

*Welcome to a wonderful career and a great profession. Welcome to teaching.*

The West Virginia Education Association (WVEA) welcomes you to the teaching profession! We hope this handbook will help you get your career off to a great start. Additional resources and information for new teachers can be found online at [www.wvea.org](http://www.wvea.org).

This New Teacher Handbook is intended to provide resources to connect with every student. It includes teaching tips, techniques, best practices and resources by teachers, for teachers. Let it serve as a reminder that you are never alone in the classroom. WVEA's dedicated staff, known as Organizational Development Specialists along with our Help Center staff meet or talk daily with teachers across the state to provide resources, opportunities and direction on professional issues. Your WVEA staff and colleagues are here to answer your questions, and to help you succeed in your chosen profession.

Together we stand up for ourselves, our students, our profession and West Virginia's future. Your WVEA membership includes many benefits all aimed at helping you survive your first years as a teacher and thrive as an educator. Our goal is to strengthen the teaching profession by providing opportunities for quality professional development, networking and resources. We work to create better working conditions because our teaching conditions are student learning conditions.

Importantly, WVEA represents you in the legislative arena, which affects everything you do, everything you learn and everything you earn in the classroom. We work tirelessly for public schools and for those who provide our students with the best education possible. You will find there are so many great benefits from belonging to your professional organization. Have a great year!

Sincerely,



Dale Lee  
WVEA President  
#IBelong ♦ @IamWVEA

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# Belong To Your Professional Association

We're working together to provide a quality public school to every student, regardless of ZIP code. Every student has a basic right to a great public school that's why our Association is about more than salary and benefits. It's about creating schools and supporting educators who are growing tomorrow's inventors, thinkers, artists and leaders.

We are stronger together. Our collective voice affords us the strength to do more together than we can by ourselves. Our collective actions advance our profession and improve public education. Together we stand up for ourselves, our students, our profession and West Virginia's future. Become a member today! Go to [wvea.org/joinnow](http://wvea.org/joinnow) or scan QR code to the right.



## The Value of Membership

- ◆ **Reach, teach and inspire.** You're never on your own. Your membership gives you access to some of education's most sought-after authorities who provide new and innovative programs you can use in your classroom. With resources that cover classroom management and supports, to more in-depth professional development provided by your local and state affiliates you have a team supporting you. Check out edCommunities at [mynea360.org](http://mynea360.org) for great classroom ideas.
- ◆ **Make your voice heard.** As trusted professionals, educators are best equipped to make school and classroom decisions to ensure student success. It's our mission to ensure educators have a seat at the table when education policies are made. As members of the Association, educators have a powerful voice in creating the policies that affect our students, our schools and our classrooms.
- ◆ **Enjoy what matters most.** WVEA membership means less worrying for you. With representatives, able to support you, answer your questions and offer advice, you have peace of mind as you do your job. You are never alone in the classroom. WVEA is your advocate and your partner.
- ◆ **It's worth it.** From salary and compensation to health care and retirement security, WVEA is there advocating for you. We also offer exclusive member-only discounts at major retailers and on insurance coverage, mortgages, car loans and more through our Association partners. Be sure to check out our new tool to help you with federal student loan forgiveness. Go to [neamb.com/loanforgiveness](http://neamb.com/loanforgiveness) to determine eligibility for federal repayment and forgiveness program.

## WVEA Help Center - 1.866.568.WVEA

You are never alone in your classroom and your one-stop shop is the WVEA Help Center. A Member Advocacy Specialist will answer your questions from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. each school day and will call you back if you leave a message. Just call 1.866.568.WVEA.



Can't get to a phone? Then e-mail your requests directly to the Help Center. Look for this logo at [wvea.org](http://wvea.org) or scan this QR Code above. You'll get a speedy response. Help is just a phone call away - 1.866.568.WVEA

## Former WVSEA Member? Get A Rebate!

Did you belong to the West Virginia Student Education Association (WVSEA) during your college years? If so, WVEA will rebate to you \$10 for every year (up to four years) of student membership. In addition, NEA will rebate to you \$20 for every year of student membership, up to four years. That's up to a \$120 rebate of your student dues!

To qualify, you must be an Association member paying active dues and the application for rebate must be made during your first year of educational employment in West Virginia. Learn more about [wvea.org](http://wvea.org) or scan this QR code!



