

**FIRST YEAR TEACHER SUCCESS:  
A Study of the Successes and Frustrations of  
Beginner Teachers**

**SCOTT ROYCE**

B.A., King's College, 1989  
B.Ed., University of Alberta, 1990

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	7
<b>THE PREAMBLE</b>	9
<b>PART ONE: INTRODUCTION</b> <i>The Importance of Beginner Teacher Success</i>	15
<b>PART TWO: THE CURRENT LITERATURE</b> <i>What Does it Say?</i>	24
<b>PART THREE: THE RESEARCH FOR THIS PROJECT</b> <i>Research</i>	46
<i>Hypothesis</i>	47
<i>Methodology</i>	48
<i>Survey Design</i>	59
<b>PART FOUR: INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS</b> <i>Part One: the Open Ended Questions</i>	52
<i>Part Two: the Likert Scale Assertions</i>	58

PART FIVE: <b>CONCLUSION</b> <i>A Recipe for Success</i>	62
Appendix A: the Questionnaire	70
Appendix B: A Template for Orientation Modules	75
References	78
Final Note	83

## LIST OF TABLES

1	Current Literature: List of Beginner Teacher Frustrations	29
2	Current Literature: Sources of Beginner Teacher Successes	39
3	Open Ended Survey Results: Six Most Common Sources of Success	53
4	Open Ended Survey Results: Six most Common Sources of Frustration	56
5	The Likert Scale Survey Results: The Successes	59
6	The Likert Scale Survey Results: The Frustrations	60

## **Don't Be Afraid To Fail**

You've failed many times, although you may  
not remember.  
You fell down the first time you tried to walk.  
You almost drowned the first time you tried to swim,  
didn't you?  
Did you hit the ball the first time you swung a bat?  
Heavy hitters, the ones who hit the most home runs,  
also strike out a lot.  
R.H. Macy failed seven times before his store in  
New York caught on.  
English novelist John Creasey got 753 rejection slips  
before he published 564 books.  
Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times, but he also hit 714  
home runs.  
Don't worry about failure.  
Worry about the chances you miss when you don't  
*even* try.

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*The  
Preamble*



It certainly would strike most of us as odd if we were asked to name the greatest teachers ever. And, yet it is not uncommon to hear the same asked, for example, of professional athletes. Indeed, would not Wayne Gretzky and Babe Ruth likely be answers to this question? In fact, would not the same asked of other professions solicit a quick response as well? Who, for example, were among the greatest scientists, doctors, or politicians to ever practice their profession? Some would suggest Isaac Newton, Louis Pasteur, and Winston Churchill in respective order. But, why do we not have a ready answer when the same is asked of teachers? One reason probably lies in the fact that teaching is not nearly as high a profile profession as the others previously mentioned. Many would also suggest that teachers, as a lot, are too ministerial in nature. That is to say, most of those who become teachers are motivated by altruism, specifically, by the desire to make a positive contribution to society and to work with children (Boberg, Bosetti & O'Reilly, 1992). In other words, teachers like pastors, are not in the profession for the pursuit of fame or glory, but rather are in the service of being servants to those entrusted to their care (Devers, 1996). Yet teaching is the profession that makes all other professions possible (Clark, 1997). According to Hart (1986), Isaac Newton and Louis Pasteur attributed much to their college teachers, while Winston Churchill sought to increase the quality of education for one and all. Why can we not, then,

readily name a famous teacher?

Perhaps the flaw is in the question itself. It might be more *à propos* to ask the reader to name a teacher who has helped shape goals and who has subsequently inspired these goals to fruition. Posing the question this way makes an answer that much easier to formulate. However, this new question carries with it an intrinsic value. That is to say, implicit in this new question is the notion that the importance of teaching itself exceeds that of any other profession. In other words, if specifically a teacher, and generally, the teaching community, has inspired one to pursue his or her life's goals, then teaching must be deemed the most critical profession there is. But why do we down play the significance of the profession with such neutral or castrated vernacular as *rewarding* or *challenging* (see, for example, Your First Year: Information for the Beginner Teacher, 1995)? I would prefer to proclaim, as William Gairdner has in The War Against the Family (1992), that teaching is indeed the *most* important task that any nation takes on as the teaching profession itself is responsible for the nurturing of the quality of the minds, spirits, and the bodies of the young. Indeed, this thought is echoed by Welsh (1996) who said that teachers have one of the few opportunities that life offers to positively change, guide, influence, and mold people. Furthermore, the teacher, despite changing technologies and philosophies, continues to be the prime humanizer in the educational process, and the essential catalyst in introducing the curious, growing mind to the knowledge of the

ages while at the same time encouraging the novel approaches germinating in young minds (see Hasenfaus, 1986)—a mind that Plato suggested was meant to be educated with one quest in mind: the quest for truth (Guttek, 1995). This Platonic notion of truth can be expanded to include truth about oneself as well as the truth about that which is around us now as well as all that has preceded us. This point is eloquently summarized by the famous French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain (1943) who stated: man is not merely an animal of nature, like the skylark or a bear, he is also an animal of culture, whose race can subsist only within the development of society and civilization, he is a *historical* animal; hence the multiplicity of cultural or ethico-historical patterns into which man is diversified; hence, too, the essential importance of education.

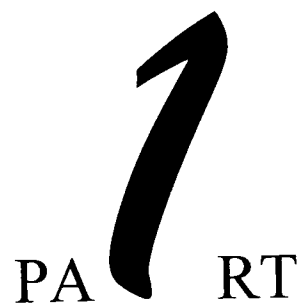
This notion of education as the essential catalyst in the development of the nonpermeable nature of human relations today as well as yesterday is a common theme with many educational writers. Guttek (1995), for example, pointed out that education has been, and continues to be, a process that ensures the cultural continuation of a group or nation. Indeed, daily the teacher—implicitly or explicitly—teaches how each of us is a thread woven throughout the complex pattern of modern and historical society.

This theme serves to magnify the critical role that teaching has in the development and the caressing of the human spirit as an enduring and marvelous entity. To caress this spirit is the consummate gift of our trade—the trade of all trades.

Given the importance of this professional we must, then, concern ourselves with the perpetuation of quality teaching by attending to two critical components of this profession: first, the proper preparation of inductees; and second, the cultivation and preservation of those inductees who have proven to be above average. I say *above average* as opposed to *excellent* because I agree with Daniel Dyer (1985) that the rarity of excellent teachers should not be at all be surprising. Excellent relief pitchers are rare. Excellent hockey players are rare. Excellent human beings are rare. As they have always been.

All of us, from time to time, must take a stand on particular issues. To *not* do so renders us dispassionate and disinterested players in the game of life. Martin Luther, while defending his ninety five theses, put it most succinctly when he said, “Here I stand”. My position—the rock upon which I stand—is the cultivation and preservation of those teachers who are indeed above average as defined by their commitment to our greatest resource: young human beings. Regardless of their

chosen goals in life, our key to success as a species lies in our youth. Let them be guided by the best.



*The  
Importance  
of  
Beginner  
Teacher  
Success*

During a reminiscent mood recently, I scavenged my way through a treasure chest of memorabilia that collectively serves as a series of snap shots into the life of a happy school boy. Of the various accolades that my mother stored in this chest, my fourth grade report card particularly caught my attention. Purely as an academic measurement, it suggests that my fourth year in grade school was by far my most successful. However, this icon inundated my memory with a bevy of beautiful moments affirming, instead, that my grades were a positive by-product of having been a “content”, “motivated”, “energetic” student; adjectives that were all flushed out by an excellent first year teacher.

My fourth grade class was blessed with a brand new teacher by the name of Miss Finigan. I remember well that she possessed youthful energy and endurance, clarity and precision of mind, as well as what seemed to be an inexhaustible ability to connect with everyone in the class in such a way that the recipient felt that they were the quintessential reason she was teaching.

