



**NEW TECHNICAL
COLLEGE INSTRUCTOR
HANDBOOK**

WELCOME

College Address _____

College Phone & Fax _____

Key Contacts	Name	Address / Room	Phone
Local Union President			
Campus/Dept. Representative			
UniServ Director			
College President			
Division Head			
Dean			
Dept. Chair or Team Leader			
District Board Chair			

**Wisconsin Education Association
Council**

P.O. Box 8003
Madison, WI 53708
1-800-362-8034
1-608-276-8203 (fax)
<http://www.weac.org>
<http://www.weacm.org>
(members only)

WEA Trust

P.O. Box 7338
Madison, WI 53707-7338
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National Education Association

1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
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<http://www.nea.org>





an NEA affiliate

WELCOME TO THE WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL!

Welcome to the Wisconsin Education Association Council and your new position in the Wisconsin Technical College System.

You're entering a position that truly makes a difference in the lives of your students and the health of the Wisconsin economy. You and your colleagues have a significant impact on the communities you serve – providing education and training that result in good paying, rewarding jobs.

Together with WEAC's 98,000 members, you have an incredible impact on the future of our state! Collectively, WEAC members have the strength to accomplish common goals and uphold the Wisconsin Technical College System's proud tradition of excellence in technical education.

Please take an opportunity to review the information included in this handbook – it was assembled by your fellow WEAC members to provide helpful strategies you can employ in your first year and throughout your career teaching in the technical colleges. And be sure to take advantage of the many other benefits and services provided by all levels of our union.

I hope that you consider becoming active in our union. There are a number of rewarding opportunities for you at the local, UniServ, or state level of our union. Remember, WEAC is a member-led organization; all levels of the association are dependent on active and engaged members.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Bell". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mary Bell
WEAC President





INTRODUCTION

WELCOME

Hello and welcome to your new position in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS)! As you have probably already learned, the instructors new to the WTCS must quickly learn to cope with a wide range of pressures, including a new teaching environment, unfamiliar surroundings and the varied needs of WTCS students.

This handbook is intended to provide you with some resources and helpful hints to ease your transition into your new position.

Please remember, the handbook is not the only resource on which you can rely. No handbook – regardless of its quality – can replace regular interaction, collaboration and cooperation with your professional colleagues. Be willing to ask questions of your colleagues; you will quickly find they can provide you with a wealth of valuable information. Consider seeking out experienced colleagues that have similar teaching assignments. You will be glad you did.

Some districts have mentoring programs for new instructors. These programs can be quite valuable. You may want to use this handbook with the district's program.

ABOUT THE WTCS

Wisconsin's 16 technical college districts are the state's primary provider of career and technical education. The system equips its extremely diverse student body with real-world, hands-on training in more than 300 educational programs. Technical college districts also play an important role in local economic development by delivering customized training courses for incumbent workers.

The system prides itself on being one of Wisconsin's most important bridges to the work force. It retrains dislocated workers; updates the skills of working adults; and provides high school graduates with the practical training they need to find high wage employment. In doing so, it strengthens our communities and contributes to the general health of our economy.

After attending the WTCS, students go on to form the very backbone of the Wisconsin economy; they are Wisconsin's health care professionals, police and firefighters, computer technicians and manufacturers. In 2004-05 alone, over 19,300 students graduated from the WTCS in a broad range of fields. Innumerable Wisconsin employers count on WTCS graduates to remain innovative and competitive.

ABOUT UNIONS

The system offers two types of 2-year associate degrees. All districts offer Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree programs. The AAS degree places a heavy focus on occupational and technical training and less emphasis on general education. There are currently three districts, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Madison Area Technical College and Nicolet Area Technical College, which offer a 2-year “college parallel” program that focuses heavily on general education credits and typically culminates with graduates transferring to a 4-year institution.

In addition to the 2-year degree programs, the technical colleges offer one and two-year technical diplomas, apprenticeship programs, adult basic education courses and a wide variety of community education classes.

In all, the system enrolled nearly 430,000 students in the 2004-05 academic year.

