YOUR Source for Member Rights Services:

Plain & EGL Service Centers
Pierre Office
605-224-9263
1-800-529-0090

Eastern Prairie & SEE Service Centers
Sioux Falls Office
605-339-3236
1-800-529-0090

Western Service Center
Rapid City Office
605-342-8068
1-800-529-0090

Professional Development Service Center
Watertown Office
605-886-4800
1-800-529-0090

Keep The Following Documents in a Safe Place:

- All signed contracts, including extra-duty contracts
- All evaluations and plans of assistance
- All written directives or reprimands
- Descriptions of any “incidents” involving students, parents, colleagues or the administration
- Teaching certificate(s) & related documents (Be certain your certificate accurately reflects the courses you are certified to teach)
- Up-to-date transcripts of all course work
- Retirement documents
- Commendations, awards and honors
- Work schedules for current and past years
- Current negotiated agreement
- Current employee handbook
- Current student handbook
- All correspondence between you and the administration
- All correspondence between you and parents, including complimentary ones
- Proof of membership in the association
- A copy of the NEA Educators Employment Liability Insurance

Member Rights Services Through SDEA/NEA Membership*

✅ Professional representation in grievances
✅ Professional representation in meetings with the administration and board
✅ Professional representation in nonrenewals and legal defense on appeal
✅ Legal defense for such matters as terminations or suspensions
✅ Educators Employment Liability Insurance and Legal Defense

* Except for the Educators Employment Liability Insurance, these services are not guaranteed. Association member rights services are provided through SDEA/NEA member rights policies and practices. Each situation is handled on a case-by-case basis.
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Getting Started

Getting off to a positive start sets the tone for a successful year—and career. You may be experiencing some stage fright, which is only natural. The suggestions in this section of *The New Teachers’ Guide* are guaranteed to help this year and for years to come.

13 Ways to Beat Your 1st Day Jitters

You’re a classroom teacher — with your own classroom!

Your classroom is part of a major enterprise -- hundreds or even thousands of individuals engaged in teaching and learning in buildings scattered across a city, town or region. To be efficient, effective and in control of a classroom, you must be able to navigate the system.

The place to start is your SCHOOL BUILDING. Visit your building and learn as much as possible about: the layout, the location of your classroom, storage areas, work areas, fire exits, lounge, cafeteria, gymnasium, auditorium, rest rooms, offices, phones, media center, computer facilities, guidance office, and nurse’s office.

FIND OUT WHERE. Familiarize yourself with the building. Locate the exits, the principal’s office, the gym, the nurse’s office, the cafeteria, the supply room, the faculty lounge, media center, and so forth.

KNOW THE RULES. Get acquainted beforehand with school policies and procedures such as opening and closing hours, attendance procedures, fire drill regulations, lunchroom regulations, etc. Set up a notebook to hold official notices, policies, and schedules.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF. Meet the teachers around you. They can be really helpful in the first few weeks of school. Take time to say “hello” to other important people: the librarians, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, office workers, and custodians.

DECORATE YOUR ROOM. Make sure your classroom is friendly and livable for opening day.

USE TRADITIONAL SEATING. Start with the traditional arrangement of desks until you’ve established control and know your students’ names. Keep traffic patterns in mind when arranging desks, work areas, etc.

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ALL MATERIALS you’ll need for getting school under way: paper, pencils, books. Obtain blank forms such as hall passes. Test your equipment to make sure it works. If you are a floating teacher, prepare a means of moving materials from room to room.

STORE SUPPLIES. Go through the storage and filing cabinets and decide where to store things to which the students will have access and things to which only you will have access.

SCHEDULE YOUR TIME. Make a detailed schedule for the first few days, including times for each subject, rest room and lunch breaks, etc.

PLAN, PLAN, PLAN. Create lesson plans for the first few days. Plan at least twice as much you think you can cover. Write down everything. Detailed plans will provide you a feeling of security when facing the class for the first time.

GET THERE EARLY. On the first morning, arrive early so you will have time to ask any last-minute questions, go over final plans and relax before the students come in.

GREET YOUR PUPILS. Be in your room when the pupils arrive. Have your name written on the board. Greet the students with a smile and a pleasant “Good Morning.” Encourage them to be seated and remain so.

GO OVER THE RULES. Introduce your students to your classroom rules and regulations the first day. Cover things like: getting books and materials, sharpening pencils, entering and leaving the room, and so forth.

START THE LEARNING. Make the first day of school a real one. Accomplish some constructive learning with your students. A good start yields big dividends later on.
GETTING STARTED

30 Questions to Ask During the First Days of School

Make your life easier by learning school procedures early

To make your first few months easier, get the answers to these questions by the end of the first two weeks. Put the information in a place where you can easily retrieve it.

- Where and how do I secure supplies?
- How do I check out regular and supplemental texts?
- How do I make arrangements for a field trip?
- How do I sign my class up for the library?
- What are the procedures for taking a class to an assembly?
- When am I responsible for locking my room?
- What technology is available for me to use (copier, computer, DVD player, LCD Projector, or Smart Board, etc.)?
- Where can I get free and inexpensive materials?
- With whom should I consult as I make decisions on the use of supplemental materials?
- How do I use Infinite Campus (SD State Data Systems Reporting)?
- What do I do with any money I collect?
- What are the grading guidelines for the school system? What documentation must I provide?
- To whom do I report serious problems with a student’s health or behavior?
- What student records must I maintain in cumulative folders?
- What procedures do other teachers in my school follow for contacting parents by letter, phone or e-mail?
- What should I expect from a parent conference?
- What should I do if I must leave my room during class?
- What should I do in case of a medical emergency in my classroom?
- How do I handle a fight between students?
- How do I report a disciplinary problem?
- How do I arrange for a substitute?
- How do I apply for personal, professional, vacation or sick leave?
- What is my salary and what deductions are taken?
- Are there any unwritten rules for teachers in my school?
- What is my personnel file and what is in it?
- Where do I go if I am having trouble?
- What are the procedures for inclement weather?
- What are the procedures for emergency situations such as; fire drills, lockdowns, tornadoes, inclement weather.

1st Day Activities

Elementary:

- Greet the children at the door as they come in and give them name tags that are easy to read and affix. Allow them to choose desks, then tape an identical name tag to the desk.
- Explain procedures for entering the room each morning: where to hang coats, when to be in their seats, how much conversation is permissible.
- Tell how you will start each day, then have them do it.
• Describe how the lunch count, attendance, and other daily tasks will be handled.

• Read the specific rules for behavior along with consequences and rewards. Point out where they are listed.

• Give students a tour of the room and show them materials they may use.

• Establish a specific location for daily schedules, homework assignments and reminders of events and deadlines.

• Discuss and outline the basis on which students’ grades are determined.

• Schedule a rest room break early in the morning the first day.

• Explain what students should do if they finish their work early.

• If you plan an activity period, demonstrate the procedures for getting out materials and putting them away.

• Tell your class what is about to happen before they leave for physical education, lunch, or other outside activities. Tell younger children how you want them to line up and have them practice.

• Vary activities and the pace of lessons every day.

• Use take-home folders to distribute notices to parents.

• Reserve the last 15–20 minutes the first day to clean up and review what has been covered.

• Explain procedures for dismissal and bus loading. Bus loading is confusing and buses must leave at scheduled times.

**Secondary:**

• Stand at the door to greet students.

• Introduce yourself, including your background and special interests in your subject.

• Hand out any notices from the school office and have students complete any forms that are required by the school.

• Outline your procedures for recording attendance and tardiness, giving assignments, collecting papers, make-up work, and hall passes.

• Post rules for classroom behavior.

• Establish a uniform heading for papers.

• Discuss and outline the basis on which students’ grades are determined.

• Tell the class your objectives for the week and for the year.

• Allow a short period of time for each class to ask questions about what is expected of them and about any of the procedures that you have established.

• Under certain circumstances, it is wise to extend the privileges. The teacher allows certain behavior that is normally forbidden, but at the same time makes it clear just how far they will let it go.

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**Submitting a certificate of completion for the SD Mentoring Program as either a new teacher or mentor will automatically fulfill the requirements for recertification.**

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**Surviving & Thriving**

The first few weeks of school, there will be many new demands made of you: new texts, new techniques, new schedules, new students, and a new way of life. It’s an exciting as well as a stressful time for you.

All this excitement can lead to stress, and people who don’t deal positively with stress can become ill unless they have mastered some coping techniques.

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**SD Mentoring Program Available for First Year Teachers**

Mentoring is proven to increase early career teacher satisfaction, success, and retention. Thanks to broad educator advocacy and legislative funding, South Dakota offers a statewide mentoring program for first and second year teachers. If you or someone you know will be a first year teacher, seek approval from your administrator ASAP to sign up for the SD Mentoring Program. Kick-off training starts in July. For more information and applications, visit [http://doe.sd.gov/mentoring/](http://doe.sd.gov/mentoring/).
**Leave your stress at school.**
We know you will have homework, but leave the stress of the day behind.

**Recognize & accept your limits.**
Most of us set unreasonable and perfectionist goals for ourselves. But, we can never be perfect (or even come close), so we often have a sense of failure or inadequacy no matter how well we perform. Are your goals achievable?

