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## Welcome to Student Teaching

### The Open House

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*Dear Student Teacher:*



*Congratulations! You have worked really hard, and all of the late nights, presentations, papers, exams, and endless studying—not to mention the fights with your computer and hours of field experience—have finally paid off. You are ready for student teaching. It's an exciting experience filled with many unknowns. Most of you will spend at least 600 hours meeting your new "family," learning new rules, and navigating new experiences. If you aren't familiar with your placement site or your cooperating teacher, you probably have a million questions in preparation for your first day: What should I wear? What will my school be like? Will I get along with my cooperating teacher? Does the cafeteria serve good food?*

*While these questions are all relevant, you may not have thought to ask yourself additional questions: What is the school culture? Who is the principal? What is the role of parent involvement at the school?*

*Every school has its own unique spoken and unspoken way of doing things. These rules can present themselves as specific policies in the teacher handbook or as vague guidelines for workplace etiquette. We've observed student teachers in many diverse schools, and some of the best student teachers struggle with this transition. So trust us when we say that you'll want to read this chapter thoroughly (we won't waste your time with useless information). In our experience, understanding these politics (or at least knowing the questions to ask) can help you realize how you fit into the system and provide you with the first of many steps toward a successful experience.*

*Sincerely,*

*Your School Culture Coaches*

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## CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- define the importance of school culture;
- appreciate how school culture affects the organizational structure of schools;
- recognize the legal and ethical issues surrounding the teaching profession;
- identify the various functions of school employees; and
- describe the dos and don'ts of workplace professionalism.

## SCHOOL CULTURE

### What Is School Culture?

The concept of *culture* refers to a group's shared beliefs, customs, and behaviors. A **school's culture** includes the obvious elements of curriculum and policies, as well as the social interactions that occur within those structures that give a school its look and feel. This look and feel often lead to school labels, such as "friendly," "elite," "competitive," "inclusive," and so on. Frequently, it is the unwritten rules about interactions, problem solving, and decision making that give schools a "unique character," and almost everything in a school can have a set of unwritten rules about how to behave. These unwritten rules often reflect what the school and staff members care about (school mission and/or philosophy), what they are willing to spend time doing (actions in the classroom and parent involvement), how and what they celebrate (career accomplishments, birthdays, weddings, births, etc.), and what they talk about (the all-important school newsletter and teachers' lounge conversations).



School culture is *not* about

- **Race:** The categorization of humans into populations or ancestral groups on the basis of various sets of heritable characteristics
- **Socioeconomic status (SES):** A measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation
- **Size of the school:** The population and whether it is considered large or small
- **Religion:** A set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe

Let's make this conversation a little more tangible. Think about your family and all of the habits, relationships, celebrations, and kitchen table conversations that make it unique. Would you ever say that your family is like every other family? Absolutely not. It may seem difficult to understand why one family celebrates the Christmas season throughout the year (really—365 days, Christmas tree and all), or why a family enjoys going ice fishing as a tradition on birthdays, or the unusual practice of another particular family who hurl dinner rolls across the table instead of calmly passing around the breadbasket. It might be easy to judge these families if their experiences are vastly different from yours. Are these customs considered bad manners or just common courtesies? Would a visitor from another family instantly understand the unwritten rules of your family? Probably not at first, but over time the family choices would become quite clear to visitors because either: (a) they stay for an extended time indicating they agree with and appreciate your family's ideas and practices, or (b) they thank you for the evening and sneak out the back door, never to be seen again.

In either case, you probably agree that knowing some basic elements of culture helps others understand how your family "does the things that they do."

We trust that no one will be throwing dinner rolls at you as you walk into the school cafeteria, but what they will be doing remains an open question. How will you know what is valued and expected of you in the school where you will be spending the majority of your waking hours for the next 10,000 weeks? (Just kidding; the length will vary by program.) And if you find out, why does it matter?

### Why Is School Culture Important?

Have you ever heard the saying, "What you don't know might hurt you?" Well, you may want to replay this phrase as you think about the "unwritten and unspoken rules" of the school where you will complete your student teaching internship. This will be helpful as you understand and find your place in this new family. By focusing on the importance of school culture, it is our intention to give you some points to think about as you prepare for and establish yourself in the student teaching experience. Throughout this guide, we refer to the uniqueness of the student teaching experience. There is no place where the uniqueness of this experience is more apparent than in understanding how it is connected to the culture of your placement school. This sentiment is echoed by Cherubini (2009), who found that the student teaching experience is often marked by tensions relating to the difference between teacher candidates' expectations of school culture and their observed realities. He further noted that this is due mostly to the unique and distinctive circumstances of the student teaching practicum.

For a moment, let's discuss these unique circumstances:

- Student teachers are not paid employees of the school system,
- Student teachers are expected to fulfill the vast majority of the same responsibilities as teachers (within legal parameters),
- Student teachers are acknowledged as part of the staff, but may not be afforded the same privileges,
- Student teachers are students, and
- Student teachers are also viewed as professionals (and expected to act as such).

### School Culture and School Roles Work Together

The student teaching experience typically puts you in a problematic spot where you often straddle the fence (or live in the two worlds) as both student and teacher. In order to hurdle the fence, you must teach for a predetermined amount of time under the supervision of a certified teacher; thus, we now have your new title of **student teacher (ST)**. You don't have the same privileges as your **cooperating teacher (CT)**, who is an experienced teacher selected

to be a mentor, model, and guide, or the other teachers in the building, but you are expected to live by the same rules—whether they are spoken or unspoken. You could say that you are being held to a higher standard because you need to prove yourself, whereas the other teachers and staff already have their seal of approval—a signed employment contract. (However, if you are a lateral entry teacher, you may have other unique circumstances that we address throughout the book, so keep reading.) Since you probably didn't have the luxury of selecting the school (or the culture) of your student teaching experience, you need to take the steps to ascertain information about the school culture and get some immediate on-the-job training as to how to fit in. Specifically, you want to think about the ways in which the school culture impacts the following:

- The school's **mission statement**, which is a formal, short, written statement of the purpose of a company or organization (What are the academic goals? How does the school involve families?)
- The school's roles (What are the various school roles? Who does what job?)
- The school's relationships (What type of decision making is valued? How are conflicts handled?)
- The school's workplace **professionalism**, which refers to adhering to a set of values composed of standards, obligations, formally agreed on codes of conduct, and informal expectations (What can I wear? What is not appropriate to say in the hall?)

