



Title Programs and Services

785-296-3069
785-296-5867 (fax)

120 SE 10th Avenue • Topeka, KS 66612-1182 • 785-296-6338 (TTY) • www.ksde.org

Dear Mentor,

Thank you for agreeing to be a mentor to a visiting international teacher. You are going to make a big difference for this person and will make his or her personal and professional experience in this country, and in our state, much more enjoyable and fulfilling.

Imagine yourself in this teacher's situation. You are thousands of miles away from your country and your family. Everything looks different, works differently and has a different logic. You try to explain why everything is not as you expect, but no one understands, because for them, it has always been that way. At your job, you are not sure about what the expectations are, how the other teachers will receive you or how the students are supposed to behave. If you need construction paper for your classroom, you do not know if it is kept somewhere in the school, if you are supposed to order it or if you go and buy it yourself.

The visiting teachers have had an orientation course in their home country and another one in Wichita. They have received information about administrative procedures, classroom management, grading policies, state standards, curriculum planning, and more. They have been provided with many resources and information; so many that their heads will be spinning when they arrive at the schools. This is why your role as a mentor is so crucial to them and their success.

Cultural adaptation is an on-going process. Even with all the information the teachers received before arriving at their new home, it may be that they just need to "live it" before it begins to make sense. Anticipate their needs and offer help when you foresee that there might be a problem. Invite them to visit your classroom and/or arrange for them to observe other strong teachers. Connect them to colleagues and staff members that may help to make their adaptation more successful. Invite them along to community events or offer to go with them to school functions. Help them find a life outside of work. It's your job as mentor to be there for them, to answer questions, to let them know they have someone reliable to go to and that their questions are not insignificant.

Set a regular time to meet with the teacher. It can be at least on a weekly basis at the beginning and then meet more or less often, if needed. Please help them to understand how things are done at your institution. Introduce them to everybody, and understand that they may not remember everyone the first time. Speak about expectations for dress code, student behavior, discipline procedures, grading policy and other important issues. The teacher might also need your help with things like finding a place to live, getting a driver's license or buying a phone. Do not assume too many things as evident or self-explanatory, because the teacher's experience in Spain or China may be completely different from the way things are done in Kansas or the United States. You will also probably learn a lot from this experience!

The two biggest professional challenges the visiting teachers usually have are classroom management and grading. Please go over the discipline policy for your schools and the steps they need to take when problems arise. It is also important to review your school's grading policy, show them examples, explain point systems, and share how you grade papers or projects.

We appreciate your support and the time you are willing to spend helping this new teacher. You can make a world of difference in his or her experience teaching and living in the United States. Please feel free to contact one of us, or with any questions or concerns you might have.

Thank you very much for your interest in this program!

Melanie Manares
785-296-7929
mmanares@ksde.org

Phyllis Farrar
785-296-1891
pfarrar@ksde.org