In many poorer communities, parents are working outside the home to make ends meet. The availability of electronic communication by cell phone is a help in these communities where teachers wish the parents had more time to be engaged and students rely heavily on teachers and schools for a wide range of needs.

Many people experience schools as "little villages," where the principal is the mayor and other individuals have varying amounts of importance or privilege. In all jobs, the politics of the environment can affect each of the workers. It is a good idea to learn about the expectations and norms of the school environment in which you will be working. You may already have had jobs where the politics of the environment affected your work. Although workplace politics may annoy or sometimes discourage you, keep in mind how important it is that schools function as learning communities where all the professionals share a core set of common goals.

A major challenge for teachers at all levels is the preparation required to engage students in meaningful learning experiences. Many people, like Sam earlier in this chapter, are unaware of the number of hours beyond the school day that teachers spend in preparation. Teachers can never be *over*prepared. The term *curriculum*, as we will explore later in this text, refers to a plan of studies that includes the ways in which the instructional content is organized and presented at each grade level. Even if you have studied a subject area extensively, you may need to deepen your knowledge of certain topics in the curriculum. Students know when a teacher is prepared for the school day. It is evident in the materials the teacher has assembled and the activities the teacher is ready to implement. It contributes to Brooks's centered presence in the classroom.

TEACHING AND VISION

Research has found that all teachers carry in their head a vision of what they want to be as a teacher (Hammerness, 2006). That is, all teachers have their own sense of what a classroom should "look like" and how it should function. Yet these visions of teaching are as variable as are the individuals who choose to teach.

Our beliefs and images concerning teaching are often difficult to enact; there is often a disconnect between what we imagine and what we can practice. For example, when I walked into a second-grade classroom early one morning, the teacher had the children in the center of the room and was engaging them in hand motions and movement routines to a popular rock song blasting from her iPad. The children were loving it! When the activity was done, Ms. Outerbridge said, "OK, girls and boys, we are now ready to work!" When I asked her about this activity, she said that (like Jessica) she had been a dancer, and her life in dance had taught her that releasing the energy in our bodies was an important way to stimulate the thinking in our minds. She worried that when her students came to class they were too docile, having already learned by Grade 2 how to "be quiet." She wanted them to be active in their bodies so they could be active thinkers about the topics of study.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

iStock/skynesher

"How wonderful!" I thought. I knew, however, that try as I might, I could never get myself or my youngsters to learn and then enact this intricate movement routine. I do not have that set of skills. I admired Ms. Outerbridge's vision but could not enact it. It is in this way that who we are comes to bear upon what we do with children and how we engage them in learning—hence, the expression "we teach who we are."

Throughout your journey to become a teacher, you will be asked about your personal vision. It is a goal of teacher preparation programs that you develop a personal educational philosophy informed not only by the scholars and research you have learned about in your program but also by your own beliefs, metaphors, personal vision, and values. The combination of self-knowledge and scholarly knowledge will assist you in developing your own philosophy. You started to do this in Chapter 1 when you described your personal simile or metaphor for teaching.

The mantra that "we teach who we are" permeates this text. Ms. Outerbridge is a dancer; that background has served her as a learner, and she shares her passion with her second graders. Similarly, in the story that follows, my life as a scientist found its way into a third-grade classroom not long ago.

Every week, I was visiting a local elementary school classroom and exploring different topics in physical science with them. One weekend before a visit, I was in another state celebrating the seventh birthday of my first granddaughter. Her mother, my daughter, discovered that the batteries in her digital camera appeared to be dead and asked if I had batteries in my camera that she could use. We made the switch; I handed the "dead" batteries to my husband, and my daughter was able to use her camera.

Some hours later, when we arrived back home after the party, my husband noticed that his right pocket was very warm—uncomfortably so. "What do you have in there?" I asked. "Just the batteries and my loose change," he replied. Delighted, I shrieked, "The batteries are not dead, and there is an electrical circuit in your pocket. It is generating all this heat!"

It is a family joke now that my thrill at finding "science in our daily life" seemed to overcome my empathy for his discomfort. However, I recognized that this was another opportunity to make the topic relevant to the third graders who were making circuits for an electricity unit. I told the story to them that week and stopped short of an explanation. "If my husband had the dead batteries and some loose coins in his pocket, why would it be warm? Can you draw a picture of the contents of his pocket?" Eagerly, students drew coins and batteries and understood that the metal coins acted as a wire and conducted electricity.