Consequently, how you respond to the culture most often sets the tone for how you are received and viewed as a student professional (and possibly a new hire). Of course, you won't be a student teacher forever. Therefore, it is also important to have a holistic perspective of school culture and take note of the impressive research that strongly correlates positive school cultures with:

- increased **student achievement** (an evaluation of performance based on a measurable standard);
- increased student **motivation** (the intrinsic or extrinsic activation of goal-oriented behavior);
- teacher productivity; and
- teacher satisfaction.

This is important to think about as you search for schools where you want to work in the future (we discuss this further in Chapter 9).

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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### Who Are the People in Your Neighborhood?

School cultures may differ, but one thing that all schools have in common is an **organizational structure**. This structure (or neighborhood) is defined as the form of an organization or entities that collaborate and contribute to serve one common goal and is devised to clearly delineate various roles and day-to-day job responsibilities of everyone inside and outside of the school building. However, if we refer back to our earlier discussion, remember that you may need to look deeper and examine the culture of your school in order to discover the unspoken roles and day-to-day tasks of each of its members. Table 1.1 provides you with a basic chart that defines the most common school roles and their corresponding tasks. Additionally, we've given you some top secret information to help give you a complete picture of what it takes to make any school run smoothly. You'll be surprised at how much goes on behind the scenes.

**Table 1.1** The School Directory

| <i>Title</i>   | <i>Role</i>   | <i>Additional Responsibilities (These are generalizations based on our years of experience. Specific roles and responsibilities differ at every school.)</i>  |
|--|---|---|
| Principal  | The leader who provides guidance to teachers, students, staff, and community members (when appropriate)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fortune teller: Predicts the future</li> <li>• Juggler: Juggles many things at one time</li> <li>• Conflict mediator: Has to be able to resolve conflicts and counsel</li> <li>• Magician: Makes things appear out of nowhere</li> <li>• Politician: Makes sure everyone's needs are being voiced</li> </ul>   |
| Assistant Principal  | Assists the principal in the general governance and leadership of a school  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational researcher: Conducts classroom observations</li> <li>• Detective: Solves "Whodunits"</li> <li>• Creative director: Supports and manages curriculum and instruction</li> <li>• Transportation supervisor: Facilitates and organizes the smooth transportation of precious cargo (the students)</li> </ul>   |
| Secretary<br>(VIP = Very Important Person. Secretaries tend to be "in the know" about everything in the school building) | Answers telephone to provide information, take messages, and transfer calls<br><br>May order and dispense school supplies   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurse: Takes care of basic medical needs</li> <li>• Mind reader: Remembers everyone's names and needs</li> <li>• Activities director: Schedules and organizes the school calendar</li> </ul>   |
| Bookkeeper   | Inputs, classifies, and records numerical data to keep financial records complete   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auditor: Makes sure the financial records are in line and well organized</li> </ul>  |
| Counselor  | <p>Counsels individuals to help them understand and overcome personal, social, and/or behavioral problems affecting their educational or vocational situation</p> <p>Maintains accurate and complete student records as required by laws, district policies, and administrative regulations</p> <p>Confers with parents or guardians, teachers, other counselors, and administrators to resolve students' behavioral, academic, and other problems</p> <p>Meets with parents and guardians to discuss their children's progress and to determine their priorities for their children and their resource needs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social worker: Helps children or families who are experiencing a crisis (especially if the school does not have a full-time social worker)</li> <li>• Testing consultant: Organizes, coordinates, and supports the myriad assessments that kids have to take</li> <li>• Trainer: Ensures that teachers are trained in new test administrations</li> <li>• Tour guide: Gives tours to prospective families</li> </ul> |

| Title  | Role  | <i>Additional Responsibilities (These are generalizations based on our years of experience. Specific roles and responsibilities differ at every school.)</i>   |
|--|---|--|
| Teacher (includes teaching assistants)   | <p>Establishes and enforces rules for behavior and procedures for maintaining order among the students for whom they are responsible</p> <p>Observes and evaluates students' performance, behavior, social development, and physical health</p> <p>Prepares materials and classrooms for class activities</p> <p>Adapts teaching methods and instructional materials to meet students' varying needs and interests</p> <p>Plans and conducts activities to create a balanced program of instruction, demonstration, and work time that provides students with opportunities to observe, question, and investigate</p> <p>Instructs students individually and in groups using various teaching methods, such as lectures, discussions, and demonstrations</p> <p>Establishes clear objectives for all lessons, units, and projects, and communicates those objectives to students</p> <p>Assigns and grades classwork and homework</p> <p>Reads books to entire classes or small groups</p> <p>Prepares, administers, and grades tests and assignments in order to evaluate students' progress</p> <p>Confers with parents or guardians, teachers, counselors, and administrators in order to resolve students' behavioral and academic problems</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurse: Takes care of basic medical needs</li> <li>• Social worker: May be called on to help children or families who are experiencing a crisis</li> <li>• Event planner: Plans special projects, birthdays, coordinates assemblies, etc.</li> <li>• Editor: Checks lots of homework; helps students revise and edit their work</li> <li>• Lobbyist: Lobbies for the needs of the students, the school, and themselves</li> <li>• Sociologist: Carefully studies the behaviors of kids and how they form relationships (this helps teachers understand cooperative learning and playground behavior)</li> <li>• Judge: Has to decide and enforce consequences</li> </ul> |
| Cafeteria manager (VIP—if you are really nice to the cafeteria manager, you might be | Determines production schedules and staff requirements necessary to ensure timely delivery of services  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event planner: Coordinates lunches for special occasions, and may need to rearrange the entire lunch schedule to accommodate special school functions</li> </ul>  |

(Continued)

**Table 1.1** (Continued)

| <i>Title</i>  | <i>Role</i>  | <i>Additional Responsibilities (These are generalizations based on our years of experience. Specific roles and responsibilities differ at every school.)</i>  |
|---|--|---|
| able to get the cookies that come right out of the oven)  | Estimates amounts and costs of required supplies, such as food<br>Inspects supplies, equipment, and work areas to ensure compliance with established standards                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health inspector: Serves healthy meals and ensures that the workspace is in top shape</li> </ul>   |
| Custodial staff (VIP—never overlook the knowledge of a well-informed custodian; plus, a custodian probably has the keys to the supply closet where the extra paper is kept) | Keeps the school building clean and in orderly working condition<br>Inspects supplies, equipment, and work areas to ensure compliance with established standards                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspector: Makes recommendations to the administration for new products and designs to make the building more efficient, and ensures that the facilities are in working order</li> <li>• Security specialist: Secures and protects the building</li> </ul> |
| Community (While not on the payroll, no one can dispute the fact that neighboring communities are a part of a school's organizational structure)                            | Community members and activists work in the community to create positive social change in the school and surrounding the school, helping communities come together to solve problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundraiser: Helps to raise money for school needs</li> <li>• Writer: Writes countless letters, articles, and speeches for causes that he or she supports</li> <li>• Visionary: Works for the vision of equal justice and social change</li> </ul>          |



