

# One room schoolhouse

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



The one room school house of the past required one teacher to meet the needs of many, usually in isolation, with limited resources and inferior materials. The legacy of the one room school house is deeply steeped into the modern education system, the effects of which make teaching difficult, especially for the novice teacher. Most teachers enter the education field with positive attitudes and lofty goals. They believe they can make a difference in the lives of their students. Difficulties in the classroom often overshadow their enthusiasm. Beginning teachers often leave the field of education due to frustration, disillusionment and negative experiences in the classroom. Three aspects of the legacy of the one room school house which are particularly difficult for new teachers are inadequate induction programs, inequity in the work place, and isolation in the classroom. Induction programs are often inadequate and do not support the teacher when it is most needed, during the first year. Would be mentors often leave the novice teacher to their own devices to see if they can handle the pressures of teaching on their own. Much needed advice and role modeling is withheld and learning by example is not accessible. Another difficulty first year teachers face is a lack of resources. Teachers are commonly known as hoarders because it takes years of teaching to gather the supplies and materials necessary to run a classroom smoothly. First year teachers are given a minimal budget for supplies, have not created materials of their own, have not had the opportunity to benefit from parent donations and are often left with subpar classroom resources from the teacher that previously occupied the room. These issues, coupled with difficult teaching assignments, give new teachers little hope when struggling in the classroom.

New teachers lose their idealism based on the environment. They can become disheartened and lose their inspiration to teach. There is currently no induction program at any school in my district because, due to budget cuts, we have no new teachers. There are, however, many teachers in new positions as teachers are forced to either take a new position or be laid off. They may be located at a new school, or teaching a new subject, or teaching a different grade level. These teachers often experience the same obstacles new teachers face. They are often abandoned by their new colleagues and left to fend for themselves when learning the new curriculum, culture and operations of a school. They must create new materials and often must obtain new resources as the ones they had been using may no longer be germane to what they are teaching. There are no programs to help these teachers adjust at my school. They must depend on the kindness of others and their own ingenuity and creativity. Induction programs should be established and mandated by the district office. Hiring new teachers is an investment of finances, time and resources. When new teachers leave the district it is a loss on all of these fronts so it is important to support new teachers and ensure their success. As an administrator, I would make sure to support new teachers, or teachers new to a position, by providing resources, time and mentoring. New teachers should receive a larger materials budget than those who have been teaching for years because they need more supplies to set up their classroom. As an administrator, I would offer new teachers extra prep time each week to use for lesson planning and observing other teachers. They could also use this time to meet with a mentor teacher assigned to them at the beginning of the year. I would use substitutes' prep

time to cover these hours so it would be relatively cost free. Inequity is another obstacle beginning teachers must face. Teaching is one of the only occupational fields where new employees are expected to do the most difficult assignments. Beginning teachers often take positions at schools in low socio-economic areas and additionally are assigned the lowest level, most challenging classes. Low socio-economic schools frequently have lower quality resources, materials and buildings, all of which make the beginning teacher's job more difficult. Low socio-economic schools also suffer from limited community resources and support for schools and teachers.

Classroom assignments are also a source of inequity for beginning teachers. Experienced teachers are given honors and advanced placement classes as a reward for being in the district for a period of time. This leaves the beginning teachers to teach the general courses which are void of many high achieving, self-motivated students. The least experienced teachers are expected to teach the neediest students with the same level of proficiency as that of more experienced teachers. Inequitable assignments are not the norm in my school district. The superintendent encourages principals to make changes to teaching assignments to promote teachers' growth.

Seniority does not factor into the construction of the master schedule and teachers rarely remain in the same position for over five years unless they are restricted by their credential. I have taught at my middle school for 18 years and over the years I have taught every grade level and every subject. My principal moves teachers to the grade level or subject area that he feels will be best suited to the needs of the school at that time. Meeting the needs of the students must be the priority of an administrator. The best equipped

teachers with the most skill need to be placed where they are needed the most. Beginning teachers at low socio-economic schools should be given special consideration when creating a master schedule. Early prep periods and smaller class sizes would help them be more successful. Also, common prep time with a mentor teacher would encourage them to seek the support they need. Administrators must not let beginning teachers fend for themselves, but should ensure that they have adequate materials and class resources even if those resources are scarce. Perhaps the most insidious problem beginning teachers must grapple with is isolation. Schools all around the country have been built using the same basic blueprint for decades. They are built with separate classrooms for separate classes for separate grades for separate teachers. Each teacher is then in charge of their classroom and teach alone in their classroom. Teachers infrequently get the opportunity to work together in collaborative teams. Weekly meetings and the lunch room may be the extent to which they share common space or have the opportunity to communicate with each other. This fact isolates all teachers but has an even greater effect on the beginning teacher. New teachers require more constructive feedback than experienced teachers in order to build their skills and confidence. A lack of feedback can leave the new teacher doubting their abilities or even worse, making habit of poor teaching practices. Isolation is a part of the culture at my school. Teams meet collaboratively only three times a year and the meetings are often unproductive. Weekly meetings are expedited to allow teachers to go home earlier. Lunch rooms are empty as teachers prefer to eat in their classrooms. Attempts to meet collegially are often met with hostility. When teachers do

meet, it is on a social level outside the workplace. My school is currently entering a two year long process of adopting a professional learning community model. The model would help facilitate collaborative communications and problem solving. It would help teachers, especially beginning teachers, improve their instruction and meet their students' needs. The process will be difficult, as change always is, but well worth the growing pains if teachers are no longer working in isolation. The legacy of the one room school house negatively impacts all teachers but is exceedingly harmful for beginning teachers. Inadequate induction programs create a sink-or-swim scenario for first year teachers. Inequitable teaching assignments place an undue burden on novice teachers making it difficult for them to meet the needs of their students. Isolation further prevents new teachers from getting the support and guidance they require to be successful. The combination of these factors can many times cause beginning teachers to fail. They lose their aspirations to have a positive impact at their school and end up just trying to survive the multitude of problems and hurdles they face in the classroom.