**Find a friend.**
This probably is someone in your building who can be a “trusted” listener.

**Exercise!**
Regular exercise, like walking, helps keep the body and mind clear.

**Get plenty of sleep.**
Go to bed early if you are tired.

**Be good to yourself.**
What could do more for your self-esteem than to take yourself out to dinner or buy yourself a treat?

**Always have something to look forward to.**
This will perk up your spirits.

**Don’t schedule all of your leisure hours.**
You live by a schedule all day long. Leave yourself some “open space”.

**Don’t feel you have to do everything.**
You can’t and you won’t.

**Observe good eating habits.**
Eat a healthy diet of vegetables, fruit, and proteins.

**Don’t procrastinate.**
Do the things you have to do.

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**Bulletin Boards**

To be effective, bulletin boards should be simple, attractive, functional, appropriate, and changed frequently. Little commercial advice is available on what to do with bulletin board materials when you remove them. Save yourself some time and frustration by adapting these filing guidelines to meet your needs:

- School month files (months, periods of time like “back to school”)
- Alphabetical order
- Holidays, alphabetically or chronologically
- Subjects (academic or other)

Regardless of the file method you use, include in your system a computer file or notebook. Jot down bulletin board ideas for future use and don’t let a brainstorm slip by.

Store bulletin board letters in shoe boxes. Don’t throw sets of letters away; keep them for a repeat of the same board or a slight variation.

Use your students’ work. Explore the possibility of commercial materials. Check with retiring teachers. Many of them have great materials they would rather share than throw away.

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**Member Benefits**

Build a better life with SDEA/NEA Member Benefits. By negotiating with America’s largest companies, we’ve saved SDEA/NEA members like you more than $10 million. Our programs and services deliver the recognition you deserve. Learn more at [neamb.com/discover](http://neamb.com/discover). And if you have any questions, don’t hesitate to call 1-800-637-4636.
Classroom Management

Helping students to govern their own behavior in ways that help them learn is a goal of all teachers. There are a number of ways you can promote good discipline in the classroom.

First and foremost, follow your district’s prescribed discipline model. Be the kind of person children respect and trust. Be firm, fair, friendly, courteous, enthusiastic, and confident; above all, keep your sense of humor.

Classroom Management

Before problems arise

- Get to know your students. This will help you anticipate problem situations.
- Show courtesy to every student and display trust and confidence in them all.
- Be consistent in the application of discipline and be fair in your requirements and assignments.
- Teaching strategies and an attractive classroom reinforce your mutually respectful relationship with your students.
- Give clear directions.
- Keep your classroom cheerful and orderly.
- Make learning fun, interesting, and relevant to the students’ lives.
- Establish no more than 5 classroom rules and enforce them.
- Be fully prepared.
- When students do disrupt learning, use the LEAST approach to discipline.
- Provide a list of standards and consequences to parents and students. Make sure they are consistent with district and building policy.
- Keep your classroom orderly.
- Begin class on time and in a businesslike manner.
- Let the students know you care. Show interest in what students say, whether or not it pertains directly to the lesson.
- Keep your voice at a normal level.
- Grade assignments and return them as soon as possible.
- Make sure all students can easily see you when you are presenting information. Place the overhead screen and instructional displays where everyone can see.
- Keep in mind potential distractions such as windows, doors, or animals.
- Leave plenty of room around student desks so that you can get to each student easily while you are monitoring individual work.
- Diversion and restructuring are great tools. When one activity has gone too long, students get bored and restless. An alert teacher anticipates trouble and changes his/hers strategy even if it requires some flexibility in scheduling.
- There are some students who encourage each other to get into trouble. Regrouping the students immediately without comment is key.
- Provide hurdle help, sometimes when a student cannot proceed with a task in which they are experiencing difficulty. The teacher may provide an explanation or a “hint” that enables the student to go on.
- It is sometime helpful for the teacher to remind the students to control their impulses when they may be tempted to misbehave. The teacher should show encouragement. Tell the student, “This has been such a good day, you read so well this morning... Come on, don’t spoil it now.”
• Students work better if they anticipate some positive activity or experiences as a reward. However, the promise should be extra, rather than the only incentive to good behavior.

After problems arise

• Allow a student to tell you his or her side of the situation. Be willing to consider mitigating circumstances.

• Don’t talk about the misdeeds of students except to those who have a right to know.

• Admit you’ve made a mistake and apologize if you’ve treated a student unjustly.

• Make sure punishments are appropriate for the misbehavior.

• Don’t argue with students.

• Don’t threaten or humiliate a child.

• Don’t use school work as punishment.

• Signal a student through a gesture, a look, or a brief signal that you are displeased.

• Provide a transition period of drawing, singing, etc. that releases tension after an exciting or tense experience.

• Sometimes a student may do something impulsively and is not sure what the teacher will do as a consequence. React with humor and understanding, the student will be greatly relieved and assured of their being accepted.

• Assume that the students have a conscience and basically wants to do the right thing. Remind them of whatever standards are important to them without accusation or threat.

• When a student is about to explode in anger, tears, or uncontrolled laughter, he/she may need to be removed from the situation so that he/she can gain control of himself/herself. You may use some pretext such as asking the student to run an errand, help with some task, or get a drink of water.

• When attractive nuisances such as water pistols, yo-yos, or balls are confiscated, it is wise to tell the student that the situation is temporary and that the student can reclaim his possession later when it is not distracting to the class.

• Constructive criticism should focus on what is required for improvement, the student’s personality or character as a whole. You might say, “This room is too noisy,” instead of “You are an inconsiderate class!”

• When teasing becomes more painful than playful, or a free-for-all develops, a clear cut “No!” may provide a welcome light to a student who is getting further into trouble than he/she means to. The teacher substitutes her/his authority for the student’s self control, which is temporarily out of commission. The effectiveness of this control increases if it is used only rarely.

• If you feel discipline has been a disaster the first couple of weeks, don’t worry, you still have time.

After a situation has occurred

The Least Approach to Discipline:

• LEAVE THINGS ALONE — when a brief and minor disturbance occurs with no danger of it continuing or interrupting learning.

• END THE ACTION DIRECTLY — when learning is disrupted. Let the student or students involved know you’re aware of what’s going on through expression or quiet action.

• ATTEND CAREFULLY — when a high level of emotion is evident. Ask the disruptive student(s) what’s going on, and respond appropriately.

• SPELL OUT DIRECTIONS — when a situation threatens to get out of hand or risking harm to someone. Explain to the students involved the consequences of their actions, and follow through.

• TRACK STUDENT PROGRESS — by keeping a record of students’ behavior. This is a way of checking out the effectiveness of your discipline methods.

Classroom Tips

You need to develop your own philosophy about homework, but make sure you are not in conflict with district policy. Consider these ideas:

• Don’t give homework as punishment.

• Don’t give spur-of-the-moment homework assignments.

• Don’t assume that because no questions are asked when you give the assignment that students have no questions about the assignment.

• Don’t expect students (even your best ones) to always have their homework done.

• Understand that not all kinds of homework assignments are equally valuable for all students.

• Explain the purpose of every homework assignment.
• Listen to what students say about their experiences with homework.
• Don’t give “make work” homework. If you expect students to do it, make sure it is worth doing. Otherwise, they will assume that none of what you assign is of value.
• Acknowledge and be thankful for students’ efforts to complete homework.
• Encourage students to ask their parents to help with homework.
• Offer to help students before and after school with homework unless the assignments are really ones that can be completed independently.
• Don’t confuse excuses for incomplete homework assignments with legitimate reasons.
• Make every effort to acknowledge completed homework assignments and, if you grade them, grade and return them right away.
• Remember, education means developing the mind, not stuffing the memory.

The SDEA offers “I Can Do It!” training for SDEA/NEA members. This free workshop focuses on classroom management for all K-12 content areas. To learn more about “I Can Do It” or other professional development opportunities for SDEA/NEA members visit www.sdea.org.

Do you use these effective questioning techniques?

• Effective questions are asked in a clear non ambiguous manner.
• Purposeful questions lead to the achievement of the lesson.
• Effective questions are brief, using specific language.
• The wording of effective questions is adapted to the level of the students in the class.
• The appropriateness of using lower level questions and higher level questions depends on several factors including lesson objectives, content, and learner characteristics.
• Effective questioners avoid using yes/no questions which may confuse lesson focus, waste time, and encourage guessing.
• Fill-in-the-blank questions should be avoided.
• By not repeating questions and student responses, you may develop better student listening habits and more attentive behavior.
• Questions should not be answered by the one asking the questions.
• It is very important to establish the expectation that every question asked requires a response.

Parents as Partners

How they can be your best allies

Educators know what an important difference parental involvement can make in a child’s education. But what can you do to show parents the role they can play and make them a strong and lasting school ally? The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) asked educators involved in successful dropout prevention programs nationwide how they enlist and energize parents as partners.

Here’s what they had to say:

• Take the initiative to involve parents. They want to be active in their child’s education.
• Schedule one-on-one conferences and ask parents what they want to know. Then share your knowledge, guidance and support.

Works4Me

Practical classroom tips from teachers like you! The free Works4Me weekly e-newsletter brings you practical classroom tips written by teachers, for teachers.

Each week you’ll receive other teachers’ best ideas on classroom management, teaching techniques, curriculum content, peer & student relationships and more.

The Works4Me Web site contains more than 1,800 tips that have appeared in the newsletter over the last 10+ years.