So, perhaps it really does take a village (or maybe a small army) of dedicated professionals to run a school. Now, what is your role in this army? The decision is totally up to you. It has often been said that student teaching is like a long job interview. Even if you do not want to be employed in that school, you will eventually want a job teaching in somebody's school, and you'll need a reference. You can jump in and work for the greater good, or you can choose to stand on the sidelines and watch from afar (we do not recommend the latter). Set your sights on being a part of the team, not just in your cooperating teacher's classroom but in other aspects of the school as well. As you work toward being a team player, it is equally important to understand the legal and ethical issues that impact your profession.

## LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

In many aspects of education, the impact of laws has intensified since the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954. It is clear that laws have substantial implications on teacher preparation and practice. For example, based on state teaching qualifications and

regulations, you spent several years in school working toward your teaching certification. Directly and indirectly, laws influence the learning environment for children and for the adults who teach them. Moreover, whether you agree or disagree with the current educational laws (and policies), realize that as a teacher they shape what you can and cannot do within the educational environment.

## Definitions of Important Terms

Interestingly, we found that although there are a few (relatively minor) laws dealing with student teachers, overall, the majority of the legal problems that apply to student teachers are the same ones that affect the entire profession. So, our conversations in this section largely pertain to general **legal** (concerning the protections that laws or regulations provide) and **ethical** (concerning what is moral or right) issues in teaching. Any good lawyer advises that you can't begin until everyone has all of the facts, so let's get on the same page with the terms and definitions that we use throughout this guide.

- *Legal* (lee-guhl), adjective: Permitted by law; of or pertaining to law; connected with the law or its administration; appointed, established, or authorized by law; deriving authority from law.
- *Law* (law), noun: A system of rules enforced through a set of institutions. It shapes politics, economics, and society in numerous ways and serves as a primary social mediator of relations between people. Additionally, the word applies to any written rule or collection of rules prescribed under the authority of the state or nation, as by the people in its constitution.
- *Ethics* (eth-iks), noun: The rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or the members of a profession.
- *Ethical* (eth-i-kuhl), adjective: Concerning a set of principles of conduct or a theory or system of moral values.
- *Issue* (ish-oo), noun: Any matter of dispute in a legal controversy or lawsuit.

## Legal Versus Ethical

Now that we've presented the definitions of the above terms, we'd like to spend a moment discussing the distinct differences. It is often the case that people tend to use words like *legal* (or *the law*) and *ethical* (or *ethics*) interchangeably, but they are in fact quite different. They are separate concepts and are not dependent on each other. Laws are enacted by an authority, whereas ethics attempts to determine morals. Ethical issues have no force of law to uphold them, but they can affect the society around you. However, depending on the law, what is legal may also be construed as unethical (e.g., slavery).

Most licensing, professional institutions prescribe ethical principles with the expectation that their members adhere to those standards. This is most often a direct result of the culture of the professional community. In this example, violations of the ethical culture are not criminally actionable, but you can be penalized and/or even expelled from the organization according to the contract you signed. Simply put, don't break the law and don't act in an unethical manner. A violation of either the law or school ethics will more than likely result in losing your job. We address some of the most common ethical violations in the "Workplace Professionalism" section below, but first let's review some legal history specific to the field of education.

## A History Lesson

Here are some landmark decisions that affected teaching. It is important to take this brief journey, as the decisions of these cases shaped the teaching profession. In an effort not to



bore you with legal jargon, we present this information in a handy reference chart. Table 1.2 summarizes some of these historic cases and explains how they may affect your day-to-day teaching experiences. Of course, this list is not inclusive of every key decision but highlights major ones in the educational field.

**Table 1.2** Landmark Education Cases

| <i>Landmark Case</i>   | <i>Why It Matters to You</i>   | <i>What You Should Do</i>   |
|--|--|---|
| <p><i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> (1954)</p> <p>Issue: Should Blacks and Whites receive an education integrated with or separate from each other?</p> <p>The U.S. Supreme Court declared that state laws establishing separate public schools for Black and White students and denying Black children equal educational opportunities are unconstitutional. Chief Justice Warren said the Court concluded that in the United States “the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”</p>   | <p>While some critics argued that the Brown decision did more to help other institutions and left the schools largely where they were in 1954, others believe that the spirit of the law moved people to serve as catalysts for social justice and change. It helped to shed light on the things that you can change within your own classroom, school system, and state.</p>  | <p>The issues surrounding equity in the schools are very large (achievement gaps, disproportionate funding that relies on property taxation, teacher quality, etc.), and many of these issues are out of the hands of teachers, but you can make a difference.</p> <p>Make a pledge to be an advocate for the students in your class. Work through your local teacher associations to say the things that some of your students and their families cannot.</p> <p>Do the hard work of making high-quality education nonnegotiable for all students, regardless of race, gender, or creed.</p> |
| <p><i>Florence County School District Four v. Carter</i> (1993)</p> <p>IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) (1990)</p> <p>Issue: Should public schools be held accountable for teaching children with exceptionalities and disabilities?</p> <p>Shannon Carter had dyslexia, which compromised her school performance. In desperation, her parents placed her in a private school for disabled children, where she jumped several grade levels within a few years and graduated reading on grade level. The Carters then sued the school system for the private school tuition they’d paid. At the time, the law limited the school choice of parents with disabled children to state-approved schools. In this case, however, the court ruled that the school system failed to provide an “appropriate public education.”</p> | <p>Children who have disabilities and/or exceptionalities in your classroom are your responsibility, regardless of any additional staff working to support and facilitate their education.</p> <p>If they are in your class, you must work to design instructional strategies to meet their needs.</p> <p>Every local education agency (LEA) has a method for identifying and supporting children with exceptionalities.</p> | <p>What you should do if you suspect that a child has an exceptionality: Talk to your CT.</p> <p>Ask about the process for identification.</p> <p>Observe the child.</p> <p>Take detailed and objective notes.</p> <p>Revisit your textbooks (or consult new books) that focus on strategies for working with children with special needs.</p>  |