I remember quite well, paying Miss Finigan the ultimate compliment when I bragged about how awesome she was to my peers in the PeeWee hockey dressing room. Who would have dared to speak favorably of their teacher? At the time that was as socially suicidal as admitting publicly to liking the Osmond Brothers. Not

surprisingly, though, I was not alone in issuing these verbal accolades. We all loved Miss Finigan because she was able to consistently position each and everyone of us as the proverbial ruler of our own domain. She managed, in a mere two hundred days (my report card said that I did not miss a single day that year) to transform me into a confident master of my future. Indeed, to Miss Finigan's greatest critics of all—us students—she was an exceptional teacher. Moreover, she was an exceptional first year teacher. Regardless, however, of my evaluation of her, it is safe to say that Miss Finigan had a great year as an inductee to the teaching profession.

As a teacher, I have fond memories of myself being an inductee to this profession. My first year was at a junior high school in Edmonton and the teaching assignment was accelerated French. My university major was mathematics: but, that did not matter as I, an ideologue, was about to embark on my *calling*; namely, to nurture young human minds. After all, the bottom line with regards to teaching I thought, and still think, is not about numeracy skills, but rather teaching the youth to exist with other human beings so as to evolve as a species that promotes and endorses reciprocity amongst its members. Indeed, as Socrates suggested (quoted in Kreeft, 1984), education is a process whereby individuals become aware of



themselves, only then can they understand those around them.

So embark on the journey I did, and though I look back at my energetic and perhaps naïve ideology with amusement, the end result of my first year was a great deal of professional and personal satisfaction. Sadly, however, not all beginner teachers experience the success that Miss Finigan or I did. Indeed, according to Gordon (1991), all too many find their first year traumatic to the point that they contemplate quitting. Of the seven hundred and seventy two novice teachers who participated in a survey with Boberg, Bosetti, and O'Reilly (1992), almost half indicated that they thought about leaving the profession. Moreover, this same study reported that over twenty percent of these novice teachers *would not* be teaching in five years.

This past Fall, I walked into a colleague's classroom to wish her a happy weekend only to have her respond, "I am not cut out for this job, I really don't think I should be here....". My heart sank. This news shook me simply because I believed then, as I do now, that this Senior High teacher is one who definitely belongs in front of students. She has a definitive gift for melding together a strong knowledge of her subject area with a passion for its acquisition. With some guidance—insofar as honing her overall management skills—I believe, this beginner teacher will become a quality teacher. This tearful confession, however, was a reminder of her present plight. I felt both embarrassed by, and ashamed of, our

profession. Why was the predominate induction method of *sink or swim*—left over from another era—still so common in our profession (see, for example Krajewski & Veatch, 1988)? Why was she left to her own devices? Why, after four years of university preparation, has she found herself in tears? What could and should our school and school board have done to set this neophyte up for success?

Her case, tragically enough, is not unique. Dinham (1994) is one of many authors who has noted that many beginner teachers experience frustration and dissatisfaction during their first year. Gordon (1991) has found that many beginner teachers leave the profession after only two years. This revelation is certainly substantiated by a study done in a major Florida metropolitan school district where it was found that the rate at which teachers leave the profession is inversely related to the number of years of experience (see Bruce, 1994). Gordon has estimated that throughout the United States, one in five leave the profession in the first five years. In Quebec, according to Bradley (1995) the numbers leaving the profession are so high they warrant government intervention insofar as teacher preparation programs. Even closer to home, Sloan (1996) estimates that sixteen hundred students graduated with a Bachelor of Education degree from the three major Universities in the province of Alberta in 1996. Of these, about 175 were from the University of Lethbridge. Approximately ninety five percent gained teaching positions, and of

those, one in three will subsequently leave the profession in their first five years. This fact is born out in a survey conducted by Friesen (1990) showing that attrition among Alberta's beginner teachers is high. Yet another study by Kavanagh (1992) reveals that even those who remain often lack the professional training to cope, endure, and function in their daily routines.

This, then, begs the critical question of how it is that the training process before and during the induction period can better prepare the beginner teacher for the first few years, the most critical phase in a teaching career. Furthermore, have those teachers who have passed from this critical stage and gone onto many years of teaching simply learned to cope with their inadequacies, or, have they—by the nature of their university education coupled with their school board policies designed for beginner teacher success—developed into quality teachers? And, if so, what exactly are these processes by which teachers have, as Huberman (1992) suggests, successfully negotiated the transformation from the beginner, or survival stage to the stabilization stage?

This question of beginner teachers' success is vital not only to the first year teacher but to the teaching profession at large. Indeed, as Kavanagh (1992) has observed, the cost to the system due to dissatisfaction and the subsequent quitting of beginner teachers is enormous. How do we, then, remedy this problem of unhappiness and attrition in the teaching profession during, what Kavanagh calls the

critical period of induction—usually identified as the first three years?

To begin, I think, we must ask upon whose shoulders falls the responsibility of ensuring the success of our inductees? More specifically, when does the university teacher program end and the school board training begin?

Over fifty years ago the Minister of Education arranged with the universities of Alberta to be solely responsible and accountable for teacher preparation. These Memoranda of Agreement, however, have recently been re-negotiated as stated in the Quality Teaching Document (Alberta Education, 1995). Now the Minister of Education and the accredited post-secondary institutions must enter into new agreements under which the Minister has a leadership role in creating ongoing, dynamic interactions between the post-secondary and the field-based educators. The hope of the Alberta Government is that the universities, since they know best how to prepare individuals to become teachers, will continue to be responsible for the preparation of graduates who can demonstrate competency when they enter the classroom. The Minister of Education, however, will identify a second level of knowledge, skills and attributes that teachers must have to qualify for permanent certification (see Quality Teaching Document p. 4, 1996). This perspective is a wonderful step forward as the line between the conclusion of university teacher

training and the commencement of school board training has not always been entirely clear.

Indeed, as Lasley (1986) suggests, all that is clear is that much has to be done from both perspectives to further ensure the success of beginner teachers. Bradley (1995) has shown that in the province of Quebec, for example, a great deal is being done to strengthen teacher training programs. While Merseeth (1990) has found that more and more universities are becoming more accountable for their graduates, following the lead of Harvard Graduate School of Education which has set up interactive computer networks between beginner teachers and their former university-based teacher educators.

However, university-based training—albeit the first and pivotal component—is only one part in the overall training of a successful teacher. The other part will be the focus of this study, because this project sprang from my desire to explore and better understand consistent themes of frustration and success experienced by novice teachers as they attempt to bridge the gap that evidently exists between their formal teacher preparation and their arrival at the stabilization stage of their careers. Specifically, I wanted to know how novice teachers become confident and secure quality teachers? What are the indicators of frustration as well as success of those neophytes who do make this leap? My short term goal was to help

minimize the chance of attrition of quality teachers in our jurisdiction and, perhaps, elsewhere, but my most immediate concern was to lessen the risk of walking into novices' classrooms to wish them a happy weekend, only to witness tearful confessions of frustration.

PA **2** RT

*What  
Does  
the  
Current  
Literature  
Say?*

The amount of research done on professional development is quite substantial, yet, specific articles on teacher failure or teacher dissatisfaction are quite rare. Equally rare is evidence of work done on first year teacher attrition. Therefore, using present research to discuss the specificity of beginning teacher success or failure was, indeed, a challenge.

