



New Educator Guide

For a Successful Career

Arizona Education Association welcomes you to the teaching profession!

We hope this handbook helps you get your career off to a great start.

My Association Representatives

Local president: _____

President's phone: _____

Site Leader: _____

Site Leader: _____

Arizona Education Association

Organizational Consultant: _____

OC e-mail: _____

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Arizona Education Association Works with You

The Arizona Education Association is the statewide union for educators, representing preK-12 teachers, educational support professionals, college and university faculty, students and retirees. We provide a united voice for quality public education. The Arizona Education Association is affiliated with the National Education Association.

Our headquarters is in Phoenix, Arizona. Other groups within Arizona Education Association include AEA Retired, the AEA Student Program, and the New Educator Caucus.

The Arizona Education Association (AEA) advocates on behalf of students and our profession at the state legislature, at school board meetings, and in the principal's office to ensure students have the tools and time to learn, regardless of their zip code.

Quality Public Education for All

Our 20,000 members across the state and 3 million nationwide, through the National Education Association (NEA), believe every child deserves a quality public education in a fully resourced school with caring and trained public school employees.

Fairness, Equity, and Respect for All

As public school employees, our working conditions are our students' learning conditions, and we believe our input is important when making policy decisions that impact our work and the success of our students. AEA members and staff ensure children have an opportunity to learn and teachers and support staff have an opportunity to earn a professional salary, have retirement security, and work under fair employment conditions.

Teaching as an Esteemed Profession

AEA teachers are shaping and leading their profession in Arizona through mentoring, lobbying, training, and promoting the needs and impact of effective teaching in the public and media. AEA members build coalitions with community organizations and empower the voice of teachers.

Education Support Professionals as Valued Partners

As public school employees, support staff are key players on the education team that prepares Arizona's children for the future. When support staff gain respect, teachers and students gain, too. All public school employees deserve the same basic rights, and AEA members are committed to working together toward due process rights for classified school employees.

Learning as a Community Commitment

As public education advocates, teachers and support staff believe community involvement and engagement is integral to creating support for neighborhood public schools. AEA members work with parent and community groups to pass override and bond elections, which are critical to our schools at a time when the state is underfunding education. Every year, AEA members raise awareness about the importance of reading through NEA's Read Across America, the largest annual reading event celebrated in schools nationwide. We also work with parents and community groups to focus attention on public schools.

Membership Benefits

Your association is comprised of your colleagues and you coming together in a united effort to enhance your profession. It provides a voice in the important decisions that affect you as an educator, including compensation, working conditions and professional issues. In many school districts, AEA local associations are deeply involved in staff development and support for new teachers.

If you have questions...

- About your rights and benefits—your local site representative is your first contact.
- About state and district wide association committees, contact your local president.
- About AEA, NEA + member benefits, visit Arizona Education Association's website at www.arizonaaea.org, or call 602-264-1774 or 800-352-5411.

Association membership is . . .

- A voice in shaping your profession at the local, state and national levels.
- Local, regional and statewide professional and leadership development opportunities, including the Delegate Assembly and Summer Institute.
- Access to grants for innovative teaching projects through the Arizona Education Association Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.
- \$1 million in liability insurance for on-the-job protection.
- Click and Save online discount program.
- An exciting pathway to connect with colleagues, www.mynea360.org.
- Free member publications, including the Arizona Education Association *Advocate* and NEA periodicals.
- Professional Learning — www.arizonaaea.org/professional-excellence

Establishing Positive Colleague Relationships

Your relationships with other educators and administrators are important to your success the first year. It's well worth the effort to meet and get to know the other adults at your school.

- **Introduce yourself to colleagues.** Other educators can help you greatly in your first weeks. Get acquainted not only with other teachers, counselors and media specialists, but also educational support professionals such as secretaries, education assistants, custodians, security, transportation, and food service and health workers.
- **Ask veteran teachers for their advice and insights.**
Be willing to admit you have a lot to learn from experienced teachers.
- **Find a mentor.** If you're not assigned a mentor or your assigned mentor isn't a good match, seek out an informal mentor or ask your administrator to help you find one.
- **Be a good team player.** Make sure you share and collaborate. Plan ahead so you can coordinate your activities with other teachers' schedules.
- **Accept the need to take on non-instructional duties,** but learn to say "no" graciously if you're becoming overwhelmed with responsibilities.
- **Watch your words.** Steer clear of gossip and negative talk. Be cautious when you are angry. It's difficult to rebuild relationships once angry words are spoken or emailed.
- **Communicate with your principal.** Take the initiative to schedule a time when you can meet with your principal. Invite him or her to visit your classroom and give you constructive feedback. Listen carefully and respond to suggestions in a professional manner.
- **Get acquainted with your local association.** Find out who to go to with questions about your contract and your rights on the job—usually it's your building representative or local president. Get involved in activities of your local to help build a professional support system.
- **Say thanks** to those who help and support you.