| <i>Landmark Case</i>   | <i>Why It Matters to You</i>  | <i>What You Should Do</i>  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. The act has been reauthorized and amended a number of times, most recently in December of 2004.</p> <p>Other documents often associated with this law include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, especially Section 504); Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) (PL 94-142); Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE); Individualized Education Program (IEP) (PL 99-142); Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).</p>   |   |  |
| <p><i>Norwalk Teachers' Association v. Board of Education</i> (1951)</p> <p>Issue: Do teachers have the right to organize and/or strike? Should the Board of Education recognize the Teachers' Association as the bargaining agent? Are arbitration or mediation acceptable methods?</p> <p>Dispute over salaries involving stalwart negotiations between the Teachers' Association and the Board of Education led to a legal decision that prohibited public employees' method of conflict resolution. (It's important not to confuse striking with protesting. Striking is leaving work or stopping work as a coercive measure, whereas protesting is making a formal declaration of disapproval or objection; both can involve a concerned person, group, or organization.) The court held that since government is established by and run for all people (not for the benefit of any one person or group), to strike is a contradiction. A strike by public employees is in effect a strike against the government and hence goes against public policy.</p> | <p>It is a given that during your long, happy career as a teacher, you might have a dispute with someone else in the organization. If and when this happens, be glad that you can go to your local or national teacher association. This law helped to support the creation of local, state, and national teacher organizations as well as solidify their place in aiding teachers through myriad issues.</p> | <p>Teacher associations work hard on your behalf. Their roles include (but are not limited to) grassroots efforts involving collective bargaining for better pay, workloads, and working conditions; and they use negotiations, arbitrations, and mediation to achieve their purposes. But in order to take advantage of all that these organizations have to offer, there are some things that you have to do:</p> <p>Find out more about teacher organizations, associations, and unions.</p> <p>Locate your local, state, and national representatives.</p> <p>Decide which organization is best for you.</p> |
| <p><i>New Jersey v. T.L.O.</i> (1985)</p> <p>Issue: Can schools search students' possessions?</p>  | <p>The assistant principal probably looks back on that search and seizure and is thankful that there was</p>  | <p>If you have a suspicion that a student has done something or is in possession of something</p>  |

(Continued)

Table 1.2 (Continued)

| <i>Landmark Case</i>  | <i>Why It Matters to You</i>  | <i>What You Should Do</i>   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>T.L.O. was 14 years old at the time that she was caught smoking cigarettes in a public school bathroom. When she denied the accusation, the assistant principal demanded to see the contents of her purse. Inside he found not only a pack of cigarettes, but rolling papers, marijuana, and a list of names of students who owed her money. T.L.O. was later charged with drug dealing. Her family argued that the school was unlawful in their search of T.L.O.'s property. However, the U.S. Supreme Court stated that searches and seizures may be conducted by school officials based on "reasonable suspicion."</p>  | <p>enough evidence to make a case, because without it, he would have lost his job. The moral to this story is, make sure that you have a good reason to search a student's locker, person, book bag, clothes, etc. Your suspicion of "Well, she just looked guilty" will not cut it.</p>                                      | <p>harmful, take the following precautions:</p> <p>Notify the school building administration immediately.</p> <p>If it is not an emergency, make sure to document and date everything that you notice.</p>  |
| <p><i>Tinker v. Des Moines</i> (1969)</p> <p>Issue: Do students have First Amendment protection at school?</p> <p>To protest the Vietnam War, Mary Beth Tinker and her brother wore black armbands to school. Fearing a disruption, the administration prohibited wearing such armbands. The Tinkers were removed from school when they failed to comply, but the Supreme Court ruled that their actions were protected by the First Amendment. The court's 7-to-2 decision held that the First Amendment applied to public schools, and that administrators have to demonstrate constitutionally valid reasons for any specific regulation of speech in the classroom. As Justice Fortas put it, "In order for school officials to justify censoring speech, they must be able to show that [their] action was caused by something more than a mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompanies an unpopular viewpoint."</p> | <p>Yes, students do have rights that are protected under the Constitution! They have a right not only to think differently than you, but to voice their opinions as well. Moreover, it is your responsibility as a teacher to encourage your students to engage in conversation that is supportive of diverse viewpoints.</p> | <p>How can you support this decision in your classroom? Get to know your students and find out what makes them special.</p> <p>Offer multiple ways for students to share their thoughts and ideas (suggestion box, community meeting, webcast, etc.).</p> <p>Incorporate debate techniques as a regular part of your instruction.</p> |
| <p><i>Title IX of the Education Amendments</i> (1972)</p> <p>Issue: Should institutions that limit gender equality receive federal funds?</p>   | <p>If nothing else, this law should make you think twice about how you work toward gender equality in your classroom (and school).</p>  | <p>Ask yourself these questions:</p> <p>Do I have any gender biases that I need to face and change in order to be a better teacher?</p>   |

| <i>Landmark Case</i>   | <i>Why It Matters to You</i>   | <i>What You Should Do</i>   |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Although Title IX is best known for its impact on high school and collegiate athletics, the original statute made no explicit mention of sports. Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 says that any institution receiving federal funding may not discriminate against anyone based on gender. The legislation covers all educational activities and complaints under Title IX alleging discrimination in fields such as science and math education and in other aspects of academic life, such as access to health care and dormitory facilities. It also applies to other extracurricular activities, including school band and clubs; however, social fraternities and sororities, sex-specific youth clubs (Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts) are specifically exempt from Title IX requirements.</p>   |  | <p>Do I equally call on all of my students?</p> <p>Does my class/school offer academic opportunities for underrepresented populations?</p>  |
| <p><i>The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (PL 93-247) (1974)</i></p> <p>Issue: Should states be mandated to provide funding for the prevention of the welfare of children?</p> <p>This key federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect provides federal funding to states in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities; it also provides grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations for demonstration programs and projects. All 50 states have passed some type of mandatory legislation that requires certain professionals and institutions to report suspected child abuse. These include (but are not limited to) health care providers, mental health care providers, teachers and other school personnel, social workers, day care providers, and law enforcement personnel. The act, originally passed in 1974, has been amended several times and was most recently amended and reauthorized on June 25, 2003, by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003 (P.L.108-36).</p> | <p>This one is a no-brainer—it is your legal and ethical responsibility as a teacher to report any suspected abuse of a child. This extends not only to children who are in your classroom but also to others who attend the school.</p> | <p>If you have a suspicion it is best to do the following: Take your concerns to your CT, administrator, school counselor, or school social worker. Document and date everything that you notice.</p> |