# Keeping Organized Is Critical

Maintaining your own up-to-date personal and professional records is every bit as important as keeping your lesson plans and grade book organized. Having the appropriate documentation on hand can be critical to placement on the salary schedule, clearing up misunderstandings, making sure your evaluation is fair and accurate, etc. Proper written documentation can help keep a problem from becoming serious or being a problem at all.

## Professional educators should have the following documents on hand:

- Certificate(s)
- Professional employment contract
- Record of in-service or advanced academic credit earned
- All evaluations and growth plans
- Proof of membership in the Association
- Record of college attendance, dates, and degrees
- Transcripts of undergraduate and graduate credits and degrees
- Supplemental contract(s)
- Record of accumulated sick leave days as received from the county
- Records of commendations, awards, honors
- Copies of teaching schedules and assignments for current and past years
- Records of incidents involving discipline, violence, or other disruptive student behavior
- Records of disciplinary referrals of students and methods in handling specific classroom problems
- Copies of letters to/from administrators and board members
- Copies of letters to/from parents, colleagues, etc.
- Yearly salary notices/annual salary schedule
- Copy of all documents in the personnel file
- Monthly payroll stubs
- Records pertaining to retirement
- Phone numbers and individuals to call for assistance and information



# Your Teaching License and Certification

If you are a newly licensed teacher in West Virginia, you have already cleared your first professional hurdle and you hold your first teaching license. After your initial licensure period, you will need to qualify to renew your license.

You are responsible for keeping your license up to date. Failure to do so could result in the loss of your job. No one may teach without an up-to-date West Virginia teaching certificate. Again, you are responsible for renewing your own license. School systems have no choice but to terminate your employment should you let your license lapse!

A few tips to guide you through the renewal process:

- ◆ Be sure to read the information on your license carefully and make sure it's accurate. Keep a copy of your teaching license in your personal files.
- ◆ All licenses and certifications expire on June 30 of the last year of validity. The application for renewal must be submitted after January 1 of the year in which the license expires.
- ◆ In order to renew a professional certificate an applicant must complete six semester hours of appropriate college/university coursework reflecting a 3.0 GPA and related to the public school program as defined in Policy 5202 unless the applicant holds a minimum of an M.A. plus 30 salary classification based on the awarding of a master's degree. The coursework for conversion must have been completed subsequent to the issuance of the certificate being converted (the process to upgrade from one level of certificate to another) and within the five-year period immediately preceding the date of application.
- ◆ Your certificate may also be renewed by completing two WVDE e-learning courses and earning two certificates of completion. Keep in mind that the e-learning renewal option will only renew your certificate. The e-learning option will not count toward hours needed to advance on the salary scale. Renewal by college coursework will count towards renewing your certificate and as hours needed to advance on the salary scale.
- ◆ The college renewal option requires six semester hours of appropriate college coursework related to the public school program. The six semester hours must meet one of the following options: 1) courses relevant to a master's degree in a curriculum related to the public school program, 2) courses related to the improvement of instruction and the applicant's current endorsement areas, 3) courses needed to qualify for an additional endorsement or 4) credit prescribed by the county as a result of an applicant's evaluation.
- ◆ Waivers of the renewal requirement will be granted only for extenuating circumstances. The lack of knowledge or understanding of the renewal requirements is not a valid reason for requesting a waiver.

# Certification Renewal

Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate	WV Teaching Certificate <u>Form 4</u>	Substitute Permit <u>Form 2</u>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Does not need to be renewed once obtained</b></p> <div style="background-color: #f4a460; padding: 10px; border-radius: 15px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p><b>Note: All licenses and certificates expire on June 30 of the last year of validity (regardless of the date issued).</b></p> </div>	<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Must be renewed every 3-5 years</b> (depending on whether it is an Initial Professional Teaching Certificate or a Professional Teaching Certificate)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Must have 6 hours of college credit</b> (degree or non-degree) in <b>education-related courses</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Complete 2 WVDE E-learning courses and receive 2 certificates of completion</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Must have a Master + 30 salary classification</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Must be age 60 and present a birth certificate</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Must have recommendation from county superintendent</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Must be renewed every 3 years</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Must have 12 hours of County or approved in-service</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>6 hours of college credit</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Must have recommendation from county superintendent</b></p>

\*The WVDE maintains a certification section on their website, <http://wvde.state.wv.us/certification>. Many of your questions can be answered there. If you still have certification-related questions, you may also contact the WVDE's Certification Toll-Free Line at 1-800-982-2378.

