



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

# First Year Teacher Handbook



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## Letter to Teachers

Congratulations, you made it! You are entering your first year of teaching, with your heads held up high, eager hearts, and your eyes on the horizon. You're currently at the forefront of our students' future and your community is relying on you to educate our next generation on how to analyze and solve not only current, but future, crucial, real-world problems.

It's okay to be nervous. You are now responsible for your classroom and everything in it. We could go on and list the dozens of things in your classroom that you're responsible for, but your most important responsibility is your students. You now have the rare opportunity and the pleasure of shaping their lives. After all, they're our future politicians, lawyers, construction workers, government employees, or even educators like you.

I encourage you to not let all the time you spend in the classroom teaching distract you from the true reason you've become a teacher in the first place. As an educator, you love to make a difference in the world and your love for teaching is profound and shared amongst thousands of other teachers.

The classroom is your playground; it will use up much of your energy, you might get a bruise or a scratch, but always enjoy yourself.

You are not alone. You will be in a school with other educators that are first year teachers like you, as well as more experienced teachers from whom you can learn.

Learn your students. Once students have a driven and loving classroom they will become captivated by the beauty of learning. That look in your students' eye is a direct fruit of your love.

Speaking of classrooms... you'll have your own! The classroom is your space to not only educate others, but to learn from them as well. Believe it or not, your students will think you live there, only because to them you're always there when they're not. You'll be there on half days, and sometimes even when there's no school at all (for the students at least.) But again, it's yours. So, make sure you own it and make sure you love it!

Lastly, remember not every student is going to want to connect with you right away. Like all relationships, you build trust over time and through your ability to express yourself. With many students it'll be easy. However, there will be some students who seem to be unmotivated or unattached in the classroom. These are the students that you should love the most. The ability to change minds is rare, but we know you can connect with them.

We'll conclude with this: you will never stop learning. We know you can do it. We believe in you. We wish you the best.

Sincerely,  
Khalid Abogourin, Horace Ryans III, and Alfredo Pratico



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# THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

## Learn Our City “Philly Slang”

### **1. Cheesesteak**

*Philadelphia’s beloved sandwich made with sliced steak served on a long roll. Good for breakfast, lunch or dinner.*

### **2. Whiz**

*The gooey, cheesy deliciousness found atop a cheesesteak.*

*(Ex. What type of cheese should I get on my cheesesteak- American, provolone, or **whiz**?)*

### **3. Wit/Witout**

*How to order fried onions on your cheesesteak, meaning with or without the onions.*

*(Ex. Whiz **wit** means you will be getting a cheesesteak, smothered in cheese whiz and topped with fried onions)*

### **4. Yous**

*Philly Version of y’all*

*(Ex. What are **yous** doing later?)*

### **5. Down the shore**

*Also known as ‘The Jersey Shore.’ These are the beaches on the New Jersey coast and are the most popular vacation destination for Philadelphians.*

*(Ex. Can’t wait to go **down the shore** this summer!)*

### **6. Jimmies**

*No ice cream cone is complete without Jimmies, which are known to the rest of the world as ‘sprinkles.’*

*(Ex. Can I have a vanilla cone with rainbow **jimmies**?)*

### **7. MAC machine**

*Money Access Center or more commonly referred to as an ATM.*

*(Ex. Where’s the nearest **MAC machine** I need to get out money?)*

### **8. Jawn**

*A noun to describe anything. A jawn can literally be any person, place, or thing.*

*(Ex. Can you pass me that jawn?)*

### **9. Water Ice (Pronounced Wooder Ice)**

*A delicious summer treat that is synonymous with Italian Ice.*

*(Ex. It’s hot out- let’s go to Rita’s to get **water ice**!)*



**10. Drawlin'**

*Acting out of character/Doing something that others don't approve of.  
(Ex. If you don't come out tonight you're **drawlin'**).*

**11. Boul**

*A word to describe a person.  
(Ex. The **boul** over there has on fresh kicks.)*