The Works4Me online discussion board will connect you with other educators and give you a place to get answers to your everyday classroom dilemmas and help other educators solve their own problems. For more information, please go to www.nea.org/works4me.
• Schedule home visits. Parents are apt to be more open and at ease in their own homes.
• Encourage parents to spend time at school.
• Give parents a chance to share their talents and experiences in the classroom or on field trips.
• Remember to say “thank you” to parents for their efforts with a call or a note.
• When parents are not available, reach out to grandparents, foster parents or community volunteers who are serving as mentors to your students.
• Publish a newsletter.
• Share positive as well as negative feedback.
• Give parents a hands-on role by requiring parents to sign homework and permission slips for activities.
• Turn “back-to-school night” into “family night” and invite students and parents to come together to discuss what will be expected of students, parents and teachers.
• Encourage parents to provide their children with a quiet study area, a good breakfast, a time to read together and supervision over television viewing.
• Send a letter to parents to begin the year. The sample letter to parents on the page 16 was drafted by a fifth grade teacher. Her colleagues found it useful and “stole” from it in drafting their own letters. You may as well.
• One word of caution: Most building principals will expect to see a copy of any parent letter before sending it home with students.

Responding to Parent Concerns

Parents care deeply about their children and how they’re doing in school, and most parents are reasonable, respectful, and cooperative when dealing with teachers.

However, when problems arise, here are some basic guidelines to follow.

• Ask Questions — Check to see if the district has a policy on Parent complaints.
• Try not to be defensive — You share a common goal with parents: to help their children succeed in school. Try to approach every conversation with that in mind.
• Unreasonable requests — If a parent makes one of you, respond in a friendly, firm manner and try to work it out. For example, a parent wanting you to call every night to report on a child’s performance can be told: “I’m sure you understand I have 90 students, and am not able to call you every night. However, I have a suggestion...” Or, if a parent shows up at the door of your classroom, politely explain that you can’t talk right now, and suggest he/she call back after classes and make an appointment.
• Protect yourself — Keep a log of all parent contacts (phone calls, visits, letters, etc.), noting date, time, place, and what was discussed. Keep copies of all documents. If a parent complains to you, consider going to your association representative or your principal and tell them about the complaint.
• Maintain confidentiality — Don’t talk about other students to any parent, and discourage parents from doing so. Never mention other students’ names, even their child’s social group. Talk about their child’s behavior only.

27 Tips for Conferences

• Contact parents early in the year. Outline your curriculum and expectations and let parents know how they can reach you.
• Invite both parents. But, be sure to find out first if a student comes from a single-parent home and if both parents should be invited; or if the appropriate guardian is someone other than a parent.
• Allow enough time in the conference. If you are scheduling back-to-back conferences, give yourself a “cushion” of time in between.
• Prepare in advance to answer specific questions parents may have about their child’s ability, skill levels and achievements.
• **Get organized before the conference.** Assemble your grade book, test scores, student work samples and attendance records.

• **Plan ahead.** Have in mind a general—but flexible—outline of what you’re going to say including a survey of student progress, a review of his or her strengths and needs, and proposed plan of action.

• **Greet parents at the door.** Also, you’ll help parents feel welcome and relieve their anxiety if you greet them by name. Check records in advance to make sure you have names correct.

• **Avoid physical barriers.** Don’t sit behind your desk or ask parents to perch on uncomfortable chairs.

• **Open on a positive note.** Begin conferences on a warm, positive note to relax everyone. Start with a positive statement about the child’s abilities, school work or interests. Show some of the child’s work.

• **Structure the session.** As soon as the parents arrive, review the structure of the conference - the why, what, how and when - so you’ll both have an “agenda.” (Remember, of course, that parents often come with their own agendas or questions they want answered, so you’ll have to be flexible.)

• **Be specific** in your comments and suggested course of action.

• **Offer a suggested course of action.** Parents appreciate being given some specific direction. If Jane is immature, it might be helpful to suggest parents give her a list of weekly chores, allow her to take care of a pet, or give her a notebook to write down assignments. (Of course, when you offer advice, let parents know you’re only making a suggestion.)

• **Forget the jargon.** Try not to use “edubabble” because it sounds like doubletalk to most parents.

• **Turn the other cheek.** In routine parent conferences, it’s unusual to run into parents who are abusive and hostile. But it can happen. Try not to be rude, whatever the provocation. Hear out the parents in as pleasant manner as possible, without getting defensive, if you can.

• **Ask for parents’ opinions.** Hear them out, even if the comments are hostile or negative.

• **Focus on strengths.** It’s very easy for parents to feel defensive, since many of them see themselves in their children. You’ll help if you review the child’s strengths and areas of need, rather than dwelling on criticism or stressing weaknesses.

• **Use body language.** Non-verbal cues set the mood of the conference. Smile, nod, make eye contact and lean forward slightly. You’ll be using your body’s language to let parents know you’re interested and approving.

• **Stress collaboration.** Let the parent know you want to work together in the best interests of the child. A statement like “you need to see me as soon as possible to discuss Johnny’s poor study habits” only arouses hostility, while “I’d like to discuss with you how we might work together to improve Johnny’s study habits” gets the relationship off on the right foot.

• **Listen to what the parents say.** Despite the fact that we spend nearly a third of our lives listening, most adults are poor listeners. We concentrate on what we’re going to say next, or we let our minds drift off to other concerns, or we hear only part of what a speaker is saying. You’ll get more out of a parent conference if you really listen to what parents are saying to you.

• **Ask about the child.** You don’t want to pry, of course, but remember to ask parents if there’s anything they think you should know about the child (such as study habits, relationship with siblings, any important events in their life) which may affect their school work.

• **Focus on solutions.** Ideally, all parent conferences would concern only positive events. Realistically, many conferences are held because there’s a problem somewhere. Things will go smoother if you’ll focus on solutions, rather than on their child’s problem. Discuss what you and the parents can do to help improve the situation. Plan together a course of action.

• **Don’t judge.** It may not always be possible to react neutrally to what parents say - their values may be very different from your own - but communicating your judgments of parents’ attitudes or behaviors can be a roadblock to a productive relationship with them.

• **Summarize.** Before the conference ends, summarize the discussion and what action you and the parents have decided to take.

• **Wind up on a positive note.** When you can, save at least one encouraging comment or positive statement about the student for the end of the conference.
Dear Parents:

I am your child’s 5th grade teacher, and I am delighted to have your child in my class this year. I’m looking forward to a very successful year, and I know you are too. I have high expectations for your child, and I will be doing all that I can to help your child achieve those expectations.

You can help. I will be expecting all work assigned in class to be completed. Of course, all children do not work at the same pace. Some children will get their work done in class and some will not.

Whether or not a child gets his or her work done in class has no effect on his or her grade. If your child does not complete an assignment in class, he or she will be required to complete it at home. The way you can help is ask your child every school day if school work needs to be done and, if so, make sure your child completes the assignment.

I want you to be aware of the following policies:

- Work may be turned in one day late; however, an assignment turned in one day late will receive an automatic penalty of minus-20 grade points.

- If assigned work is not turned in, or turned in after the one-day late period, the grade for that assignment will be recorded as “zero”.

- Within each six-week period, the single lowest grade (just one) will not be averaged.

- Work is due at the time the teacher asks for it on the assigned day. If the student is not prepared at that time, but finishes the assignment later in the day, the assignment will still be considered late.

- Students who have late work will automatically attend “study hall” during recess.

- Absences will be dealt with on an individual basis.

In addition, I will be assigning projects in various subjects throughout the school year. Projects are to be completed at home. Your help and support will not only make your child more successful in school this year but will instill good study habits that will last a lifetime.

Finally, I want you to know that one of my most important goals this year is to keep the lines of communication open with you. Please do not hesitate to call me at school. I am available to talk to you every day between 9:00 a.m. and 9:45 a.m. and between 3:00 p.m. and 3:40 p.m. Your child’s daily schedule and the class expectations are attached. Please review these together with your child.

Sincerely,

Your Name
• **Meet again if you need to.** If you feel you need more time, arrange another meeting later, rather than trying to rush everything before the kids get back from art class.

• **Keep a record of the conference.** You may find it helpful later to have a brief record of what was said at the conference, what suggestions for improvements were made and so fourth. Make notes as soon as possible after the conference, while details are fresh.

• **Sample letter** to parents on page 14.

### Special Education

Your district will assume that you are familiar with the broad spectrum of laws governing special education and inclusion. The details of the identification and referral process for special needs children, the names of the individuals responsible for the program, and the location of required forms is information provided by your district. If this is not part of an orientation, ask.

The expansion of inclusion law means that students who have been identified as having special needs will be integrated into your class(es). It is critically important that you know who they are and have working knowledge of their IEPs (Individual Education Plans) and/or section 504 plans. Both documents clearly identify any modifications in learning strategies or materials required for these students. It is your legal obligation to meet the terms of the IEP or 504 from day one. Ask whether your district uses an RTI (Response to Intervention) early intervention approach to provide services to students who are not yet on an IEP or 504 plan, and find out how to refer students for those services.

Your special needs colleagues will no doubt be approaching you to discuss how you can work together. However, they have an extraordinary workload at the beginning of the school year. If you have questions, seek them out.