Building a Team with Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals are part of the instructional team. A good working relationship between teacher and para will benefit not only the two of you, but students as well.

Here are some tips for building an effective team.

- **Be respectful.** The paraprofessional is a valued member of the classroom team. If he or she is not performing the job correctly, be upfront about it, but be professional. Never use destructive criticism or put-downs. Don't assume you know what the para is thinking.
- **Get to know each other.** Schedule time when you can talk about your backgrounds, goals and approaches to different situations. You might find that your interests and skills complement each other.
- **Clarify expectations.** Discuss with your para(s) what you want to achieve together.
- **Communicate.** Touch base with the para every day if possible, but at least once a week, particularly when it comes to goals for students. The para might spend more time with some students than you can, so listen to his or her insights and be open to suggestions.
- **Share materials with the para.** Share copies of lesson plans and any professional development materials you receive. This will help all members of the classroom team share responsibility to adopt and support the mission and strategies being implemented in the classroom.
- **Seek feedback regularly.** Ask the para if you are meeting frequently enough and providing clear guidance. Ask if your job roles are defined clearly. Does the para feel overburdened or underutilized? What areas need improvement?
- **Compliment.** If the para is doing a good job, let him or her know you appreciate it.
- **Celebrate.** You are both important in your students' education, so take time to congratulate each other on your successes.

Creating a Positive Classroom Environment

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—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. 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 multimedia resources, and their frustration can boil over into behavior problems. For example, you might review graph-reading techniques and charting procedures in math, or technology applications that can help them succeed 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. Others don't know any alternatives to yelling or interrupting. Arrange for students to give you a signal when they need help, such as putting a book on the corner of their desk. Make yourself available after class or school.
- **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.
- **Dress for success.** Avoid sloppy clothes or anything provocative, tight or skimpy. If you present a professional appearance, you'll get more respect from students, parents, administrators and colleagues.

Resources for New Teachers

NEA Micro-credentials

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/professional-learning/micro-credentials>

A micro-credential is a short, competency-based recognition. NEA offers over 175 micro-credentials that have been created by educators for educators.

National Board Standards

www.nbpts.org

What accomplished teachers should know and be able to do to have a positive impact on student learning.

Professional Learning Board

<http://arizona.naep.org/k12ceus.com/>

Sharing research-based, relevant, effective, respectful, cost-effective and timely professional development.

The First Days of School:

How to Be an Effective Teacher

Harry K. Wong and Rosemary T. Wong
Harry K. Wong Publications, 2009

Classroom Management

[nea.org/tools/ClassroomManagement.html](http://www.nea.org/tools/ClassroomManagement.html)

A collection of articles from the National Education Association.

Better Lessons

betterlesson.com

Innovative lessons from effective teachers.

PBS TeacherLine

www.pbs.org/teacherline

Pre-K-12

PBS Teachers

www.pbslearning.org

Classroom resources for K-12

Tools and Ideas

www.nea.org/home/ToolsAndIdeas.html

Resources from the National Education Association

Share My Lesson

www.sharemylesson.com

K12. Resources and the largest online community of educators in the world.

Teacher Tube

www.Teachertube.com

Share classroom ideas, videos, docs, audio and photos.

The Teaching Channel

www.teachingchannel.org

Lesson plans, tips, strategies and teacher videos.

Teach Net

www.teachnet.org

Lessons plans, how-to articles, information about grants, and videos.

Use School Technology Wisely

Computers can transform and enhance classroom instruction and help you further your own professional development. However, technology can also create pitfalls for educators. Misuse of technology is one of the most common causes for discipline.

