

- Information file-

New teachers welcome in a difficult teaching area (ZEP)

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Deals with new appointed teachers in a ZEP.

Local education authority guide lines n°4

Summary:

Teachers in Robert Schuman school made up a consulting team to welcome and accompany new teachers appointed in the school all year long. They meet during the year and they give them the « keys » to succeed in integrating the educative community and in teaching their first periods.

Key words : ZEP (difficult teaching area with special needs), new appointed teachers, violence, violence prevention, conflict, discipline, school regulations, pedagogy, intervention, the day before you go back to school, first teaching periods, consulting team,

STRUCTURES	APPARATUS	THEMES	SUBJECTS
School	Teacher support (tutor)	New teachers welcome	

- descriptive file-

The consulting (resource) team and the welcome of new appointed teachers in Robert Schuman School, Behren-lès-Forbach

Introduction

Following the violence outburst at the beginning of year 2001, the whole school community and some ZEP partners in Behren-lès-Forbach got together and progressively found different means to improve the climate in Robert Schuman School. After implementing immediate solutions, the school continued this long run action improving inter alia the welcome and the accompaniment of new appointed teachers in the school. The “consulting team”, made up of voluntary teachers, was created for this particular mission.

I) Observations

Our school must face an important turnover every year. The newly appointed teachers are often young and not always prepared to deal with difficult classes. On the one hand, a transfer in a ZEP school often arouses apprehension and interrogation in their minds.

On the other hand, each school runs differently, and it's quite difficult to get accustomed to it, in only one day (the day before the return to school), for teachers left on their own.

All these factors, added to the fact that pupils have a tendency to « test » new teachers on school regulation details, put them under considerable stress; This stress will be seen by the pupils as a sign of weakness and incompetence, and it will lead to a hostile reaction towards the new comers. This first clumsy contact with the pupils will lead to conflicts in the following hours.

When an educational team faces difficult situations with pupils it is necessary that the working atmosphere should be cordial and soothing. Quickly integrating the existing team is paramount for the newly appointed teacher to feel more confident. At the same time it is important to show the pupils a certain consistency among the adults in charge of their education. We must deal with risky situations and conflicts on the same basis.

II) The consulting team : members

Our team members are volunteers and usually headteachers, which facilitates information exchanges and communication.

The consulting team members :

History and Geography: Miss Auburtin Sylvie

PE : Mr Charpentier Claude

Biology: Miss Da Rocha Sylvie and Mrs Hilgert Marie-Laure

Physical Sciences : Mr Carrara Philippe

German : Mr Miclo Sylvain and Mr Braz Teddy

The newly appointed teachers in 2001 asked us to reduce the number of members in the team and we did so.

We can count on the headmaster and the ZEP coordinator's help and support.

We meet at the end of each school year to draw up the balance-sheet and to talk about the evolutions for the following year. Just before we go back to school one part of the team organizes everything: a meal with the new colleagues, the distribution of photocopies and the coordination with the Headmaster.

We meet each time a colleague or a team member needs it.

III) The day before the return to school: 2002/2003

After the plenary meeting, where the Headmaster introduced each member of the consulting team, we gathered the newly appointed teachers in order to :

- Play down the transfer in this school by breaking their prejudices and assuring them of our support.
 - Show the aim of this welcome(educational practices consistency, exchanges of « things », improving the school climate and setting a good working atmosphere).
 - Make a list of their expectations and define the meetings to come.
- All this was done thanks to ideas exchanges and debates.

Then the new colleagues met their subject coordinating teacher and the administrator to:

- Know how to find the car park, to get the car park and the photocopy machine pass and the classroom keys.
- Visit the buildings, the classrooms, try the keys, see where the switches and the educational equipments were.
- Locate the evacuation plan and the spots in the playground where pupils had to line-up in twos.

The lunch, organized by our team, took place in a nearby restaurant. It allowed all the staff to gather in a friendly atmosphere, the new teachers meeting the « old » teachers.

In the Afternoon we met with the new colleagues to discuss the following items:

- Introducing Behren-lès-Forbach (mining city) and its ZEP
- Introducing the pupils' profiles and specifications. (immigrants of 2nd and even 3rd generation from North Africa and Italy)
- Introducing the school regulations, the school life convention(Charter), the organization of the family link book , we gave the "reflex files" that we created. (see annexes)
- Prevention of risky situations and intervention during such situations according to notes from JP legault's book « la gestion disciplinaire de la classe »(discipline in the classroom) which presents the author 's main advice.

We stopped doing « role-plays »in front of our new colleagues because they apparently created too much anxiety among them.

