Get the support you need

By Natalie Blewitt
Growth Team coordinator

Not long to go now until you are able to stop, rest and recharge after a very hectic first semester. Reports will be done, parent meetings finished and you will finally be able to turn that alarm clock off.

It is so important that you take the term break to spend time decompressing and looking after yourself. This year has seen an unprecedented amount of teacher shortages, sickness, isolation periods, collapsed classes, missed DOTT (and in some cases no DOTT), stress, anxiety and a level of uncertainty that we have never seen before. And, if you have been teaching for three years or less, your career has started under the cloud of COVID-19. These are not normal times, and we must remember that.

You are never on your own when you are a member of the SSTUWA. Our Member Assist Team is a phone call away (9210 6000, or via email on memberassist@sstuwa.org.au) and will provide you with answers to your questions, no matter how small or overwhelmingly large they may seem.

The Growth Team has provided support, information and advice to many early career teachers. They will assist you with questions you have, whether about your graduate entitlements or your everyday working conditions (contact at: neweducator@sstuwa.org.au)

All members of the team are teachers too, so they completely understand – they were once graduate teachers themselves.

Many schools have an established branch, which means you also have an elected representative (union rep) at your school who can provide you with information or point you in the right direction of where to find it.

If you are unsure who your union rep is, ask around at your school or get in contact with us. If your school does not have a current union rep, perhaps you may consider taking on the role.

Training is provided and there are several early career teachers who are very active union reps in their schools.

Networking is also a great way to meet other early career teachers and build up your knowledge and skills. As they say, a problem shared is a problem halved.

The New Educator Network is a great place to start building your network. Visit the New Educator Network Facebook group, where you can share ideas and experiences with your peers: bit.ly/3x6AkqV

Training is another great way to get to know other early career teachers. There are several excellent courses on offer throughout the term break. There are also online courses that run throughout the year. So, if learning online is your jam, then check out the full training schedule via the SSTUWA website: sstuwa.org.au/training

In Term 3, the SSTUWA is holding a New Career Teachers' Afternoon Forum on Friday 5 August. This "choose your own" style of professional learning allows you to select the sessions that best suit your needs.

The various presenters will provide an opportunity for questions and the between-session tasks will have you participating in a "burning questions challenge" which will surely provide some fun and lots of learning.

End the afternoon forum with an opportunity to build your network as you enjoy some nibbles and drinks with other early career teachers.

Full session details and registration information can be found at: sstuwa.org.au/training

Graduate teachers are encouraged to request a trained teaching and learning coach through the In-Class Coaching Program (ICCP). ICCP is a confidential, non-judgemental professional learning experience that supports graduate teachers to:

- Develop and refine classroom practice.
- Participate in lesson observations and reflection.
- Implement learning from the graduate teachers' modules in practice.
- Work towards the proficient career stage.

Working with an experienced trained teacher coach affords you the unique opportunity to share your thoughts and practice with someone who is external to your school. Further information can be found via IKON at bit.ly/3NPYD39

Remember, there is no shame in reaching out for help, talking to someone outside your usual support network, seeking advice from a trusted professional or having a phone conversation with someone in the know.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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