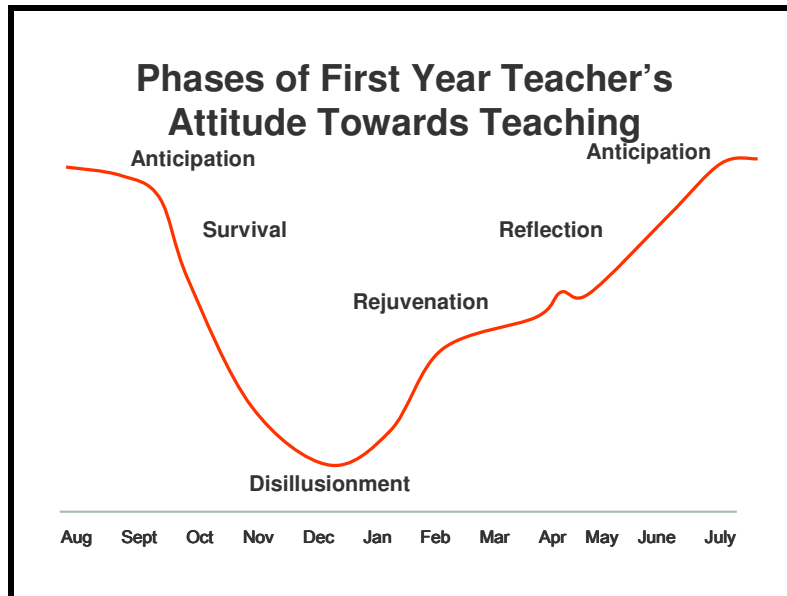


Promising Professional Support and Assistance Activities for Entry-Level Teachers: *What Agricultural Education Teacher Educators Can Do!*



Source: Moir, E. (1990, 1992)

Richard Joerger, Lyle Westrom, Brad Greiman, Brian Warnick,
Greg Thompson, Barry Croom, Jim Armbruster, and Brad King

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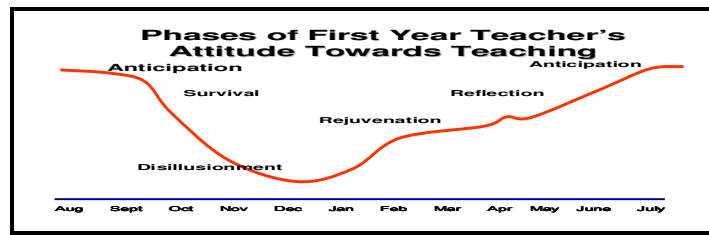
Promising Professional Support and Assistance Activities for Entry-Level Teachers: *What Agricultural Education Teacher Educators Can Do* *

Introduction

Recommendation for support and assistance of ELTs following each phase of changing attitudes (Moir, 1992) were secured from 43 teacher teachers from across the USA. The forms of assistance listed in the instrument for each phase of the attitudinal development were derived from interviews with 6 teacher educators from across the United States. Forty-three teacher educators of agricultural education completed an on-line or hardcopy of an instrument that sought how strongly they recommended teacher educators use selected forms of support and assistance.

What follows is an initial listing of the forms of support and assistance activities that the 43 teacher educators *strongly or very strongly recommended* they and peers use at different phases during the attitudinal development of entry-level agricultural education teachers. The phases for which forms of assistance were developed in the instrument were anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, reflection, and anticipation.

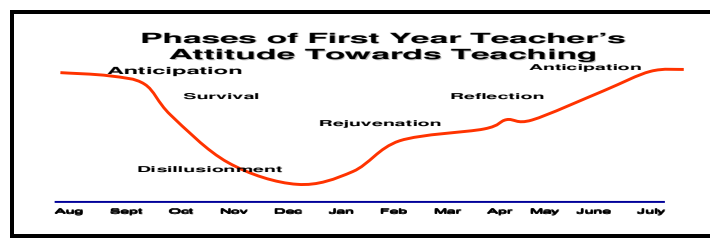
The characteristic feature of each phase will be initially presented; immediately following will be the forms of assistance that the teacher educators strong or very strongly recommend teacher educators conduct in each phase of attitudinal changes of the ELTs.



Anticipation Phase. The entry-level teacher (ELTs) has a tendency to romanticize the role and position of the teacher. ELTs initiate their jobs with a tremendous commitment to making a difference and a somewhat idealistic view of how to accomplish their goals. Feelings of excitement carry the new teachers through the first few days to weeks of school. They often believe they are going to be the best teacher their program has ever had, and that they have the skills, attitude, and dispositions to complete the role!