**12. Ard or Aight**

*Philly slang for alright.  
(Ex. Gotta go but I will see you later! **Ard**. Talk to you later.*

**13. Wassup**

*Means "Hey" or "Hello"*

**14. Wack**

*Means "corny" or "dumb"  
(Ex. Man, that's **wack**.)*

**15. Yo**

*Greeting or a question  
(Ex. **Yo!** wass good bro!)  
(Ex. **Yo!?** Why'd you do that?)*

**16. Ocky**

*Fake or not-authentic  
(Ex. "Ayo ya timbs **ocky**")*

**17. Sawty**

*An word to express being wrong  
(Ex. "I thought I was gonna make the bus but I was **sawty**."*

**18. Finna**

*"To go," or, "Going to"  
(Ex. "I was finna go but naw."*

**19. Bet**

*A response  
To assure or "yes"  
(Ex. "Throw it, you won't" "Bet!"*

**20. Say less**

Assurance or “understood”

Can be used in conjugation with **bet**.

(Ex. “Do you understand me?” “**Bet, say less.**”)

**21. Outta Pocket**

“Out of line” or “acting up”

(“My teacher gave me 2 hours of homework today, she outta pocket!”)

**22. Naw or Nah**

No or nope

(Ex. “Can I get Pencil?” “**Naw** bruh.”)



# 5 Things to Remember

1. Keep an Open Mind
2. Recognize the Positive
3. Engage Me
4. Understand Your Students
5. Equality vs. Equity

### Keep an Open Mind

#### **Scenario:**

Mr. Johnson is teaching a lesson to his students. He's standing in the front of the room overlooking his class when he notices that one of his students begins to act out and become disruptive. He addresses this student like he was trained to do. After addressing this student, the individual continued to act up and misbehave. This student has a history of bad behavior over the past month. This student has been progressively getting worse and worse. As a punishment, Mr. Johnson decided to send the student out of the room instead of talking to them and trying to understand why.

If Mr. Johnson talked to this student and checked in on them, he would have found out that this student has been having home troubles. His parents are getting divorced and he's been going from house to house packing his stuff and moving. He's been struggling to complete his homework and projects because of the stress. Now that his teacher sent him out of the room instead of talking to him, he now feels like he has been abandoned and set aside.

#### **Breakdown:**

All your students are supposed to feel safe in your classroom. They all come from different backgrounds and life experiences. You are allowed to ask your students questions, because you are concerned about their well-being. Remember that there is always a reason behind the actions of a student. It's up to you to address the situation in a way that creates a healthy relationship with your students. We want you to understand us, but at the same time, don't try to figure out our whole life story just from one look at us. We are more than what is on the surface.