# The Basics: What Else You Need To Know

Here are some more things to know and have on hand. Be sure to check with your WVEA colleagues or staff if you have questions.

## **Know:**

- ◆ Your classroom and curriculum duties and responsibilities
- ◆ Additional duties and responsibilities such as bus, hall and lunch duties
- ◆ The county and/or school policy on:
  - ◇ Employee Code of Conduct
  - ◇ Homework
  - ◇ Dispensing medication
  - ◇ Referrals to special programs
  - ◇ E-mail and Internet usage
  - ◇ Grading
  - ◇ Fire drills and lockdowns
  - ◇ Field trips
- ◆ Procedures to follow in case of a personal emergency, sick day or personal leave day
- ◆ Who to contact in case of a classroom or school emergency
- ◆ When faculty, team or other regular meetings are held
- ◆ Where and how to get classroom supplies
- ◆ How to communicate with parents
- ◆ How to fill out school forms
- ◆ How and when you are paid; payroll deductions
- ◆ When is open house and what is the policy or procedure for it

## **Have (In Your Professional File):**

- ◆ Required district forms such as W-2, insurance enrollment, teaching license
- ◆ Grade book or other student record forms
- ◆ Calendar
- ◆ A copy of the student handbook
- ◆ Forms you will need during the first week:
  - ◇ Accident reports
  - ◇ Absence reports
  - ◇ Hall passes
  - ◇ Discipline Referral forms

# Code Defines Professional Behavior

Each teacher, upon entering the profession, assumes a number of obligations, one of which is to adhere to a set of principles that defines professional conduct. These principles are reflected in the **West Virginia Employee Code of Conduct (Policy 5902)**. **Violation of the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action against a teacher's license.**

The West Virginia Board of Education recognizes that the capabilities and conduct of all school employees greatly affect the quality of education provided to students in the public schools. The state Board of Education further believes that all school employees should be intrinsically motivated by the importance of the job that they do. The purpose of the Employee Code of Conduct is to establish appropriate standards of conduct for all West Virginia school personnel.

The code applies to all school personnel employed by a county board of education whether employed on a regular full-time basis or otherwise. It provides that all West Virginia school employees shall:

- ◆ Exhibit professional behavior by showing positive examples of preparedness, communication, fairness, punctuality, attendance, language and appearance.
- ◆ Contribute, cooperate and participate in creating an environment in which all employees/students are accepted and are provided the opportunity to achieve at the highest levels in all areas of development.
- ◆ Maintain a safe and healthy environment, free from harassment, intimidation, bullying, substance abuse, and/or violence and free from bias and discrimination.
- ◆ Create a culture of caring through understanding and support.
- ◆ Immediately intervene in any code of conduct violation that has a negative impact on students, in a manner that preserves confidentiality and the dignity of each person.
- ◆ Demonstrate responsible citizenship by maintaining a high standard of conduct, self-control and moral/ethical behavior.
- ◆ Comply with all federal and West Virginia laws, policies, regulations and procedures.

The Code of Conduct also requires that West Virginia public school employees respond immediately and consistently to incidents of bullying, harassment, intimidation, substance abuse, and/or violence or any other code of conduct violation that impacts negatively on students in a manner that effectively addresses incidents, deters future incidents and affirms respect for individuals.



# Building Appropriate Teacher-Student Relationships

No one anticipates becoming the target of a major news story when deciding to become a teacher. Yet, year after year, the national and local media aggressively pursue any story concerning allegations that a teacher has engaged in some type of inappropriate relationship with a student.

In some cases, the allegations are true. In many cases, they are not. Often, by the time the truth is known, it is far too late to save the reputation of those falsely accused. Young teachers, particularly secondary teachers, are extremely vulnerable to false allegations for several reasons. First, they simply lack significant experience in maintaining appropriate relationships with students. In addition, secondary teachers in many instances deal with students who are close to the same age. These older students may want to become “friends” with their new teachers, both inside and outside the classroom. Obviously, such “friendships” are fraught with danger.