Keep these tips in mind:

- **As a general rule**, use your school computer only for school-related work.
- **Read your district's acceptable use policy (AUP) for Internet and email use.** The policy should define where, when and how long school employees may use school computers and network services. Do not use your school's computers for anything not permitted in the policy. Under the AUP, you are also likely to be responsible for exercising reasonable supervision over student use.
- **Remember, the district has the right to restrict or prohibit access** at any time for any reason. Activities typically prohibited include sexual harassment, viewing or transmitting inappropriate language or images, and copyright infringement.
- **Do not expect your email to be private.** The school district—your employer—owns and controls the email system. Even deleted emails can be retrieved and used against you. Do not send any personal confidential or private emails from district-issued computers, iPads or mobile devices, or district email addresses.
- **Do not access, receive or transmit** anything that can be interpreted as obscene or pornographic. It is good practice to notify the technology coordinator if you receive an unsolicited inappropriate email and delete it right away. Never let students see anything even marginally inappropriate.
- **Grades, IEPs and all other private data must be secured**, even on a computer. Just as you wouldn't leave your grade books sitting on your desk, don't leave your computer data unprotected.
- **Do not use school computers** or other district-issued devices for commercial purposes, such as promoting a summer business you operate or selling items on Craigslist, eBay, Facebook Marketplace, or sites like Etsy.
- **Be careful what you post** on personal blogs, social media and online profiles outside of school. Inappropriate photos and comments could be considered detrimental to your school and could jeopardize your job. In general, don't post anything you would not want viewed by your students, colleagues and employer.
- **Be aware that students sometimes target teachers** via social-networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter. Contact your local president or Arizona Education Association Organizational Consultant for assistance if you are the subject of a fake webpage or profile or other inappropriate use.

All Students Thrive

You show up on the first day of school and discover that your class is made up of students with a variety of abilities—physical, developmental and cognitive. How do you make sure they are all accepted and progressing satisfactorily?

When special education teachers or educational support professionals join your classroom, how do you determine how to work with your students and the other adults?

Those are just some of the challenges of an inclusive classroom. Here are some suggestions for working successfully with students of all abilities.

- **Welcome all students.** Avoid labeling students. When you refer to your students, make sure they're all your students and not “the special ed teachers’ students” “the ELL teachers’ students,” “the Title I students,” “the gifted students,” and so on.
- **Be supportive and flexible.** You will need to adapt some of your assignments and strategies so students of all abilities can achieve success.



- **Be an active member of the special education support team.** Together you can discuss concerns and develop strategies for working with students with special needs. As a member of a student's individual education plan team, you will have a say in the goals of the plan, which should reflect your goals for the general education classroom. If a student comes into your class with an established IEP, work closely with all the service providers and the parents to determine their top priorities.
- **Enable all students to participate.** Look for ways all students can share interests and ideas. Participating in an activity, classroom duty or discussion boosts self-esteem and confidence.
- **Explore teaching options.** After you “get your feet wet” in the classroom, consider co-teaching, collaborative partnerships or concurrent small group instruction with other staff, including special education teachers.
- **Seek help from other teachers.** Talk to someone with more experience. Find out how others handle specific situations. Look for ways you can support each other. If problems arise, quickly discuss them with the other staff, the building principal or the student support team. Create a collaborative planning team to address classroom issues on a regular basis and also celebrate your own learning.

Check out these Web Resources

Arizona Department of Education

www.azed.gov

Council for Exceptional Children

www.cec.sped.org

National Education Association

www.nea.org

PACER Center

www.pacer.org

National Association for Gifted Children

www.nagc.org

Education World

www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr139.shtml

Special Education Network

www.specialednet.com

Parents are the Best Ally

When parents become involved in schools, children do better, teacher morale improves, and parents rate the school higher and the entire educational process benefits.

Start the process by finding ways to open the lines of communication with parents. Here are some guidelines for communicating with parents and involving them in their children's education.

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.

- **Take the initiative.** Contact parents through phone calls, email and personal notes. Provide information at the beginning of the year on what is covered in the class and what is expected from each student.
- **Be sure to share** positive as well as negative feedback about students. One idea that works well is to catch students doing something noteworthy in class, and then communicate with parents. Note: some parents might not have internet access or email.
- **Consider a variety of communication tools.** Ask parents to complete a short questionnaire on their children's likes and interests. Create a classroom website or newsletter. Have students log their assignments and activities briefly in a notebook and take it home each day.
- **Tap into parents' knowledge.** Give them a chance to share their talents and experiences in the classroom, on field trips or before school-wide audiences. Send them a survey asking how they'd like to be involved.
- **Encourage parents to spend time at school.** Add a "parent section" to the school library and provide office or lounge space where parents will feel comfortable. Invite parents to spend a day in school with their child.
- **Give parents a hands-on role in their child's school success.** Ask them to sign-off on homework. Encourage them to provide their children with a quiet study area, a good breakfast, time to read together and supervision over television viewing and computer use.
- **Remember, not every child has a parent at home.** Be aware of the special challenges facing students who live in nontraditional settings.