Michael Huberman (1992) wrote an excellent chapter in the text Understanding Teacher Development in which he synthesizes the fragmentation of a teacher's early professional life into a developmental process during one's overall career. This process consists of several stages, two of which he called the *survival stage* and the *stabilization stage*. The question that he and many others struggle with is how does a teacher successfully pass from the former to the latter? What are the intermediate steps? What are the consistent sources of frustration as well as success during these intermediate steps? In search of these answers I poured through countless educational journals such as the *Phi Delta Kappan*, *the Bulletin*, and *the Principal*. Moreover, I spent an enormous amount of time scouring the Internet. Finally, I spent time conversing with, and reading materials written by, practitioners in this area; specifically, the superintendents from Medicine Hat Public and Sherwood Park Catholic School Divisions. All of this, coupled with texts (or portions thereof) written on the subject, allowed me to amass a great deal of information on teacher



growth. From this pile I managed to siphon off sufficient clues that consistently cropped up as sources of success or frustration as teachers attempted to get from the survival stage to the stabilization stage. These clues continuously emerge and were like symbols found on a road map that help the traveler know what to avoid as well as what to look for when attempting to get from Town A to Town B. I found these clues could be broken into two fairly distinct categories: areas of frustration and areas of success.

***The areas of frustration*** are six of the most common themes that emerged time and again in the current literature. These six themes are listed in Table 1 on page 29. There were certainly other themes that emerged as well, but these six were by far the most commonly noted.

***1. Difficult work assignments:*** It seems that many beginner teachers had an initiation similar to mine. That is, many seem to have begun their teaching career in an assignment that was removed from their area of expertise. This is substantiated by Kurtz (1983) who concluded that it was not unusual for returning teachers to choose to teach all of the ‘good’ courses, leaving the “dregs” for the new teachers. It may be, as Maeroff (1988) puts it, that knowledge is supposed to be the basic

currency in which a teacher deals, but Hasenfaus (1986) has found that too many teachers are teaching in an area in which they have little or no background.

Whitehead (1929) contends that it is extremely important for every teacher, let alone the beginner teacher, not to teach too many different subjects, and the subjects they do teach should be thoroughly grasped and thoroughly taught. Indeed, the Alberta Teachers Association stated in one of its booklets (from a series of booklets intended for improved instruction) titled Your First Year: Information for Beginning Teachers (1995) that teachers should not accept teaching assignments for which they are not qualified. Despite these warnings, difficult work assignments remain one of the most frequently enumerated sources of frustration for teachers here in Alberta (see, for example, Addressing Teacher Stress: An Ongoing Issue for Alberta Educators, 1991; King and Peart, 1992) as well as across the country. Sadly though, according to Kurtz (1983), this point is often over looked when scheduling beginner teacher assignments. Hasenfaus says of this matter that the number one priority for novice teachers is that they be given subjects to teach that are directly compatible with their University majors. Kurtz echoes this sentiment by stating that it is critical that beginner teachers not end up with cast-off courses when the master schedule is being planned. The proper mix of courses and students is critical to the success of many beginning teachers.

King and Peart (1992) believe it is also critical to recognize that most teachers

choose teaching because of how they perceive themselves as being able to relate to the student via the medium of their chosen subject. Moreover, they feel it is common for teachers to achieve an identity that is a personification of their specific subject matter and not unusual for teachers to enjoy this subject comparison.

Whitehead (1929) notes the importance of ensuring that teachers teach subjects in which they have mastery because that benefits both the teacher, with regards to confidence and economies of time, and the student.

Directly related to difficult work assignments for teachers is the notion of little in-school preparation time. In a federal study done by King and Peart (1992) involving nearly seventeen thousand teachers, over sixty four percent claimed to do over eleven hours of school work outside of the school per week and as a result, felt exhausted each and everyday. Ironically, Kurtz (1983) says, we expect the same of first year teachers even though they are essentially void of the mechanical knowledge necessary for dealing with the deluge of paper work in the form of marking and other administrivia. This finding is substantiated in a study done by Hudiburg and Klingstedt (1986) showing that in one way or another, every teacher and administrator interviewed expressed frustration brought about by having too much to do and too little time to do it. Engelking (1987) supports this claim as well, noting it is little wonder many teachers fail to enter, or leave shortly after entering the teaching profession. He cites excessive paperwork as the second

principal reason quality teachers leave the profession.

TABLE 1: Six sources of frustration for beginner teachers

1.	Difficult work assignment
2.	Unclear expectations
3.	Inadequate resources
4.	Isolation
5.	Relationship with Administration
6.	Lack of University Preparation

In Alberta many teachers experience stress and burnout because of the work overload associated with such scenarios as preparing for a course with which they

have little or no expertise and having inadequate time to do so, according to the A.T.A. document entitled Addressing Teacher Stress: An Ongoing Issue for Alberta Educators (p. 3). This conclusion was further verified by Friesen (1990) who stated that among indicators of professional dissatisfaction as voiced by beginner teachers difficulty associated with workload specific to preparation was highly rated. Excessive paper work and inadequate time for class preparation was identified by Goodlad (1983) as the number one reason contributing to decisions not to enter or to leave the teaching profession while work done by Boyer (1983) claims that the number one source of teacher dissatisfaction is lack of time to do what must be done.

**2. Unclear expectations:** Another, equally unfortunate common theme of beginner teacher dissatisfaction, according to Kurtz (1983) is that of not knowing what is expected of them. Kurtz adds that though most inductees have had some sort of orientation process and access to district policy, they simply walked away with expectations that were either too vague or not applicable to their school. This is an example, he said, of the discrepancy between intent and impact. In other words, the neophyte is told what should be done but not necessarily how to do it.

Indeed, Kurtz goes on to say that beginner teachers are often unaware of what the school and school board philosophies are with regards to such basic matters as mission statements and discipline. Myers (1981) found that this lack of

understanding and wherewithal with regards to the greater school community's needs and desires was a constant source of frustration for beginner teachers. Myers (1981) found that when novice teachers were asked to identify those experiences which they thought were significant in helping them adjust to their particular situation and to teaching in general, the top three responses had to do with knowing and understanding the local situation with regards to general school policies, school facilities, and school routines. Many beginner teachers in Kurtz's (1983) study felt that it was the principal's responsibility to enlighten the novice practitioner with regards to school policies. Myers contends that doing so is simply seen as good management and of tremendous value to the anxious neophyte.

Beginner teachers are often unaware of the community or neighborhood dynamics before they begin teaching. In a small town in rural Alberta it is extremely important for new teachers to understand the mood and mentality of the community. With regards to teaching in a bigger centre, say Edmonton or Calgary, it is equally important for teachers to understand and appreciate any particularities of the community such as specific ethnic or religious characteristics.

**3. *Inadequate resources:*** In a recent issue of *Chatelaine*, Lesley Krueger wrote a passionately accurate article on the present plight of teachers in Ontario. She

noted from the outset how alarmed she was to find just how under-supplied the classrooms were (Krueger, 1997). She says of one high school biology class that was about to dissect perch. There was only one problem, there were not enough latex gloves to go around. So those that had them, cut; those that did not, watched.

Certainly we have all heard at least one teacher say, “If only I had this or that I could do a much more thorough job”. Indeed, resources, or more accurately in these *Kleinian* times, the lack of resources is a consistent source of frustration for all teachers, according to Cichon & Koff (1980). In Alberta, inadequate resources are cited by Schlansker (1987) as one of nine potential stress-producing environmental factors in a teacher’s work life.

Sadly, these are times when teachers feel themselves the constant target of societal criticism. Olszewski & Maury (1997) suggest that society requires much of teachers, yet the support it provides is often insufficient to allow them to accomplish all that is demanded. They note specifically that despite public claims to hold education in high regard, expenditures for public elementary and secondary education is sorely lagging.

Given this climate of economic disequilibrium, all too many teachers are finding themselves filling the margin between supply and demand with their own money. Olszewski & Maury (1997) write of a recent study in Minnesota of which revealed teachers spend an average of \$492 on behalf of their students per year.

