

The SPACE checklist for your classroom

Student-centered

- ☐ Students see themselves, their thinking, and their work represented
- ☐ The layout supports student talk, thinking, and collaboration
- ☐ Learning activities, not furniture, drive the use of space

Practical

- ☐ The teacher maintains clear sight lines to monitor learning
- ☐ The environment supports safe movement and routines
- ☐ Materials and tools are positioned to maximize instructional time

Accessible

- ☐ The teacher can confer, monitor, and provide feedback to all students
- ☐ Students independently access resources and learning supports
- ☐ Movement and transitions support engagement rather than disruption

Collaborative

- ☐ The space flexes to support varied instructional strategies
- ☐ Furniture and layout support multiple grouping structures
- ☐ The environment adapts as instructional demands change

Engaging

- ☐ Visuals and walls reinforce current learning targets, instructional focus, and thinking
- ☐ Lighting, color, and nature support focus and visual interest
- ☐ The environment invites curiosity, ownership, and participation



scan for more resources

● YOUR NEW TEACHER
journey
From First Steps to Firm Ground

About this book

Perfect for district induction programs, new teacher academies, mentor development, university coursework, and alternative certification models.

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Your New Teacher Journey: From First Steps to Firm

Ground equips new teachers with practical tools and actionable strategies they can use immediately to build their confidence and effectiveness. District leaders gain a coherent induction framework that improves consistency across campuses, strengthens instructional quality, and supports long-term teacher success.

Grounded in nationwide teacher induction research and shaped by ongoing collaboration with district leaders, mentors, and classroom teachers, it reflects what new teachers need to thrive by guiding teachers step-by-step through:

1. Preparing before students arrive
2. Navigating early campus expectations
3. Establishing culture and behavior systems
4. Strengthening family partnerships
5. Managing stress
6. Planning and delivering effective, engaging instruction that results in student learning
7. Using formative assessment to adjust and differentiate
8. Sustaining educator wellness and professional growth

This enhanced edition delivers:

- A clear progression aligned to the real phases of a new teacher's journey
- Research-based instructional practices that translate directly to student learning
- Practical communication tools for colleagues, students, and families
- Emphasis on professional relationships, effective communication, and campus culture
- Extensive ready-to-use templates, examples, and implementation supports

Whether supporting one new teacher or an entire cohort, this book serves as both a personal guide and a structured induction framework. This is where the journey from new teacher to confident professional truly begins.

Teacher induction program

Building and sustaining an effective teacher induction program is a key component of successful schools. lead4ward's program provides support for leaders, new teachers, and mentors. Learn more at lead4ward.com/teacher-induction

Connect with us!

lead4ward supports district/campus leaders and teachers with resources, professional development, and customized support to bring clarity, focus, and joy to the work of helping students learn, grow, and succeed. Visit us at lead4ward.com to see how we can partner with you, and get in touch if we can support your plans in any way.

Follow us on social media for tips, instructional strategies in action, and more!



Join our email
or SMS list!

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The “best teacher” secrets

Throughout this book, you’ll uncover the measured steps that effective educators take to be successful in and out of the classroom. Honing your teaching craft takes time and will keep evolving. We support the body of research that shows teacher induction—the process by which early-career teachers learn to do this complex and meaningful thing called teaching—is at least a 3-year journey.

So, what’s the big secret? Give yourself grace and focus on progress over perfection!

Our goal is for you to be an effective, confident teacher! You’ll learn, reflect, and grow throughout your journey, and you’ll also benefit greatly from observing and emulating the habits of highly effective educators. To support that growth, let’s explore **The Best Teachers’ BIG 6**: six overarching categories drawn from national research on what accomplished teachers know and do.

The Best Teachers’ BIG 6

Extensive research has generated many lists, standards, and descriptors of what makes a highly qualified teacher. To make the complex simple, we distilled these findings into the six essential categories that follow. Remember, developing your teaching skills and talents is a process. Explore **The Best Teachers’ BIG 6**, dig into the chapters aligned with each area, and then use the reflection opportunity that follows on page 1-10 to set your intentions for the year.