Full-time faculty (and some part-time faculty) at the 16 technical colleges are represented by unions. A union is an organization that allows you, the employee, to actively participate in the decisions that affect your employment.

Employees in a unionized workplace collectively bargain, or negotiate, the terms and conditions of their employment with the employer. The contract resulting from these negotiations defines the benefits, salary, working conditions, and protections afforded you through your employment in your technical college district.

Unions enforce the terms of the collective bargaining agreement through neutral third-party arbitrators, assuring that disputes over the interpretation of the contract will be resolved fairly.

Unions are not solely involved in contract negotiations and enforcement. Unions engage in a wide variety of other activities to support and protect the welfare of the membership; to advance the profession of teaching; and to advocate for public education. The union supports members’ interests through public relations, political action, legal advocacy, professional development and other activities.

You are represented by a local union that is affiliated with the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC), a state-wide union of over 98,000 public education employees. WEAC, in turn, is affiliated with the National Education Association (NEA), the nation’s largest education union. Your local association also belongs to a UniServ, a group of local unions in the same geographic region that assists local unions with collective bargaining, representation, political action and numerous other activities.

Membership in your union is extremely important. Membership shows your employer that union representatives have the support and backing of those they represent. Membership gives you a voice in the decisions made by your union. Membership also makes you eligible for the host of individual financial products and services offered by WEAC, NEA and the WEA Trust – the insurance and financial service company created by WEAC.

Questions

WHO DO I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS ON...

Your district likely has a great deal of contact information in directories and on its website. However, sometimes navigating these sites can be time-consuming. Use this sheet to create a quick reference guide to help you get your issues resolved quickly and efficiently.

Topic	Contact Person	Phone
Adds/drops		
Administrative software (e.g. PeopleSoft)		
Certification issues		
Class		
Copies or printing		
Counseling services		
Credit transfer & articulation agreements		
Disability services		
Email setup; troubleshooting		
Employee benefits		
Enrollment and course registration		
Facilities and maintenance requests		
Financial aid issues		
Grades (turning in; changing)		
Information technology troubleshooting		
Instructional technology (e.g. Blackboard)		
ITV (Instructional Television)		
Library and media services		
Multicultural services		
Online instruction and eTech		
Payroll		
Professional development		
Purchasing		
Scheduling computer lab time		
Scheduling rooms		
Security		
Student assessment		
Student services		
Supplies and materials		
Textbooks		
WIDS (Worldwide Instructional Design System)		



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Below is a list of information you should be acquainted with. Some pieces of information are more critical than others. However, you should at least be familiar with how to find this information should the need arise.

- Campus/building hours
- Your district's calendar and your class schedule
- District policies and procedures (consult district policy guide and/or collective bargaining agreement)

For example:

- Accommodation of religious beliefs
 - Affirmative action
 - Campus safety
 - Closing of facilities
 - Computer and internet usage
 - Discrimination
 - District email
 - District mail
 - Drug and alcohol use
 - Emergency procedures (e.g. fire; tornado; building security; first aid)
 - Employee ethics
 - Employment contracts
 - Enrollment changes – adds; drops; etc.
 - Field trips
 - Grading
 - Guest speakers/visitors in classrooms
 - Intellectual property
 - Parking regulations
 - Personal illness and/or leave policies
 - Purchasing/procurement
 - Referrals – Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA); English as a Second Language (ESL); special needs; learning resource center or skill labs.
 - Sexual harassment
 - Solicitation and distribution of material
 - Student academic standards & academic misconduct
 - Student attendance
 - Student discipline
 - Telephone usage
 - Travel and expenses
- Certification requirements
 - Professional development opportunities
 - Employee benefit enrollment deadlines and requirements

YOUR FIRST YEAR

BEFORE YOU BEGIN – DISCOVERING THE LAY OF THE LAND

Before the start of classes, consider visiting your work location(s) to familiarize yourself with the general layout of the campus. Investing some time in advance of your first day can save you time and leave you feeling more comfortable with your surroundings.