Although, these are statistics from the United States, I am certain that the same rule of thumb applies here in Canada. That is to say, all too many teachers are spending their own money on school supplies, which may compound professional stress and exacerbate domestic stress.

**4. Isolation:** Most enterprises that work with a substantial number of people operate as a cohesive unit. For example, seldom do architects for a large city project, doctors and nurses in an Emergency Room, or engineers at NASA, work in isolation. Rather they work as a team, teaming together to complete a task. On the other hand, Kurtz (1983) has observed that the teaching profession, despite the enormous number of students it serves, still operates in the conventional model of a one room school house. More specifically, all too many educators operate as though their subject, their students, and their classroom were entities distinct from the overall mechanism called the school community. Hiebert (1985) suggests that as a result of this isolationist mentality, many teachers feel alienated from the school community.

In a study done of teachers who were certified during the 1978-79 academic year, Kurtz (1983) showed many indicated frustrations and feelings of isolation that were strong enough to culminate in a desire to leave the profession. Indeed, if the returning teachers' sense of belonging to their school community is tenuous at best, how is the beginner teacher likely to feel? Moran (1990) responded by saying more



often than not the beginner teacher feels inadequate and lonely. Myers (1981) says the quintessential feature of beginner teacher anxiety is an acute sense of isolation and the feeling of not knowing how to become a part of the community. Moreover, failure of the system to instill in beginner teachers a sense of security and self-confidence has resulted in a serious loss to the profession of potentially excellent teachers. Myers concludes that from the moment that a new teacher is hired, he or she must be made to feel needed.

**5. *Relationship with Administration:*** Myers argued that being accepted as an equal in a group of one's respected peers is a tremendous psychological boost to any young teacher and wise is the principal who consciously strives to cultivate such a climate. Yet a prominent theme throughout many articles on beginner teacher dissatisfaction focuses on administrative failure to initiate a process to minimize beginner teacher alienation, which is seen as a failure to demonstrate their commitment to backing these same teachers when it came to students, parents, the Board, or other concerns.

"Management tension", as Cichon and Koff (1980) put it, is the result of teachers not having confidence in their supervisors. This tension is also a prominent theme in a study by Engleking (1987) which found that beginner teachers all too often feel they receive inadequate help and support in the classroom from superiors.

Schlansker's (1987) characterization of this lack of administrative support as a contributor to stress is substantiated by both Hiebert (1985)—who claims interactions with administrators in Canada parallel those of studies done in England and the United States—as well as King and Peart (1992) who claim a strong correlation between teacher job satisfaction and their relationship with their administration. Kurtz (1983) notes that effective beginner teachers consistently attribute their success to administration who emphasize and develop one-to-one contact with them, both formally and incidentally. In fact, according to Myers (1981) many beginner teachers expect and anticipate sincerity and a wholesome attitude from their new leader and Ryan (1986), in his enumeration of six consistent problems for first year teachers, found that administrators lacking such an attitude were ranked third. It is surprising, then, that the ATA's booklet Your First Year: Information for Beginner Teachers (1995) does not include contact with the school principal in its list of what beginner teachers should do on or before their first day. Myers says it is both the responsibility of the administrator and the teacher to cultivate a positive relationship with the other. From an administrator's perspective, it is his or her responsibility to give recognition for contributions to the school and encouragement when it is needed. Honest, fair and consistent evaluation are all manifestations of the principal's awareness and concern for the new teacher.

**6. *Lack of University Preparation:*** Boorstin (1983) has suggested that an Elizabethan reformer by the name of Richard Mulcaster (1530-1611) was certainly one of the first to recognize and declare that teachers, like lawyers and doctors, should be specifically trained at universities for their profession. Since the late sixteenth century, there have been great developments in teacher preparation programs at universities. As I mentioned earlier, the new Teacher Qualification Document published by Alberta's Minister of Education states rather succinctly that the post-secondary institutions *will* offer teacher preparation programs that provide teachers with (1) knowledge, skills and attributes needed to qualify for interim certification and (2) theory and experience on which they can base further professional growth and enhance their ability to help students learn (p. 4). However, these developments, these structured programs of teacher preparation, are coming under increasing scrutiny and criticism. An article in the November 1996 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* (see Shanker, 1996) states that many teacher education programs have been described as fragmented, superficial, lacking in substance, and outdated with teacher education students rarely experiencing the kind of challenging instruction that we would want them to be able to offer when they are given an opportunity to teach. Two months before this article was written, Schwartz (1996), writing in the same magazine, declared that many teachers were ill-prepared to teach

in New York city schools due to the inadequate teacher preparation they were given. And, closer to home, Bradley (1995) stated in the Kappan magazine that there is a single overriding issue concerning the initial preparation of professional educators with which we Canadian educators can identify: namely, the lack thereof.

Though, there are continuing attempts to challenge the state of teacher education, as evidenced by improved programs at Harvard and throughout Quebec, many beginner teachers still complain about the poor quality of their particular teacher preparation program, according to Shanker (1996). This theme of the inadequacies of teacher preparation programs seems to be constant throughout North America with pockets of exception here and there. One of these pockets seems to be The University of Lethbridge. Sloan (1996) has observed that this particular university strives for excellence in teacher preparation and the results are mirrored by how demanding schools boards are of their Education graduates.

Despite the successes of The University of Lethbridge program, many graduates of that Faculty of Education, like graduates of other Alberta faculties, do not, according to Sloan, remain in the profession after five years. Though the reasons are varied, this is consistent with the Shanker's theme of being ill prepared to deal with the realities of the *work place*.

On the other side of the beginner teacher experience, the literature on beginner

teacher success indicates that among many, four particular themes recur, especially with respects to the achievement of a successful transition from the survival stage to the stabilization stage. These themes are listed in Table 2 on the following page.

*1. Mentorship:* Typically, professions induct their neophytes through a deliberate and guided process of initiation. Indeed, as the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation declared in its publication entitled, Alternative Approaches to Staff Development (1974), apprenticeships are the hallmark of many professions (p. 31). It is while serving as a resident, clerk or associate that a young doctor, lawyer or architect learns to balance theory with pragmatism which is crucial to the success of a budding professional (p. 31). Is this true for the teaching profession as well?

Although Krajewski & Veatch (1988) would say that most novice teachers have traditionally "broken" into the profession by the conventional method of sink or swim. Heller & Sindelar (1991) noted that the use of mentors to assist in the induction of new teachers is growing in many schools. Moreover, Strother (1989) believes there is strong evidence to support the claim that mentoring leads to both effective teaching practices as well as a marked improvement in the novice's confidence and school community involvement. Although, this paper refers to it as the mentoring system, it has also been referred to as the buddy system by

Kurtz (1983), peer coaching OSSTF (see Alternative Approaches to Staff Development, p. 32), and assigned teaching by Quimby (1985).

The previous section of this review made note of various sources of anxiety as well as instruments with which to deal with beginner teacher frustration. Mentoring seems to be one such tool that can efficiently alleviate many of these problems according to the OSSTF (Alternative Approaches to Teacher Development, p. 31).

Quimby (1985) asserts that the effects of mentoring have been proven to be so

TABLE 2: List of the Sources of Success for Beginner Teachers

1. Mentorship
2. A Structured and Continual Orientation Program
3. Professional Development
4. Supportive Administration

powerful that in some schools the principal leaves the responsibility for orientation of a new teacher up to the assigned teacher who, in conjunction with the administrator,

provides essential information about school and school board policies, community philosophy, discipline, scheduling, students, parents, and so on. Quimby (1985) believes This has proven to be an excellent way of integrating the novice teacher into the school community as it provides a safe venue through which he or she discovers the multiplicity of the school machinery. Indeed, as the OSSTF document claims (see, Alternative Approaches to Staff Development, p. 34) mentoring greatly clarifies the process of completing report cards, parents' night, disciplinary issues, athletic philosophy and so on. Kurtz (1983) adds that though there are many ways to make the beginner teacher experience success, mentoring is seen as absolutely necessary.