Conference Tips that Work

Your only contact with some of your students' parents might be during conferences. Here are some suggestions to help make your meetings with parents productive and successful.

- **Bridge communication gaps.** Find out in advance if you need an interpreter for parents who are deaf or hard of hearing, or who don't speak English well.
- **Schedule wisely.** Provide times when working parents can attend. Allow enough time for conferences, and stay on schedule. If you are scheduling back-to-back conferences, give yourself a short breather between each.
- **Get organized.** Have your grade book, test scores, student work samples, attendance records and a flexible agenda ready. Be ready to talk about student progress, strengths and goals, and to answer parents' questions about their student's ability and achievement.
- **Open with a positive statement** about the student's abilities, schoolwork or interests, and save at least one encouraging comment for the end.
- **Stress collaboration.** Let the parent know you want to work together in the best interest of the student. Hear parents out, even if they are upset or negative.
- **Be specific.** Give examples and practical suggestions, rather than talking in generalities. End with a summary of actions you and the parents will take.



Creating Meaningful Parent Conferences

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 on the defensive.** If 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 your site leader or local president before you agree to do so.

Help Provide a Safe Learning Environment

Statistically, public schools are one of the safest places for children, but it is still essential to be prepared for the possibility of violence or other life-threatening emergencies. Where do you start?

- **Familiarize yourself** with your district's crisis management policy. Arizona law requires all school districts to develop such a policy-in cooperation with staff, parents, law enforcement and others-to deal with a broad range of crises.
- **Make sure you receive training** in crisis procedures, including opportunities to practice the procedures with students present. Contact your site leader or local president if your district does not offer this.
- **Know your school building.** Make sure you get a map and a complete tour of your school. Know where designated safe areas are and how to get there. Familiarize yourself with evacuation routes and alternate routes if the main route is blocked.
- **Know the staff and other adults** authorized to be in your school. If you see someone you don't recognize, follow your school's policy for reporting an unauthorized visitor.
- **Pay attention to warning signs** that a student could become violent. These include preoccupation with weapons and death, cruelty to animals, and expressions of anger or violence in writings or drawings. Ask others at your school how to access resources for troubled youth.
- **Help foster a safe and respectful environment** in your classroom and school. Know your school district's policies on bullying, intimidation and hazing. Don't tolerate bullying, put-downs, harassment or physical violence. Teach students how to resolve conflicts and manage anger, and help them practice these skills in everyday life. Work with others at your school to implement school-wide anti-bullying and school safety programs.



What to Do When Problems Arise

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.

Here are some tips for dealing with problems:

- **Check school policy.** Get a copy of your school's discipline policy and read it thoroughly. Find out if there's a teacher support committee for help with discipline cases.
- **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** and 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.

DISCIPLINE

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

- **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 district property. Never hit or strike a student. Never touch a student in disciplining him or her.
- **Avoid acting alone, if at all possible**, when discipline does not suffice and the incident has escalated 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.
- **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. Keep classroom doors open. Exercise caution and common sense.
- **Know your district's policy** for reporting incidents.
- **When in doubt** about what to do, ask your mentor, a colleague or your site leader.



First Year Got You Down? Hang in There!

The first year of teaching is a year of “firsts,” as you establish yourself personally, financially and professionally. Learning to cope with the stress that accompanies these changes is critical to your success.

Experienced teachers have found that these techniques will help you cope.

- **Keep a “things to do” list.** Review it daily and do one or two things. When you cross something off your list, you’ll have a sense of accomplishment.
- **Don’t procrastinate.** Having something hanging over you can cause more tension than the project is worth.
- **Don’t feel you have to do everything.** Try to do a few things well each day and do the best you can on the rest.
- **Tame the paper tiger.** Keep up with paperwork, or it can ruin your love of teaching. Find a method that works for you, and try not to create more paperwork than you need to assess students, grade them fairly, and reflect and improve on your practice.
- **Schedule time for you.** A refreshing walk, good book or creative hobby will give you a chance to revive and recharge.
- **Leave your teaching at school.** If you must lug home school work, get it done early in the evening. Better yet, do it at school and leave it there.
- **Get plenty of sleep.** Go to bed early if you’re tired. Don’t lie awake worrying about how you should have handled a situation in class.
- **Find a friend who can be a trusted listener.** Talking a problem out won’t make it go away, but it can relieve the tension.
- **Observe good health habits.** Don’t forget to exercise, and watch your vitamin and mineral intake. Eat wholesome foods so that your body gets enough calcium, potassium, iron, vitamin B, vitamin C and protein. When in stress, the body calls on these nutrients for energy.

