Blog of a beginning teacher

Braden Blyde
Secondary teacher, Prescott College, SA

As I write, week seven has all but come to a close. I am doing the calculations; seven out of eleven weeks for Term 1. Three more terms and my first year is complete—that's about 17% of time gone by.

Why am I counting thus already? Well, at this stage, keeping my chin up is the best thing I can do to keep my head above water.

Walking into the classroom for the first time as a real teacher was both a liberating and a 'melancholy' experience. I was liberated by the lack of glaring supervisors' eyes, but unnerved by the sudden sense of responsibility and finality.

I am a teacher! Now, how do I teach?

Four years of tertiary study should have been enough—it 'sure' felt enough. But this assumption, as I already knew, was all but false.

Assumptions are the bane of beginning teachers, I've discovered. In conversations with various members of my graduating class it soon became apparent that what they had assumed about their role, what they had assumed about their students, and what people had assumed about them, has contributed to numerous and challenging difficulties. Simple things such as: Who does 'what' during playground duties? Where are the



OHP transparencies stored or what is proper roll marking practice? These sometimes seem to fly by the radar.

Sometimes, there are more serious matters. For instance, finding out who has special needs in your classroom, where the first aid kit is kept or what the State Government's assessment policy is.

We assumed that our teacher education and training might be enough, at least, to get us by. But, I quickly realised that we continually need to learn and in more than one area; particularly in an unfamiliar city and state. Away from family and familiar faces, a support network is needed, but oh so hard to initiate. A clear set of goals helps to define direction, both inside and outside the classroom. A lot of the challenge is keeping the emotions on a steady course.

But it's not all bad. In fact, the majority of it is good. Teaching is living up to its challenging, yet rewarding promises. Seeing kids smile or 'switches' being flicked in their developing minds is definitely all it is cracked up to be; discovering and honing your own instructional style is motivating—and the pay cheque is a nice little bonus too.

So what is the point of this *beginning teacher's blog*? While the blogosphere may be littered with information from whinging, whining and generally self-obsessed characters, I hope these observations and reflections are a little more embracing. For the seasoned professional much of what I have said is likely to be a faint and distant memory; for the academic, perhaps 'fodder' for your next lecture. But like a cool southerly on a hot summer day, I hope it may in some way be refreshing.

> *Maybe it's time for* you *to revisit your dreams*

Being a new teacher is a lot like being a child in a toyshop. It's full of bright, shining packages of various shapes and sizes, each with the promise of endless fun and fulfilment. But some toys are a little too old for you, some too expensive and some—well, just too high on the shelf.

There are things you want to achieve in the wide-eyed wonder (and bleary-eyed bamboozlement) of your first term. My guess is that some of these toys you once looked up at, you've grasped and opened. I also guess that many of the toys you dreamt about in your first year of teaching—your plans and your dreams, have been left on the shelf.

Maybe it is time to revisit the toy shop. Now that you've grown professionally and have more money in the bank account, reach a little higher and further. Maybe all it needs is for you to connect with a beginning teacher, share their pains and passions for a moment. They will appreciate your concern and while they may still be 'novices', you might learn something too. TEACH

[Image: Avondale College collection]