

PERSPECTIVE

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR SUPPORTING TODAY'S NOVICE TEACHER IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

The following perspective series discusses the three-tiered method that the AUSL school network recommends to support novice teachers. AUSL's perspective is reinforced via interviews held with novice and experienced teachers within the AUSL network and partner districts to discuss the effectiveness of various supports they received in their first year. AUSL has found that there are three key components of support necessary to build the foundation that first year teachers need to be able to best serve their students. These three anchors of support are as follows:

Administrative Support: Prioritize transparent, consistent communication from school leadership. Novice teachers are managing their own classrooms for the first time, and school practices such as managing a gradebook and understanding building policies can be daunting, not to mention navigating remote learning during a pandemic. Transparent communication around expectations from school leadership enables novice teachers to focus their energy on developing relationships with students instead of navigating expectations. When reflecting on her school year, one novice teacher said that it's important to have "clear expectations of requirements at the beginning.

[Leadership] frontloading expectations for the whole quarter would be helpful." Transparency helps to build trust and breaks down the divide that can exist between leadership and new teachers.

Coaching Support: Coach with positive and consistent feedback. Novice teachers crave frequent and consistent feedback so they know what they are doing right and can continue to develop their craft. One novice teacher left her prior school because of lack of coaching. "There were no instructional coaches. [Without feedback] I didn't know how to improve." Along with consistency, positive framing is key to developing confidence in novice teachers. Positively framed feedback helps to reassure novice teachers that there are elements they are doing well and helps them to measure and see that they are making progress. "One [coach] did a really good job of framing feedback in a growth mindset, even if it was something negative. For first year teachers, it's all about small victories." When novice teachers feel that they are growing, they are motivated to continue helping their students learn and grow, and are able to reflect on their accomplishments.

Peer Support: Construct different types of cohorts for diverse systems of support. When novice teachers begin their first year, they are new to curriculum, classroom structures, and school procedures, which can be overwhelming. Speaking to an experienced teacher, she reiterated that “new teachers can be lost. There are hard, high demands and they need someone they can lean on.” Having a cohort of other novice teachers across multiple schools can help new teachers to develop confidence in the classroom. When talking to first year teachers, we heard over and over again the importance of their first year teacher cohort. One teacher touched on the emotional support the cohort provided by saying “Even if they couldn’t help [with the specific problem I was having] it was the validation. That was really cool - having other first year teachers that were going through the same things too.” Alongside a district or network-wide novice teacher cohort, smaller school-specific cohorts can create the important space for novice teachers to talk about and reflect on the relevant challenges they are encountering. One teacher discussed the weekly first year teacher meetings her school organized: “I really liked that because we could talk about individual kids and could pinpoint struggle spots. It was more personalized and relevant, and brought us together as a unit.”

Most novice teachers entering the workforce today are from the Millennial or GenZ generations and have different values and workplace expectations than those that came before them. It’s important for there to be supports at the administrative, coaching, and peer levels that are aligned to the needs and values of the generation and therefore retain effective teachers. Further, effective novice teacher supports will be as vital as ever as new teachers are forced to navigate the uncertain terrain that lies ahead as the COVID-19 pandemic continues and impacts schools around the country. This is the beginning of a recurring perspective series in which we’ll dive into additional detail along with examples and practices to implement these three tiers of support to best guide novice teachers. We have found that this three-tiered approach is the foundation for supporting novice teachers, on top of which additional practices may be added.

Stay tuned for a deeper dive into each of these three tiers by subscribing to our newsletter on our [website](#) or [contact us](#) directly if you’re interested in learning more about our school network or how our Advisory Services team partners with districts around the country to help ensure student access to equitable, high quality learning.



ABOUT AUSL ADVISORY SERVICES

Advisory Services provides strategic consulting to K-12 school districts. Our goal is to build district capacity to source, grow, and retain diverse, high-quality teachers who transform schools by providing consistent access to equitable, high-quality, learning experiences.

WE PARTNER COLLABORATIVELY WITH DISTRICTS TO:

- Establish and calibrate on a common, readily observable language for excellent, equitable instruction.
- Develop growth-focused learning trajectories and supporting structures that take the guesswork out of how to design and implement differentiated professional learning and coaching for teachers and school leaders.
- Provide differentiated professional learning and coaching experiences to accelerate teacher and school leader growth.

INTERESTED IN PARTNERING WITH US?

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