

THE INDUCTION OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

POLICY OF THE VICTORIAN INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION

1.0 Preamble

- 1.1 The VIEU believes that the structured and resourced induction of those new to the teaching profession is integral to the quality assurance processes in any school and system.
- 1.2 The VIEU is committed to the support of beginning teachers in schools, through both the regulation of industrial conditions and the establishment of induction programs.
- 1.3 In consultations that the union has undertaken with beginning teachers, the major issues that have emerged are:
 - The gap between theory and practice
 - Class sizes and spread of year levels and subjects
 - Lack of release time for induction
 - Lack of opportunity to discuss professional concerns on a “one to one” basis
 - Excessive paperwork
 - Lack of structure or format of induction program
 - Legal liability concerns – lack of information at the school level

2.0 Structured Induction Programs

- 2.1 The VIEU strongly advocates a more structured approach to a beginning teacher’s experience, which can be achieved by a better combination of time release and effective mentoring. In “best practice” models, induction roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined and formally linked to professional development and collaborative skill review.
- 2.2 The VIEU supports clear guidelines and processes established at the system and school level for inductees. These should include:
 - The development and resourcing of an induction program for each beginning teacher
 - The designation of a particular staff member as a co-ordinator of induction in the school with appropriate time release

- The establishment of general principles concerning the roles and responsibilities of the inductee and support teacher or mentor
- Access for the inductee and mentor to appropriate professional development activities
- The entitlement of the beginning teacher to a lighter load to ensure appropriate time for consultation and advice
- The provision of adequate time release for both the inductee and any colleague involved in the induction process
- Access for the beginning teacher to counselling services without any reference to professional competence at this entry level point of career
- Organisational information such as school policy, expectations, and responsibilities made explicit
- Guidance and advice on useful professional development such as teacher unionism, professional associations, in-servicing etc
- Regular review of the effectiveness of the induction program

2.3 In general, school induction programs should provide a variety of forms of assistance to the beginning teacher which supplement the beginning teacher's background knowledge with information:

- of a specific kind relating to the school and its community,
- which capitalises on the beginning teacher's previous training,
- and assists him/her to deal in a practical way with classroom management, curriculum planning, teaching method, and other facets such as administration procedures of the beginning teacher's teaching.

The school should also protect the beginning teacher from unreasonable demands, encourage the beginning teacher, strengthen the beginning teacher's confidence and satisfaction in their work, and respect the beginning teacher's style.

3.0 The Beginning Teacher

3.1 This policy recognises beginning teachers as those who are at least in their first three years of teaching.

3.2 In addition, teachers returning to teaching after an absence of five or more years should be offered support through an induction process with the appropriate modification.

3.3 Beginning teachers should be allocated a reduced teaching load and should not be allocated to teach curriculum areas outside of their teacher training.

4.0 Mentor Teachers

- 4.1 Experienced teachers who are part of this process, through mentoring and the provision of professional support, should also have their input and skills developed and formally recognised within the profession, rather than the current reliance on the goodwill and voluntary labour of others.
- 4.2 The teaching load of a mentor teacher should also be reduced to enable them to participate appropriately in the induction process.

5.0 Industrial Arrangements

- 5.1 The union believes that the induction of new teachers should be recognised as a major responsibility of schools and employing authorities. Attracting good teachers to the profession remains a strong concern, but retaining them and ensuring that their skills continue to develop and are recognised is an equally paramount issue.
- 5.2 The VIEU believes that the entitlements as detailed in this policy should be covered in industrial agreements, so that appropriate monitoring, accountability, and implementation can be ensured.
- 5.3 The union is opposed to any form of probationary employment, contractual arrangements or induction processes that are linked to punitive or formal due process. Beginning teachers need to experience a supportive work environment without feeling vulnerable about employment security.