Be sure to locate your classrooms, labs and/or shops. Also locate your office.

	Location (Building, Rm. #)	Phone
Classroom		
Classroom		
Classroom		
Classroom		
Office		

Locate the fire alarm, fire extinguisher, telephone and emergency exit closest to each of your classrooms.

You should also locate:

	Location (Building, Rm. #)	Phone
Administrative offices		
Audio/visual equipment room		
Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse office		
Audio/visual equipment room		
Bookstore		
Building maintenance office		
Cafeteria		
Certification officer		
Computer lab(s)		
Copy center		
Counselor office(s)		
Curriculum specialist office		
Employee benefits office		
Financial aid office		
Health center/nurse's office		
IT Help Desk		
Library/media center		
Local union office		
Personnel/HR office		
Procurement office		
Staff lounge		

BEFORE YOU BEGIN – ESSENTIAL MATERIALS

Class schedule and office hours
District calendar
Class roster
Curriculum guide
Textbook and instructor's guide

Student handbook
Employee handbook
Collective bargaining agreement
Grade book
Lesson plan book

Staff directory
District-provided supplies
Safety equipment
Attendance forms

YOUR FIRST DAY (OR BEFORE)

Most faculty members realize the importance of the first day of class. First impressions are important, and students form these initial impressions quickly. The initial interactions you have with your students will go a long way towards shaping your relationship for the rest of the semester.

Here are some ideas that may assist you on this all-important day:

Prepare for the day – The first day shouldn't be taken for granted. Don't let the organization responsibilities of the first day (introductions; passing out the syllabus; etc.) lull you into thinking there is no need to prepare. Take some time to think about what you'll say about your course, why it's important, how you'll describe the course contents, your role as teacher and your expectations of your students. How will you make sure your students leave their first day with you excited about your class?

Set the tone – Be firm but fair; maintain discipline and clearly lay out your expectations for class conduct. Review your policies for class assignments, tests, grading, attendance, class safety and other class rules.

Maintain balance – Discussions related to policies, procedures and expectations are important. Students need this direction from you. However, remember to deal with other important questions: why you're excited to be teaching this course; what students will know and be able to do by semester's end; why this course will be interesting.

Try something out of the ordinary – Think about doing something unique to convey to your new students the potential value and importance of the course material you'll be presenting during of the semester. A brief demonstration, multimedia show or some other presentation could be used to show your students the relevance of your course.

Find out something about your students – Find out who is taking your course and what experiences they bring to it. Ask your students what they hope to get out of your course. Doing so will help you shape the weeks and months to come. Design an activity that will help you learn your students' names.

Provide a syllabus – The course syllabus clarifies how your course is structured and specifies expectations, behaviors, outcomes, skills, and evaluation criteria and techniques. Your college may have specific guidelines for what is to be included in the syllabus.

Enroll in benefits programs – Take the time to complete the paperwork necessary for the employee benefits programs you've chosen to enroll in. Your union has worked hard to secure these benefits; make sure you don't miss enrollment windows.

Join your union – Membership in your union is the first step toward active participation in important decisions that impact your work life.





THE FIRST MONTH

It is often sometime during the first month when new faculty begin feeling overwhelmed. Remember, you are not in this educational enterprise alone. Discuss your feelings with your colleagues. Collaborate, communicate and cooperate with them to accomplish your common objective of helping students to learn and grow. Don't let your enthusiasm for your profession and your students fade.

Here are a few suggestions for your first month:

Begin a journal – You may want to consider starting a journal to record your questions and thoughts. Record what works with your students, what doesn't work, and what changes you'd make to your class. Make note of the topics or activities that really spark your students' interests.

Establish & build relationships

– Begin to get to know your colleagues. Get in the habit of exchanging ideas and asking questions. Also remember to establish relationships with support staff employees at your district. Clerical staff; custodians; information technology staff and other support staff are wonderful resources with valuable information about the college's operation.

Learn policy – Familiarize yourself with the college's various policies and procedures. Earlier in the handbook there is a list of some important policies you may want to review.