Source: United States Courts, <http://www.uscourts.gov/EducationalResources/ConstitutionResources/LegalLandmarks/LandmarkSupremeCourtCasesAboutStudents.aspx>

## WORKPLACE PROFESSIONALISM

So far in this chapter, we walked you through an overview of school culture and its importance to your role as a student teacher, unmasked the hidden roles of school professionals, and given you an overview (or maybe a review) of the major legal and ethical issues involved in teaching. Never is an understanding of these concepts more important than when it comes to professionalism. This term is defined as the ability to adhere to a set of values that are composed of standards, obligations, formally agreed on codes of conduct, and informal expectations. Think about your attire, how you carry yourself, your attitude, and how you interact with others. Typically, these issues revolve around a common understanding (sometimes unspoken, but if you're lucky, spoken) about expectations.

### Workplace Rules

The teaching profession may appear to be a more relaxed environment than corporate America (think starched white collars, pearls, neckties, business suits, wing tips and high heels), however, it isn't as laid back as the constant images we see of workplace environments like Google, Amazon, and Yahoo. Sure, it would be nice to bring your dog to work every day, play Ping-Pong to relieve stress and encourage creativity, or not have to worry about leaving your Yoga class to be bothered by work (since you can work when you want to—and still get PAID); but this is the real world. It doesn't really matter whether or not these types of workplace environments really exist, because at the end of the day, that is not the reality of our profession (nor is it the reality of most professions). In the real world, the rules regarding what you can and cannot do at work (if you want to keep your job) are very clear. Conducted in 2013 by Polk-Lepson, a custom marketing research firm, a nationwide study on the state of professionalism in the workplace revealed nothing new, yet confirmed EVERYTHING that you probably already suspected. The study focused largely on employer's experiences with new college graduates and the professionalism (or lack thereof) that was exhibited by these employees. A nationwide sample of 401 human resource professionals was surveyed via an online questionnaire that also included open-ended response options. Now, it may seem as though this conversation is a bit premature (since you have yet to graduate); however, we know good information when we see it, and as your "School Culture Coaches" we feel compelled to give you the scoop in advance (you'll thank us later). Here are the highlights of that study:

**Table 1.3** State of Professionalism

| <i>State of Professionalism</i>   |                                     |   |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Employers feel that . . .</i>  | <i>Percentage (%)</i>               | <i>What Can I Do to Be Successful?</i>  |
| Less than 50% of new employees exhibit professionalism in their first year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The data trends show that no improvements were made during the four years of the survey administration.</li> </ul> | 48.9%<br>(Strongly Agree/<br>Agree) | Define professionalism*<br><br>While the percentage of respondents identifying each quality varies from year to year, the qualities that are consistently mentioned remain constant. To be a professional in the workplace, you should demonstrate the following qualities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work until a task is completed competently</li> <li>Indicate interpersonal skills, including civility</li> </ul> |

| <i>Employers feel that . . .</i>  | <i>Percentage (%)</i>                        | <i>What Can I Do to Be Successful?</i>   |
|---|--|--|
| <p>There is a decrease in the number of new employees demonstrating professionalism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This percentage is the highest it has been in the four years of data collection.</li> </ul>   | <p>35.9%<br/>(Strongly Agree/<br/>Agree)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect appropriate appearance</li> <li>Exhibit punctuality and regular attendance</li> <li>Evidence appropriate communication skills (written and oral)</li> <li>Express honesty</li> <li>Reveal focus/attentiveness</li> </ul> <p>*Interestingly, in this definition, few respondents mentioned expertise in one's field. Most likely, the assumption is that this is an expected quality of a professional.</p>  |
| <p>There is an increase in the number of new employees exhibiting a sense of entitlement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A recurring theme in the research is the sense of entitlement that new hires demonstrate. The way parents raised their children is most often seen as the reason for new employees feeling entitled (34.5%). Related to this, another 16.2% of the respondents believe new employees exhibiting a sense of entitlement were overly coddled and excessively praised. Lastly, some (15.8%) feel that the current education system may be the culprit. As one example offered, "Students have learned that they can receive acceptable grades without necessarily putting in the effort that should be required to earn those grades. Any teacher who has given a student the opportunity to get extra credit to improve a grade has contributed to a sense that anyone can receive a reward without putting in the effort."</li> </ul> | <p>52.9%<br/>(Strongly Agree/<br/>Agree)</p> | <p>Demonstrate a sense of humility, not entitlement</p> <p>Respondents commented that new job applicants feel that they have paid their dues by graduating from college. While you certainly have the right to feel joyous about graduating from college, it is wise to remember that the undergraduate degree is only a start. It is a prerequisite for eligibility for many of today's jobs. The degree entitles you to the opportunity to compete with others for the same job. An attitude that works every time is "no one owes you anything; work hard to earn the reward."</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an increase in IT etiquette problems. Abuses of information technology continue to plague the workplace. IT abuses have increased over the past five years. It is estimated that, on the average, half of all new college graduate employees (48.8%) abuse IT in some way.</li> </ul>   | <p>50.1%<br/>(Strongly Agree/<br/>Agree)</p> | <p>Control your on-the-job use of technology</p> <p>Abuse of technology is now common in the workplace, and other studies validate that people feel lost without their cell phones. Nevertheless, it is time to be weaned from the addiction of constantly having to be in contact with others via technology. Twittering or checking Facebook are activities that do not belong on the job (especially when you have 20 to 25 eager children waiting for you). Additionally, with job-related activities, when you are sending an email or text, ask yourself if a direct conversation with the person isn't more appropriate. The convenience of technology often prompts us to use it when other means of communication are better or more effective.</p> |

(Continued)