Most educators would agree with Strother (1989) however, that the conditions for a successful mentoring program for teachers include a nonthreatening, nurturing environment, as well as support from the school board, district, the staff, and the building administrators. Sparks (1986) has found there is a stark difference between mentoring programs in schools where the staff and administration are wholeheartedly involved and schools where they are not.

The OSSTF (p. 35) feels that mentoring is most effective when novices or protégés choose their mentors themselves. When this is the case, the pairing is most often based on the protégé's understanding of the mentor's character, expertise and/or appreciation of beginner teachers. Kurtz agrees generally, but proposes that the mentor should then meet with school administrators regularly to exchange

experiences and identify any problems that may need to be addressed.

**2. *A Structured and Continuous Orientation Program:*** Mentoring programs are extremely important, but according to DiGeronimo (1993), they are not enough to assist beginner teachers through the entire year. Like Hetlinger (1986) he believes beginner teachers should be exposed to structured and continuous orientation modules in addition to a mentoring program.

Hetlinger found that teacher orientation prior to their first year and subsequent seminars during that same year were seen as enormously beneficial to those teachers and the advantages of a continuous orientation process are far reaching for both the novice teacher and the school at large. Hetlinger believes that by establishing orientation modules for new teachers, the principal can ensure that the information that new teachers receive about the school organization and specifics of their job assignment is meaningful and significant.

These seminars must be pertinent to the first year teacher's needs, as opposed to providing a surplus of unnecessary information that serves only to compound the stress associated with beginning years. Needs most consistently noted included the following: information and advice on classroom management, school and school board philosophy and politics, parent-teacher interviews, expectations, and long range



planning (see, for example, Dinham, 1994; also see Appendix C, for a sample orientation program). Krajewski & Veatch (1988) have noted other needs as well, such as developing attitudes about teaching, students, and oneself. These authors contend that follow up to enhance the latter, that is an attitude or confidence about oneself, does not always require direct interaction from the principal for, they feel, a mentor can assume more responsibility in harnessing the young talent by helping to develop and sustain confidence.

**3. Professional Development:** Sparks (1986) is one of many authors who feels the school's orientation program in essence, can become a source of sustained professional development. Indeed, if the modules are set up correctly, it can be an excellent form of beginner teacher professional development. Sparks would further argue that such a model, if sustained by the whole staff, can become a particular form of staff development for everyone as opposed to just a beginner teacher program.

Quimby (1985) suggests that novice teachers should build the habit of self-directed professional development such as professional reading, journal writing, as well as participating in professional development seminars that suit their individual needs. In Alberta, it is every teachers' responsibility to be continuously engaged in a personal professional development plan (Alberta Education) so as to bridge the gap

from their university studies to control over their day-to-day practice.

**4. *Strong Administration:*** Though there can exist an unbelievable amount of tension and distrust between teachers and administrators, it is these same administrators who can be the prime movers in the degree to which beginner teacher and teachers alike experience success, according to Maeroff (1988). Success here is measured in two ways: the teacher achieving a desired set of behavioral outcomes with his or her students, and the teacher being far more experienced in the successes, as opposed to the frustrations, of teaching. Maeroff believes the principal is the most able player in the school community insofar as being able to help teachers achieve success by empowering them to become instructional leaders themselves.

Dyer (1985) feels the importance of outstanding school administrators cannot be over emphasized in any discussion about teacher success. Good administrators do not get in the way—they lubricate the mechanism—they define their successes as the success of their faculty; they seek out the opinions of students, faculty, and community members. This is critical if teachers are to become empowered to become instructional leaders themselves. The principal is either the catalyst in the process or a hindrance. Moran (1990) argues that the principal and faculty should define goals together so that all teachers can be encouraged to be initiators. Maeroff, too, believes teachers and administrators must become more collegial in sharing

leadership of the school community. Devers (1996) thinks this can work best when the administration (derived from the word minister) acts as a “servant” to the teachers who will be empowered through this process. In a recent article in The Advocate, Devers (1996), the former Chief Superintendent of the Calgary Catholic School District, wrote on transforming schools through servant-leadership. The article would suggest that the Calgary Catholic School Division is, at least in theory, undergoing a profound transformation of its philosophy of leadership. This transformation is based on the idea of leadership as servanthship or discipleship so that those entrusted with the position of leadership lead in a manner that enables those whom they serve to become liberated to achieve their fullest potential as, for example, educators. This in turn, as Devers suggests, can create a climate in which the students themselves become servants. An ideal world, perhaps? Alternatively, it just may be possible that if more humans were indeed willing to cast themselves in the role of servant—as herein defined—the healthier our society would be.

The foregoing notwithstanding, it is fairly well established within the literature that principals should show a genuine desire to help new teachers and make it clear they have faith in the new teachers’ ability to succeed.

PA  RT

*The  
Research  
for  
this  
Project*

## Research

*As* previously mentioned, this project developed from my desire to identify consistent themes of success and frustration among beginner teachers as they attempt to emerge from merely surviving to being fully self-actualized teachers. The intent of this study is to succinctly demarcate this information so that all teachers with whom I have contact can share from it, apply it, and benefit from it, in the years to come.

The existing literature clearly identified several consistent sources of success and frustration experienced by novice teachers. In my own research I was curious to know if the same themes would emerge among various beginner teachers in Alberta. That is, would the feedback from neophytes in my school district reveal similar sources of frustration to that of the current literature? If not, where do the deviations occur? And, regardless of whether the current literature mirrored the research results, how can my school board shuffle its priorities so as to minimize beginner teacher frustration and thereby maximize the probability of their success. Our school division has a present student growth rate of about twenty four percent per annum. The hiring of beginner teachers reflects this growth. With an increasing number

of beginner teachers we have to be cognizant of what measures ensure beginner teacher success as well as which pitfalls must be avoided. This must be done, as I have exclaimed in Chapter One, because in not doing so, we run the risk of needlessly losing quality beginner.

### Hypothesis

This study's hypothesis is that the project results will be mostly congruent with findings in the current literature. As well, I hypothesize that my research will reveal one or two deviations that reflect the unique characteristics of our school jurisdiction. That is, because the subjects in this research are entirely beginner teachers (again, where beginner refers to those with three or fewer years of experience) from my school division, I hypothesize that there will exist unique sources of success as well as frustration. The unique sources of success will, I predict, be a high degree of collegiality that is fostered by both the team concept (which is highly pronounced in our division) as well as the general youthfulness of the total teaching staff. Unique sources of frustration, I predict, will result from an overzealous parent community

which is, at times, all too involved in school matters. Another predicted source of frustration will centre around the senior management and the School Board itself. I believe they project feelings of distrust too often in their dealings with school staff.

### Methodology

I sent out thirty one questionnaires, twenty one of which were returned. With over 60% of the beginner teachers in the district responding I feel I should be able to compare these results with the current literature. The exercise here is not to determine if the sources of success and frustration for beginner teachers in my school division are statistically significant at this point. Rather, I am more anxious to compare the current literature with the results of a survey on our beginner teachers so that we, as a division, can minimize the loss of quality teachers.

The questionnaires were distributed with a cover letter clearly absolving the recipient of any obligation to participate in the survey. However, sixty eight percent of those receiving a questionnaire did participate. The reasons why the others did not may be many, but two possible reasons include the enormous workload associated with being a beginner teacher and possible fear that their questionnaire would end up in their personnel file.

The questionnaires were either hand delivered or mailed depending where the recipient taught in our school division, which ranges from Oyen to Okotoks, Alberta. The thirty one recipients taught in various schools, grades, and, obviously, towns. The common thread among them was that each has taught for less than three years.