As noted on the graphic below, the anticipation phase characteristically occurs from the time entry-level teachers sign their contract through the early days of teaching in the fall. The summarized ratings from the teacher educators involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** teacher educators implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs:

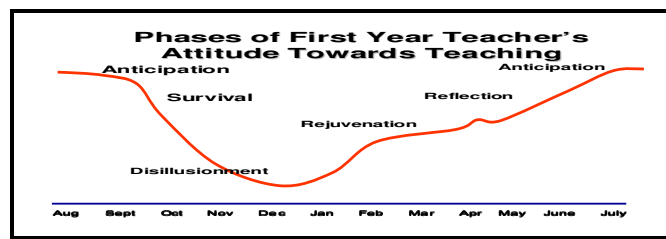
- ✚ Communicate and build a rapport with new teachers through a personal visit, emails, letters, and/or telephone calls
- ✚ Encourage ELTs to establish a formal or informal advisory group
- ✚ Encourage ELTs to establish professional relationships with the parents of the students
- ✚ Encourage ELTs to establish relationships with community members
- ✚ Encourage ELTs to select a local mentor or guide to assist them in their new school
- ✚ Encourage first year teachers to attend the NAAE-affiliate summer conference
- ✚ Invite ELTs to a meeting or training session



Survival Phase. Entry-level teacher (ELTs) learn a lot at a rapid pace. They are instantly bombarded with a variety of problems and situations they had not anticipated, and are caught off guard by the realities of teaching. They struggle to keep their heads above water and become very focused on the day-to-day routine of teaching, with little time available to stop and reflect on their experiences. They often report spending up to 70 hours per week on school-related work and activities. In addition, they are overwhelmed by a constant need to develop curriculum and instructional materials. They are not sure which instructional materials and strategies will work and many expend considerable effort thinking about and developing their instructional plans for the first time. Much to their disappointment, they experience the negative consequences of poorly-prepared lessons. ELTs are surprised by the amount of work involved in being a teacher. They usually are able to maintain a high level of energy throughout this phase. They report being hopeful the stress and strain will subside and maintain belief there is a ‘light at the end of the tunnel’. During this phase new teachers often feel alone and really desire that others will reach out to them.

As noted on the graphic below, the survival phase usually occurs during the early days of the fall teaching assignment. The summarized ratings from the teacher educators involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** teacher educators implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs:

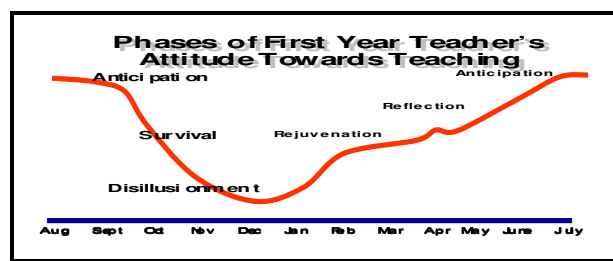
- ✚ Discuss effective ways of teaching students with learning disabilities
- ✚ Discuss proven strategies with ELTs for increasing student motivation
- ✚ Discuss strategies with ELTs for optimizing student behaviors
- ✚ Encourage ELTs to visit with administrators when seeking solutions to challenges/issues
- ✚ Encourage the ELTs to critically evaluate their lesson planning process and products
- ✚ Establish opportunities for all ELTs to meet, socialize, and discuss teaching issues
- ✚ Provide ELTs with sources of instructional resources and materials for teaching
- ✚ Provide encouragement and your belief in their ability to be an effective teacher
- ✚ Remind ELTs of the importance of meeting and interacting with parents



Disillusionment Phase. The entry-level teacher (ELT) realizes things are not going as smoothly as earlier envisioned. Low morale leads to disenchantment with the job. They question their competence and commitment. The level of stress and worry often leads to bouts with illness. The situation is compounded by new events including back-to-school nights, parent-teacher conferences, and initial evaluations by the administrator. Many of the beginning teachers find that classroom management is more stressful than anticipated. The unexpectedly large time commitment brings complaints from family members and friends. Teachers in this phase express self-doubt, have lower self-esteem, and question their professional commitment. This is the toughest phase for many new teachers.