Attend a union meeting – Take a step towards involvement in your union by attending a union meeting. Attending a general membership meeting is a great way to connect with colleagues from across the college. You'll get a good sense of some of the issues facing the college and its employees.

Review your collective bargaining agreement

– The collective bargaining agreement is an extremely important document. It spells out the terms and conditions of your employment. Review the document and seek out answers to questions you might have.

Get to know your union contacts

– Introduce yourself to your local union president and other faculty in union leadership positions. Also, seek out and introduce yourself to your UniServ Director (your union staff representative). These individuals are important contacts.

Begin networking in the community

– The technical colleges have strong ties to business and industry within your community. Familiarize yourself with some of the businesses served by your program. Begin building relationships with businesses and industry leaders. A good place to start is your program's advisory committee.

THE FIRST SEMESTER

Branch out beyond your program

– Get to know the overall makeup of your District’s offerings. What are some of the most popular programs? What organizations and clubs do students participate in? What community activities does the college offer? What student services are offered by the district?

Continue to learn policies & procedures

– Make sure you are familiar with budgeting procedures and policies related to purchase orders and equipment requests. Learn how to complete and submit grade reports. Know your college’s graduation policies.

Certification & professional growth

– Make sure you have a clear understanding of the certification requirements you must meet. Keep an eye out for opportunities to grow professionally.

Get involved in your union – The strength of your union depends on your participation in it. Start small by attending meetings and volunteering for simple tasks. Build towards a higher level of involvement as you become more comfortable in your new job.

Take time for reflection – When planning subsequent courses, make sure you look back on previous experiences. If you started a professional journal, look back through your writings and note what has worked and what activities might be changed. Ask yourself:

What issues/topics sparked the greatest interest among your students?

What activities stimulated students’ interest?

Were there administrative challenges that should be addressed?

What types of issues challenged your abilities?

Were there certain patterns that emerged when students were evaluated?

Were there certain topics that caused problems for your students?



20 STEPS TO STARTING THE YEAR OFF RIGHT

Build relationships. Get acquainted with administrative assistants, custodians, and other support staff. Get involved in campus activities and staff functions.

Get it together. Get your papers organized – especially employment-related documents. You never know when you may have to produce a document related to your job. A list of work-related records to include in your files appears elsewhere in this handbook.

Keep receipts. During the year, you may have expenditures that could be deductions on your income taxes. You may also have reimbursable expenses. Set aside a place to keep track of them and keep them organized.

Introduce yourself. Consider writing an autobiographical sketch for your students. If students feel a connection, their learning experience is enhanced.

Improve yourself. Set your sights on improving your professional ability in at least one area during the year; then decide how best to go about it.

Play the name game. Get to know your students by name as soon as possible.

Do your best. Determine from previous experience what factors keep you from doing your best job during the year. Then figure out a way to work around them. For example: How will you deal with the range of student abilities?

Look for hope. Give yourself a lift by watching for something hopeful. It may be that student who gives you an indication he or she learned something in the first week of class. Maybe it's the student who speaks to you in the parking lot and uses your correct name!

Be realistic. Don't expect to win every battle or successfully solve every problem. Be prepared for failure and learn from it.

Enroll. Your union has worked hard to negotiate and maintain the various employment benefits offered by the district. Take the time to enroll in these benefit programs as soon as possible.

Be prepared for special students. You may have students with special problems. Don't expect problems to work themselves out. Plan how you will deal with them in the best interests of the student, yourself and the class.

Think about health. Determine how to handle students' health problems.

Find a shoulder. Every faculty member needs someone to turn to for advice or to unload about challenges. If you don't have a network of "buddies," start building one.

Know your rights. Read your faculty contract and board policies, so you will know your rights.

Support your union. Join your local faculty union for the support of colleagues who understand your job. Get active in your local union. Your contract depends on your union's strength...and your union's strength depends on your participation.

Develop resources. Develop sources of information. Know where to get help when you need it. Keep your eyes open for free or inexpensive material you can use in your classroom.