Federal law requires that decisions about what goes into an IEP are made collectively by an IEP team. As a classroom teacher, you are part of the team for each student you have with an IEP, along with parents, other teachers, support professionals, and administrators. While you have an obligation to advocate for the needs of your students, remember that you are also employed by your school district. If you find yourself caught in the middle of a dispute between parents and your district, it is best to remain neutral by referring parents to request an advocate/navigator at [www.SDParent.org](http://www.SDParent.org).

### Diversity in Education

Schools must be proactive in creating a positive environment where students and teachers are respectful of different backgrounds. Take time to discern your school’s approach to diversity and your role in the process.

### Strategies For Improving Instruction For English Language Learners

- Speak slowly, audibly and clearly in whatever language you use in the classroom. Avoid asking students in front of the whole class if they understand. Instead, ask students to volunteer to repeat the instructions in their own words, in English or in the students’ native language.

- Prepare English Language Learners for challenging whole-class lessons ahead of time. In a small group, teach the second-language vocabulary that students will need to know. In addition to vocabulary, introduce the concepts that the whole class will be learning. Use materials that are geared for the specific group of English Language Learners (i.e., use materials in the students’ home language and/or materials in English that are appropriate for the students’ English reading level). That way when you teach the whole class lesson, English Language Learners have a head start because they’ve already had one comprehensible lesson on the topic.

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**Resource Tip:** *South Dakota Parent’s Guide to Special Education — “What Parents Should Know...About Special Education in South Dakota”* is an easy-to-understand, comprehensive guide to federal and state laws and regulations about special education. The development of the guide was a collaborative effort and is written specifically for families. Contact us at 1-800-640-4553 or sdpc@sdparent.org for your free copy.
• Use lecture and verbal instruction as little as possible. Use visual cues such as posters, electronic presentations, videos, and illustrated books. Use active methods of learning such as games, skits, songs, partner interviews and structured conversation with classmates. Use an app like Google Translate to convert text of worksheets and books when necessary. Finally, be prepared to spend additional time helping English Language Learners do the work. To keep things in perspective, try thinking about how your performance on the assignment would change if you were doing it in a language in which you were not yet fully proficient.

• Use whole class instruction as little as possible. English Language Learners sometimes get lost and/or tune out during this kind of lesson. Whenever possible, work with small groups of children, or get students working on an assignment and circulate among them as they work.

• In reading class, use literature — in English or the students’ home language — that features the students’ language/cultural groups. Give English Language Learners lots of attempts to be successful in a low-stress environment. Choral reading, echo reading, and partner reading all allow students to work on fluency and pronunciation without putting them on the spot. Rehearsing a sentence, paragraph, or page before reading it aloud to a group can help students to improve fluency one chunk of text at a time. Plays and skits provide a wonderful excuse to encourage students to practice the same lines over and over until they master them, and presenting a play or skit in their second language gives students a great sense of accomplishment.

• Encourage students to maintain and develop their first language at school, at home, and in the community. Research shows that students learn English more effectively, and don’t lag as far being their English-speaking classmates in other subject areas, when they do more academic work in their native language. And when students are pushed to learn English only, and aren’t given the chance to continue learning their home language, they lose the opportunity to be bilingual, a skill that’s increasingly valued in society.

• Don’t assume a student has special education needs just because they’re struggling academically. It could just be that they lack the language skills to successfully complete more academic work in English. At the same time, don’t ignore potential special education needs either. Seek out resources in your school, district and community to help you determine what is going on with a particular student.

Trauma-Informed Classrooms

Students exposed to potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences (ACES) often demonstrate emotional and behavioral difficulties that dramatically interfere with their ability to engage in school. Such characteristics can both negatively impact the educational experiences of traumatized students and present significant challenges for the teachers tasked with supporting them. Teachers are in a unique position to create an environment for these students, where learning can begin again. SDEA/NEA offers training and resources for schools and teachers to become trauma-informed and to begin to change the culture of schools and classrooms to one that is compassionate and encouraging. Visit www.sdea.org/professionaldevelopment or contact Rich.Mittelstedt@sdea.org to set up a training or for more information.

Implicit Cultural Bias

Thanks to a broad and diverse group of tribal leaders and educators, South Dakota now has a set of Lakota/Dakota/Nakota cultural understandings designed for use with existing content standards. The purpose of the OSEU is to provide an appreciation for and understanding of cultural differences among South Dakota citizens in a safe learning environment. They are intended to be used in all schools as a way to address implicit cultural bias, regardless of the diversity of the students or faculty. Visit www.wolakotaproject.org or contact Rich.Mittelstedt@sdea.org for resource materials or https://bit.ly/2krC5uc to view the OSEU. To request training on implicit cultural bias or OSEU integration into your curriculum, contact Rich.Mittelstedt@sdea.org.

Instructional Coaching Available and Expanding

In addition to mentoring and induction for teachers in their first two years on the job, instructional coaching (working with a practitioner coach to hone your skills as a classroom teacher) is now available in SD. This is a great way to perfect your craft much earlier in your career, make your job more enjoyable sooner, and increase student achievement.

Check first to see if your district has instructional coaches on staff. If not, SD DOE is implementing coaching by content areas, and SDEA is working to expand that capacity under an NEA Great Public Schools grant to mirror the work of DOE in areas they don’t yet cover. To request instructional coaching or to learn more about it visit www.sdea.org/professionaldevelopment, or contact Rich.Mittelstedt@sdea.org. Don’t wait until there are problems to ask for coaching.
Professional Issues

Whether you are a new teacher just out of college or someone who has entered the profession as a second career, you have embarked on a journey to make a difference in the lives of children.

The education profession can be a rewarding yet challenging adventure. Understanding your professional rights and the organizational resources available to you will help you navigate through the academic year.

About Your Certificate

Your South Dakota Teaching Certificate is your license to work in the public schools of our state. It is extremely important that you know your area(s) and level(s) of certification, that you treat your certification documents with the same care you would any other important official document, and that you understand the policies and regulations that govern certification and recertification.

You are responsible for obtaining your certificate and keeping it up-to-date. South Dakota law forbids school districts to pay personnel who have not submitted current certification to be kept on file. You will also be required to collect and submit proof of credits earned to the Department of Education for your recertification once every five years. You should obtain details on recertification periodically.

Recertification now requires one hour of suicide prevention training. Please reference the website to stay current the most recent program changes.

The South Dakota Department of Education (DOE) maintains a website with certification information: [http://doe.sd.gov/](http://doe.sd.gov/).

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**RE-CERTIFICATION IN A NUTSHELL**

Every 5 years teachers must submit the equivalent of 6 graduate credits of continuing education.

- **Continuing Education Unit (CEU)** = one CEU equals one clock hour of training, verified via certificate issued by trainer

- **Graduate Credit** = 15 clock hours of transcripted class/workshop time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you hold a BA/BS Degree</th>
<th>If you hold a MA/MS/MEd Degree</th>
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<tr>
<td>a minimum of 3 transcripted graduate credits</td>
<td>90 CEU hours</td>
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<td><strong>AND</strong></td>
<td><strong>OR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>45 CEU hours</td>
<td>any combination of transcripted graduate credits and CEUs</td>
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<td><strong>OR</strong></td>
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<td>any other combination of the two over the minimum graduate credits</td>
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SD Educator Code of Ethics

While working as a certified educator, you must obey South Dakota laws regarding your conduct as a school employee. Your certificate can be revoked by the state of South Dakota for breaches of the SD Code of Professional Ethics.

Obligations to the Profession

In fulfilling their obligations to the profession, educators shall act as follows:

1. Accord just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession in the exercise of their professional rights and responsibilities;
2. Maintain confidentiality of professional information acquired about colleagues in the course of employment, unless disclosure serves professional purposes;
3. Discuss professional matters concerning colleagues in a professional manner;
4. Accept a position or responsibility only on the basis of professional preparation and legal qualifications;
5. Adhere to the terms of a contract or appointment unless the contract has been altered without the consent of the affected parties, except as provided by law, legally terminated, or legally voided;
6. Use sound professional judgment in delegating professional responsibilities to others;
7. Not interfere with the free participation of colleagues in the affairs of their associations;
8. Not use coercive or threatening means in order to influence professional decisions of colleagues;
9. Not knowingly misrepresent their professional qualifications;
10. Not knowingly distort evaluation of colleagues;
11. Not criticize a colleague before students, except as unavoidably related to an administrative or judicial proceeding;
12. Cooperate with authorities and the commissions regarding violations of the codes of ethics of the South Dakota Professional Teachers Practices and Standards Commission and the Professional Administrators Practices and Standards Commission;
13. Perform duties in accordance with local, state, and federal rules and laws.