This story illustrates how our personal lives meet our professional lives in the classroom. Your students will learn a lot about you, and you will also learn a lot about them.

Hidden Curriculum

The stories we tell students about our lives and experiences outside of school are one small part of what may be considered the **hidden curriculum**: what students learn as they participate in the act of going to school, being part of a classroom community, and relating to their peers and their teachers. The phrase *hidden curriculum* was coined by the sociologist Phillip Jackson (1968), who described ways in

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

which schools become arenas for socialization and transmit messages to students about how to be in the world. Long before that, educational philosopher John Dewey (1916) explored the hidden curriculum in schools as he examined the social values inherent in the experience of school. Hence, the hidden curriculum includes how we interact with students, how we enact the rules of the school culture, and how we communicate our expectations for student achievement and demeanor and our own passion for teaching and learning. I often think of the hidden curriculum as the values and beliefs inherent in the experience of "doing school." For so many students during the Covid-19 pandemic, that was a huge loss. The experience of recognizing and understanding the school culture and the beliefs and values inherent in the act of going to school was missing from many young people's lives.

By telling the batteries-in-the-pocket story to my young students, I gave them a glimpse of what it is like to be an adult with a curious, scientific mind (and a family eager to make fun of my propensities). Perhaps the story helped some students in the class feel that science is fun, interesting, and relevant to daily life—and that certainly matches my vision of what I want to do in the classroom.

Every day, through countless similar incidents, teachers contribute positively to their school's hidden curriculum. However, teachers can also affect the hidden curriculum in negative ways. If you and other teachers are bored and cynical, for instance, you convey those feelings to your students. No matter how dutifully you slog through the subject matter, students will sense that it does not interest you, and they will absorb that message.

If you call on boys more than girls, for example, the hidden curriculum of your classroom might include the idea that boys are somehow more important. In early studies of gender and schooling in the 1980s, there were many instances in which teachers called on boys more frequently than girls as a way of exercising "control" in the classroom (Sadker & Sadker, 1995; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). The belief in the latter environment was that if you kept the boys engaged, they would not be apt to "act up." Today, we know that calling on boys and girls in equal numbers is of significant importance.

The hidden curriculum, not a part of public documents, includes messages that deal with attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior. For example, when the No Child Left Behind Act was passed in 2002, regular assessment of mathematics and language arts prompted many elementary school administrators to allocate much more time to these subjects than to science, social studies, art, or music. The tacit message for children is that science is less important than math and reading, for example. The Every Student Succeeds Act passed in 2015 gives states more flexibility for administering standardized tests and has the promise of encouraging more diversity in the school curriculum. The hidden curriculum transmits the cultural and social norms of the school (how things are done, what routines matter, what dress is acceptable, who counts and who does not!). When you visit schools and examine their routines and practices, ask yourself what matters to the leaders of this school. By exploring what is displayed in their showcases and on their walls, the hidden curriculum can be revealed.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

When asked who gave them the most support in their teaching careers, the teachers featured in this chapter all agreed that their colleagues were the strongest source of support. This matches research that asserts that teachers are the most successful when they are in connection with competent colleagues who are happy to mentor each other (Ebner, 2018). The teachers I interviewed mentioned other sources of support as well. As you read the following stories, think about how these teachers interacted with their colleagues and others in the school and the community. During a long period of time, when face-to-face teaching was not possible in the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers sought assistance virtually, through Zoom meetings, and by connecting with virtual mentors. Virtual mentoring and coaching supported many teachers as they worked to educate their students through electronically remote formats (Singer et al., 2021).

Who Provides the Most Support to Teachers?

Amanda "I have found it supportive to listen to fellow teachers and the administrators, students, parents, and community members. You can learn a vast amount from conversations with others. In a crowded teachers' room, I am the one who is content to sit alone and listen in on others' conversations.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

As you listen, you can learn so much about the expectations, the culture, the negatives and the positives, and ways to connect to the school and community in which you teach. I find keeping a teaching journal and jotting down what I discover about the students and the school to be very helpful. I try to make entries at least two or three times a week."

