

**Clinical Field Experience B: Improving New Teacher Induction Strategies**

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**EAD-523: Developing Professional Capacity**

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There are two separate processes one undergoes as a new teacher in the Orinda Union School District. The first is orientation. This is led by administrators during welcome back/orientation ceremonies during the first two days that teachers return to school. For middle school teachers orientation involves icebreakers and a review of the general policies and procedures in place at the Orinda Intermediate School (OIS.). New OUSD teachers are also equipped with a TIP mentor that guides them through what our district classifies as their induction during their first year on campus. The TIP system aligns with PSEL 7e by “develop(ing) and support(ing) open productive caring and trusting working relationships among leaders, faculty and staff to promote professional capacity and improvement of practice” (PSEL, 2023).

As a new art teacher, Sean Ferguson took part in the TIP/induction program during the 2022-23 school year. He said the program matched him with his mentor, who in his case was a middle school teacher out of our district, named Jennifer Gulassa who taught at Piedmont Middle School in the Oakland School District. Sea met with his mentor every week for about an hour. She helped him prepare lesson plans, guided him through grading and class management and conducted two formal observations, one in the Fall and the other in the Spring.

Ferguson felt his mentor’s presence alone in the classroom helped refine his teaching skills. During his formal observation, as in most formal observations, she asked him where he wanted her to focus her attention: student engagement, grouping students, class culture, etc. Ferguson also received two formal observations from an assistant principal as OIS, but he called time with Jennifer much more casual and felt she was great at giving him advice on how to improve his instruction.

She advised Ferguson on grouping techniques, warm-up exercises, developing daily prompts for students as they entered class, and cautioned him to wait for answers from students when they required “think time.” He said she was very helpful in helping him cultivate a warmer, more inclusive environment in the classroom as well as having him focus on developing the “mindset of an artist” among his students. The theory that no work is ever finished. It can always be improved.

Since Jennifer wasn’t a teacher at OIS, they did not spend much time on the specific mission and vision at OIS. I need to investigate why our district needs to “hire out” for most of our TIP mentors, but I suspect it has a lot to do with the shortage of teachers in our area. If Sean could change something about the OUSD induction program it would be to eliminate the amount of unnecessary paperwork he feels new teachers are required to complete. Another deficiency has to do with our school site specifically and administrators making clear what qualifies as a behavioral misdeed that would send a student to the office, and those which the teacher should handle themselves.

There are standards for middle school art programs in California public schools but for whatever reason Sean feels like they are hard to follow. However, another benefit that he received from the TIP mentor was in terms of grading. He had been grading students on effort alone. Gulassa helped him develop rubrics that assessed student abilities as well, then in accordance with PSEL Standard 6c “develop(ing) teachers’ and staff members professional knowledge...through differentiated opportunities” she took another step in his growth by introducing Ferguson to the veteran art teacher at her middle school. This teacher demonstrated a grading system that broke lessons down into “steps of accomplishments” with points associated

with each step. Ferguson said tried the grading approach but abandoned it when he said it “got too complicated,” however he said he might try it again in the new school year.

As far as what he would like to see improved and changed, Ferguson said it would have been helpful to have his mentor assist him in streamlining state art standards. Ferguson would keep the TIP/induction program but reduce the paperwork and put more emphasis on the classroom observations. He was reluctant to be “watched” by another teacher at first, he said, but discovered that simply being observed by a veteran teacher and getting their feedback helped sharpen his own teaching abilities.

## **References**

National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015). Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015. Reston, VA: Author.