Obligations to the Students

In fulfilling their obligations to the students, educators shall act as follows:

1. Not, without just cause, restrain students from independent action in their pursuit of learning;
2. Not, without just cause, deny to the students access to varying points of view in the classroom;
3. Present subject matter for which they bear responsibility without deliberate suppression or distortion;
4. Make a reasonable effort to maintain discipline and order in the classroom and the school system to protect the students from conditions harmful to learning, physical and emotional well-being, health, and safety;
5. Conduct professional business in such a way that they do not expose the students to unnecessary intimidation, embarrassment, or disparagement;
6. Accord just and equitable treatment to every student, regardless of race, color, creed, sex, sexual preference, age, marital status, handicapping condition, national origin, or ethnic background;
7. Maintain professional relationships with students without exploitation of a student for personal gain or advantage;
8. Keep in confidence information that has been obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law;
9. Maintain professional relationships with students in a manner which is free of vindictiveness, recrimination, and harassment;
10. Not engage in or be a party to any sexual activity with students including sexual intercourse, sexual contact, sexual photography, or illicit sexual communication.
Obligations to the Public

In fulfilling their obligations to the public, educators shall act as follows:

1. Take precautions to distinguish between their personal views and those of the local school district or governing body;
2. Not knowingly distort or misrepresent the facts concerning educational matters in direct and indirect public expressions;
3. Not interfere with a colleague’s exercise of political and citizenship rights and responsibilities;
4. Not exploit the local school district or governing body for public or personal gain;
5. Not exploit the local school district or governing body to promote political candidates or partisan political activities;
6. Neither accept nor offer any gratuities, gifts, services, or things of value that impair professional judgment, offer special advantage, or provide personal benefit;
7. Engage in no act that results in a conviction;
8. Exemplify high moral standards by not engaging in or becoming a party to such activities as fraud, embezzlement, theft, deceit, moral turpitude, gross immorality, sexual contact with students, illegal drugs, or use of misleading or false statements; and
9. Not misuse or abuse school equipment or property.

Prepare for Evaluation

The South Dakota Teacher Effectiveness Model

As professionals, we have an ongoing responsibility to keep up-to-date in our field and to sharpen and improve our skills. To help meet this responsibility we need expert feedback on our performance. Evaluations can result in a positive experience which opens lines of communication and improves the quality of our instruction and/or job performance. Through the evaluation process, specific strengths as well as areas for improvement can be identified in positive ways which encourages growth and professional development. Everyone is more successful when an effective evaluation system is in place and used effectively.

South Dakota’s Commission on Teaching and Learning (SDCTL) has developed a model system for teacher evaluation that includes a focus on professional practices and a focus on student growth as measured by student learning objectives, or SLOs. Schools will separately determine a professional practice rating using the four domains of the SD Framework for Teaching, based on the work of Charlotte Danielson (see fig. 1 & 2 on pg. 20). Teachers will also create an SLO which will be used to measure student growth throughout the year. The professional practice rating and student growth rating may be either combined by a district to determine a summative rating, or used separately in evaluation.

Focus on Student Learning Objectives

A student learning objective is a teacher-driven goal or set of goals that establishes expectations for student academic growth over a period of time. These specific, measurable student learning goals based on student learning needs and aligned to applicable standards. SLOs reflect a rigorous, yet realistic expectation of student growth that can be achieved during a given instructional period. SLOs must be approved by the principal.

Developing an SLO starts with four questions:

1. What do I most want my students to know and be able to do?
2. Where are my students starting?
3. What assessments are available?
4. What can I expect my students to achieve?

SLO planning guide forms can be found at sdea.org.

SD Teacher Effectiveness Model and Student Learning Objectives Training

Most school districts in South Dakota use the SD Teacher Effectiveness Model; however, there are some school districts who have cross-walked their own evaluation model to conform to the standards of the state model. More information on the SD Teacher Effectiveness Model and Student Learning Objectives can be found at: http://www.doe.sd.gov/secretary/TE.aspx.

If you have not received training in this model, ask for it. It is essential that everyone understand how the model works and how you will be evaluated. SDEA/NEA offers training in teacher evaluation, SLOs, and assessment design. If you would like to set up a training in your district or find one to attend on your own, contact your UniServ Director. If you need help, ask your association building representative or contact your UniServ Director.
Charlotte Danielson's Framwork for Teaching

**Domain 1: Planning and Preparation**
- 1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy
  - Content knowledge • Prerequisite relationships • Content pedagogy
- 1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students
  - Child development • Learning process • Special needs
  - Student skills, knowledge, and proficiency
  - Interests and cultural heritage
- 1c Setting Instructional Outcomes
  - Value, sequence, and alignment • Clarity • Balance
- 1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources
  - For classroom • To extend content knowledge • For students
- 1e Designing Coherent Instruction
  - Learning activities • Instructional materials and resources
  - Instructional groups • Lasso and unit structure
- 1f Designing Student Assessments
  - Congruence with outcomes • Criteria and standards
  - Formative assessments • Use for planning

**Domain 2: The Classroom Environment**
- 2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
  - Teacher interaction with students • Student interaction with students
- 2b Establishing a Culture for Learning
  - Importance of content • Expectations for learning and achievement
  - Student pride in work
- 2c Managing Classroom Procedures
  - Instructional groups • Transitions
  - Materials and supplies • Non-instructional duties
  - Supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals
- 2d Managing Student Behavior
  - Expectations • Monitoring behavior • Response to misbehavior
- 2e Organizing Physical Space
  - Safety and accessibility • Arrangement of furniture and resources

**Domain 3: Instruction**
- 3a Communicating With Students
  - Expectations for learning • Directions and procedures
  - Explanations of content • Use of oral and written language
- 3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
  - Quality of questions • Discussion techniques • Student participation
- 3c Engaging Students in Learning
  - Activities and assignments • Student groups
  - Instructional materials and resources • Structure and pacing
- 3d Using Assessment in Instruction
  - Assessment criteria • Monitoring of student learning
  - Feedback to students • Student self-assessment and monitoring
- 3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness
  - Lesson adjustment • Response to students • Persistence

**Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities**
- 4a Reflecting on Teaching
  - Accuracy • Use in future teaching
- 4b Maintaining Accurate Records
  - Student completion of assignments
  - Student progress in learning • Non-instructional records
- 4c Communicating with Families
  - About instructional program • About individual students
  - Engagement of families in instructional program
- 4d Participating in a Professional Community
  - Relationships with colleagues • Participation in school projects
  - Involvement in culture of professional inquiry • Service to school
- 4e Growing and Developing Professionally
  - Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill
  - Receptivity to feedback from colleagues • Service to the profession
- 4f Showing Professionalism
  - Integrity/ethical conduct • Service to students • Advocacy
  - Decision-making • Compliance with school/district regulations
Sioux Falls Service Center:
SEE – Kara Hoines, UniServ Director 605-339-3236
Eastern Prairie – Ryan Rolfs, UniServ Director 605-339-3236
Rich Mittelstedt, Teaching & Learning Coordinator 605-886-4800

Pierre Service Center:
Plains – Loren Paul, UniServ Director 605-224-9263
EGL – Dolores Tufaro, UniServ Director 605-370-6132

Rapid City Service Center:
Western – Frann Linn, UniServ Director 605-342-8068

In Preparation for Evaluation
Before every conference assemble and review the following materials:

- Negotiated agreement/board policy and procedures for evaluations
- Your job description
- Previous observations and evaluation reports
- Notes on lessons observed
- Any annual reports
- Letters of recommendation – SAVE ALL PRAISE
- Positive examples of what you are doing
- Other data on which you want to focus

Consult your association representative to find out how supervisors conduct conferences, what types of improvement plans are proposed, and how supervisors generally write up conferences.

Conduct at Evaluation Conference

- Come to the conference clearly having in mind what you want to accomplish.
- Keep accurate notes, especially important positives and negatives.
- Situate yourself physically so you are comfortable.
- Guide the discussion with your supervisor when appropriate.
- Establish the “initial premise” early in the conference. If not indicated by the supervisor, establish this yourself by stating (for example): “It appears that my overall performance continues to be highly satisfactory…and it appears that this is your conclusion, too.”
- Listen attentively.
- Clarify by questioning – when desired, when necessary.
- Expect and request positive reinforcement and constructive suggestions.

EdCommunities is a place to connect, collaborate, engage, and share with other educators by joining different interest groups specific to your needs. Joining NEA EdCommunities means sharing your commitment and dedication through an open exchange of strengths and resources with thousands of other education professionals, all designed to foster student success. Free and open to all, visitors are required to register.

SupportEd.nea.org is a leading voice for educators, providing the essential tools, resources and support to help you as an educator. It delivers the best professional support and development opportunities, articles, and events from the NEA universe.

EdJustice engages and mobilizes activists in the fight for racial, social, and economic justice in public education. Find timely coverage of social justice issues in education and ways you can advocate for our students, our schools, and our communities.