**Table 1.3** (Continued)

| <i>Employers feel that . . .</i>   | <i>Percentage (%)</i>               | <i>What Can I Do to Be Successful?</i>  |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| <p>There has been a negative change in the work ethic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On this measure, 44.6% of the respondents indicate the work ethic is worse. The decline in the work ethic is attributed to unprofessional characteristics and attire/appearance (keep reading for more information).</li> </ul>  | 44.6%<br>(Strongly Agree/<br>Agree) | <p>Commit to producing quality work.</p> <p>Close to half of the respondents feel the work ethic in new employees has deteriorated. When asked why they believe this, respondents reply that employees take a casual attitude toward their work and are willing to do work that is less than professional quality. The education system may have to take some blame for this. Giving students extensions on deadlines for assignments and not taking the time and effort to demand quality work may promote the mistaken belief that this is acceptable behavior. When students receive good grades for mediocre work, they can develop an inflated image of their abilities and talents. It then becomes too easy to transfer these learned behaviors to the job. So, even though you want to be upset at your professors for holding true to deadlines and giving you the grades that you <b>EARN</b>, it really does help you in the long run.</p> <p>Remember that appearance <b>DOES</b> matter.</p> <p>It is important to recognize that what was acceptable or the norm in college does not necessarily apply to the workplace. The impact of appearance goes beyond affecting the likelihood of getting hired; the study also indicates that it has an impact on the perception of one's competence on the job.</p> |
| <p><b><i>Unprofessional Characteristics</i></b></p> <p>These behaviors were rated high on the list of frequent offenses and were cited as the most common causes to "let go" or "not ask to return" (fire) new college graduates.</p>  |                                     |   |
| <i>Indicator</i>   | <i>Percentage (%)</i>               |   |
| Absenteeism/Punctuality  | 57.9%                               |   |
| <p>Incompetent/poor performance/poor work quality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Willingness to do work that is less than professional quality</li> <li>Not self-driven or motivated</li> <li>Not understanding the meaning/value of hard work</li> </ul>   | 45.5%                               |   |
| <p>IT Etiquette:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text messaging at inappropriate times</li> <li>Inappropriate use of Internet</li> <li>Excessive Internet and cell phone usage for personal calls</li> <li>Text messaging/email instead of face-to-face conversation</li> </ul>   | 16.3%                               |   |
| Time Management/failure to meet deadlines  | 14.6%                               |   |
| Arrogant/lack of respect/rude to coworkers   | 14.3%                               |   |
| <p><b><i>Impact of Attire/Appearance on Perception of Competence</i></b></p> <p>Your appearance <b>CAN</b> (and most often <b>DOES</b>) have an effect on others' perceptions of an employee's ability to perform job requirements. Over half (58.9%) of the survey respondents noted that they Strongly Agree or Agree that your attire/appearance has an impact on perception of competence. Below are a few of the frequently mentioned issues that respondents feel impact perception of competence.</p> |                                     |   |

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Personal Hygiene                   | 90.8%          |
| Attire/dress                       | 74.8%          |
| Facial piercings (other than ears) | 74.3%          |
| Inappropriate footwear             | 70.8%          |
| Visible tattoos                    | 60.6%          |
| Unnatural hair color               | 39.2%          |

Source: Adapted from Polk-Lepson Research Group. (2013). York: Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania.

We hope that by offering this overview, we have clarified the characteristics of professional and unprofessional behaviors. With the state of professionalism in the workplace not improving, candidates who understand and display professionalism have significant advantages over those who do not. The qualities that characterize a professional are straightforward. However, the challenge is that many of the behaviors and attitudes that epitomize unprofessionalism (as discussed above) are a part of our daily lives and in most cases are culturally accepted. Therefore, your job (along with all of the other things that you have to do) is to recognize the culture of your school and act accordingly.

Remember, culture in the workplace may have less to do with art, music, and literature than with shared belief systems, expected effort, and behavior expectations. This culture definitely includes such things as dress codes, socialization expectations, how the group feels about attendance, work output, problem solving, and so on.

Additionally, these expectations are also closely linked to *principles of professional ethics*, which are defined as “the norms, values and principles that should govern the professional conduct of a teacher” (Campbell, p. 29). Now, before you begin the internship, we have to make certain that you don’t overlook some obvious details that, if not observed, might jeopardize the first impressions you make. We want to ensure that you don’t risk making a negative impression that can hurt your career, but we certainly don’t want this to turn into a boring review section of dos and don’ts; so, we’d like to offer a fresh perspective on the tried-and-true rules.

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

### What to Wear

It has been a long time since teachers dressed in their Sunday best to teach in a school. Nowadays, most schools are pretty casual, which can sometimes present a problem. With the freedom of being able to dress casually comes the responsibility of being able to maintain a professional work environment. Everything is not for everybody (even if it is the latest fad) and certain clothing is best left in your closet (even if your friend or mother tells you that you look fabulous

in it). Let’s be honest. Do your coworkers really need to see you in tight pants (yes, guys, this is for you, too), a miniskirt, or plunging neckline? Come on! Not only does it look unprofessional, it is inappropriate. Moreover, sweats or overly baggy pants and a T-shirt that says, “Where’s the Party?” or “I Love Beer” also shouldn’t be worn at your job. What you wear to work makes an individual statement about you that communicates your professionalism to others. Wearing

(Continued)



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an outfit to work that you would wear to a nightclub on Friday night or for a weekend stroll at the beach suggests that your free time is more important than or indistinguishable from your job.

Be mindful of the dress code that the school culture dictates in the building. If one hasn't been presented to you, take your clues from the other teachers (or just ask). If your CT wears a suit every day, that doesn't necessarily mean you have to, but it most likely means that you

should dress nicely. Now we're not saying that you need to go out and spend a lot of money on a new wardrobe. Some simple understated pieces can carry you through the semester. Add flair with your personality, not with your wardrobe. You always hear "Dress for success" and "Dress for the job you want, not the job you have." As cheesy as those adages may sound, they couldn't be truer. Save your casual dress for when you've got the job. Until that time—dress as if you are interviewing for a job.

### Top 10 Rules of Conduct

These are statements you should *never* hear during your student teaching experience:

1. "You left your Facebook page up for the kids to read."

*Don't use the school day to advance your personal activities.*

2. "Can you please take that cell phone call outside?"

*Put your phone on silent or vibrate when you come into the building.*

3. "Are you dating my mom?"

*Keep your relationships with your students and their families on a professional level.*

4. "Where is your lesson plan?"

*Always be prepared.*

5. "You overslept again?"

*Always be punctual.*

6. "Did you forget to proofread this before you sent it home?"

*Go beyond spell check when using written communication (proofread it yourself or ask your CT for help).*

7. "Did you hear about Mr. Jones and Mrs. Kelly?"