Maintain a positive attitude. You have the opportunity from the first day to help your students determine whether classes are drudgery or a serious undertaking that can have fun moments. If you give the impression that being in class is a chore, that attitude will be reflected by your students.

Foster curiosity. If you want your students to be curious, set an atmosphere that encourages curiosity and doesn't stifle it.

Brief your students. Let your students know early what you expect of them. Most students will rise to your expectations.

And finally... Keep these three qualities of good teaching in mind: flexibility, patience and a sense of humor.

YOUR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

The faculty of all 16 technical college districts are organized into local unions that collectively bargain – or negotiate – their wages, hours and working conditions with their employers (the technical colleges’ district boards). The collective bargaining agreement (CBA) is the employment contract that results from these negotiations.

Your collective bargaining agreement is an extremely important document. The CBA spells out in great detail the contractual employment rights you have as an employee of your technical college district. You are strongly encouraged to review your contract. You will not know if or when your rights as an employee of the district are violated without an understanding of the CBA.

New faculty should review the entire collective bargaining agreement. In particular, pay close attention to sections on:

Salary

The technical college collective bargaining agreements all contain salary schedules – typically a matrix of columns and rows.

The rows of a salary schedule most often represent salary “steps”, or years of service. The columns often referred to as “lanes”, typically represent levels of education (e.g. Bachelor’s; Master’s; PhD). The lanes are sometimes further differentiated by the number of credits earned in excess of the major degree (e.g. BA+6; MA+10).

Movement through the salary schedule occurs as employees increase their years of service and their levels of education.

Your union also typically negotiates a general salary increase – a per-cell adjustment to the entire salary schedule.

So, an individual’s salary is most often adjusted by some combination of the following:

Increasing years of service –

attaining a new salary “step”

Increasing levels of education

– “lane” movement

Increasing the amount of the salary cells by a negotiated amount.

Workload

All 16 technical college district contracts spell out a system for determining instructors’ workload. Collective bargaining agreements govern how instructors’ total work assignments are set, typically placing

restrictions on how much work the district can assign to faculty members in any given semester or year. Workload language may also cover issues such as class size; extra-contractual work; maximum number of preparations or the duties for which workload credit is awarded.

Each district has its own unique workload system. You should learn you district’s system as soon as possible.

Benefits

Your local association has negotiated a number of fringe benefits for you and your colleagues, such as medical and dental insurance. You should review your contract to determine which benefits your district offers. You should also examine any district-provided materials that describe the benefits that have been negotiated.

Determine which benefit programs you will enroll in. Fill out and turn in benefit enrollment forms immediately upon your employment.



YOUR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT, continued

Probationary Status

Probationary employees are new instructors that work for a specific length of time before being granted permanent status. Probationary periods and other contractual language pertaining to probationary employees vary from district to district, so it is important that you review your contract to be certain of the conditions that apply to your probationary period.

Probationary employees are strongly encouraged to review all contractual language concerning their probationary periods. Be sure you understand your employment status and your rights clearly.

Evaluation, Discipline and Personnel Files

Be sure to understand when and how you will be evaluated. Contracts vary with respect to the methods used to evaluate employees and the frequency with which the evaluation is conducted.

Contracts typically stipulate that evaluations cannot be placed in an employee's personnel file without the employee first reviewing the document.

Also examine your contract's non-renewal, discipline and dismissal language. While we certainly hope it will not happen to you, employee discipline and dismissal is a fact of life. Your collective bargaining agreement contains specific provisions that govern the district's use of discipline and the dismissal of employees.

Grievances

The grievance procedure is a formal process the union and employer use to resolve disputes stemming from the collective bargaining agreement. The process typically has several steps whereby the dispute is heard internally by administrators with differing levels of authority. Ultimately, if a contract dispute cannot be solved internally, the grievance procedure provides for an impartial third party – an arbitrator – to issue a binding decision on the issue.