Bring New Media Into Your Classroom With These Sites

- Lesson Plans – nea.org/tools/LessonPlans.html
- Wordle – Type verbiage in and see a visual interpretation of all the words used. wordle.net
- Prezi – Prezi has fun and interesting slide transitions to keep your kids guessing about what will happen next. prezi.com
• **Teacher Tube** – Teacher Tube has classroom-approved videos. [teachertube.com](http://teachertube.com)

• **Quora** – If you have a question, Quora has an answer. [quora.com](http://quora.com)

• **Poll Daddy** – Quickly and easily set up a survey or poll for your students. You can see the answers instantly—no tallying required! [polldaddy.com](http://polldaddy.com)

• **Think Link** – Turn a picture into a visually appealing cluster of links. Tag people in a photo and link to articles about them, or cover an infographic in links for further information. Then post the image to your class’s web page! [thinklink.com](http://thinklink.com)

• **Skitch** – Skitch is a quick and easy photo-editing application. [skitch.com](http://skitch.com)

• **Dipity** – Create visually appealing and interactive timelines. Users can scroll through the timeline and click on the events that interest them. [dipity.com](http://dipity.com)

• **Wordpress** – Make your own page using Wordpress. If your students subscribe, they’ll receive an email every time you post something new. [wordpress.org](http://wordpress.org)

• **Pinterest** – Teachers post free print outs, pictures of beautiful classrooms, and links to resources. Don’t forget to follow NEA Today! [pinterest.com](http://pinterest.com)

• **Plickers** – Powerfully simple tool that lets teachers collect real-time formative assessment data without the need for student devices. [plickers.com](http://plickers.com)

• **Kahoot** – Kahoot! is a free game-based learning platform that makes it fun to learn – any subject, in any language, on any device, for all ages! [kahoot.com](http://kahoot.com)

• **Classcraft** – Helps teachers manage, motivate and engage their students by transforming their classroom into a role-playing game. [classcraft.com](http://classcraft.com)

• **Class Dojo** – Safe and simple communication app for teachers, parents, and students. [classdojo.com](http://classdojo.com)

• **Remind** – Free text messaging app that helps teachers, students, and parents communicate quickly and efficiently. [remind.com](http://remind.com)

• **Breakout Edu** – Bring all the excitement of an escape room to your classroom in a small wooden box with this immersive learning games platform. [breakoutedu.com](http://breakoutedu.com)

### NEA Micro-Credentials

Micro-credentials are an on-demand, personalized learning experience. Earning a micro-credential is based on demonstrating competency, as opposed to spending seat time. NEA offers over 100 micro-credentials free of charge to members. Topics range from classroom management to bullying to ELL strategies. Start an account at [nea.certificationbank.com](http://nea.certificationbank.com). SDEA offers support in forming a professional learning community to support educators seeking micro-credentials. To start or join a PLC, contact Rich.Mittelstedt@sdea.org.

### Protect Yourself and Your Career on the Internet

“When never put in electronic form anything that you wouldn’t want viewed by a million people, including your colleagues, students, and supervisors—and your mother.”

— Michael D. Simpson, NEA Office of General Counsel

With the rise of technology, educators have many new opportunities to use the internet to communicate in ways we never thought possible. However, with new technology come pitfalls. As a school employee, you must exercise extreme caution when you engage in blogging or other forms of Internet communication. In fact, future teachers need to take action to protect their careers and reputations well before they start their first teaching job, starting with the day they open a social network account. What you post on the internet as a teenager or college student may prevent you from getting the job you want someday.

Keep in mind that your First Amendment rights can be limited by virtue of your position as a school employee. The general rule is that school employees can be disciplined for off-duty conduct if the school district can show that the conduct had an adverse impact on the school or the teacher’s ability to teach. And it wouldn’t be too difficult to make that showing if the teacher’s blog includes sexually explicit or other inappropriate
content and is widely viewed by students. Consequences can be severe, from a written reprimand, to a suspension or termination of employment, to suspension or revocation of one’s teaching license.

**U.S. SUPREME COURT DECISION**
**GARCETTI ET AL. V. CEBALLOS**

“When public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties, they are not speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline.”

**Internet Protection Tips for Prospective Educators**

1. What you post on the internet is, for all intents and purposes, there forever. If you have questionable content on the internet, by all means remove it NOW. Be wary, though, that once you have removed content from the internet, it might still be there preserved by an image-capturing historical documentation site which takes daily screen captures of random sites on any given date and time. Also, just because you remove something from the internet doesn’t mean that someone else hasn’t printed it off and saved it prior to your removing it.

2. Minimize the risk associated with Internet communication by limiting access to your blog, social network, or Web page using a “friends only” or similar restrictive setting. If you are using Facebook, review the privacy options and choose the most restrictive ones. This will make sure only trusted individuals can see the information you are posting. Use extreme caution when “friending” relatives or other individuals who may have connections to students. You may need to revise their access privileges to your site or social network while you have students connected to them in your school.

3. Don’t “friend” students and NEVER GIVE A STUDENT ACCESS TO YOUR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE. Many districts have policies or directives that prohibit staff from inviting or accepting invitations from students to be “friends” on a social network. Check your district’s policies and make sure your internet habits are in compliance with them. Review the policies with your UniServ Director. If you are in a district which allows social network use, make certain to maintain separate networks for your personal life and your classes and never allow the two to commingle. Better yet, use apps designed exclusively for school networking like Remind or Class Dojo.

4. If visitors can post to your blog or Web page, monitor postings constantly and remove any that are inappropriate. Most blogging sites give blog authors and administrators the ability to review and approve blog comments before they are posted. We recommend you use this option if it is available to you.

5. Do not blog or post about your job duties, colleagues, supervisors or students. This will reduce the danger that you might disclose confidential information, share information about a private workplace complaint, or otherwise carelessly or unintentionally engage in speech which could affect your future employment.

6. If you choose to blog or post as a citizen about a non-job-related matter of public concern (i.e., the elections, terrorism or environmental issues) take care that what you say will not impede your employer’s effectiveness or efficiency or otherwise disrupt the workplace.

7. If you are blogging or posting about innocuous information (i.e., your favorite football team or family genealogy), you still must be careful not to engage in comments that could adversely affect your employer (i.e., damage the employer’s reputation) or interfere with your ability to carry out your job duties.

8. Do not blog or post about personal subjects (i.e., dating, romance, or drug or alcohol use). Your blog or Web page should not contain any references to sexual subjects, or contain vulgar, graphic or profane language.

9. Blogging and posting anonymously does not protect you. Names of bloggers, Web page authors and other internet users can be discovered through litigation.

10. Be very careful about posting pictures of yourself or family on the internet. Scrutinize every photo before deciding to post it. Avoid party photos. If others have tagged you in questionable photos on their social networks or websites, ask them to remove them immediately. On Facebook, you also have the option of blocking the tags identifying you, even on someone else's page. If you are allowed to maintain a site for classroom purposes, before posting any student photos make sure you follow district procedures and/or seek written permission from those in photos before posting them.
What to do when you are the target of internet speech

If you discover you are the subject of inappropriate student cyberspeech:

1. **Print** the page, screen capture or email. It is important for the speech to be preserved, if possible. Either print to a hard copy or save an electronic copy of a web page by printing to .pdf or another image writer. If possible, save it to your own personal flash drive or computer or email it to a personal account.

2. **Inform** the school administration. School administrations should really work with you in these situations. Disciplinary action against the offending student may be appropriate in certain cases. Also, you do not want the administration coming after you if the page is not obviously a fake.

3. **Contact** your SDEA UniServ Director or local president for assistance.

4. **Contact the host of the information** such as facebook.com, snapchat.com, plus.google.com or ratemyteachers.com to have the page removed if the profile is fake or the content or conduct on the site violates the guidelines for the site.

5. The ability to track the creator of the information should not be lost by requesting the page be removed. The host will help to identify who posted or created the information, but not without a subpoena, which will require the assistance of local law enforcement.

6. **Contact local law enforcement**. The creator of the content may have committed a crime or you may want to seek a restraining order.

7. **Be Wary of companies** offering to rehabilitate your reputation.

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**Special Concerns**

**Teach But Don’t Touch**

*Whenever possible, never be alone with a student.* That’s because a student’s allegations made when there are no other witnesses hinge on credibility, and authorities often tend to favor the alleged victim in these circumstances. So don’t be alone with a student in a house or a car, and never give a student a ride home. To the extent possible, avoid being alone with a student in a classroom.
Risky situations include: one-on-one tutoring, counseling, after-school or recess detention, and make-up tests. If you can’t avoid being alone with a student at school, keep the door open and stay in plain sight.

Always maintain a professional demeanor and distance. That means: no flirting, teasing, or joking about sex. Don’t socialize with students or treat them as “pals” or “friends.” Never give gifts, unless you give one to every student, and don’t single out any one student for constant special attention or flattery.

Never send e-mails, text messages, or cards to students unrelated to schoolwork. Don’t ask students about their social lives or comment on their personal appearance and avoid discussing intimate details of your own private life. Don’t hire students to baby-sit or allow them to visit your home. Be the adult and maintain boundaries.

Avoid physical contact with students. This is a particularly difficult area. Younger children often seek and need physical comfort from their teachers who, sadly, may be the only source of compassion and love that some students have. In the early elementary grades, an occasional hug is probably OK. But as a general rule, it’s best to avoid most forms of physical contact, especially kissing, hair stroking, tickling, and frontal hugging. And use common sense: a “high five” to acknowledge a job well done is fine; a slap on the bottom is not.

Male teachers have to be especially careful when it comes to physical contact of any sort. While a female teacher’s touch may be perceived as comforting, a male teacher’s may be viewed as sexually suggestive. And male employees are far more likely to be accused of inappropriate contact with students than female employees. According to one expert, accusations involving female teachers and male students make up less than 5 percent of the cases.

Avoid using physical force to enforce discipline. When students are misbehaving or out of control, avoid touching or grabbing them to get their attention. Instead, use verbal commands and other disciplinary methods. There may be a rare occasion when you will have to use physical force in self-defense or to prevent injury to others. If that happens, use the minimum force necessary to prevent harm and immediately call for help. Also, if this is a persistent problem, you may want to ask your district for special training.