It is imperative that teachers take the necessary steps to protect their good names, their reputations and ultimately their careers.

## Teachers should implement the following strategies to avoid problems.

- 1. Maintain your “personal space.”** You cannot permit students to invade your personal space. This simply means that you cannot allow students to touch you, stroke your hair or hang on you to gain your attention. This sets the tone that you will respect the students’ “personal space” as well.
- 2. Avoid “double entendres.”** You must be extremely careful when choosing your words. Any comment that students may consider to be a cute or suggestive remark can and often will lead to trouble. Students may report your remarks to their parents or your administrators in ways that distort the context in which they were spoken.
- 3. Don’t discuss sexually explicit topics.** You cannot afford to be drawn into conversations regarding sexually explicit topics, song lyrics, jokes or movies. You should always discourage and try to stop such conversations in your presence.
- 4. Don’t be alone with students.** Avoid being alone with a student in an enclosed space where you cannot be observed by another adult. When you’re alone, you are inherently vulnerable because you will not have a corroborating witness in the event a student makes an allegation against you. Assigning students to after-school detention, keeping a student in from recess, making up tests, and one-to-one tutoring are all examples of potentially risky situations. You need to arrange the activity when you are at least in the sight of another adult, and you should ask that person to be observant of your work with the student.
- 5. Don’t become “friends” with your students (either in person or online).** You should always maintain the “line” that lets students know that you are their teacher. If this line becomes blurred, students may become too comfortable with you. This “comfort” can lead to a multitude of problems, including romantic overtures toward you by the student. Rejection of such overtures may cause the student to make false allegations against you with the administration.
- 6. Don’t socialize with students.** If you are seen in public with a student, people often assume the worst. Also, if the student gets into any type of trouble, you will be presumed to be involved either directly or indirectly.
- 7. Don’t ever think it can’t happen to you.** It can.

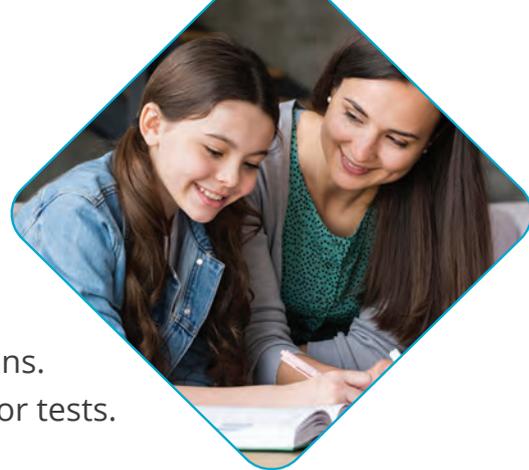
# Create A Classroom Climate For Learning

One of the most important things a new teacher must learn is how to manage the classroom. This is both an attitude and a skill. An effective teacher is a leader, not a boss—someone who can motivate students and show them why it's in their best interest to learn. The day-to-day reality, however, is that you're also coping constantly with minor annoyances, squabbles and other disturbances. How do you create and maintain a positive learning environment?

**Experts agree that prevention is the key. Try these tips from your colleagues:**

- ◆ **Create a supportive classroom.** Be approachable. Let students get to know you by sharing something about yourself, your family and your pets. Notice and acknowledge students; let them know that you care about them, respect them and think they can succeed.
- ◆ **Be aware.** Good teachers know what's going on in the classroom at all times, so they can anticipate trouble and head it off—a quality sometimes referred to as “eyes in the back of your head.” Arrange your classroom to make this possible.
- ◆ **Structure the time in your class.** Students need a predictable schedule to feel safe. Start each class with an attention-grabber such as a word of the day, trivia question or math problem whatever enhances your curriculum.
- ◆ **Try to minimize students' frustration levels.** The most important behavior intervention may be an academic one. Arrange lessons so that students can succeed if they work at it. Allow them to choose ways to satisfy the requirements of your class. You may eliminate many frustrations that lead to disruptive behavior.
- ◆ **Teach study skills along with subject matter.** Many students do not know how to study, develop an outline or use a reference book to prevent their frustration from boiling over into behavior problems. For example, you might review graph-reading techniques and charting procedures in math or note-taking techniques in other subjects.
- ◆ **Give students specific ways to ask you for help.** Some students aren't comfortable asking you in front of the entire class. Arrange for students to give you a signal when they need help, such as putting a book on the corner of their desk or let them know they can meet with you briefly after class.
- ◆ **Be the one in charge.** Students want you to be the adult, not the buddy. They don't want you to tolerate disruptive behavior. Let each student know it is his or her responsibility to control his or her behavior.
- ◆ **Know your stuff.** The better you know your subject and pedagogy, the better your students will respond to your teaching. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and try to find the answer if it's relevant to the class.
- ◆ **Dress for success.** If you present a professional appearance, you'll get more respect from students, parents, administrators and colleagues.