### Survey Design

The survey I used was broken into two distinct parts. The first consisted of two open ended questions, while the second was patterned after the Likert Scale questioning technique (see, for example, Palys,1992). The Likert Scale questionnaire asks the participant to determine, on a scale from 1 to 7, how strongly they agree or disagree with a particular assertion. I say assertion rather than question because the statements are neutral, neither true nor false. Palys (1992) suggests it is this neutral nature that forces recipients to think about their stance on the issue at hand. Once respondents get used to using the agree-disagree format, which happens quickly, they can deal rapidly with many different issues.

The open ended part of the questionnaire was intended to allow participants an open forum in which to express their sources of success and frustration as beginner teachers. I thought this was an important means of flushing out additional



information on beginner teacher success and frustration, especially since the Likert Scale confines the participant to the assertions themselves. If additional sources of success and frustration among novice teachers in my division were to surface, then I thought it necessary for the participants to have an additional way of providing information outside of the inherent presuppositions of the Likert Scale assertions.

Part Two, or the Likert Scale, consisted of thirty five assertions based on the ten themes derived from the six sources of frustration on page 29 and the four sources of beginner teacher success on page 39. There are, on average, two or three statements for each of these ten themes throughout the survey. These themes are dispersed fairly evenly to determine whether or not participants remained true to their convictions about how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a particular assertion.

PA **4** RT

*Interpretation  
of  
the  
Project  
Results*

## Part One: the Open Ended Questions

In analyzing the data gathered from Part One of the survey, I went through each questionnaire and did a tally of the six sources of frustration for each of the twenty one respondents. I did the same for the sources of success. However, in an effort to determine the top six among the many that were tallied, I assigned each particular response a weighted value: a six if it appeared first on someone's list, a five if it was second, and of course a one if it was listed last. By doing so I managed, I think, to capture more accurately the top six sources of success and frustration among beginner teachers in our school division.

The list of the sources of frustration, as identified by this survey, is in Table 3 on the next page. Note, too, that this table also lists the sources of frustration according to the current literature as a means of allowing easy comparison between the survey results and the literature.

Table 3 shows that three themes emerged as sources of frustration in both the survey and the current literature: *difficult work assignments* (S1,L1), *lack of resources*(S2,L3), and *unclear expectations* (S6,L2). The references inside the brackets indicate that the item was ranked, for example, first in the survey (S1) and

TABLE 3: Beginner Teacher Ranking of the Six Most Common Sources of Frustration

<u>Survey</u>	<u>Literature</u>
1. Difficult work assignment	1. Unclear expectations
2. Lack of, or inadequate resources	2. Difficult Work Assignment
3. Faulty technology	3. Inadequate Resources
4. Parents	4. Isolation
5. Evaluation process and/or the fear of the Board	5. Relationship with Administration
6. Unclear expectations	6. Lack of University Preparation

first in the current literature (L1). Of the six listed, three mirrored those listed in Table 1 on page 29: namely; *difficult work assignment*, *or inadequate resources*, and *unclear school and/or school board expectations*. The fact that these three surfaced in my survey is not at all surprising. The other three—even though they were not enumerated as sources of frustration in the literature—were not surprises either, given the uniqueness of our school division as mentioned in the research hypothesis.

These three were *faulty technology, parents, and acute fear of the Board and/or its evaluation policy*. These areas, though not unique to our school division, are, indeed, characteristics of a young school jurisdiction such as ours. As I had hypothesized, I believe our parents are far too involved in the affairs of the school and, on occasion, breach protocol in ways that serve only to frustrate teachers and interfere with healthy school and school-community relations.

With regards to faulty technology, all the schools in our school division seem to have a ghost in their machines that mastermind break downs and other timely malfunctions. As a result, the teachers and support staff alike are frustrated with alarming regularity. The unfortunate side effect of consistent computer problems, however, is that our students have become computer shy. After all, why bother using the word processor to type an essay when the system is likely to *crash* at any time, resulting in the loss of several pages of hard work? Finally, with regards to beginner teacher frustration over evaluation procedures and/or acute fear of our Board, this too is not surprising given the Board's apparent inability to display a *common touch* with its teachers. The gap between teachers and the Board in a school division as small as ours is far too pronounced. Moreover, evaluation processes that date back to the 1970 styles of management, whereby one is judged on the basis of unannounced snapshot observations, is enough to worry even

the most seasoned of teachers.

Several areas of frustration identified by the literature were not highly ranked in my survey (*isolation, lack of administrative support, and the lack of university preparation*). I believe these results are easily explainable. First, the staffs in our division are quite young with an average age of thirty one. Hence, many of the beginner teachers have easily identified with, and have been accepted by, the veterans on their respective staffs who are, in fact, only a few years older. This young age also applies to the junior administration in our division (principals and vice-principals) who, with regularity, try hard to empower their staffs. Like Devers (1996), I believe that this results in a more content group of teachers who are more apt to be compatible with their administrators. Finally, with reference to university preparation, most of the teachers participating in this survey ranked this as a source of frustration but gave it a very low ranking. Clearly there is some dissatisfaction among participants with their formal training (this shows up as well in the Likert Scale data) but it simply was not ranked as highly as it was in the current literature.

The process of ranking the sources of frustration as identified in the survey was done in similar fashion for the sources of success. These results are listed in Table 4 on the next page.

Similarities between the survey and the literature are strong, in fact, quite a bit stronger than were the sources of frustration. The survey lists a strong sense of *collegiality* and the *team concept* as the highest sources of success among beginner teacher in our division. This, I believe, equates to what the literature refers to as

Table 4: Beginner Teacher Rankings of the Six Most Common Sources of Success

<u>Survey</u>	<u>Literature</u>
1. Collegiality	1. Mentorship programs
2. Team concept	2. Continual Orientation
3. Knowing one's Assignment	3. Professional Development
4. Orientation program	4. Supportive Administration
5. Professional Development	
6. Supportive Administration	

“mentorship”. Indeed, a good mentorship program should result in collegiality as well as a “team approach” to education. In addition, an *orientation program* (S4,L2) was also identified as a source of success; an introductory orientation program has been a staple in our division for the past several years. A sustained orientation program or modules has not yet, unfortunately, caught on. Moreover, *supportive administration* (S6,L4) is also mirrored in both lists, as is *professional development* (S5,L3). The only item not to be mirrored in both lists deals with knowing one’s assignment. This is seen as a source of success by beginner teachers in our school division. Obviously, this was not necessarily seen as an expectation of beginner teachers, but they were delighted when it happened. Knowing one’s teaching assignment is probably most akin to having clear expectations of one’s school year (Table 3:S6,L1). It is interesting to see that it was ranked quite low in the survey but was ranked number one in the current literature, obviously implying that beginner teachers in our division have a fairly clear sense of what is expected of them while the literature suggests that beginner teachers, as a rule, do not.



## Part Two: the Likert Scale

In dealing with the second part of the questionnaire, the Likert Scale assertions, I did the following: after writing the ten sources of success and frustration that emerged in the current literature on a piece of paper, I went through the Likert Scale and itemized each assertion into one of the ten categories. This list of categories and their corresponding assertions can be found both in Table 5 on page 59 and Table 6 on page 60. In these tables it should be noted that in the column on the far right there is a numeric value. This is the percentage of those twenty one participants who agreed or disagreed with that particular assertion. As an example, in Table 5 under the theme of *difficult work assignment*, assertion number 4 dealt with beginner teachers teaching their university major. Of the twenty one respondents, fourteen circled a 5, 6, or 7 on the scale of one to seven (one representing a strong disagreement and a seven being a strong agreement). Accordingly, fourteen of the twenty one survey participants, or sixty seven percent, agreed with the assertion that they were presently teaching within their university major. In the case of 100 SA, this means that one hundred percent, or all twenty one participants circled a seven. Conversely, a 100 SD means that all twenty circled a one.

