

# A Newsletter for Beginning Teachers in NC



Regional Education Facilitators - NC Department of Public Instruction  
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## A Message from the 2018 Southeast Regional Teacher of the Year, Cameron Gupton



### Thriving: More Than Surviving

Struggle, survival, and disillusionment, these are just a few choice words that have been used to describe the beginning teacher experience. Over the years, I have come to realize the education profession and society expects a beginning teacher to simply keep his or her head above water. I have found myself unable to accept this as the status quo. Beginning teachers are important assets to the field, to their schools, to their students, and to their communities; beginning teachers should be celebrated and encouraged to thrive.

As I reflected back on my first three years in the classroom, I was reminded of the warnings of “Darktober” and the descent into disillusionment in November. Now, I wonder why these warnings were not more constructive? Why were they not more helpful? Why were they warnings at all? Why were they not phrases of affirmation? Why were they not suggestions on how to better my craft? Why were they not opportunities to better myself? Why was I not expected to thrive?

Recently, I read an Edutopia article that echoed these same sentiments. Entitled “Thriving in Your First Years as a Teacher,” the article spells out six practical steps to elevate instruction while operating under mounting pressure. Though some suggestions listed may seem to be “no-brainers,” we often fail to heed the most meaningful advice. The following are three that I have determined to be the most important.

The first step to thriving in your first years as an educator is to reflect. Write about or video record your classroom as often as possible. Let off some steam by writing about your stressful days, learn and grow from failures, and cel-

brate your accomplishments. Watch yourself, watch your students, question how you can change your classroom for the better. It is important that we as teachers take time to reflect. Learning comes from thinking about what we are doing, not just subscribing to a routine.

The second step is to observe other teachers in action. Too often, we feel confined to the four walls of our own classrooms. It is crucial that we make connections with other professionals in our buildings and observe their methods. Schools typically require beginning teachers to observe veterans but that is where the process usually ends. Make time after observations to debrief, discuss what went well, and talk about how to implement new techniques into your instruction. Learning by observation allows us to model the actions of others.

The third step is to seek out professional development and expand your horizons. It is easy to fret about missing a day and even easier to imagine the chaos that may occur in our classrooms, but it is vital that we grow in our field. Research professional development opportunities in your area, search for webinars, read books on educational strategy. If you are unable to devote school-time to PD, join online content and pedagogical discussions on various social media platforms. Learning through cultivating new knowledge, skills, and experiences helps us to maximize teacher capacity and boost student achievement.

I urge you to take these three recommendations to heart. Consider giving yourself the chance to thrive rather than just survive. Instead of merely attempting to keep your head above water, reflect, take advantage of the potential in your building, and broaden your knowledge. “Darktober,” November disillusionment, and coasting through your BT years do not have to remain the existing condition.

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### 5 Things All Great Teachers Have In Common

The quality of someone’s teaching does not just refer to how much information they manage to get into their student’s heads or the results that they produce. It also refers to their technique and presentation. Many teachers have a fantastic amount of knowledge that would be greatly useful to students, but they have no idea of how to express it. Great teaching often has less to do with wisdom and skills, but more to do with their attitude to their student, their subject and their work. This [article](#) explains the top five characteristics of great teachers, and how to incorporate them into your own lessons.