# Team Up With Parents



## Encourage parents to:

- ◆ Make completion of homework a family expectation.
- ◆ Show interest in their student's classes by asking specific questions.
- ◆ Use question-and-answer sessions to help the student prepare for tests.

## Prevent and Manage Conflict

Conflicts between teachers and parents are hard on everyone. It pays to establish positive relationships early and maintain good communication throughout the year.

- ◆ If possible, call parents to introduce yourself before the school year begins. Make positive contact during the first few weeks of school via a phone call, note or newsletter. Use back-to-school night to establish rapport with parents.
- ◆ If it becomes necessary to deliver bad news, don't do it in writing—call or arrange a meeting. Try to make sure parents hear the news from you first.
- ◆ Handle disciplinary episodes carefully. Touch base with the student before he or she leaves your room to dispel hard feelings and review the reason for the discipline. Inform your principal afterwards.

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, you may be confronted by angry parents. Remember, it's usually not about you, or not only about you—you are part of a team at school. Don't hesitate to seek advice and support from your principal or experienced colleagues.

- ◆ Don't respond right away when you're upset by an angry email. Calm down first, then call the parent instead of writing.
- ◆ When you meet with parents, the best thing you can do is listen. Let them express their feelings, note the issues that are being aired and ask questions that show you are trying to understand their point of view. Once they have calmed down, you can begin to give them missing information and redirect the conversation to how you and they will work as a team to ensure their child is successful.
- ◆ Don't get put on the defensive. If the parents are unwilling to listen to you, ask respectfully if they will meet with you and your principal to discuss the situation.
- ◆ Remain professional at all times. Choose your words carefully. Never argue, yell or use sarcasm.
- ◆ Try to keep the focus on the future—what you and the parents will do to make sure the problem will not recur.
- ◆ Set a date for a follow-up meeting or conversation to go over the plan and determine whether any changes are needed.
- ◆ Document both positive and negative contacts with parents and keep the records in a file for future reference.
- ◆ If your supervisor asks you to meet with parents to apologize for your conduct, contact the WVEA Help Center or your local CEA President before you agree to do so.

# Keep Student Information Private

Much of the information you will deal with is private educational data on students and is protected by both state and federal privacy laws. Sharing information when there is no valid educational reason for doing so may subject you to discipline by the county and to civil liability.

When discussing students with colleagues, ask yourself whether the discussion is really necessary to provide educational services to the student. Try to do so without revealing identifying information. Do not discuss individual students outside the school setting. Be sure volunteers in your classroom know they must keep information about students private.

- ◆ **Most student information is private** and should not be released to anyone but the student, his or her parents, or staff with a legitimate educational interest.
- ◆ **Privacy laws cover all forms of data.** If you can't release something in written form, you can't release it orally.
- ◆ **Review your classroom practices** to make sure you aren't unnecessarily sharing information about students in class. Don't publicly list the names on top scorers or students who need to turn in work. Be cautious about students grading each other's work.
- ◆ **Do not post students' work** on your class website unless you have their parents' permission. Never post photos or the work of students on your social media pages.
- ◆ **Ask if your county allows you to display photos** of students or send home videos of students. This will probably require a permission form.
- ◆ **If in doubt, when anyone asks you for information, withhold the requested information** until you check with your principal to determine whether it can be released.
- ◆ **If anyone questions you about a student**, whether it be the media, law enforcement or a parent of another student, respond simply that the information is private student data and you cannot discuss it (unless your supervisor allows it).