Keep Up with Paperwork

If you teach special education, you have major responsibilities in addition to instructing your students. You are required by the federal and state governments, and often your local district to document your work to ensure procedural safeguards for students with disabilities.

This mandatory paperwork is an increasing part of special educators' workload.

No matter how good a teacher you are, there are legal consequences for failing to complete paperwork and you risk losing your job if you fall too far behind. It is important to get yourself organized; take advantage of any support your school can provide and ask for help when you need it.

- **Get a mentor and use his or her expertise.** If your school does not provide formal mentoring, find an experienced colleague you can call on for advice. Also keep the lines of communication open with your fellow teachers.
- **When you attend IEP meetings, come prepared** with a checklist of things to get done—both general goals and items specific to that student.
- **Use systems to keep track of deadlines and students.** Most districts use an electronic data management system for special education. If yours doesn't, develop your own spreadsheets. Use one spreadsheet for due dates for IEPs, periodic reviews and assessments; if you have case management responsibilities, use another spreadsheet to track students' whereabouts and progress. Color-coding the spreadsheet entries can be helpful.
- **Tell someone if you are getting overwhelmed with paperwork.** Go to your mentor or a colleague, supervisor or principal, or the special education coordinator or director. Ask for time and support to get your work done. Do not wait until you are so far behind that you're in danger of losing your job.
- **Ask if clerical help is available.** Depending on the school district, you might be able to get help processing the paperwork. It is your responsibility, however, to get the work done. Work with your local association negotiators to address issues related to special education.

Stay in Compliance

What can you do to overcome monitoring and compliance issues? Document, involve parents, correctly identify students, make decisions based on student needs, meet timelines as required by law, provide individualized instruction and retain evidence of progress.

Help your Substitute Succeed

If you have to miss a day of school, your class must still go on. Prepare now so your substitute teacher knows what to do and where to find things. Keep essential information in a clearly marked substitute folder. Be aware of your school's norms or requirements for preparing for a substitute.

What your substitute needs to know:

- 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 or remedial or gifted programs.
- Class roll, including your seating chart for regular activities and special work groups.
- Opening activities, absentee report, procedures for reporting lunch count and other housekeeping tasks.
- Lesson plans or where to find the plan book, including alternate plans in case the lesson depends on resources only you have.
- Classroom rules and discipline procedures, including any district policies and notes about special cases.
- Location of all manuals and materials to be used.
- Procedures for use of AV materials and equipment.
- Names and schedules of education support personnel and/or volunteers.
- Names of students the substitute can call on for help if needed.
- Name and location of a teacher to contact for assistance.
- Procedures for sick or injured students, including location of nurse's office, district policy on dispensing medication and notes on allergies or special needs.
- Procedures for regular and early dismissal.
- Building floor plan, including emergency drill routes and procedures.

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.

Certification Protocols

Make sure you renew your certificate and fingerprint clearance card in a *timely manner*.

If you are a newly certificated teacher in Arizona, you have already cleared your first professional hurdle. After your initial certification period, make sure you keep up with the expiration date for your certificate. This is your responsibility and not the school district in which you were hired. You are responsible for renewing your own license and fingerprint clearance card!

For questions about certification and fingerprint clearance concerns visit the Arizona Department of Education website at: www.azed.gov/educator-certification.

Visit OpenBooks | Ombudsman-Citizens Aide | Get the facts on COVID-19 | AZ.Gov | az.gov

Select Language

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Welcome to Educator Certification!

COVID-19 Update: Office Hours

Our offices are currently not accepting walk-ins for certification applications or advisement. Apply and check your application status online using the [AzEDCert portal](#).

Overview

The Certification Unit at the Arizona Department of Education provides services to educators to assist them in obtaining and maintaining their Arizona Educator Certification. Educators are certified in a myriad of areas which include Early Childhood, Elementary, Secondary, CTE, STEM, Arts, Physical Education, Administration, Special Education, Adult Education and others as well as adding approved content areas and endorsements. The unit also assists out-of-state educators in obtaining Arizona Certification as well as supports Human Resource departments through staff training and facilitating on-site certification events to meet the needs of their educators.

Our Mission

The Arizona Department of Education Certification Unit assists educators in meeting the requirements for Certification.

Results

The Certification Unit processes over 40,000 different services annually with a typical processing time of 1 to 3 weeks and as long as 6 weeks during the peak season. The unit is comprised of 12 staff members in Phoenix.