At the end of the afternoon we distributed documents written by our team. Some teachers, who had not done so in the morning, visited the buildings and tried their keys.

IV) Subsequent meetings

We organized a 4-hour meeting on the first morning for colleagues who were not headteachers in 1st year. The newly appointed teachers could ask questions about the written documents handed out the day before. We explained why it was necessary to follow the “reflex files” even if it seemed futile and sometimes infantilizing. We also explained the importance of rituals, the mistakes to avoid and the behaviour to adopt in front of pupils.

We ended up talking about what the first teaching period should be and should not be.

When the older pupils went back to school in the afternoon the new colleagues could sit in for a first contact with the consulting team members’ classes. They could either sit in the class with the pupils or they could just stand in the next room. (the science lab, which allows you to hear everything of what’s happening in both adjoining rooms). They gave us their first impressions and were quite surprised by the pupils enthusiasm and by the quietness during their circulation in the corridors. They could see the relevance of our remarks.

This year, we put the stress on newly appointed teachers during the school year. This concerned many teachers in our school.

After a warm welcome by the administration and the headmaster they were given a day off to be accompanied by one of the consulting team members. Thus, they got the necessary information about the school, they were introduced to their educational team and to the rest of the school community. They could sit in a colleague’s class for one period if they wanted to, visit the school, the classrooms. They got a condensate welcome.

V) Results of the action

Analyses by the head of the school and of the GLAS(Groupe Local d’Action et de Sécurité =Action and safety local group)

- School year 2001/2002

« This year was much calmer than last year, no serious incidents happened in the school. I assume this is the results of our work to welcome new teachers.»

- School year 2002/2003

« In a difficult school, more than in any other schools, your colleagues’ welcome is as important as the headmaster’s. The complementary speeches about the relation to pupils, about the necessary strictness, provide newly appointed teachers with landmarks : from the first days on they are part of a community.

This assurance, to benefit from all their colleagues solidarity, to know the school, the staff better, allowed them :

- To teach with more serenity and therefore more efficiency,
- To participate in the school project.
- But also to think about their own subject, their own teaching methods, and to find concrete actions and solutions to improve them (this is quite unusual !!).

Analysis : The School Life Advisor

- School year 2001/2002

The school life office had less difficulties with the new comers concerning the administration of late pupils, detentions, and registration yet this was not amazingly different.

- School year 2002/2003

The school life office thought this action should be carried on because it improved human relationship within the school. Some points will have to be reinforced, mainly the verification of absent pupils and the sharing of information concerning this point.

Analysis : The school nurse

The nurse did not notice any massive sending of pupils to the nursery for unlegitimate reasons outside the periods indicated in the reflex files.

Analysis : Newly appointed teachers

- School year 2001/2002

The consulting team prepared an anonymous questionnaire handed out

Results for the resource team

Other realizations and actions by the resource team.

- Introducing the numerous ZEP partners and its coordinator to the parents association, to the town associations and to the newly appointed teachers.
- Realization of a group photo for all the staff members making it easier to identify your colleagues.

Positive aspects :

- Our action maintains an excellent working and solidarity atmosphere between the staff members and allows them to talk about their problems with no difficulty in order to find a solution together.
- Our cohesion is even stronger as new teachers integrates easily thanks to our work. Evidence of this is their involvement in the board of directors, in the socio-educative foyer, in the open school, in the different association meetings and in the pilotage and thinking committee about how to run the school.
- Henceforth, more teachers get involved in the school life and in the school development, which dynamises the whole school community.
- Parents tend to value sanctions differently if given by new teachers. Once more, the resource team helps parents and teachers know each other better and forget prejudices.
- Following a serious incident, which impressed our new colleagues, (stone throwing at a teacher's car), the discussions with the headmasters and the resource team allowed tensions to disappear(This could have seriously disrupted the school community).

Negative Aspects :

For the past two years, a couple of colleagues have not been able to benefit from our advice. They haven't seemed to have the necessary rigor or capacity to apply them and their different class management immediately aroused pupil's rejection. (the absence of rituals is unsettling for those pupils).

We tried to see them apart and to give them personalized advice, we allowed them to attend our lessons but nothing changed. They started feeling guilty which increased their feeling of exclusion. A few times, a colleague refused our help assessing his lessons were adequate. Our team did not find any solutions to help them.

VI) Personal investment

Our team agrees to spend a few hours more at school, and this personal investment is nothing compared to the benefits.

Nevertheless, we don't count the hours spent listening to problems we don't face anymore and talking about « work », even while having lunch.