Jessica "In the first years of teaching, much of my support came from my fellow teachers in the building. They were the ones who knew the answers to difficult situations and who would give encouraging words. I have found that to be true even now that I am no longer a new teacher. Other educators can give you ideas, advice, and a sympathetic ear when needed, and this help can come from other new teachers as well as from veterans in the profession. I was assigned a mentor at school, and this teacher was very helpful in acclimating me to the routines and procedures that I needed to understand at the very beginning. As time went on, she became an important role model for me."

Cheryl "For me, professional development is an opportunity to learn with my colleagues. I really like working with them; they are great sources of support. Collaborating with them, observing them, and asking them to observe me improves my practice. The team that I am on takes time to do this. It is really helpful to watch colleagues do lessons and to have them watch me. There is also mandatory professional development regardless of how many years you are teaching. We have meetings before and after work. In any group of teachers, someone will be really good at something that you are not good at. There is so much to learn."

Jennifer "Every morning at 8 a.m., I meet with the other teachers on my grade (second). We plan together and share lessons as we develop units in mathematics, English language arts, and science. We divide the planning and the work, and we coach each other on implementation. I do not [know] what I would do without my grade level peers. During the pandemic, we met each day on Zoom, and never was their support more important."

Mentoring New Teachers

Many schools and school districts are adopting mentor-teacher programs. Mentor teachers are specially trained to work with new teachers and support them in understanding the school culture, the curriculum, and the resources available to them as professionals. You may want to ask if there is a mentor program where you begin teaching. Mentoring has been a trend over the past 10 years as the teaching profession has recognized the need to develop a special transition period during which new teachers acclimate to their profession. This period as a whole is often called *induction*. Good mentors have a broad range of skills and are able to help new teachers apply their professional knowledge in the classroom. They are generally master teachers who have demonstrated a love of teaching and learning and are eager to share their experiences with others.

Learning From New Teachers

Although it may feel like teachers new to the profession are always the learners, new research indicates that they contribute a great deal to the school environment. New teachers bring new ideas and perspectives as well as new energy to school departments and grade levels. While experienced teachers have the advantage over new teachers in many areas, new teachers often have a better understanding of the most recent research, best practices, and pedagogical or technological advances. Because teaching is often so all consuming, veteran teachers may not have time to keep up with the latest innovations or current educational research. When new teachers bring their personal expertise to a department, school, or district, it adds a lot to the school climate and curriculum (Johnson, 2018).

TEACHERS AS LIFELONG LEARNERS

We are living in a rapidly changing global environment in which youngsters' and adults' lives are drastically different than they were even 10 years ago. We are all experiencing the information technology revolution, which has brought access to huge volumes of information—a degree of accessibility never

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

before experienced in human history. This explosion of information, along with the continuous connectedness that we all feel as a result of Internet and cell phone technology, especially with social media, has changed the pace and progress of our daily lives.

In this ever-changing society, the activities that interest students today are necessarily different from the activities that interested you even just a few years ago. Teachers must constantly adapt and improve their skills as they respond to the recurring question: What works best in the classroom for these particular students at this period of time in our history? Many educators today like to think of schools as **learning communities**, a term that emphasizes interaction and collaboration in the learning process. The phrase also conveys the idea that all the participants—teachers, students, and administrators—are always learning. Hence, teachers see their own continuing education as part of their work and their lives.

This need for ongoing **professional development**, as it is called, actually makes many people excited about entering teaching. These individuals understand that to teach is to learn. To improve our practice requires targeted efforts at our own growth as teachers and learners. Professional development can take many forms. We will learn more about the many ways teachers extend their education in a later chapter. In the following, this chapter's teachers share some of their experiences.

How Do Teachers Continue Professional Development?

Kathryn "Professional development is easy for teachers who know they still have a lot to learn. The school I work in now consistently provides a variety of workshops focusing on literacy and technology. I attend a few seminars every year that are sponsored by a local science outreach institute. I participated in a teacher program in Panama in association with the Smithsonian Institute to expose teachers to hands-on science. I've led workshops for my colleagues to show them how they can incorporate publications and inquiry-based projects into everyday lessons. It is challenging, it is time consuming, but when my students can apply skills because I took the time to learn them first, I know it's worth the effort."

Amanda "Alongside life experience, continued schooling is needed. Formal education presents important new ideas, strategies, and problems, and helps your mind grow in the same way that you want your students' minds to grow. In addition, formal education puts you in contact with professors who are experts in their fields and classmates who have a wealth of knowledge to add to your own. Being in a formal learning environment gives you a community of peers with whom you can bounce around ideas. Formal education is a wonderful resource for a teacher."