From the Educator Certification Blog

[COVID-19 Certification Updates](#)
Mon, May 18 2020 - News and Information

[COVID-19 & Certification Updates](#)
Tue, Apr 21 2020 - News and Information

The following items were approved by the Arizona State Board of Education on May 18, 2020.

- About Us
- Careers
- Contact Us
- Certification

- Data & Public Records Request
- School Report Cards
- State Board of Education
- State Board for Charter Schools

ARIZONA
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Student Information

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 district 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 on 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 of 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.
- **Ask if your district 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).

Mandatory Reporting

If you know or have reason to believe one of your students has been the victim of child abuse or neglect, Arizona law requires that you report it to Department of Child Safety, the police or sheriff's department, or the Arizona Department of Education (if the suspected abuser has a certificate). **It is not sufficient to simply report it to the administration.**

For the child's protection-and yous-report any suspicion you have right away, even if you are unsure. The law requires a report to be made within 24 hours of the time you have reason to believe there is abuse or neglect. The law also provides you with immunity for reports made in good faith.

Do not take it upon yourself to investigate whether abuse occurred. If you are unsure, you should err on the side of reporting and leave the investigation to the proper authorities.

One sign or symptom may not necessarily indicate child abuse or neglect, but some clues might lead you to suspect it:

- A child who has a pattern of unexplained injuries or an inordinate number of "explained" ones
- A child who comes to school inappropriately dressed for the season
- A child who is habitually late or often absent from school
- A child who arrives early and leaves late because he or she is reluctant to go home
- A child who is unusually fearful of adults or other children
- A child who goes to the bathroom with difficulty or has trouble sitting
- A child who is constantly tired, thin or shows evidence of malnutrition



Appropriate Teacher / Student Relations

Touch is one of the most basic of human needs, but if you deliberately come into physical contact with your students—even in the most innocent of contexts—you put yourself and your career at risk.

It's sad but true. Every year a dozen or more Arizona teachers on average are accused of inappropriate touch. Even when the charges are proven false, the impact on you personally, your career and your colleagues can be devastating.

Be aware of, and sensitive to, physical and emotional boundaries. Remember, you are not your students' friend—you are their teacher. Let professional counselors and psychologists assist them with emotional issues.

Here are some other ways to reduce the risk of being accused.

- **Avoid physical horseplay with students.** Don't let students sit on your lap.
- **Do not meet with students alone in a closed setting.** Music teachers and coaches, along with counselors, are especially vulnerable. If you're giving an instrumental lesson, make sure you are within sight of the window. If your door does not have a window, leave the door open.
- **If you are male, be especially careful.** Regardless of gender avoid touching any student unless absolutely necessary.
- **Avoid personal notes, messages, texts, or any other communication with students** unless they deal solely with educational matters. Be sure to follow any district policy on social media and other electronic communications with students.
- **Use extreme caution when meeting with students in nonschool settings,** especially when other adults are not present. You should always have parent and district approval.
- **Never use physical force to punish a student.** Although in some circumstances you may use reasonable force to restrain a student, use extreme caution in doing so. (See the section on Discipline, pages 19 for more tips.)
- **Do not transport student(s) in your own personal vehicle** without express permission from your administrator in writing. Most school districts prohibit transporting students in your own car.

Professional Records

Keeping up-to-date personal and professional records in a safe, yet easily accessible location is as important as keeping your grade book and lesson plans organized.

Having appropriate documentation on hand can be critical to your placement on the salary schedule, resolution of misunderstandings, and a fair and accurate evaluation.

Keep the following documents in one convenient spot:

- Teaching certificate
- Records of in-service education or advanced academic credit
- Performance evaluations and your responses or comments
- Letters of praise, directive or reprimand
- Record of college attendance, dates and degrees
- Transcripts of undergraduate and graduate degrees
- Record of accumulated sick leave and personal leave days
- Copies of teaching schedules for current and past years
- Records of incidents involving student discipline, violence or other disruptive student behavior
- Copies of correspondence with administrators
- Copies of correspondence with parents and colleagues
- Copies of all electronic or print documents in your personnel files. (You should review this file annually to be sure you know what is in it. Keep copies of any disciplinary items.)
- If you keep your employment information and your professional records in digital form, make copies or digitally back-up the information.