*Don't feed into the rumor mill. This extends to verbalizing generalizations about children based on prior experiences with their siblings or family members.*

8. "My husband heard your name on the police scanner on Saturday."

*Don't break any laws.*

9. "My 10-year-old daughter has that shirt."

*Dress professionally.*

10. "I'm sorry, I thought that you were the custodian."

*Know all of the players.*

### The Doctor Is In . . .

*Dear Doc,*

*My CT's team member is so rude. It's gotten to the point that I just have stopped trying to be nice. My CT just seems to know how to deal. They plan and teach a lot together, so*

*it's not like I can stay away from him. I don't want to blow my top, but I am on the edge.*

*Sincerely,*

*HELP!*

Dear HELP,

I'm glad you sought out my advice before you lost your temper. It seems as though you need to take a page from your CT's book of cool. He obviously has some practice when it comes to working with lots of different people. While I can't tell you what to say, I can offer some tips to help you focus on what matters most.

- Look for the positive

- Strive to understand and value other people's opinions and differences
- Listen carefully
- Try not to interrupt
- Don't overreact (much easier to say than to do)
- Know your boundaries/limits
- When in doubt . . . Smile

Sincerely,

Doc

According to a Yahoo! Hot Jobs and Banana Republic survey (2007), 82% of Human Resources (HR) managers and directors agree that the way you dress directly affects the prospect of getting hired, retaining your position, and/or getting a promotion.

## Transitioning Into Your New Environment

We know that you have a lot on your plate right now, but forgetting to **transition** (moving from one thing to another) into the school culture could be detrimental to your success as a student professional. Transitions are important. You never ask your students to move from one activity to another without planning for a transition, so why is it any different for you? You can make a successful transition by better understanding how all elements work together; this helps connect you to the school community. The alternative to this adaptation inevitably results in the impression that you really don't want to get to know (or care about) your new community—you stick out like a sore thumb! When you link transitioning ideas into the phase-in schedule dictated by your teacher licensing and/or certification program, also referred to as your **teacher education program (TEP)**, the ideas support your student teaching experience. We provide additional activities on this topic in the “Extra Credit” section below (these are most helpful if your internship site is unfamiliar or if you've had limited experience at your placement site).



## FINAL THOUGHTS

You are now armed with important information to help you get started on your student teaching journey. As you begin your internship, consider how school culture and organizational structure work together. They really go hand in hand to make your placement unique. The outcome of the relationship between the school culture and the organization determines many spoken and unspoken rules regarding workplace professionalism. Yet some rules are the direct result of legal policies. Now that you understand the concepts, it's time to put your best foot forward. In the next chapter, we introduce you to your CT, so go out, take what you've learned, and make your first impression the best.

## BULLETIN BOARD

### Welcome to Student Teaching: The Open House

#### School Culture

School culture refers to a school's shared beliefs, customs, and behaviors. School cultures are typically exemplified by unspoken or unwritten rules. These unwritten rules often reflect the concerns and interests of the school and its members. The student teaching experience is unique, and it is important for you to understand a school's culture in order to be able to transition into a successful experience.



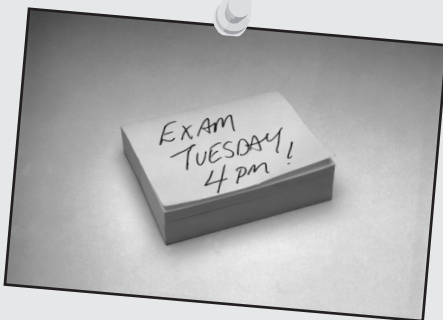
School culture is important.

#### Legal and Ethical Issues

Many landmark, historic cases helped to shape the way that we teach and interact with students, staff, and administration in schools. It is important for you as a teacher to know the difference between the legal and ethical responsibilities of the profession.

#### Organizational Structure

Every school has an organizational structure. Often the employees do much more than their job title indicates. It is important to understand the different school roles, how they work together, and how you can best adapt to those roles. Take the time in the beginning of your internship to transition into your new surroundings.



#### Workplace Professionalism

Always remember that professionalism is defined as a set of characteristics that are determined by a culture (in this case, your school's culture). Take this into account as you make appropriate etiquette choices, as the right decisions can make a great first (and last) impression.

## EXTRA CREDIT

**Read About It***School Culture*

<http://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=e2aiFroKYFU%3D&tabid=4398>

<http://usca.edu/essays/vol122004/hinde.pdf>

*Legal and Ethical Issues*

<http://www.streetlaw.org/en/landmark.aspx>

[http://www.uscourts.gov/outreach/resources/landmark\\_studentcases.htm](http://www.uscourts.gov/outreach/resources/landmark_studentcases.htm)

<http://everything2.com/title/Important+Landmark+Cases+in+Educational+Law>

<http://www.nea.org>—National Education Association’s (NEA) Code of Ethics for the Education Profession

*Workplace Professionalism*

<http://www.ycp.edu/offices-and-services/academic-services/center-for-professional-excellence/2013-professionalism-study>

<http://investor.yahoo.net/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=261265>—Are You Primed for a Promotion? Check Your Wardrobe First

**Think About It***Understanding School Culture*

The following section includes an overview from a school that conscientiously connected its school culture and mission statements to its school activities. The artifact is from the Academy of the Pacific Rim charter school (<http://www.pacrim.org>), whose mission “is to empower urban students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds to achieve their full intellectual and social potential by combining the best of the East—high standards, discipline and character education—with the best of the West—a commitment to individualism, creativity and diversity.” Review the following artifact and ask yourself the questions that are listed at the end:

**Artifact:**

A middle school begins each day by publicly honoring a student who has demonstrated a *gambatte* spirit. This word, taken from Japanese education, is used to explain when a person’s opportunity is not due to luck or happenstance, but to their effort, diligence, and perseverance. In this school, students participate in daily community meetings, wear student uniforms, and enroll in Mandarin Chinese language classes beginning in the seventh grade. Students also participate in cleaning the school and their classrooms. Students and staff clean desks, sweep floors, take out the trash, sweep stairs, clean bathrooms, and pick up trash around the grounds of the school. In addition to the progress report, a journal is sent home with each student at the end of each week outlining major events that have gone on at the school. It also contains information about student achievement and reminders to parents of upcoming events. Parents/guardians must sign the Reply Form every week to indicate that they have read the journal and have seen their child’s progress report. The Reply Form also provides space for comments or questions for teachers and/or advisors. Families are encouraged to call or email teachers or staff when questions or concerns arise.