# Technology And Social Media

## Using District Technology

School districts provide a wide array of technology to employees, including computers, laptops, Internet access, and tablets. Whenever you are using district technology, bear in mind that your activity is being tracked and can be seen by the district. Every email that you send via district email and every website you visit via district technology is recorded, this includes anytime you use district laptops or tablets at home. If your district provides wireless access or a place to connect to the district's Internet, even if you use your own personal technology, the district can see what you do. Also, be very careful about connecting personal electronic devices to district computers or laptops. Some cell phones and tablets automatically copy their contents onto computers to which they are attached, including any photos stored on the device.

As you create documents as part of your teaching career or any further education you pursue, remember that anything saved solely on district technology can be lost forever. If an employee is placed on administrative leave (a very common occurrence during district investigations), access to technology and email is cut off. Therefore, you should create personal backups of any and all important documents. These backups can be made on external USB drives or by emailing the documents to a personal email address.

## Social Media

From Facebook and Twitter to Instagram, social media reaches into almost all areas of our lives. The greater connectedness fostered by social media brings dangers for school employees. First and foremost, social media profiles can make private information available to the public (including to your students and their parents). Therefore, you should set your privacy settings so that only those individuals you specifically allow can see your information. Anything that is available to "friends" on social media should be professional enough that you would feel comfortable handing it to your principal.

Second, with the vast majority of students using social media and texting, it can be tempting to reach out to students in the format they are comfortable with. This is dangerous. Most districts have policies limiting or preventing outright communication with students via social media or texting.

All education employees in West Virginia should become familiar with WV State Board **Policy 2460 – Educational Purpose and Acceptable Use of Electronic Resources, Technologies and the Internet.**

Pay attention to section 5.8.b.1 – School personnel will maintain a professional relationship with all school students, both inside and outside the classroom and while using any form of social media and other electronic communication. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to committing any act of harassment as defined by WVBE and/or district policy; committing or soliciting any sexual act from any minor or any student regardless of age; soliciting, encouraging, or consummating a romantic or inappropriate relationship with a student, regardless of the age of the student; using inappropriate language including, but not limited to, swearing and improper sexual comments; taking inappropriate pictures (digital, photographic or video) of students or exchanging any inappropriate pictures with students; or engaging in any other behavior that constitutes a violation of district or county policy or that is detrimental to the health and welfare of students; and 5.8.b.3 – All information stored within work computers or servers is the property of the state, county or school, and the personnel using such computers/servers/networks have no expectation of privacy with respect to its contents.

Carefully read your county's policy, as well as WVBE Policy 2460, on social media use and contact the WVEA Help Center if you have specific questions.

# What To Do When Problems Pop Up

Despite your best efforts to prevent them, discipline problems can occur. You will have to gauge the appropriate response for your class, depending on the situation and problem and your students' ages and abilities. Below are some tips for dealing with problems:

- ◆ **Check school policy.** Get a copy of your school's discipline policy, as well as the state board's student discipline policy, and read them thoroughly. Be aware of behavior plans for special needs students.
- ◆ **Outline your expectations early in the year.** On the first day of class, either present your rules or work with students to establish class rules and consequences. If these are clear, and especially if they are the result of consensus, students are less likely to think they're being treated unfairly.
- ◆ **Review the rules.** Post your classroom rules and review them periodically, especially after school breaks.
- ◆ **Be fair.** Be consistent in your discipline methods. Apologize if you make a mistake or accuse someone unjustly. Listen to the student's side of the story.
- ◆ **Don't use sarcasm or ridicule.** Be aware of how students may perceive your comments. Something you intended as a joke may be viewed as sarcastic or critical. Never use threats to enforce discipline. Don't point out a student's mistakes on an assignment in front of the entire class.
- ◆ **Let it be.** If the event is a brief and minor disturbance and no one is being harmed, forget it. Use eye contact to let the student know you saw what happened.
- ◆ **Provide a warning.** If the situation starts getting out of hand, clearly explain to the students involved the consequences of their actions, then follow through. Record what happened, who was involved, what you did and who witnessed the incident.
- ◆ **Watch for bullying and intimidation.** Address it immediately. Let students know they can tell an adult when they feel unsafe and make it clear that bullying and put-downs will not be tolerated in your class.