Table 5: Likert Scale Results of Beginner Teacher Frustrations

<b>THEME</b>		<b>ASSERTION</b>	<b>RESPONSE(%)</b>
Work Assignment	4	teaching major	67 A
	5	lack of prep time	67 A
	10	teaching something outside what hired for	50
	16	teaching outside major is frustrating	100 SA
	22	extra-curr should be a part a novice's assign	67
	27	beginner teachers expects to do job of twenty year veteran	97 SA
	32	beginner teachers get the left-overs	95 A
	34	beginner teachers should have a prep a day	100 SA
Isolated	13	feel isolated as a teacher	50
	15	felt supported by their Board	100 SD
	26	always stuck in the classroom	76 A
	35	need more emphasis on teacher well being	76 A
	36	opinions valued by staff	50
University Preparation	11	U. should be more accountable	50
	23	U. should do a better job	76 A
	33	U. did prepare participant for this year	67 A
Resources	14	lack of resources	95 A
Expectation	25	of beginner teachers is too vague	95 A
Administration	20	always there for you	95 A
	28	confidence they will always be there	95 A
	37	valued by the administration	50

The Likert Scale Results, as evident in Tables 5 and 6, strongly support the current literature. Within the framework of the themes established by the current literature in Chapter 2, those participating in the survey agreed unequivocally that these were sources of frustration and success for them while teaching in our school division.

So the Likert Scale results confirm the conclusions of the current literature, while Part One of the questionnaire produced themes that are more unique to our

Table 6: Likert Scale Results of Beginner Teacher Success

<b>THEME</b>		<b>ASSERTIONS</b>	<b>RESPONSES(%)</b>
Mentors	8	while at U, best mentor was co-op teacher	90 A
	9	mentoring is a good idea	100 SA
	12	felt a strong sense of collegiality	95 A
	17	sought out a mentor on staff	95 A
	30	mentors would be of great value	100 SA
Professional Development			
	19	there was sufficient funds for PD	50
Orientation	21	an O. to the school was a good thing	76 A
	29	periodic O. put on by the staff would be beneficial	100 SA
Adminstration	20	always there for you	95 A
	28	confident they will always be there for you	95 A
	37	feel valued by the administration	50

school division. These unique themes, again, were *parents*, *faulty technology*, and *the Board*. A tentative conclusion that can be drawn from these results is that, in addition to implementing specific action plans to minimize beginner teacher frustration and thereby increase the probability of beginner teacher success (as confirmed by both the literature and this study) our board should address these specific themes as they appear to relate most directly to the experiences of beginner teachers in our school division.

PA **5** RT

*A  
Recipe  
for  
Success*

This project has been evolving for many months. It is probably not too surprising that I had grown momentarily tired of it and decided to post pone the writing of its conclusion until after the Easter Holidays.

Interestingly enough, however, the holidays have just begun and here I am—on the ferry from Dover, England to Calais, France—eagerly writing this conclusion. This eagerness was inspired by a discussion that my wife, Kathy, and I had with a colleague while on a two hour train trip from Salisbury to London. I say colleague because our travelling companion, Susan, herself a teacher from north London, was heading back after spending the holidays with her parents on a small farm near Stonehenge just a few kilometers from Salisbury.

This trip afforded us a great deal of time to exchange ideas. After comparing and sharing our professional lifestyles: grades taught, subjects of instruction, methods of discipline, salaries and so on, we got around to beginner teacher working conditions in both England and Canada.

I prompted the question of what conditions were like for beginner teachers in England and I wanted Susan to answer fully before I responded, principally because I did not want to establish the framework. I wanted to hear, as unbiased as possible, her opinions on the trials and tribulations of beginner teachers in England.

Susan knew all too well what conditions were like as she herself is a beginner teacher, having just completed her first year last Spring. She was so desperate to get employment that the choice of school community within which she was to grow as a novice was inconsequential. Job security was the number one priority. It still is. Indeed, it's to the point where she feels many beginners in this profession are obsequious to "management"—whether that be headmasters or governors (superintendents)—and therefore far too inclined to accept such things as poor working conditions, large class sizes, less desirable subjects, and far too many extra-curricular activities, not to mention little preparation time and too much supervision. Moreover, beginner teachers, according to Susan, have inadequate resources, few aides and to top it off, they are paid far less than beginner teachers elsewhere; certainly less than those in my own school division. However, Susan smiled and said it was worth all the frustrations when she sees the children's eyes light up with joy when they have captured a concept or marvel at magical moments of mastering new skills. Susan confessed that she contemplated leaving the profession more often than there are Mondays in the school year but she felt strongly that it was her calling and therefore would not allow herself to be too frustrated by the overwhelming evidence of beginner teacher injustices that prevail in her particular school jurisdiction.

Do these injustices, do these sources of beginner teacher frustration, exist in all jurisdictions, whether in England or Canada? Clearly, the evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the conclusion that yes, in fact, there are consistent and highly pronounced themes of beginner teacher frustration throughout Canada, and specifically, in my own school jurisdiction. I cannot generalize with regards to conditions throughout England, but I am relatively certain I would not be far off if I concluded the same for that country as well. Obviously, these themes do not respect national borders. In varying degrees of intensity, they surface throughout the United States, England, and Canada.

But, the frequency of their occurrence should not validate their acceptance any more than the incidence of starvation should argue for the acceptance of international hunger. Something must be done to minimize beginner teacher frustration if the leaders of the different school jurisdictions hold, as I do, the teacher as one of the quintessential ingredients in a recipe for overall societal success. I believe all educators must engage in activities that will serve to minimize beginner teacher attrition.

In a very general way we have to ensure safe passage from Michael Huberman's survival stage to the stabilization stage, a passage that can be made considerably smoother with proper school and school board navigational tools. Such tools—as substantiated by both the current literature on novice teacher success and



failure, and the survey that I conducted for this project—should include structured and continuous orientation modules and a mentoring program for beginner teachers. The literature supports the conclusion that structured and continuous orientation modules and a mentorship program are among the most effective means of eliminating frustrations associated with (1) unclear expectations (2) isolation and (3) difficult work assignments. Continuous orientation modules combined with inherent cohesiveness associated with a novice/mentor relationship greatly increase collegiality and reduce isolation. Moreover, these two sources alone contribute greatly to the clarification of school and school board expectations. Finally, orientation modules and the mentor relationship together serve as media through which to disseminate information on a variety of issues, many of which help in dealing with difficult work assignments. If a novice teacher has an assignment outside of his or her university major or minor, for example, the orientation modules coupled with the mentor relationship offer a network through which resources and resource people can be accessed.

Christ the Redeemer School Division has done a good job with its one day orientation program. District leaders would be wise, however, to extend this one session into a series of modules, to offer greater and ongoing support for their beginner teachers. Indeed, one hundred percent of those surveyed agreed that such a program would be beneficial.

Collegiality is also a highly successful mechanism in our school division for providing support to teachers. I would suggest, though, that this is not by Board design, but rather because we happen to have a very young teaching community. However, an initiative by the Board that has proven highly successful for the beginner teacher, according to the survey, is the team concept. This practice should be maintained as it has been found to be a favorable means of pooling resources, ideas, support, and time. Moreover, once again, it fosters collegiality. Another highly ranked source of success for beginner teachers in our division, according to the survey, was supportive administration. This is extremely positive because, as discussed earlier, the school administrator is a critical agent in the life of a novice teacher. He or she can constructively cause change or destroy the early experiences of a neophyte.