**Questions:**

- What values and expectations are respected at this school?
- How has the school attempted to communicate these values and expectations to the community (students, staff, faculty, parents, etc.)?

Focus on the above artifact and relate this to your student teaching placement site in order to think about this question: How does your school use expectations, traditions, celebrations, scheduling, and physical space to support and reinforce the culture? Use Table 1.4 as a model to initiate your own school evaluation.

**Table 1.4**

| <i>School Culture Element</i> | <i>Evidence</i>   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Traditions and celebrations   | My school recognizes each child's birthday by announcing his or her name over the PA system and by giving the child a pencil. The birthdays of teachers and staff are posted on the school calendar and are celebrated with a cake in the teachers' lounge at the end of the month. This shows that the school really values and sets aside time to recognize the kids and people who work in the building. |

*Legal and Ethical Issues*

Read this case study and answer the questions that follow it.

**Case Study**

Gail is very excited about beginning her student teaching placement. She is hoping she will receive a job offer in the district (or school) where she is completing her student teaching internship. This also happens to be the same town that she grew up in, as well as the same district where she received her education. In fact, she knows most of the teachers and students in the building and even worked out a transportation schedule with a couple of the teachers in the building who are friends of her older sister. They bring her to school, and her boyfriend picks her up. Because she is saving money for a car and in spite of the long hours during the day, Gail decided that it makes sense for her to keep her job at a restaurant and just switch her shifts to the evenings. Her boss already agreed to the change, and she is confident that she has thought of everything and is prepared for her internship.

As the semester gets under way, Gail's cooperating teacher, Mr. Jones, notices that she doesn't seem to be available to meet as often as he would like. He wants to meet after school in order to plan for the following day or week, but Gail is always rushing out of the school to get to work. Additionally, Gail is observed yawning throughout the day and is constantly sending a student to the lounge to refill her coffee mug. Her lesson planning has dropped off considerably as well, and she just doesn't seem to be prepared to teach.

To add to these issues, Mr. Jones notices other behaviors that concern him. For example, Gail is typically seen talking to her friends (other teachers at the school) while the children are on the playground during recess rather than interacting with the children. When she takes the students to the computer lab, instead of instructing them, she surfs the web. She also has been overheard telling the children that if they don't complete their work, they will not have snack or recess, and she has been caught gossiping about students' families and other teachers at the school. Mr. Jones is very disappointed in her performance thus far. He sees that she has a lot of potential, but he is concerned by her lack of professional ethics.

**Questions:**

1. List some possible reasons to explain Gail's behavior.
2. After reading the National Education Association's Code of Ethics of the Education Profession listed in the "Read About It" section, answer the following question: Does Gail's behavior violate any of the principles? If so, which one(s)?
3. What would you say to Gail if you were Mr. Jones?

Source: Adapted from [www.bigpicture.org](http://www.bigpicture.org). Reprinted from a 2010 article by Ron Wolk, "Education: The Case for Making It Personal." *Educational Leadership*, 67(7), 16–17.

**Try It***What Are the Expectations?*

Use Table 1.5 as a planning tool to outline and understand your CT's expectations and to develop strategies for addressing them during your student teaching internship. The worksheet lists one expectation example, and there are additional spaces for you and your CT to design expectations that may not be on the worksheet. This activity is particularly helpful to complete during the first week of the internship.

**Table 1.5**

| <i>Expectation</i>  | <i>My CT expects me to . . .</i>   | <i>I will do the following . . .</i>   |
|---|--|--|
| Dress attire  | Dress in comfortable clothes that are not too tight or revealing and do not have suggestive language. Follow my CT's recommendation to not wear very high heels, as I will be responsible for taking the kids outside during recess and participating in games with them.<br><br>Fridays are school spirit days and everyone wears the school colors or school T-shirts. | Make sure that I dress appropriately and wear low-heeled shoes (or clean sneakers).<br><br>If necessary, purchase a school T-shirt or see what clothes I have that have the school colors. |
| Time management   |  |  |
| Planning  |  |  |
| Instructional strategies  |  |  |
| Classroom management  |  |  |
| Technology integration  |  |  |
| Exceptional children  |  |  |
| Family involvement  |  |  |
| Professional development  |  |  |
| Extra school duties (staff meetings, curriculum nights, PTA meetings, etc.) |  |  |

*Transition Checklist*

*Sunday:* Get ready for a walk around the block.

- Spend some time before your first day of work thinking about how you will transition into your new surroundings. Start by making a great first impression.
- Write a brief narrative about yourself. It should be four or five sentences. Include information about your interests outside of school, where you are from, your family, your pets, and so on. Make sure to end with how excited you are about being a part of the school community.

*Monday:* Meet the neighbors (school and clerical staff).

- This is no time to be shy. Begin your first week with a smile and a firm handshake.
- Make a special trip to the front office and introduce yourself to all of the office staff.
- Deliver your narrative (via mailboxes) to every staff, faculty, and PTA member.
- Stop by the office of the principal or assistant principal to set up an appointment for Friday.

*Tuesday:* Meet the neighbors (teachers).

- Find out more about the school's mission and professionalism policies and what is valued at the school.
- Ask your CT how the school engages the community, families, and businesses in the goals and objectives of the school.
- Ask a teacher at your grade level the following question: "If testing were not an issue, what would you spend most of your time teaching?"
- Talk to your CT about the school's dress policy. Ask specifically about any dos and don'ts.

*Wednesday:* Meet the neighbors (custodial and cafeteria staff).

- Take the time to celebrate and show your new neighbors that you value their daily contributions.
- Buy a few cards or have your class make a special card or picture for the custodial and cafeteria staff to show your appreciation for all that they do (clear this with your CT first). Present it to them personally (you may have to reintroduce yourself).

*Thursday:* Meet the neighbors (the community).

- With the support of your CT, prepare a letter of introduction to send home with your new students. Don't forget to proofread it before you send it home—better yet, let someone else read it.

*Friday:* Meet the neighbors (administrator/s).

- Ask the following questions during your meeting with the school building administrator/s. This helps you to gain a more substantive understanding about the school culture.
  - What is the mission of the school/district?
  - What type of decision-making structure is valued at the school?
  - How does the school recognize celebrations and traditions?
  - What advice can they offer you?

*Saturday:* R&R (rest and reflect).

- Think about all of the new information that you learned. How does it support your student teaching experience? Are there additional questions that you want to ask? Who has the answers?