

Physical Needs of Beginning Teachers

Physical needs of beginning teachers are centered on structure, culture, policies, and procedures. The term physical, in this sense, does not refer to the “body.” It refers to the “building” – the procedural, structural, and operational aspects of the building. Teachers must understand how the school operates outside of instruction – the “who’s” and “how’s” of the school. Who do I call if I need a restroom break during class? How do I secure a substitute teacher when I have an upcoming doctor’s appointment? Beginning teachers also need to be made aware of school culture. This could mean informing them about the level of support to expect from administration when it comes to teachers pursuing professional development opportunities or the level of parental involvement occurring throughout the school. A mentor should also be prepared to communicate district policies and procedures with beginning teachers, particularly those that may not be fully enforced in the school or those that are not necessarily written in a handbook, but are just “understood.”

Physical needs can be viewed as basic needs, like in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. These basic, lower-level needs must be reasonably satisfied before meeting more advanced, higher-level needs – creativity, problem-solving, lack of prejudice, etc. – that are often instructional in nature.

The following bulleted list includes potential physical needs of beginning teachers, but should not be considered an all-inclusive list.

Physical

- Culture – professional learning communities, institutional support
- School/district structure and policies – procedural issues outside of instruction, administrative procedures
- Location of resources – people or materials
- Professionalism – school norms related to dress codes, on-time behaviors, cell phone use, computer use, teacher-student interactions