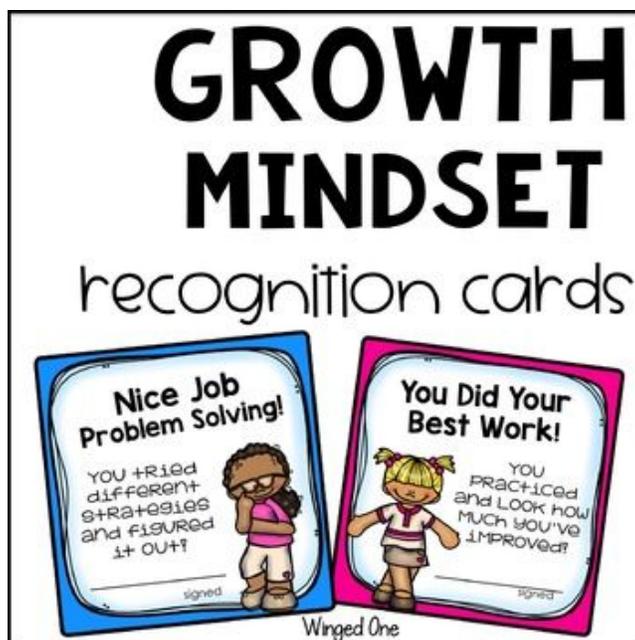
### Recognize the Positive

#### Scenario:

When I was in middle school, I had this friend that would always ask me for a pencil every day before class. I never understood why he didn't bring a pencil with him, but I didn't feel like asking so I would just always give it to him anyway. However, I was always afraid of getting caught by Mrs. Williams, my teacher, so I would hide the fact that I was giving him a pencil. One day, while we were in class, the student asked me for a pencil. I gave it to him but wasn't careful and I ended up getting caught by Mrs. Williams. I immediately thought that I was in trouble. However, believe it or not, the teacher actually thanked me for giving my classmate a pencil and highlighted that I didn't need to hide my actions from her. Mrs. Williams also gave my friend a full case of No. 2 pencils.

#### Breakdown:

Mrs. Williams highlights the positive instead of focusing on what the student done wrong. She could've easily kicked him out of class for disturbing her lesson, but instead she talked to the student and found out the effort he put forth so that his classmate could have a pencil. She also used positive connotations to explain why that student was wrong and how to properly do it.





## Engage Me

### **Scenario:**

I have a teacher named Mr. Narwich. He is never boring. He always manages to tie in fun and relatable activities into his lesson. One day, Mr. Narwich was teaching a lesson and he compared the force in Star Wars to the Force in physics. It was awesome because from that perspective I understood exactly what he was talking about. One of the great things about Mr. Narwich is that he is always able to bring out energy in you that you would've never thought you possessed. I am eager to begin class every day because I can't wait to see what fun things he ties into the lesson.

### **Breakdown:**

Mr. Narwich engages his students. He ties a little fun into the classroom and interacts with his students, as opposed to lecturing them. Engagement is a strategy that can also help students learn concepts. In the scenario, you saw how the student learned the concept "Force" after the teacher compared it to the "Force" in Star Wars because it was something that the student found relatable. By using high interest topics to draw students in, the teacher created an engaging environment in which students can formulate opinions and make decisions.



### Understand Your Students

#### **Scenario:**

Joshua is a very intelligent student. He is an active learner, participates in class, and is very well-liked by his peers. Joshua also has Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). Joshua's impulsiveness in the classroom makes him very jumpy and quick to react when presented with a problem. Often when Joshua's teacher asks him to sit down and do his worksheet like the rest of the class, Joshua cannot sit still, nor can he stay on task for very long. He is frequently told to, "keep still," or, "stop fidgeting," by other teachers, but he simply can't. So, Joshua's English teacher, Ms. Grain, knows Joshua learning style. She understands that for Joshua to focus, he has to be able to move. Movement helps Joshua maintain his focus for a longer period of time. So, whenever Joshua is in Ms. Grain's class, she allows Joshua to stand in the back of the room at a tall table, so he can move as he pleases without disrupting the class.

#### **Breakdown:**

As a teacher, you will have students in your class that have mental disorders, learning disabilities and different learning styles. You will go through trainings and lectures that may not prepare you for these situations but keep in mind that every student is unique. Ms. Grain in the scenario above has dealt with students like Joshua before. She's been teaching for about twenty years. She wasn't accommodating Joshua. She assessed the situation and identified the best way to help Joshua succeed in her classroom. She built his weakness into a strength. Taking time to get to know and understand your students is one of the best ways you can create a loving and safe classroom.



