

School Year 2009-2010: A Year of Possibilities!

“Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming after all, is a form of planning.”

Gloria Steinem

As we begin another New Brunswick school year, teachers from around the province have spent a significant amount of time (and money) eagerly planning for the students who will walk through their classroom door this September. Over the course of this summer alone, I spent five of the eight precious NB summer weeks with various groups of teachers exploring topics such as assessment, leadership, professional learning communities, the environment, NB Labour Market Trends, and a multitude of other topics that we hope will better prepare us to assist our NB students to achieve their maximum potential.

Wherever and whenever I had the pleasure of learning in community with teachers - be it DSS, CONTACT, our NBTA Leadership Workshop or the recent Assessment Institute sponsored by Solution Tree and our Department of Education in Saint John - I was consistently struck by the energy and excitement that abounds when teachers come together to learn and plan for all of the possibilities that the coming school year may hold.

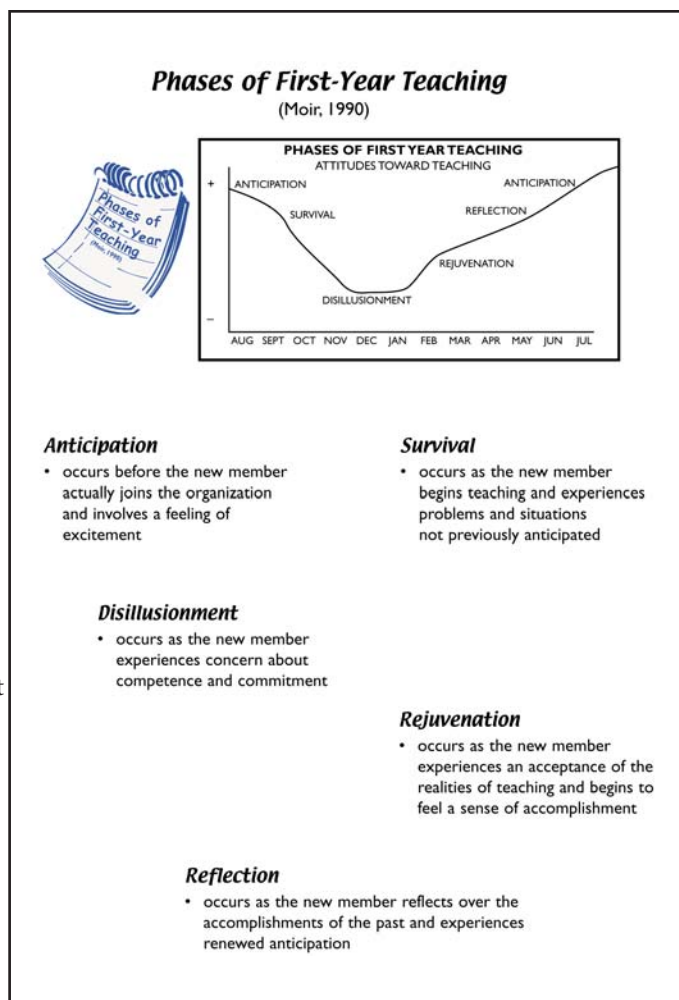
As September unfolds and the whirlwind of the school year descends upon us, I invite you to take a bit of time to plan for your own learning.

Why do I believe it is so important for teachers to plan for their learning now? One phenomenon that those of us who have been teaching for a while are very familiar with is Moir's "Phases of First Year Teaching". We know that in August and early September teachers are in the "anticipation" stage and anything feels possible. (Please bear with me as I pause and allow the following song to play through my head: "It's the most wonderful time of the year!") Don't you

just love the remake of the old STAPLES commercial? We also know that the months between October and March may take us through the stages of "survival" and "disillusionment". I usually suggest to new teachers that Moir's stages aren't just first year teacher stages. I believe that those teachers who manage to succeed and flourish in our profession are those who know and understand the stages and plan accordingly. (Hmm...I wonder if there could be a comparison between Moir's teaching phases and those experienced by our students throughout the school year? Note to self: Must look into this!)

As evidenced several times for me this past summer, there is nothing that boosts one's energy, excitement and zest for our profession than MAKING time to learn and reflect upon our learning. Why not have a look at the following suggestions for professional learning opportunities and plan at least a few throughout the phases of your year? Let's insure that energy, excitement and the love of learning sustains all of us throughout this year!

1. Subscribe to a professional journal or podcast that relates to your subject area. If an article really speaks to you, copy it and place it in the mailbox of a colleague. Have a discussion about it at your next team meeting.
2. Enroll in a course to increase your certification. (It is VERY important to remind yourself of what it is like to be a learner.) As you critique your own instructor's approach - (let's face it, we all do it) - reflect on your own teaching



and what your students might be saying about your approach.

3. Attend a conference. (You may wish to apply for an Educational Improvement Grant through your branch, council or provincially.)
4. Take on a new teacher leader role. Perhaps become an NBTA School Rep. or School PD Rep.? Join a new committee? The possibilities are virtually endless.
5. Become a mentor for a beginning teacher or a new teacher in your school.
6. Invite a colleague into your classroom to observe your teaching. Return the favour and then enjoy the professional conversation that transpires over your next cup of coffee!
7. Consider a teacher exchange. (See our ad on Page 22 for more details on our planned information session on October 17th!)

8. Video yourself teaching and then ask a trusted colleague to help you analyze your lesson.
9. Ask colleagues who may have a common interest to join you in a professional learning community to explore a new technique or teaching idea. (There is no limit to the wealth of study guides, resources and discussion points readily available online on virtually any topic on teaching.)
10. Consider presenting or leading a PD opportunity for your colleagues at a staff meeting or PD Day. Yes, YOU can do this! The best way to learn something new is to teach it and Roland Barth's very definition of collegiality is staff members learning with and from one another.

Once you have decided on which components to include in your own professional learning plan for this school year, share your plans! Your colleagues may be inspired and your students will benefit by recognizing you as a learner, too! It really is a win-win!

Best wishes for a wonderful 2009-2010 school year that is full of possibilities!

Ardith