Never allow a student to obsess over you. While a crush can be flattering, it also can be fatal, so always nip it in the bud. An unfulfilled fantasy can result in a student acting out to gain attention or retaliating for being ignored. If a student expresses a love interest, respond with an unambiguous “no.” Don’t equivocate and certainly don’t encourage the student by acting pleased by the attention. It’s also advisable to share this information with another adult and your Association representative. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to tell your supervisor and ask that the student be transferred.

Be particularly wary of “troubled” students. This is a tough one. Some students come to school with a host of emotional needs and chronic problems, and they may confide in their classroom teacher and ask for support and guidance. Particularly for a student with emotional problems, a teacher’s efforts to help unfortunately can be misconstrued as something more and may lead to an infatuation or dependence. Plus you don’t have the skills or training needed to assist.

While you can and should express concern and compassion, don’t take on the role of confidant or counselor. Instead, refer the student to the school counselor, a trained professional who has both the expertise to assess what services the student may need and the experience to know how to arrange for the delivery of those services to the student.

Be especially vigilant if you hold certain teaching positions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that employees who perform certain jobs are at increased risk of false allegations. These include athletic coaches and performing arts teachers—drama, band, chorus, and debate, as well as publications advisers. This trend may be the product of the intense nature of such activities, which may weaken teacher/student boundaries, coupled with a substantial amount of after-school, weekend, and off-campus contact.

Sexual Harassment

Federal law and a series of court decisions require that all work places and schools be free of sexual harassment.

In the work place: Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects all public employees from discrimination in employment (including hiring, promotions, salaries, benefits, training and on-the-job treatment.) Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments protects employees and students by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex in educational institutions, educational programs, or other institutions that receive federal funds.

Federal regulations define sexual harassment as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- submission to such conduct is made whether explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment,
• submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or

• such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.”

Involving students: In working with young people there is sometimes a tendency to dismiss inappropriate behavior as “boys will be boys” or “teenage flirting.” In general, if an individual feels harassed, it is likely that a violation of policy and law has occurred.

All school districts must have written policies that address student-student, staff-student, staff-staff, and student-staff sexual harassment. They designate individuals to be consulted with or reported to and establish appropriate processes. Such policies are generally distributed annually (possibly in your orientation materials) and should be read carefully. Teachers are expected not only to exercise good judgment over their own actions, but to protect students from being victimized.

If you have any doubts about a situation, consult the district’s designated person or your local association representative.

What should a target of sexual harassment do?

• Tell the harasser that you dislike the behavior and that you expect it to stop.

• Keep a written record of all harassing acts.

• Tell others about the problem so they can observe and, if necessary, corroborate your claims.

• Make sure that schools, colleges, or university officials are aware that you have been sexually harassed.

• Report the problem to your local Uniserv representative for assistance.

• What should a target of sexual harassment not do?

  • Don’t ignore the harassment. Ignoring it will only encourage the harasser. Tell the harasser to stop.

  • Don’t delay addressing the problem.

  • Don’t blame yourself. Harassment is unwanted can make you feel trapped, confused, helpless, embarrassed, scared. You certainly didn’t ask for any of those feelings.

  • Don’t be embarrassed to share the problem. Tell someone you can trust, and ask her or him to help you take the necessary action.

Child Abuse

Recognizing the fears and sensitivities of our children is very important for today’s education employees. Children who have been or are currently being subjected to abuse outside of school will be more likely to misinterpret actions that other students would not. A child who shows no outward signs of abuse may still be living in terror of being touched or may have an emotionally devastating reaction to a simple verbal reprimand. Being aware of some of the signs of abuse may save you and the child from unnecessary turmoil resulting from an innocent action or statement.

There are several behavioral clues that may lead you to suspect that a student is being abused. Of course, one sign or symptom does not necessarily indicate child abuse but there are some clues that may lead you to suspect it.

Watch for a child who:

  • appears nervous, disruptive or hyperactive;

  • has a pattern of unexplained injuries or an inordinate number of “explained” ones;

  • comes to school inappropriately dressed for the season;

  • is habitually late or often absent from school;

  • arrives early or leaves late because he/she is reluctant to go home;
PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

10 Steps to Stop and Prevent Bullying

BULLYING is systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt and/or psychological distress on one or more students. Bullying is not just child’s play, but a terrifying experience many American school children face every day. It can be as direct as teasing, hitting or threatening, or as indirect as in rumors, exclusion, or manipulation. Bullying can no longer be explained away—as some adults are inclined to do—as a normal part of growing up. Bullying in children can develop into sexual harassment in older students.

Whether you are a parent, an educator, or a concerned friend of the family, there are ten steps you can take to stop and prevent bullying:

1. Pay attention. There are many warning signs that may point to a bullying problem, such as unexplained injuries, lost or destroyed personal items, changes in eating habits, and avoidance of school or other social situations. However, every student may not exhibit warning signs, or may go to great lengths to hide it. This is where paying attention is most valuable. Engage students on a daily basis and ask open-ended questions that encourage conversation.

2. Don’t ignore it. Never assume that a situation is harmless teasing. Different students have different levels of coping; what may be considered teasing to one may be humiliating and devastating to another. Whenever a student feels threatened in any way, take it seriously, and assure the student that you are there for them and will help.

3. When you see something — do something. Intervene as soon as you even think there may be a problem between students. Don’t brush it off as “kids are just being kids. They’ll get over it.” Some never do, and it affects them for a lifetime. All questionable behavior should be addressed immediately to keep a situation from escalating. Summon other adults if you deem the situation may get out of hand. Be sure to always refer to your school’s anti-bullying policy.

4. Remain calm. When you intervene, refuse to argue with either student. Model the respectful behavior you expect from the students. First make sure everyone is safe and that no one needs immediate medical attention. Reassure the students involved, as well as the bystanders. Explain to them what needs to happen next — bystanders go on to their expected destination while the students involved should be taken separately to a safe place.

5. Deal with students individually. Don’t attempt to sort out the facts while everyone is present, don’t allow the students involved to talk with one another, and don’t ask bystanders to tell what they saw in front of others. Instead, talk with the individuals involved — including bystanders — on a one-on-one basis. This way, everyone will be able to tell their side of the story without worrying about what others may think or say.

6. Don’t make the students involved apologize and/or shake hands on the spot. Label the behavior as bullying. Explain that you take this type of behavior very seriously and that you plan to get to the bottom of it before you determine what should be done next and any resulting consequences based on your school’s anti-bullying policy. This empowers the bullied child — and the bystanders — to feel that someone will finally listen to their concerns and be fair about outcomes.

7. Hold bystanders accountable. Bystanders provide bullies an audience, and often actually encourage bullying. Explain that this type of behavior is wrong, will not be tolerated, and that they also have a right and a responsibility to stop bullying. Identify yourself as a caring adult that they can always approach if they are being bullied and/or see or suspect bullying.
Listen and don’t pre-judge. It is very possible that the person you suspect to be the bully may actually be a bullied student retaliating or a “bully’s” cry for help. It may also be the result of an undiagnosed medical, emotional or psychological issue. Rather than make any assumptions, listen to each child with an open mind.

Get appropriate professional help. Be careful not to give any advice beyond your level of expertise. Rather than make any assumptions, if you deem there are any underlying and/or unsolved issues, refer the student to a nurse, counselor, school psychologist, social worker, or other appropriate professional.

Become trained to handle bullying situations. If you work with students in any capacity, it is important to learn the proper ways to address bullying. Visit www.nea.org/bullyfree for information and resources. You can also take the pledge to stop bullying, as well as learn how to create a Bully Free program in your school and/or community.

Cyberbullying is the term applied to bullying over the Internet, via email, text messaging, and similar technological modes of communication. Cyberbullying includes sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression. This form of bullying is more intense as it can occur around the clock, and the text or images can be widely disseminated, well beyond the school grounds.

Educators Preventing Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is growing rapidly among youth. Whereas bullying used to be confined primarily to the schoolyard, young people are being bullied on their computers, cell phones, and with other technology. A good way to tackle the issue of cyberbullying is to stop it before it ever starts. Here are some tips to preventing cyberbullying.

Ten Tips for Preventing Cyberbullying

1. Implement and enforce an anti-bullying school code of conduct that includes both bullying and cyberbullying. Spell out what behaviors and actions will not be tolerated and the consequences that will follow.

2. Have students sign an anti-bullying and cyberbullying pledge where students pledge not to bully others and to speak up if they know someone is being bullied.

3. Create a safe place for students to voice concerns or problems and encourage students to come forward and speak to someone.

4. Learn how to tell the warning signs that a child might be being cyberbullied and how to get the child appropriate help. Educate teachers and staff on the warning signs and what they should do to help a student.

5. Talk with students about cyberbullying: what it is, the impact it has, and its consequences. Let them know cyberbullying is a serious issue that will not be tolerated.

6. Educate parents on cyberbullying. Let them know what signs to look for at home and how to talk with their children about the issue. Invite parents to talk with you about cyberbullying and send home resources.

7. Learn and teach conflict resolution and anger management skills. Help students practice applying them in everyday life.

8. Develop and sustain a network with health care, mental health, counseling, victim services, and social work resources in your community. Make sure all staff knows how to connect students with available resources.