If a conflict is serious, potentially violent or ongoing, remember these steps:

- ◆ **Know your county's policy for reporting incidents.** You should receive ongoing training to deal with potential situations.
- ◆ **Never use force** unless it is reasonable force and unless it is necessary to restrain a child from injuring himself/herself or others or causing serious harm to school property. Never hit or strike a student. Never touch a student in disciplining him or her.
- ◆ **Avoid acting alone**, if at all possible. There are times when discipline may not suffice and the incident may escalate to the point where the use of reasonable force may be necessary to correct or restrain a student or prevent bodily harm or death to another. Defer to a school administrator to remove the student.
- ◆ **Consult with the special education teacher** to deal with disruptive behavior from a student with special needs. Better yet, ask to be a member of the team that develops the student's individual education plan so the team can determine appropriate methods of discipline. Ask the parents how they deal with disruptive behavior. Make sure a behavior plan is in place and is effective.
- ◆ **Explore conflict mediation.** Many schools are implementing such programs. The idea is to get the parties to talk face to face, identify the problem and outline acceptable solutions.
- ◆ **Take precautions to avoid situations** where your behavior could be misinterpreted. Use team teaching, teaching assistants and volunteers to assist when possible. Invite parents to observe classes. Exercise caution and common sense.
- ◆ **When in doubt about what to do**, ask your mentor, a colleague, your association's building representative, or contact the WVEA Help Center.

# What if a Complaint is Filed Against Me?

If you are called to a meeting with administrators and the meeting becomes an accusatory proceeding where you are asked questions that could lead to disciplinary action, do not answer the questions. Do not tell administrators, or anyone else, what you did or did not do. You have a legal right to refuse to answer such questions without association representation. **Know your Weingarten Rights\***.

Until you have a chance to discuss the situation with your Association Representative or a Member Advocacy Specialist at the WVEA Help Center (**1.866.568.WVEA**), do not reply to any questions or charges presented to you. Request an adjournment of the meeting and immediately consult your representative. It is important that you get advice early instead of waiting to “see what happens.” Your Member Advocacy Specialist will see to it that you have the benefit of legal advice and counsel, if needed.

You should always cooperate with your association advocates regarding any written statements involving accusations. Do not submit any written statements to administrators unless your Association Representative has reviewed them. Be sure to keep copies of any written statements submitted or received. Also, keep all correspondence related to your situation, including postmarked envelopes. Arrange to be accompanied to your administrator’s office by an Association Representative. The representative could be your building representative, a local association officer or your Organizational Development Specialist. Beware of proposals offered by administrators. Do not agree to any proposals without first checking with your association. If offered an “opportunity to resign,” do not do so without first conferring with a WVEA staff professional. If the media learns of any accusations, they may try to get you to make a statement. Do not make any public statements whatsoever.

## Reminders

- ◆ Exercise your Weingarten Rights.
- ◆ Do not make spontaneous responses to charges brought against you.

- ◆ Do not appear at any accusatory hearing unless accompanied by a representative.
- ◆ Do not attempt to defend yourself alone.
- ◆ Do not accept “an opportunity to resign.”
- ◆ Do not agree to any proposals, either in writing or orally, without consulting a WVEA representative.
- ◆ Do not submit any written statement to supervisors without consulting with your representative.

## If you suspect a complaint:

- ◆ Write down immediately everything that happened – a narrative, including time, date, location, names of involved persons, witnesses and actual words spoken.
- ◆ Get advice early from a WVEA representative; don’t wait to see what happens.
- ◆ Keep all copies of correspondence and papers relating to the situation.
- ◆ Take notes at any conference during which charges are explained.

## \*Weingarten Rights

“If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my union representative be present.”

*SCOTUS Decision*

*NLRB v Weingarten, Inc. 420 U.S. 251 (1975)*

By law, if an employee has a reasonable belief that discipline or other adverse consequences may result from what he or she says, the employee has the right to request union representation. When the employee makes the request for a union representative to be present, management has three options:

- ◆ Stop questioning until the representative arrives.
- ◆ Call off the interview.
- ◆ Tell the employee he or she will call off the interview unless the employee voluntarily gives up her/his rights to union representation (an option the employee should always refuse).

# Evaluations: What Every Teacher Should Know

Procedures for teacher evaluation vary by district, yet one rule should be constant for every teacher: know your county school district's evaluation policy. Early in their employment, every teacher should secure a copy of the state evaluation policy, as well as the forms used for evaluation. Review them, and structure your teaching strategies appropriately. At the first sign of difficulty with your performance, or if you are in disagreement with your evaluation, call your WVEA Organizational Development Specialist or the WVEA Help Center at **1-866-568-9832**.

