

# *Preface*

**H**ow incredibly exciting yet unbelievable! You have been given the key to your new classroom; the day has finally arrived for you to unlock the door to the place you're going to know, love, and spend as much time as you do your own home. Soon you will be immersed in attending school meetings, preparing the teaching and learning, and welcoming your elementary school students. Your teaching career is beginning at last!

There is much for you to know and remember. The details may seem insurmountable. But you can do it! Most likely, you will share this journey with many other new teachers. Only you have this book, which offers many keen insights and secrets, gathered from all kinds of first year and veteran teachers, to enhance your efficiency and strengthen your effectiveness in everything you do.

As you begin your teaching career, you have the freedom to become the educator you always dreamed of being, one who will make a difference. Consider all the possibilities you can and will create! You will establish a warm and caring learning environment; you will develop and implement challenging and engaging lesson plans. You will collaborate with all kinds of professionals and parents who want you and your students to do well. Finally, you will start earning money doing something you hope you will truly love.

You will be responsible for molding impressionable minds in positive directions. You will create the kind of dynamic classroom that you always wanted as a student—a place where real learning takes place, where everyone has fun, where there is order and support, where differences are honored yet everyone works together as a team.

## **OVERVIEW**

This book is intended to serve as one of your mentors, a handbook that you can consult to prepare yourself for any of the usual

challenges you are likely to face. It has been written specifically to reflect the realities of what most typically leads to success for beginning teachers.

We have brought together the most practical elements from the education literature and our experience. We added the advice of teachers and the wisdom of young learners (whose names are changed for privacy) to provide you with guidance during your first professional teaching position. The book includes a plethora of tips and suggestions . . . secrets that experienced teachers have discovered to simplify, organize, and reduce the stress associated with the first year on the job. Many guidelines are illustrated with vignettes that show how they can be applied in action.

## CONTENTS

*Secrets to Success for Beginning Elementary School Teachers* has been written to assure your success in the classroom. The book's short, focused chapters address several important topics that are absolutely critical for beginning teachers. They serve as checklists for you to follow as you begin your career. Chapters 1 and 2 describe all kinds of details that you need to consider before you start teaching; we provide insights vital for learning your way around the school and organizing your classroom. Chapter 3 helps you get to know your students.

Chapters 4 through 9 systematically walk you through the first day of school and tell you how to launch effective ways to facilitate teaching and learning to meet the needs and interests of your students. Guidelines include developing meaningful curriculum, planning instruction and assessment, establishing routines and classroom management, valuing diversity, and using instructional technology. Each of these chapters reveals one valuable secret to success after another, many of which some teachers only understand, apply, or appreciate after many years of trial and error.

Chapter 10 looks at the importance of professionalism from dressing for success and maintaining confidentiality to managing time and working well with colleagues. Chapter 11 describes the pragmatic realities of building relationships with students, understanding their behaviors, and implementing classroom management strategies. Chapter 12 explores creating and maintaining positive relationships with parents or other guardians.

Then, Chapter 13 and 14 address preparing for and using substitutes, getting involved in the school, and networking with professionals. Finally, the Reflection chapter encourages you to be the teacher you want to be.

Being a teacher encompasses far more than what you do with students in your classroom. *Secrets to Success for Beginning Elementary School Teachers* reveals what you need as you progress through your first year and look ahead to many more years to come. We suggest you read the entire book both before you begin and again during the year. You'll be amazed at all there is to know and do; every day brings new challenges and rewards, and we are here to make the journey smoother for you.

As you read this book, take time to incorporate the ideas, relating them to your own classroom and students. Your geographic locations and student populations may differ, but you will benefit from the ideas we share with you. We have gathered our suggestions from many different successful teachers who want you to profit from all that they have learned much more slowly and painstakingly along the way. We want to prepare you for changes, soften the challenges, and broaden your choices as you go through your first year.

## AUDIENCE

This book is written for new teachers, teachers returning to the classroom, and experienced practicing teachers mentoring new teachers or student teachers and interns, as well as for preservice teachers in the midst of their education and preparation. Each chapter presents a list of suggested activities to extend your thinking and to help you apply, within your particular classroom and situation, the ideas presented. Although the suggestions and structures we offer are based in research and practice, our intent is to be practical above all else. We provide you with all the little (and not so little) secrets that will help you to do your job in such a way that you make your classrooms fun, interesting, and satisfying—not only for your students but for yourself. Because, if you are not having fun working as a teacher, you're probably not doing it right. We want you to experience success from the very beginning!