Sometimes it can be difficult to tell if the contract has been violated. What is a contract violation and what isn't? Talk to your union's leaders and your more experienced faculty colleagues if you suspect something isn't right. They have the experience to help you answer your questions about the contract.

Some new faculty may find it intimidating to report a grievance. This is natural, especially for those that don't have previous experience with unions. However, remember that the grievance procedure is in place to protect your rights as an employee of the district. Both the union and the district recognize the grievance procedure as a legitimate way to resolve employment disputes. Employees that are unwilling to use the dispute resolution tools available to them may continue to have their rights violated.

New faculty should be aware that certain timelines exist in the contract's grievance procedure. So, faculty should speak with their union colleagues promptly about potential contract violations.



YOUR RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION

If you are called to meet with a supervisor and know the reason is non-threatening, there is likely no problem. However, you have certain rights if you suspect the meeting could result in disciplinary action.

In an important case decided by the US Supreme Court (National Labor Relations Board vs. J. Weingarten, Inc.), employees were found to be entitled to union representation in any meeting in which the employee reasonably believed disciplinary action could result.

If a meeting takes a turn into an inquiry, an accusation of wrong-doing, or an actual reprimand for misconduct, respectfully interrupt and assert your Weingarten Rights by stating:

“If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I request that my union representative be present at this meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions.”

When you assert your Weingarten Rights, the meeting should stop, pending the attendance of your union representative. If the inquiry does not stop, ride out the illegal meeting by saying a little as possible. Contact your union representative immediately.

Please note that your employer is not required to inform you of your right to have a union representative present at a disciplinary meeting. *You must ask for representation.*

You are strongly encouraged to ask for union representation if you feel a meeting with your administration may lead to disciplinary action!

CERTIFICATION

A high quality staff is the key element in delivering a high quality education. The Wisconsin Technical College System ensures quality staff through a system of certification. Certification is required of all professional employees in the technical college system. This includes instructors, counselors, instructional specialists, librarians and instructionally-related administrators.

Certification is obtained once you are employed by your district. Once employed, you will be asked for transcripts and employment records. Your district's certification officer should be available to assist in obtaining certification.

There are several different types of certification – including provisional and 5-year certifications. The type of certification you receive is dependent on whether you meet the educational and occupational requirements of the certification code – the rules and regulations governing certification.

The certification code respects the importance of academic credentials. At the same time, the certification code recognizes that the unique occupational and technical mission of the WTCS can also be served by employees with experience in business and industry. The certification code therefore allows professionals with appropriate occupational experience to enter the teaching profession through non-academic routes.



The process of certification, professional growth requirements, and certification renewal can seem complex to many new faculty. Remember, numerous resources are available to help address your questions. Your union, your district's certification officer, the members of your district's certification committee and your more experienced colleagues can help with any questions you might have.

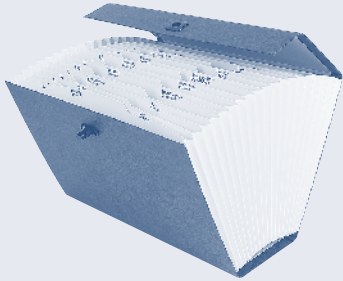
There are several different types of certifications. Typically, new full-time instructors are given a "provisional certificate." Provisional certification indicates that an individual has additional requirements to complete before attaining five-year certification – the standard certification within the WTCS. Five-year certification is granted after certain educational and occupational requirements are met and after the individual has completed specified

certification courses. Educational requirements, occupational experience and required certification courses differ based on type of position held (e.g. academic instructor; occupational instructor; librarian; counselor; etc).

Because certification is such an integral aspect of your employment, you are strongly encouraged to review the certification requirements for your position and discuss any questions with your professional colleagues, union leaders, and district certification staff.