Educator Rights

Check with your local site leader to see if you have the right to association representation at a conference with an administrator if the meeting could result in discipline. Here are a few guidelines:

- **Request the purpose.** If an administrator invites you to a meeting that you feel may involve disciplinary action, ask the purpose of the conference.
- **Seek help from a representative.** If you feel the purpose of the conference is to investigate an event that may lead to disciplinary action, or to discuss the proposed discipline, contact your site leader or local president for assistance. In some districts, you may have the right to schedule the conference at a time when an association representative can be present.
- **Stop the conference.** If you attend a conference that begins on a positive note but deteriorates into addressing possible discipline, ask to stop the conference until you can obtain advice and representation.
- **Be prepared for an administrator's reaction.** A few administrators may feel threatened by the presence of a representative. Some may even indicate they will not allow a representative to be present. Your local association may have negotiated rights to representation.

If You are Accused of a Work-related Crime

- **Contact your Arizona Education Association Organizational Consultant immediately**
- **Never talk to a police or school resource officer without obtaining legal advice through AEA.** In many cases, Arizona Education Association will provide an attorney for you. Tell the police officer or investigator: "I am an AEA member and once I obtain legal advice I will provide a response."
- **Do not go with the police unless you are under arrest.** If you are not under arrest, your attorney can handle the situation.
- **Do not talk about the specifics of the accusation with anyone except your attorney.** Be cautious even with immediate family members.
- **Before you consider resigning,** talk to your AEA Organizational Consultant. Resignation can impact other rights, such as unemployment compensation.
- **Do not sign anything** unless you have consulted your attorney or AEA Organizational Consultant.

Frequently Asked Questions

Some of your rights are limited because you are a probationary employee, but Arizona law grants all teachers certain rights, addressed below.

Who are probationary teachers?

Probationary teachers are teachers who:

1. Hold a certificate from the Arizona Board of Education;
2. Are employed under contract in a school district;
3. Are employed in a position which requires certification (excluding psychologists and administrators unless they teach at least 50% of their time); and
4. Have been employed by the school district for less than 3 consecutive school years or have been employed on a part-time basis (less than a full class load for 51% of the school days); or
5. Were designated as a probationary teacher in the year following an ineffective rating on a performance evaluation. See A.R.S. §§ 15-538.01(D) and 15-536(D).

Who are continuing teachers?

Continuing teachers are teachers who meet all of the following requirements:

1. Hold a certificate from the Arizona Board of Education;
2. Are employed under contract in a school district;
3. Are employed in a position which requires certification (excluding psychologists and administrators unless they teach at least 50% of their time);
4. Have been employed full time in the same school district for the major portion of 3 consecutive years (employed for a full school day or full class load for 51% of the school days);
5. Have completed the third consecutive school year without receiving a notice of intent not to re-employ. See A.R.S. § 15-501; and
6. Have neither been rated “ineffective” for the previous school year nor regained continuing status by obtaining an effective or highly effective rating, after losing their continuing status for an ineffective rating. See A.R.S. § 15-537(D).

Can teachers retain their continuing status if they work part-time or take a leave of absence?

After obtaining continuing status, teachers may teach part-time without losing their continuing status. They must work at least 40% of the school day or have 40% of the normal class load. See A.R.S. § 15-502(D).

Can teachers at charter schools earn continuing status?

No. Charter schools are exempt from the Arizona laws that provide for continuing status teacher protections. See A.R.S. § 15-183(E)(5).

What happens if I move to a different district?

At any point you move to a different district, you will have a three-year probationary period in the new school district.

Contract Rights and Responsibilities

After receiving your contract, verify the following information:

- When did you receive the contract?
- When must the contract be returned?
- Is the position full-time or part-time?
- What is the salary?
- Look at your salary schedule, were you placed correctly?
- Did they give you credit for professional growth completed prior to hire?
- Are your years of experience accurate?
- Are you getting all possible compensation for filling a “hard-to-fill” position?
- How are they paying your performance-based pay from the Classroom Site Fund/ Proposition 301 ?
- Does the contract include any additional compensation for additional positions/ responsibilities (addenda)?
- How long do you have to correct your salary if it is wrong?
- Is there a penalty for breaking the contract after you sign it? What is it?
- What happens if your certificate or fingerprint clearance card is not valid?

What does nonrenewal of a contract mean?

A school board can give notice to a probationary teacher at any time during the first three years of employment that his or her contract will be non-renewed. That means

the teacher does not have a job the following year. The district can non-renew a probationary teacher for any reason, as long as it is not an illegal reason, but they do need to list a reason. See A.R.S. § 15-536. If your district tells you that they are going to non-renew you, do not resign until you have spoken to your AEA representative! Contact your member rights advocate, building representative, local president, or aeahelpdesk.org for assistance.