- 1 Commit to lifelong learning.**
Continue growing through reflection, professional learning, and collaboration to strengthen your practice.
- 2 Foster collaborative relationships.**
Build strong connections with colleagues, students, and families to support shared success.
- 3 Design engaging, accessible spaces.**
Create organized, student-centered environments that spark curiosity and support learning.
- 4 Set clear expectations and support behavior.** Establish high standards, positive relationships, and proactive strategies for a safe, productive classroom.
- 5 Prioritize well-being and resilience.**
Protect your energy, nurture optimism, and maintain balance so you can thrive as a teacher.
- 6 Deliver high-quality, data-driven instruction.** Use engaging strategies and student data to guide learning, growth, and achievement.

Adapted from *The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future: The Highly-Qualified Beginning Teacher* (2003) and *The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards—What Teachers Should Know and be Able to Do: The Profession’s Vision for Accomplished Teaching* (updated 2016)

Your Turn



The Best Teachers' BIG 6

- 1 Commit to lifelong learning
- 2 Foster collaborative relationships
- 3 Design engaging, accessible spaces
- 4 Set clear expectations and support behavior
- 5 Prioritize well-being and resilience
- 6 Deliver high-quality, data-driven instruction

Choose one or two of **The Best Teachers' BIG 6** that you want to focus on this year. For each one you select, write a specific, achievable goal for yourself. Then list the chapters on page iv (behind the table of contents) that will support your learning and growth in those areas.

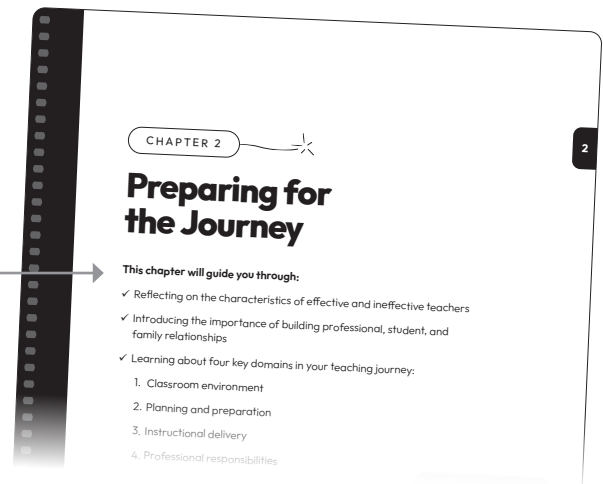
Your Best Teachers' BIG 6 Focus	Specific goal	Chapters to support your goal

What to expect in this book

We'll support you through each chapter with some key components:

Chapter guide

Each chapter starts with "This chapter will guide you through:" These bullets highlight the big ideas you'll explore.



Content

The content in each chapter is designed with you in mind—your needs, your most important learning points, and the information that's just right for where you are. You'll find images, examples, and **intentional spaces for your thoughts to flow and connect.**

Don't forget to take notes!

Your turn

Your Turn provides purposeful moments for you to process, practice, and reflect on the content you're learning. Slow down, take a breath, and really use these opportunities to make the learning your own.

Your Turn

How can you incorporate your unique personality into your classroom to create a positive learning environment?



Keeping it real

Building relationships during your first days in your teacher shoes sets the stage for success—not only in your first year but throughout your career. These first days will be filled with meetings, training, and many to-dos (which we'll get to in the next chapter), but remember that this time is also crucial for building relationships. We want to help you prepare to step into your teacher shoes in style and make a great first impression on your new campus!

Keeping it real

We're a true teacher-friend and mentor, so we'll give you a heads-up on things you really need to know or shed light on critical realities of teaching.

Pro tip!

This section is all about making your life easier with ideas, insights, time-savers, and helpful strategies that effective teachers have figured out and are passing on to you.

Tone and timing

PRO TIP

Tone and timing of responses and communication are essential! When addressing an issue or offering feedback, consider the **timing** and **emotional state** of the person you're speaking with.

- Focus on **what** you say but also **when** and **how** you say it
- Choose the right moment when the person is calm and open to discussion to make your message more impactful and reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding or defensiveness
- Thoughtfulness in timing can be just as important as the content of your message

Let's sum it up!