Finally, leaders in Christ the Redeemer Division should address four specific issues which consistently cropped up as sources of frustrations for novices that are not as easily fixed by mentorship or orientation programs. The first two have to do with the improvement of technology as well as increasing the general availability of teacher resources. These two problems can be alleviated with proper financing. The third surrounds parent protocol. This can be remedied with strong and supportive administration. Finally, the fourth deals with teacher evaluation methods. The Board should consider dispensing with its traditional methods of snapshot judgements

for the purposes of teacher evaluation and instead consider adopting a more collaborative mechanism that engages the teacher more actively in the process. Effective evaluations strategies can aid in the empowerment of teachers, and teacher empowerment should be one of the goals of any purposeful beginner teacher program.

I began this project by asking who was the greatest teacher ever. For many a response would likely not be easy. For me, however, the answer comes quickly: Miss Finigan. I say this because she brought out the very best in me and everyone else in the class.

Miss Finigan never came back to our elementary school. She got married the summer that bridged my fourth and fifth year. I was never to see her again. Did she return to teaching? I can only hope so. I can only hope that every quality beginner teachers remain in this profession. This will be more likely to happen once school leaders embrace new processes that offer greater hope for ensuring the survival of quality beginner teachers. Otherwise, we run the risk of continuously frustrating teachers to the point of tears, as was the case last Fall with my colleague, or to the point of contemplating leaving the profession, as was the case with Susan.

Antiquated ideas about teaching as a career and the value of the work teachers do will not serve us well as we welcome new teachers into the profession. I hope to help in

the development of a new program for beginner teachers that will enrich their lives and in turn enhance the profession.

**APPENDIX A**

Dear colleague,

My name is Scott Royce. I teach in Okotoks. As part of my Master's project at the University of Lethbridge I am performing a study of beginner teachers. I am particularly interested in common theme of frustration as well as successes that teachers experience while being inducted into this profession. With this information I am hoping to succinctly formulate positive means by which beginner teachers can increase the probability of having a more satisfactory preliminary year. With this in mind, I would be quite pleased to have your feedback to the following questionnaire. However, you are not in any way obligated to complete this questionnaire.

If you do decide to participate in this study, please do not put your name anywhere on the survey. Indeed, the results of the survey are for research only, you are guaranteed anonymity.

I am thankful for your time. When you complete the questionnaire would you kindly place it into the stamped and addressed envelope provided and mail it.

Scott Royce.

***QUESTIONNAIRE***

This questionnaire is being used as part of a process to determine what can be done to help teachers make the transition from what Michael Huberman called the survival stage to the stabilization stage (Huberman), which is usually referred to as the first three years (Kavanagh). In this survey, then, beginner teacher refers to any teacher who has taught for less than three years. Your candid responses would be greatly appreciated.

**PART ONE**

[1] Is this your first, second, or third year of teaching?                      1st    2nd    3rd

[2] List six items that have been a source of success for you this year:  
(items can be a course you took, a colleague etc.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

[3] List six sources of frustration for you as a beginner teacher:  
(sources of frustration may be class sizes, parents etc.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

**PART TWO**

Read the following comments and then indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement according to the following scale:

1 = strongly disagree (SD)

2 = moderately disagree

3 = slightly disagree

4 = neutral (N)

5 = slightly agree

6 = moderately agree

7 = strongly agree (SA)

	SD		N		SA		
[4] My present teaching assignment falls under the guise of my major or minor in university.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[5] Teacher preparation time, or the lack thereof, is a source of frustration for me .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[6] This has been a successful year for me as a teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[7] I have often thought of leaving this profession.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[8] My best mentor in university was my cooperating-teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[9] Mentoring would be/ is an excellent way to help beginner teachers be more successful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[10] I was told during my hiring process what my teaching assignment would be and that is the same as what I taught in my first year.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[11] Universities should be held more accountable for beginner teacher frustrations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[12] The staff at my present school has helped me cope with the enormity of my teaching task.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	SD	N					SA
[13] I feel isolated as teacher?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[14] Lack of resources are a continuing concern.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[15] I feel supported by the school board.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[16] Teaching outside your area of expertise is frustrating.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[17] This year I have sought out a mentor on my staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[18] My philosophy of education has changed considerably since I left university.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[19] Money is readily available for professional development?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[20] My local administration is always <i>there</i> for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[21] An orientation to your school community and its essential mechanics is/ would be beneficial.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[22] Extra-curricular activities should <u>not</u> be a part of a beginner teachers assignment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[23] Universities ought to do a better job preparing their graduates for the world of teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[24] Most teachers are altruistic.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
[25] Expectations of first year teachers are too vague.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



		SD		N		SA
[26]	Teachers are always “stuck” in their classroom with little time to compare, discuss, exchange ideas with their colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[27]	Beginner teachers are expected to do the job of a twenty year veteran.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[28]	I have confidence that my administration will always be there for me.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[29]	Several seminars on various issues (put on by teachers) would have proven beneficial in my first year.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[30]	Mentorship programs would be of great value.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[31]	Salary is a source of frustration for you.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[32]	Do beginner teachers get the <i>leftovers</i> when it comes to teaching assignments.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[33]	My University prepared me for this year.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[34]	First year teachers should be guaranteed one prep. a day.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[35]	Too much emphasis is on the student and not enough on teacher well being.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[36]	My opinions are valued by the staff.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[37]	My opinions are valued by the administration.	1	2	3	4	5 6 7
[38]	The age of my staff has had an influence on my success as a teacher. <i>what is the average age of your staff (approximately).....</i>	1	2	3	4	5 6 7

**APPENDIX B***Holy Trinity Academy*

Veritas: Christo et ecclesiae

**BEGINNER TEACHER SEMINAR MODULES**August 22 Seminar #1:      ***Orientation to the school***

- ⇒Discipleship: Our Mission as a School Division
- ⇒What is the philosophy and the politics of our school and school community?
- ⇒Keys, codes, and tissue: where to find everything!
- ⇒Teacher assignments and class lists
- ⇒the Team Philosophy

August 30 Seminar #2:      ***The essential mechanics***

- ⇒Lates, lockers, and lunch: what are the rules?
- ⇒Classroom management
- ⇒Special Students
- ⇒Communication with parents

September 15 Seminar #3:      ***Mentorship***

- ⇒Background
- ⇒What is the philosophy of mentoring
- ⇒Choosing a mentor
- ⇒making contact with the parents

October 15 Seminar #4: ***Up Coming Report Cards***

- ⇒marks are in on...?
- ⇒Excel
- ⇒GradeMachine
- ⇒Trevlac
- ⇒computer and hand written comments

November 5 Seminar #5: ***Parents***

- ⇒meeting parents over report cards
- ⇒becoming a three way partnership
- ⇒problematic situations
- ⇒always keep them informed (no surprises)

January 15 Seminar #6: ***The Beginner Teacher***

- ⇒revisiting the fundamentals
- ⇒evaluations from the superintendent
- ⇒getting to the *stabilization stage*
- ⇒open panel discussion

February 15 Seminar #7: ***Behavioral students (Guest Speakers)***

- ⇒unmotivated
- ⇒disruptive
- ⇒consistently late, absent students
- ⇒passing or failing

March 15 Seminar #8:     ***Subjects: Mathematics***

⇒panel discussion

⇒problem solving

April 15 Seminar #9:     ***Subjects: Language Arts/ English***

⇒panel discussion

⇒essays

May 15 Seminar #10:     ***Open Forum***

⇒ Q & A

June 15 Seminar #11:     ***Orientation to the school***

⇒Final report cards

⇒Pass or Fail?

⇒cumulative files

⇒summer classroom projects

⇒evaluation of orientation modules/ process

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## **FINAL NOTE**

If you have any comments or suggestions I would greatly appreciate hearing from you as this project does not end here. It will be an ongoing process that may well culminate with a Doctoral Thesis.

I can be contacted at [royces@cadvision.com](mailto:royces@cadvision.com)