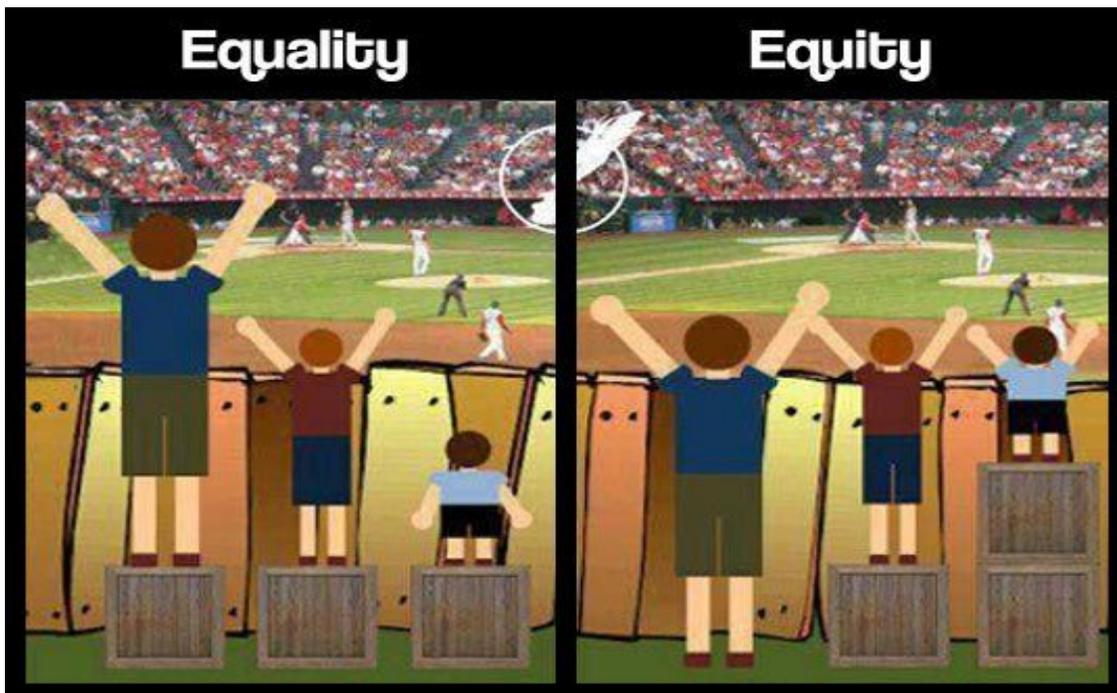
**Equality Vs. Equity**

**Scenario:**

A student isn't doing too well in class. This student doesn't have time to study or learn concepts in depth after school because his parents come home really late. He also has to babysit his little sister. Mrs. Hill decided to reach out to this student. She decided to offer him extra support during his lunch break and after school. That student took Mrs. Hill up on her offer and his grades have improved drastically.

**Breakdown:**

In the scenario above, Mrs. Hill established equity inside the classroom. She took into account the challenge the individual was facing and used what she knew to better educate the student. She could have easily ignored the student's problem and still expected him to do well in her class. This may have eventually led to him shutting everyone out and not performing to his best capabilities. However, since she went out of her way to establish equity, that student now feels that someone sees potential in him and that if he really tries, he is able to perform at his best. This will stick with him for the rest of his life.



**KEEPIN' IT REAL**  
(Pointers for Teachers)

**1. Don't be afraid to have tough conversations**

The most powerful tool in your classroom is your discussions. Talk to your students about relevant issues. Having conversations on topics such as race, poverty, and privilege are crucial to the development of your students.

**2. Talking to students, not at them**

Soon enough, your style of teaching will become second nature. You can stand in front of a classroom and lecture for as long as you want. It's important to realize when your students get bored and stop listening. A strategy you can use is actually use is creating a dialogue with students during your lessons. Engage them so that the students feel that they are equally responsible for the discussion and the class' academic success.

**3. Be Enthusiastic**

We know that sometimes teaching is not the easiest job, but one of the smallest things that some teachers forget to do is show enthusiasm. Show your kids that you actually want to be in the class with them. Smile at them, joke with them (when appropriate) and spread positivity. You want your classroom to be a lively space where students can express themselves freely.

**4. Create an active learning environment**

Students appreciate when we see adults trying to connect with us. Although we might not always show it, we love being able to connect in one way or another with our teachers. So, when teaching your lessons, try to include your students. For example, if you know one of your students likes to play a sport and is really passionate about it, include that student in your lesson.

“John scored 20 points in a basketball game. If his average is 26 points per game, how many points does he need to reach his average?”