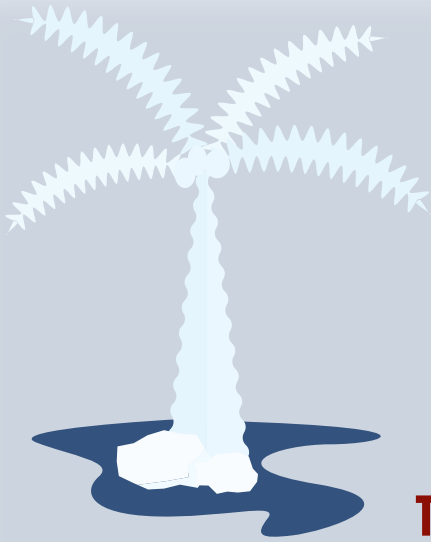
An excellent resource page on certification can be found at: <http://systematic.wtcsystem.org/certification/default.htm>

PROFESSIONAL PAPERS FILE



Every technical college faculty member should have a “Professional Papers” file that includes documents relating to his or her employment. Use this checklist to begin your file. Remember to keep your file in a safe place and update it as necessary.

- Your letter of employment
- Your collective bargaining agreement
- Copies of all records related to certification and recertification (e.g. certification application; forms verifying work experience; proof you’ve completed required certification courses; etc)
- Transcripts of all college coursework completed
- Records of job-related seminars, workshops, or conferences you attend
- Records related your health and dental plans (e.g. plan summaries; copies of benefit enrollment forms)
- Records relating to retirement benefits
- Records related to other employment benefits (e.g. district provided life insurance)
- Leave records – if your college has electronic leave tracking, periodically print out a copy showing accumulated leave.
- Letters of reprimand or letters of praise
- Employment-related correspondence to or from your administration
- Professional evaluations
- Documentation of professional awards, commendations or honors you receive
- Letters to and from students
- District calendar
- Copies of your teaching schedule and teaching assignments
- Receipts for employment-related expenditures
- Your written record of any incident that may lead to disciplinary action or that may increase your liability (include date, time, persons involved, your description of the incident and the resolution)
- Copies of local grievance rulings that may affect your position
- Proof of membership in your local union, WEAC and NEA



TIPS FOR STRESS REDUCTION

Teaching is a very rewarding profession. But it can also be extremely stressful. Teachers that learn to manage this stress will thrive, avoid “burnout,” and continue to be highly effective.

Here are a few tips for managing stress:

Recognize the sources of stress

— Learn what upsets you and avoid experiences that cause anxiety. Identify when you’re unable to do anything about a stressful situation and “let it go.”

Manage your time effectively

— Set priorities and act on them. Recognize when lack of time is contributing to your stress; don’t be afraid to ask for help.

Begin each working day with a review of priorities

— Take time out to reflect on what HAS been accomplished during the day in addition to reviewing all the things that remain on the action item list.

Improve conflict management skills

— A good way to reduce long-term stress at work and with co-workers is to improve personal conflict management skills. Conflict cannot always be resolved, but it can be managed in ways that lead to win-win situations.

Set reasonable goals

— Don’t attempt the impossible. Set realistic goals and divide broader objectives into manageable tasks.

Accept your limits

— Do the best job possible. But remember, no one is perfect. Learn from your failure and make improvements next time you try the task.

Find someone to talk to

— Find colleagues you’re able to lean on in times of stress; that you’re able to confide in; and that provide you with solid advice.

Get and stay healthy — Stay well rested; eat well; get enough exercise. Try to find some time during the work day to exercise or stretch.

Learn to say “no.” — “No” can be a responsible answer. When saying “no,” remember:

- Be honest
- Avoid being defensive
- Suggest alternatives.

Give yourself a break — Get away from your routine by taking short weekend trips to get your mind off work. Take short walks during the day. Find some time for yourself no matter how busy your schedule is.

Don’t procrastinate — Procrastination leads to a sense of having more to do than you can ever possibly accomplish. Be sure to reward yourself once the task is completed. Get your “must-do” tasks accomplished early.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS

The technical colleges serve a large number of adult learners. The average technical college student is 35 years of age. Statewide, two-thirds of the technical colleges' students are over the age of 25.

Make note of these characteristics of adult learners and their implications for the classroom.