Is there any other time a teacher's contract can be terminated?

Yes. Any teacher can be dismissed if there is cause to dismiss. In all mid-year dismissals, the teacher may request a hearing to respond to charges. See A.R.S. §§ 15-539-541. Contact AEA immediately, if you are facing a mid-year dismissal.

When can I resign from my teaching contract?

In Arizona, a teacher cannot resign after signing and returning their contract without prior governing board approval. If a teacher resigns without such approval, the resignation is deemed to be an unprofessional act, and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) can take disciplinary action, including suspension and revocation, against your teaching license See A.R.S. § 15-545. Talk to your AEA representative before resigning to make sure your rights are protected.

What is a grievance? How do I know if I have a grievance?

If you believe that a provision or portion of governing board policy has been misinterpreted or misapplied, you may be able to file a grievance. If you believe you have a grievance, contact your member rights advocate, building representative or local president. Do not discuss the matter with any administrator until you have consulted with the association. Be sure to act quickly; timelines may be short.

What should I do if a student is injured under my supervision?

Follow these steps:

1. Seek medical attention from the school nurse or administrator.
2. Within 24 hours, complete an accident report for the district.
3. Do not discuss the incident with the media or meet with the parents or the parents' attorney without having your attorney present.
4. If you receive notice of a lawsuit or pending lawsuit, contact AEA, who will send you a claim form for your liability insurance provided through your AEA membership. The school district may also be a party to any lawsuit filed by the parents. If the incident was a result of conduct within the course and scope of your employment, the district's attorney and/or representative of the school's insurance company will represent you in meetings on the matter. Contact AEA immediately if you receive notice from the district that it will not be representing you.

Your School Community Needs You

Quality schools build strong and stable communities. You can work with others in your school community in support of social justice and ensure our students and their families are part of a healthy and thriving community.

- **Know the issues.** Your local association, AEA and NEA keep you informed about issues that impact your classrooms, students and community. Visit the AEA and NEA websites to learn the latest about school funding, federal education laws, and legislative issues. Talk with your colleagues about the impact of issues on your school and community so you can make an informed decision about how to become part of a movement to make a change.
- **Register to vote.** Elected officials make most of the decisions that impact our schools and our communities. Luckily, we have power at the ballot box to support candidates who make policies that benefit our students, their families, our profession and our schools. If we fail to participate in the political process, we fail our students, our communities and ourselves.
- **Vote.** Your vote matters—from school board elections to the election of our next President of the United States. Arizona makes it easy to vote by mail in every election by signing up on the Permanent Early Voter List (PEVL). Ballots will be mailed to your home weeks prior to each local, state, and national election.
- **Advocate for change.** Civic engagement can directly improve the lives of our students and their families. By working with others on common issues, we can create a supportive environment for our public schools and our profession. Get involved outside your classroom in a cause that will make a difference in your community. Be an example for your students by engaging in civic issues and encouraging your students to work for changes they believe in through their own civic engagement.



Civic Engagement Resources

1. Register to Vote Online

Registering to vote online is easy. Visit www.servicearizona.com, click on the voter registration icon to register to vote or make changes to your name, address, or party affiliation.

2. Sign up for the Permanent Early Voter List (PEVL)

Sign up on line on your county's elections office. Visit www.azsos.gov/elections/voting-election/contact-information-county-election-officials, click on your county, and follow PEVL instructions.

3. Learn about Elections in Arizona

Visit the Arizona Secretary of State Election page to learn about upcoming elections. www.azsos.gov/elections/voting-election

4. Know the Issues

Visit the AEA's Issues and Action site at www.arizonaaea.org/takeaction to learn about Arizona issues that impact our schools and our communities. Visit NEA's Smart and Just Policies site at <https://www.nea.org/student-success/smart-just-policies> to learn about national issues that impact our schools and our communities. Contact your local association leaders to learn about local issues.

5. Advocate for Change

The AEA Fund for Public Education is the Political Action Committee (PAC) of the Arizona Education Association to support candidates who support our public schools. Visit the AEA Fund website at www.strongpublicschoolsaz.com to view AEA's recommended candidates for upcoming election and to see information about upcoming events.



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Arizona
Education
Association

345 E. Palm Lane, Phoenix, Arizona 85004
(602) 264-1774 | (800) 352-5411 | Fax 602-240-6887
www.arizonaea.org

Arizona Education Association is an affiliate of the National Education Association