The disillusionment phase may occur during the later days of the first and may last until the holiday break of the fall teaching assignment. The summarized ratings from the teacher educators involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** teacher educators implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs:

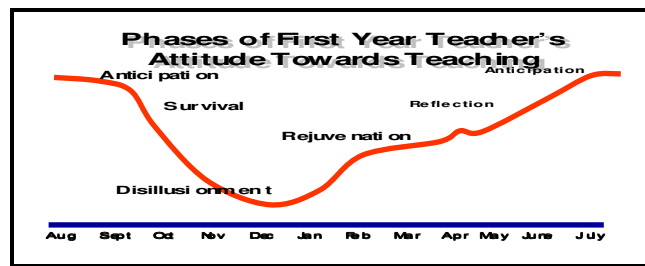
- ✚ Be available to assist the ELTs in solving their challenges and difficulties
- ✚ Encourage ELTs to visit with other teachers to learn how they solve their challenges
- ✚ Encourage them to identify the successes they have experienced as a teacher and advisor
- ✚ Ensure that ELTs receive effective mentoring in a timely manner
- ✚ Organize an institute, retreat, and/or group meeting for the ELTs
- ✚ Provide ELTs with sources of instructional resources and materials
- ✚ Use a highly respected individual (e.g., mentor, teacher educator, teacher, state staff, effective trainer) to provide ideas on how to effectively balance work and personal time



Rejuvenation Phase. During this phase, entry-level teachers experience a gradual improvement in their attitude toward teaching. They make an effort to prepare new and better instructional materials, and are ready to acknowledge their accomplishments while putting past problems behind them. Better understanding of the school system occurs along with an acceptance of the realities of teaching. Experience taught them coping strategies and skills to prevent, reduce, or manage many problems they are likely to encounter in the second half of the year. The teachers experience some sense of relief as they realize only half of the year remains before they can take a break. During the rejuvenation stage, novice teachers focus more on curriculum and instructional materials development, long-term planning and teaching strategies. This phase often lasts into spring. As the phase starts to come to a close, the beginning teachers become more concerned about getting everything (i.e., units, tests, competency exams) completed by year's end as well as student performance and levels of achievement on various assessments).

As noted in the graphic, this phase usually occurs after a holiday break, when new teachers find time to reflect and invest more time in planning curriculum and instruction. The summarized ratings from the teacher educators involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** teacher educators implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs:

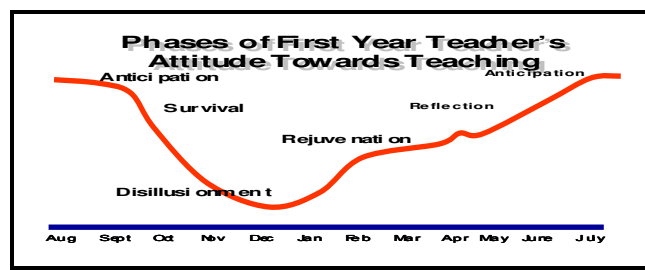
- ✚ Encourage ELTs to establish an advisory committee if not already present
- ✚ Encourage first year teacher to become involved in professional activities and/or organizations
- ✚ Encourage mentors to meet with their protégé (ELTs) to provide support and assistance
- ✚ Inform ELTs of how to become involved in professional development activities sponsored by members of TEAM ^{Ag Ed}



The Reflection Phase. This is a somewhat invigorating time. During this phase the ELT can reflect upon the successful and least effective instructional strategies and activities. The teachers begin to think more about what they will do differently in the future with regard to management, curricula, teaching strategies, resources, and any intra or extracurricular activities. They start to anticipate what teaching will be like with all of the changes they are envisioning.

During the reflection phase the comments and feelings expressed in Moir's (1990) study reflected the personal assurance and satisfaction associated with the ELT completing the first period of teaching. The summarized ratings from the teacher educators involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** teacher educators implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs:

- ✚ Encourage them to reflect on the positive and negative aspects of teaching prior to making decisions about their future
- ✚ Help them bring meaning to their entire year through reflection and evaluative activities
- ✚ Initiate discussions with the ELTs about the benefits and availability of continued and professional education opportunities (graduate courses, workshops and seminars)
- ✚ Promote the practice and benefits of reflection
- ✚ Provide ideas (electronic or in person) for reflection about what the ELT will change or do differently in the future



Anticipation Phase II. As they finish their first year of teaching, entry-level teachers express a heightened sense of what they hope to accomplish in the classroom and laboratory settings. They have less concern for survival. They focus more on their impact on students, and less on themselves. They have greater concerns with quality instructional materials and teaching strategies than they did during the initial time of anticipation that occurred before and during the first couple of weeks of teaching.

As noted in the graphic, the end-of-year anticipation phase usually occurs toward the end of their first year of teaching. The ELTs express a heightened sense of what they hope to accomplish in the classroom and laboratory settings. The summarized ratings from the teacher educators involved in this case study suggest that they **very strongly to strongly recommend** teacher educators implement the following forms of support and assistance with ELTs:

- + Assist the ELTs in developing realistic professional goals
- + Encourage continued critical thinking and analysis of their teaching activities
- + Encourage ELTs to have a functioning advisory committee in place in their program
- + Encourage the ELTs to conduct an overall program evaluation
- + Offer classes or workshops on pedagogy and/or technical skills
- + Provide recognition for the ELTs at the annual summer conference