Adults have life experiences – Adults have a broad and rich array of life experiences. Encourage your adult learner to share these experiences; they can serve as interesting classroom examples. Use the experiences of your adult students to apply course concepts; they can make your classes more dynamic. Be prepared to help adult learners see connections between earlier experiences and new knowledge.

Adult learners possess prior learning – Adults bring a wealth of knowledge to the classroom. Use your adult students as resources for yourself and for other students. Use open-ended questions to draw out students' knowledge. Provide opportunities for dialogue among students.

Adults have established values, beliefs, and opinions – Permit debate and the challenge of ideas but be careful to protect minority opinions within the class.

Adults often have specific purposes – Find out why your students are taking your classes and meet those needs.



Time is valuable to adult students

– Your adult students likely have a number of demands on their time. Formal learning must often be fit into life's "margins." Respect all your students' time by being well-prepared for each session. Don't insult your students by being unprepared. Start and end on time.

Adults desire practical application

– Adults want knowledge which can be put to use immediately, in concrete and practical terms. Give students "hands-on" learning activities with lots of practical applications. Focus on theories within the context of their application to relevant problems.

Adults want control & involvement

– Adults want control over their learning experiences. Adults can often be given a greater degree of flexibility. Involve students in the initial planning of the course – find out their particular interests and suggestions for the course.

Adults are motivated – Adult students are usually highly motivated when they begin. The motivation can quickly lessen if they become discouraged, if progress is slow, or as time passes and other responsibilities affect the amount of time and energy they can give to their learning. Work to develop and continue initial motivation by offering feedback and praise.

HANDLING “DIFFICULT” STUDENTS

Occasionally, you will have students in your classes that need special attention. These “difficult” students – for lack of a better term – can make your job more difficult and can disrupt the learning process for other students.

Many difficulties with students can be circumvented if you clearly outline your expectations and evaluative criteria at the beginning of every course.

Here are some suggestions for handling these students in a tactful manner.

	Characteristics	Suggestions
The Arguer	Has strong beliefs. Likes to argue.	Remain calm and non-judgmental. Ask for the arguer to provide evidence in support of his/her position. Use evidence from the class when providing alternative points of view. If an argument threatens to derail class, invite the student to discuss issue in greater detail after the class.
The Talker	Monopolizes class time. Tries to answer all questions.	Deliberately try to elicit responses from other students. Emphasize that it is the quality of responses, not quantity, that most interests you. Explain privately the importance of everyone having an opportunity to share.
The Silent One	Never asks questions. Doesn't participate voluntarily.	Clearly explain your expectations for student involvement in the class. Create a class environment in which students feel they are able to safely share their thoughts. Try talking with the student privately to learn the reason for being silent. Don't ridicule or put the student on the spot.
The Grade Grumbler	Vigorously contests grades he/she has been given.	Make your expectations for graded material clear from outset. Clearly articulate your grading policies. In addition to the grade, provide feedback and note the strong and weak points of the work. If no resolution to a student complaint is possible, inform them of the college's academic appeal process.
The Rambler	Takes too long to make his/her point.	Tactfully interrupt when the rambler takes a breath or pauses.
The Latecomer	Habitually is late to class.	Start the class on time regardless – this penalizes the one who is late, not the ones who are on time. Explain your expectation of timeliness with the entire group. Speak with the latecomer after class.

FEEDBACK



The WTCS Committee, a standing committee of the WEAC Board, assembled this handbook in hopes of creating a useful reference guide for instructors new to the WTCS. The Committee would like to know your reaction to the handbook.

Any feedback you are able to provide would be most appreciated.

Please direct your thoughts to Andy Lyons, WEAC staff liaison to the WTCS Committee. He can be reached at: lyonsa@weac.org

How often have you used the handbook? _____

Which portions of the handbook did you find helpful? _____

Did you find any portion repetitive or unnecessary? _____

Do you have any suggestions for additions or improvements to the handbook? _____

For those of you who received binders along with your handbook, have you found the binders a useful place to store your contract and other employment papers? _____

Other comments? _____

Thank you.



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