Take thoughtful steps to be one of the best teachers! Relationships are the cornerstone of effective teaching. As you prepare for your journey, focus on building strong connections with students, families, and colleagues. Continuously reflect on the best and worst teacher experiences and strive to be the kind of teacher who leaves a positive, lasting impact.

Lace up your teaching shoes and let's hit the ground running



Remember:

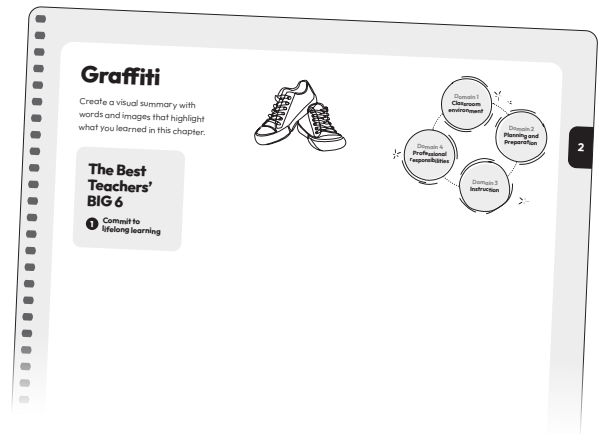
1. The best teachers are those who focus on relationships, both professional and personal
2. Your journey as an educator will be defined by how well you build connections with your colleagues, students, and families
3. The four key domains—classroom environment, planning and preparation, instruction, and professional responsibilities—are interconnected and form the foundation of your success as a teacher
4. And, most importantly, you will make a difference in your students' lives by:
 - Knowing your students—their hopes and their fears
 - Building up your students' confidence and competence
 - Creating a sense of purpose in your classroom
 - Delighting in their successes and sharing in their struggles
 - Providing structure and inspiring autonomy
 - Remembering that teaching and learning are about the students we teach—*them*

Let's sum it up!

As the name suggests, this section wraps up the chapter with a clear summary and reminders of the big ideas you explored.

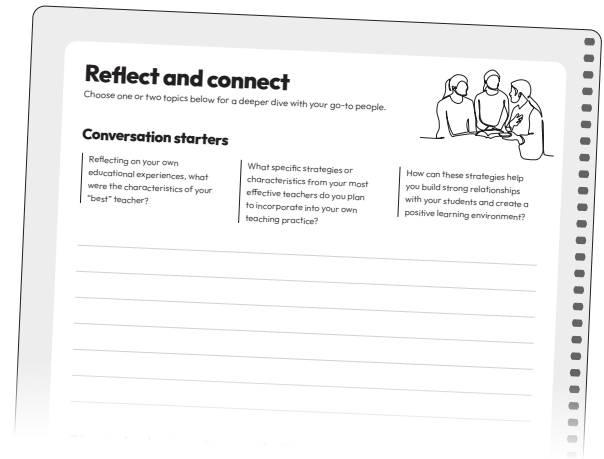
Graffiti

This space is an opportunity to capture notes, ideas, and visual cues that help you summarize your learning from the chapter. Think of it as your personal sketch notes—a place to make meaning, play with ideas, and create your own connections to the content.



Reflect and connect

Teaching is people work—you are NOT alone—and we want you to build a strong support network! This section offers prompts and conversation starters to help you talk with your go-to people. Sometimes you don't know what you don't know, and these guided questions can spark helpful, honest conversations with your go-to people.



Educator ethics and professional responsibilities

Throughout this book, you'll see professional responsibilities highlighted as they relate to the chapter topics. These important guidelines and cautions are crucial to your success as a professional educator. Most states provide a written Educators' Code of Ethics with rules for standard practices and ethical conduct toward students, professional colleagues, school officials, families, and members of the community. While we offer important reminders, your principal is also an excellent resource, as they receive training on legal issues and stay updated on policies and district requirements. When in doubt ... ask. **Always ask.** And if you make a mistake, tell your supervisor as soon as possible so they can help you address it. They would much rather hear it directly from you as a responsible, professional educator.

See Appendix A for a topical list of educator ethics and professional responsibilities.