## STUDENT CHRONICLES

(Reflection from Students about their favorite teachers)

*“Probably Mr. Kay. Mainly because during the report card conferences, I had a C in his class and he told me that the work he sees me do in other classes and even in his own, he could tell that I wasn’t a C student, that really stuck with me and at that point I pushed my grade from his class up and did better from there in all my other classes” -*  
**Douglas Oliver, 16, Science Leadership Academy**

*“I stopped by to visit my 9th grade biology teacher to say wassup and surprisingly he asked about my grades and how the school year was going for me which he’d never done before. I shared with him that my GPA was going to drop by the end of sophomore year and it would be lower than the required GPA for my dream school, so I didn’t think I would be able to apply there. He shared with me his experience and encouraged me to keep working hard and that I have the potential to eventually bring it back up.” -*  
**Hali Ryans, 16, Academy at Palumbo**

*“Tr. Patrice had a special way of teaching. You could really relate to her and she could relate to you. She didn’t feel as if she was a teacher. She has this charisma to her personality as a person that makes you feel as if she was your best buddy. Her teaching methods weren’t wack like most teachers who don’t know what they’re talking about. She had a way of teaching that was fluid and you could understand it. And she actually cared about her students, not like others who pretended just for the sake of their jobs. She was basically like a caring mom.”*

**-Nicholas Alfaro Jiménez, 16, Maritime Academy Charter School**

*“She pushed me to talk about the fact that I wasn’t born in this country and the issues that my close friends have to think about every day. What stuck out to me was the second, and only other question she asked me was, “How can I support you as you try to navigate this space?” I think this was so meaningful because she didn’t try to dictate or narrate what I felt, she decided to understand her role in helping me navigate the space. It came from a place of such genuine love.” -*  
**Priya Ahmad, 18, William Penn Charter School**

*“One positive experience I’ve had with a teacher was my theology teacher. He explained how a marriage should work and how it should be. He explained what a good example of a marriage should be and it changed my perception of marriage.”*  
**- Donovan Blair, 17, Roman Catholic High School**

*“Mrs. Miller is a one of a kind teacher. Although amazing, her way of teaching isn’t the main skill that makes her such a good teacher. It is her attitude toward her duties as one that makes her one of my favorites. I have honestly never seen a teacher so excited to see me doing so well in my life. She doesn’t only care about me inside the classroom, but outside as well. She would stop by my adobe room just to talk, and even though we were still in a virtual class I felt we were talking to one another face to face.” -*  
**Khalid Abogourin, 17, Philadelphia Virtual Academy**

### AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES



Khalid Abogourin is currently a rising senior at Philadelphia Virtual Academy. He is a student from Southwest Philadelphia that loves to play football, baseball and basketball. He loves to eat Geno's Cheesesteaks. Khalid also loves to spend his time establishing students' voices in the district and urges people to keep an open mind. Khalid is on the Executive Board of The School District of Philadelphia's City-Wide Student Government.

He is a part of the National Honor Society, an active member of his school's Student Council and was also elected Vice President of his Junior Class. He plans on attending college, majoring in Cyber Security, creating his own cyber security firm and getting his own government contract.



Horace Ryans III is a young activist in the city of Philadelphia, born and raised in Northeast Philadelphia. He currently attends Science Leadership Academy as a Junior. He plays for their Ultimate Frisbee team, Soccer team, and serves as the Chief of Staff in his school's student government. Horace enjoys being a big brother and a mentor to underclassmen. He loves to give a helping hand when needed and is always eager to make someone's day a little brighter. He is very involved in the improvement of his local school and the upbringing of his fellow

students. He currently serves as the Philadelphia City Director for UrbEd Incorporated. He is also working to bring quality and effective urban education to all students as a City of Philadelphia Youth Commissioner. Horace is an inspiring educator and hopes to teach right here in Philadelphia.



Alfredo Praticò currently attends J.R. Masterman High School. He is President of Masterman's Student Government, Vice-Chair of the Youth Commission for the City of Philadelphia and founding President of the City-Wide Student Government of the School District of Philadelphia. He is dedicated to representing all students, especially where they traditionally have no voice. He hopes to continue advocating for all issues and to

truly improve the lives of his peers.