Jessica "I have taken courses on differentiated instruction, brain-based learning, and adolescent literacy. Whenever possible, I participate in local and national conferences, which enables me to meet teachers from all over the country. These conferences reaffirm my career choice and reinvigorate me to try new ideas with students. I belong to a number of professional organizations that offer regular publications to read and ways to network with other educators. My district sponsors online educational book studies, and I try to participate in at least one per school year; there is a wealth of helpful, thought-provoking information that can be gleaned from the experiences of other teachers. I occasionally present at conferences, which requires a new level of understanding and preparation, so this furthers my professional knowledge."

Benefits of Lifelong Learning

Teachers are expected to keep up with the latest developments in education. In many schools and districts, in fact, teachers are offered financial incentives to continue to learn through professional education courses at a college or university or through professional development courses, often referred to as *in-service courses*, offered by the school district itself. These incentives are based on how many formal graduate school credits or professional development credits a teacher earns in a given academic year. Obviously, you'll appreciate the chance to earn a higher salary.

Yet as the stories you have just read illustrate, there are other incentives for taking professional development courses. Kathryn, Amanda, and Jessica think of themselves as lifelong learners. They take a genuine interest in expanding their minds and improving their teaching. In fact, all of them have

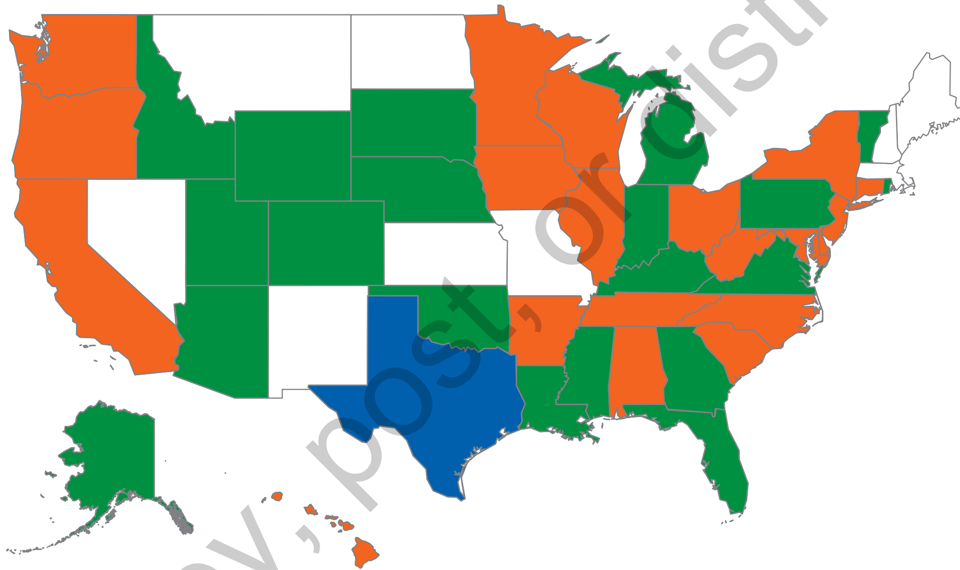
Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

reached the stage of doing their own research or making their own presentations—contributing to the sum of knowledge in the field.

Professional organizations can play a major role in expanding your development as a teacher. The NEA, the American Federation of Teachers, and the NAEYC, discussed in Chapter 1, offer teachers the opportunity to attend conferences, read and contribute to journals, and access professional resources. So do many other organizations; here is just a partial list.

- The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA)
- The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
- The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)
- The National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASET)
- The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)



White: Not yet participating in edTPA

Orange: Policy in Place
In general, these states have statewide policies requiring a state-approved performance assessment as part of program completion or for state licensure and/or state program accreditation/review. In these states, edTPA also has been approved as a performance assessment for these purposes.

Blue: Taking Steps Toward Implementation
A performance assessment and/or edTPA are being considered at the state level for program completion or as a licensure requirement.

Green: State Participating in edTPA
At least one provider of teacher preparation—either traditional or alternative—is exploring or trying out edTPA.

Source: https://secure.aacte.org/apps/edtpa/participation_map.php?action=map

Many teaching resources are available at no cost online through these professional organizations. Professional development takes place in informal settings as well, and this is often the most important kind. In one local school district where I have worked, teachers are encouraged to take field trips to local geological formations—by themselves, without their students—even if they do not teach science in a formal way. Imagine you are an elementary school teacher in this district. How might that type of field trip contribute to your professional development? How might it help you interest your young students in the world around them?