These guidelines are designed to take you step-by-step through the process. It is imperative to focus on the improvement of instruction, which is the primary purpose of evaluation.

## Preparing for the Observation

Preparing for the observation is as important as planning lessons. You must show the evaluator the learning atmosphere that prevails in your classroom. Prepare by:

- ◆ Selecting the area(s) of your teaching performance to be observed.
- ◆ Selecting the day, time and subject.
- ◆ Clarifying evaluation criteria.
- ◆ Making the appointment to confer with your evaluator.
- ◆ Preparing lesson plans for the class to be observed.

At the pre-observation conference, share the purpose and format of the lesson. Explain any special student needs and give the evaluator a copy of your plan.

## The Observation – must last at least 30 minutes

The observation is, at best, awkward. Students know it is a change in routine, are sensitive to your reactions and are quick to note differences in your approach. Sometimes this affects their ability to cooperate. If possible, plan a lesson that uses techniques familiar to students. Try to lead the class as you usually do. Have the lesson so well prepared that you don't have to stop to read notes; doing so creates awkward pauses that students may fill with restlessness. Try to put them at ease and to make them forget an observer is present.

## Post Observation Conference – within 10 Days of Observation

This conference should occur shortly after the observation when you and the evaluator have clear memories of the event. Remember to:

- ◆ Let the evaluator do the talking. You take notes and respond to direct questions.
- ◆ Ask for clarification or elaboration of observation material. Request specific examples, for instance: What did you see that makes you say that my discipline is good/bad?
- ◆ Bring your personal summary of the observation for reference. This is particularly helpful if your view of the facts differs from the evaluator's. If inaccuracies have occurred, be sure they are corrected and initialed by both of you.
- ◆ Accept all suggestions for improvement and request a demonstration of techniques in your classroom.
- ◆ Do not allow yourself to be put in the position of agreeing to an interpretation of poor performance. Agree only that you are open to concrete suggestions to improve your performance. Do not be drawn into a self-incriminating stance.
- ◆ Maintain focus on the actions of the class period observed and the purpose stated to promote professional excellence and improve teaching skills.
- ◆ When the conference is done, be sure you have received all written materials to which you are entitled and that your signature merely indicates that you have reviewed the written material—not that you agree to it.

## Final Evaluation Conference – before the teacher's final day in the classroom or before June 15

The final conference should summarize your year's performance, recognize your growth, direct you in the pursuit of educational excellence, and complete final evaluation forms. Normally, only you and your evaluator are present. If other administrators are present and the situation is threatening, you may request the presence of an Association Representative.

# Preparing For Substitutes

You are not planning on it but someday you will miss a day of school. Prepare now for that day and for that substitute. Many times, the same questions you have now as a new teacher are the same questions a substitute teacher will have. Subs do your work when you're not there, and they'll do it best if you make sure all the tools and materials are handy. Label a file folder or notebook "Substitute" and keep it in a place anyone would logically look. If you travel from class to class, jot a note in your sub folder as to the location of the file.

## What to include in your substitute folder:

- Your schedule of classes, including regular classes, special classes (day and time) and an alternate plan in case special classes are canceled.
- Names and schedules of students who leave the classroom for special reasons such as medication, remedial or gifted programs, speech, etc. Class roll, including your seating chart for regular activities and special work groups.
- Opening activities: absentee report, procedures for reporting lunch count, etc.
- Lesson plans or where to find the plan book. Include alternate plans in case the lesson depends on resources you may have with you. Classroom rules and discipline procedures (include any policies and notes about special cases).
- Location of all manuals and materials to be used.
- Procedure for use of technology and equipment.
- Names and schedules of aides and/or volunteers.
- Names of pupils who can be depended upon.
- Name and location of a teacher to call upon for assistance.
- Procedures for sick or injured students—location of nurse's office, policy on dispensing medication, notes on allergies or special needs.
- Procedures for regular and early dismissal.
- Floor plan of building including emergency drill routes and procedures.
- Where the workroom and/or bathroom is located (map of school).

## Remember to say Thank You

Substitutes are professionals, just like you, and have the same goals for students. Let your principal know when your substitute does a good job.