9. Encourage and sponsor a student-led, anti-bullying program. Work with students to help raise cyberbullying awareness within the school through student-led clubs, assemblies, or posters.

10. Stay informed! Stay up to date with the latest Internet and technology trends.

LGBTQ Students

LGBTQ students are more likely to face bullying and harassment in school leading to poor grades, dropping out of school and even homelessness. LGBTQ students at the college level also report feeling unsafe and unwelcome.

Educators are uniquely positioned to address these issues and work towards creating a safe, supportive and affirming school environment for LGBTQ students. Every student deserves the right to attend a school that fully embraces them for who they are and allows them to achieve to their full potential.

Every student deserves a safe, supportive, and affirming school environment. As a caring educator, pledge to create that space for LGBTQ students

• Talk to and share resources with colleagues to educate them on the needs of LGBTQ students.

• Advocate for safe, supportive learning environments for LGBTQ students.

• Collaborate with colleagues, parents, administration, community, and most importantly, students, to ensure students have access to LGBTQ-related supports and resources.

Advocate for the rights of transgender students and stand in opposition to anti-transgender legislation, policies, and practices.
For more information on sexual orientation and gender identity, visit the following:

http://www.nea.org/tools/18846.htm


Avoiding Gender Bias

Findings indicate that many classroom teachers are guilty of gender bias and are totally unaware of what they are doing!

Here are some suggestions for avoiding gender bias in your classroom:

- Use inclusive language. “You guys” may be a popular way of addressing a group, but it’s an example of gender bias.
- Make sure your expectations are the same for all of your students. Both genders can succeed in math and reading, for example.
- Use examples that are gender balanced. If there are none in your textbooks, do some research.
- Avoid stereotyping jobs for students such as having girls clean up and boys carry things.
- Screen books, posters, and other materials for balance.
- Try to put girls and boys in nontraditional situations.
- Make the classroom atmosphere one where both girls and boys are paid equal attention, encouraged, questioned and reinforced.
- Discipline boys and girls in the same manner.
- Pay the same attention to compliant students as you do to assertive students.
- Actively integrate groups by not allowing self-segregation.
- Never use gender to group students.
- Model gender balance by what you say and do.

How to handle complaints

If you are called to a meeting with administrators and the meeting becomes an accusatory proceeding, do not discuss the matter with anyone or attempt to defend yourself alone. Request an adjournment of the meeting to consult your representative, then call immediately. Trained association representatives are in your building or as close as a phone call to your UniServ office.

Until you have a chance to discuss the situation with your association representative or your UniServ director, do not make any spontaneous replies to any charges presented to you.

It is important that you get advice early. Don’t wait to “see what happens”. Your UniServ director will see to it that you have the benefit of legal advice and counsel, if needed. Do not submit any written statements to administrators unless they have been reviewed by your association representative.

Be sure to keep copies of all written correspondence, including postmarked envelopes.

An association representative should accompany you to all meetings. The association representative should be your building representative, a grievance committee member, a local association officer or your UniServ director.

The individual who accompanies you should agree beforehand to testify for you in administrative hearings or court proceedings, if necessary.
Do not agree to any proposals offered without first checking with your association. Under no circumstances should you submit a resignation unless at your own insistence and without first conferring with your UniServ director.

The media may try to get you to make a statement. Do not make any public statements whatsoever. Again, confer with your UniServ director to determine the best way to deal with the media.

Remember, you are not alone — the association advocates for its members.

What to Do if the Unthinkable Happens

• Even if you follow the advice in this publication, there’s no guarantee that you won’t be the victim of false allegations. And if that happens, here are some suggestions about what to do and what not to do: First, call your Association representative. Depending on the local, that person may be a building representative, the Association president, or a UniServ director. Your Association representative can provide advice and help you obtain legal representation under various Association programs.

• Don’t talk to school administrators or law enforcement officers. Even innocent statements can be misconstrued and misused. The decision whether to meet with these officials and what, if anything, to say to them should be made only after consulting with your legal and/or other Association representative. In most circumstances, your representative should accompany you to any meeting.

• Don’t sign anything. It goes without saying that this will be an enormously stressful time, and you should not make any decision about signing a statement or other document without first discussing it with your representative.

• Don’t talk to the media, unless and until you and your representative decide that it is in your best interest to do so.

• Don’t resign from your job. No matter how bad things look, resigning will not help, and it may be interpreted as an admission of guilt. You should not consider this option until you have consulted with your representative.

One of the benefits provided by NEA and your state Association is job rights protection under the Kate Frank/DuShane Unified Legal Services Program (ULSP). The ULSP is a jointly sponsored NEA and state affiliate program that provides appropriate legal assistance to members who are subjected to discipline or discharge by their employer.

But did you also know that NEA provides two other important benefits that may be available to members who are falsely accused? Some cases involving very serious allegations can result in criminal charges being filed against you and may require you to retain a criminal defense attorney. If the charges arise in the course of your employment and you are fully exonerated or all the charges are dropped, then the NEA Educators Employment Liability (EEL) Program will reimburse you up to $35,000 for attorneys’ fees.

(Note: If the criminal charges are limited to corporal punishment, there is reimbursement even if you are not exonerated.)

Be sure to contact your state Association before retaining a criminal defense attorney. Your state Association may be able to recommend a reputable attorney who has experience with child abuse cases.

You also might be sued for damages by the alleged victim and/or the parents. Under the EEL Program, all NEA members are covered for claims up to $1 million in civil lawsuits against them for damages and attorneys’ fees arising out of their employment activities. The policy kicks in after any insurance available through the school district, and is subject to several exclusions. Check with your state Association for additional information about the scope of coverage under the EEL Program.
Experienced Teachers Share Their Insight:

“I’ve learned to be consistent, to offer students routines and discipline. Kids need that kind of security in the classroom — an environment where there are rules that are shared by all.”

“I now insist on eye contact from the minute they walk in the door. I have looked at them, I know them. Students can’t feel anonymous. ‘All right, which one of you is throwing spitballs?’ does not work.”

“I never raise my voice to get the attention of students. Instead, I use hand signals that students can copy. They become so busy trying to duplicate my hand movements, they forget to talk.”

“I rely on my two favorite teaching tools: zip-up bags and the cardboard cases soft drinks come in. The bags are good to corral anything you don’t want wandering around loose. And the cardboard boxes, when cut down, make great trays for passing out materials.”

“I’ve learned to recognize students as persons; to ask them if they feel better if they’ve brought in an absentee note; or to just say ‘Hi, I know you’re in the room — you’re more than just a little question-and-answer machine to me.’”

“I wish I hadn’t felt obligated to deal with what was in my lesson plans all the time. When kids really wanted to know the answer to something, I’d put that motivation on the back burner because it didn’t fit that plan, and I lost out on some opportunities.”

“I wish I’d known not to sweat the small stuff.”

“I believe in giving people attention. I do it with the help of a wine crate, a perfect little stage. Kids stand on this ‘soap box’ whenever they have a story to read or something to share — because, let’s face it: kids love to ham it up.”

“I wish I had been better prepared in writing.” (From an elementary teacher who now gives writing workshops to others in her school.)

“I’ve learned to give kids time to think after I ask a question.”

“I don’t think enough can be said about the use of peer tutoring. Too often, teachers feel that the teaching must come from the adult in the classroom. Don’t be afraid to share some authority and responsibility for classroom learning.”

SDEA/NEA Member Rights

Do Make a Difference

**DO** keep school related conversations professional and confidential.

**DO** be aware of the Professional Practices and Standards Commission Code of Ethics.

**DO** consult an association representative and/or UniServ Director for advice and assistance immediately if you have questions or concerns about a situation.

**DO** keep a log of notable work events.

**DO** know your negotiated agreement and board policies.

**DO** respond to both good and bad evaluation comments.

**DO** develop and post a classroom discipline procedure (in conjunction with official school policies) and use it equitably.

**DO** examine your personnel file annually (take a witness with you).

**DO** keep lines of communication open between you, colleagues and the administration.

**DO** Document, document, document!

**Do Not** discuss a serious situation with the administration or publicly without representation or before consulting your UniServ Director.

**Do Not** ignore critical comments of any kind by an administrator or board member.

**Do Not** take any parental complaint lightly.

**Do Not** use force to control students unless absolutely necessary to protect the student, others, or yourself from harm. Use the minimum reasonable force to control the situation.

**Do Not** resign or make a deal before consulting your UniServ Director or SDEA/NEA legal counsel.

**Do Not** hire your own attorney before contacting SDEA/NEA for legal services unless you are prepared to pay the entire bill.

**Do Not** administer medication or medical treatment except with written approval from a parent or guardian and after proper training within state and local rules and regulations or in emergency situations.

**Do Not** EXPECT THE ADMINISTRATION TO FULLY PROTECT AND DEFEND YOU

And Never believe you can’t be replaced.

You should call your UniServ Director when...

- a student is injured or a serious student disciplinary incident occurs.
- an evaluation includes a plan of assistance or any statements like “…needs improvement…”
- you receive any form of verbal or written reprimand, warning, or suspension.
- you are directed to appear before the administration or board regarding any aspect of your employment status, a complaint or incident.
- you appear to be singled-out for extra evaluations or close observation.
- you receive a notice of nonrenewal.
- it appears that local, state or national laws or regulations are being violated.
Just smile and remember why you wanted to teach.