Beginning the Journey to Lifelong Learning: edTPA

In Chapter 1, we indicated that preservice teachers will need to demonstrate through written work, artifacts, and classroom performance videos that they are ready to teach. This is part of a new preservice

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

teacher assessment process, **edTPA**, which stands for "Educative Teacher Performance Assessment" and is mandated in many states (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2021). The evidence submitted in the edTPA is evaluated across five components of teaching practice:

- Planning
- Instruction
- Assessment
- Analyzing Teaching
- Academic Language

Currently, there are 976 Educator Preparation Programs in 41 states and the District of Columbia participating in edTPA. edTPA is a pre-service assessment process designed by educators to answer the essential question: "Is a new teacher ready for the job?" The exciting challenge of participating in the edTPA process is that it is a wonderful learning experience as it serves as an assessment for your readiness to teach. This is a process that people who have become teachers and experienced the exam say is rigorous but worth it because they feel like they have grown as a learner. We will discuss the components of this assessment throughout the text, but for this chapter, I call your attention to the importance of planning. This means that good teachers plan for meaningful instruction. This includes using a variety of tasks, materials, and scaffolding, tied to specific learning objectives. When planning, you ask yourself, "What am I hoping for?" Planning takes into account the needs of students with differing learning abilities. Teachers can never be overprepared!

Building a personal philosophy of teaching is an important starting point in your development as a teacher. Your teaching philosophy is a work in progress and will most likely change with time and exposure to new ideas about how people learn. In the next two chapters of this book, you will read about important educational philosophies that have influenced U.S. education. Your own thinking should evolve as you engage with these ideas. What remains constant is the fact that teaching is hard work and requires that you be reflective, ever conscious, and well prepared—that you be a centered presence in the classroom and ask yourself, what kind of teacher would I like to be?

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I hope that learning about other teachers' dreams and experiences gives you a way to consider what teaching might be like for you. Teaching demands so much from the individual. Our emotional sides must be expressed to communicate a sense of warmth and congeniality, whereas our intellectual selves need to maintain a sense of order, continuity, and consistency. It is a complex endeavor, requiring self-reflection and good analytical skills. One cannot overemphasize the need for personal reflection and the desire to become a lifelong learner. Luckily, teachers receive support from organizations, mentors, preparatory institutions, and sometimes induction programs. Teaching is a wonderful profession that serves the collective social good, for as you make contributions to the learning lives of your students, you contribute to the future. As you consider the brief stories of other teachers, think about your own journey and your path toward becoming a teacher.

CHAPTER REVIEW

Key Terms

edTPA (p. 37)
hidden curriculum (p. 32)
learning communities (p. 35)
professional development (p. 35)

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher

REVIEW THE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Review each section of the chapter and answer the following:

LO 2.1 Where does your demographic lie in the landscape of America's teachers?

LO 2.2 Which teaching story was most compelling for you? Why?

LO 2.3 How is your own personality likely to become part of the hidden curriculum of your classroom?

LO 2.4 What type of support systems do you envision for yourself as a teacher?

LO 2.5 What other professions require lifelong learning in the way that teaching does?

InTASC STANDARDS

Review the InTASC Standards for the chapter and explain how the chapter addressed each one.

Standard 3: Learning Environments
Standard 6: Assessment
Standard 7: Planning for Instruction
Standard 9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice

JOURNAL PROMPTS

What made you decide to become a teacher?
How did your own experience of school influence your interest in teaching as a career choice?

NOTE

1. Stanford University faculty and staff at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) developed edTPA. They received substantive advice and feedback from teachers and teacher educators, and drew from experience gained from over 25 years of developing performance-based assessments of teaching, including the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards portfolio, and the Performance Assessment for California Teachers. The design and review teams included hundreds of university faculty, national subject-matter organization representatives (e.g., NCTM, NCTE, NSTA, etc.), and K–12 teachers. SCALE continues to gather and use input from the edTPA community to enhance and improve the assessment. Stanford University is the exclusive author and owner of edTPA. The edTPA trademarks are owned by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. Use of the edTPA trademarks is permitted only pursuant to the terms of a written license agreement

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher