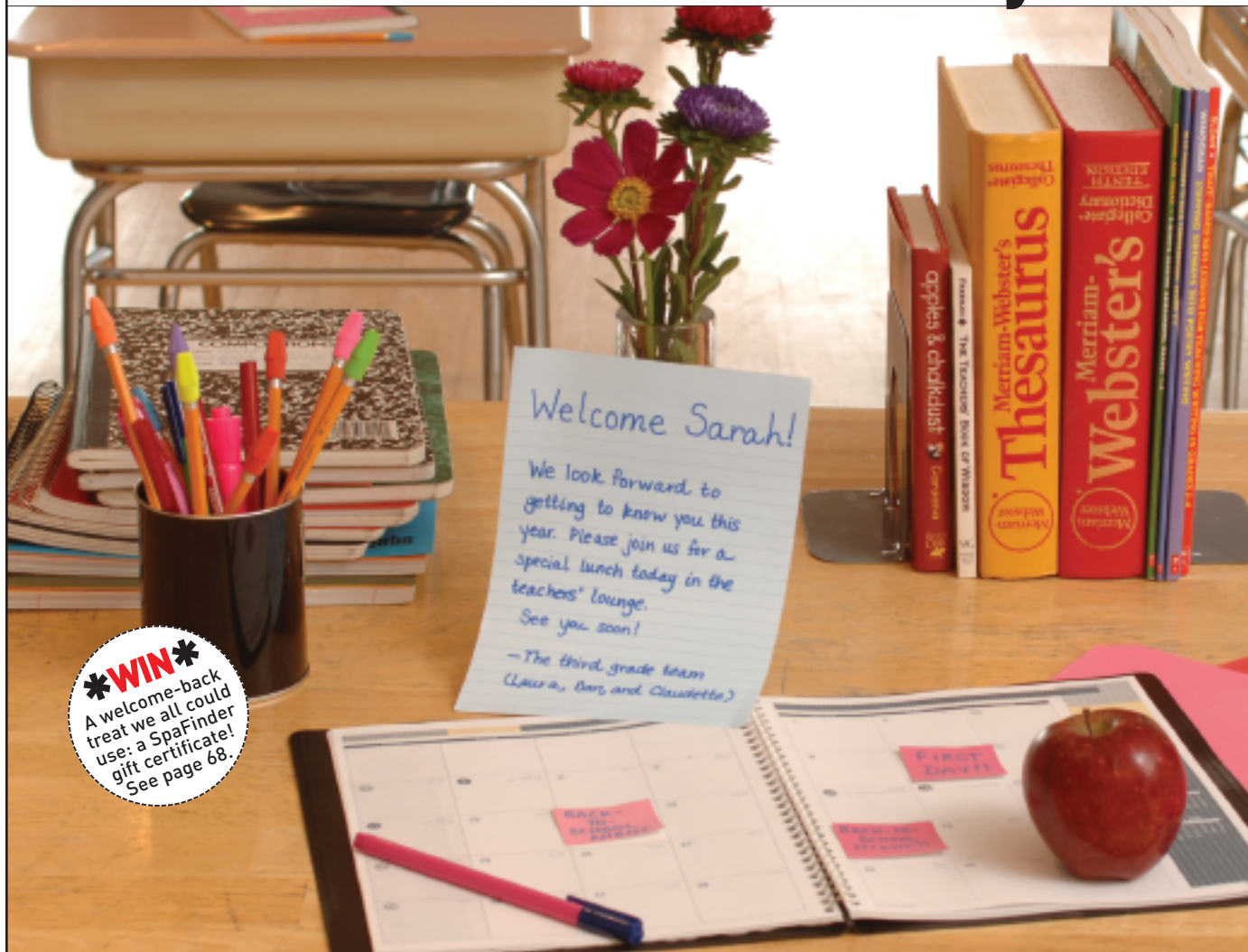


10 ways to...



WIN
A welcome-back treat we all could use: a SpaFinder gift certificate! See page 68.

WELCOME A NEW TEACHER

It's rookie season and the newbies are dazed. Here's how to help them out. **By Jayna Rust**

As a two-year "veteran," I remember well how much a little moral support and a smile can mean for a newly-minted teacher. It kept me going in those first few exhausting, confusing weeks. Building those connections is vital both for new

teachers and for our profession. With so many new teachers leaving after just a few years (over fifty percent!—according to the latest figures), we should all be putting out the welcome mat. Here are some of the ways teachers at my school made me feel welcome—and other inspiring ideas from across the country.

1 Cool Off Before Starting Up

Take advantage of the last few hot days by welcoming new teachers with a pool party. If you don't have your own pool, try an idea from the Hampton City Schools in Hampton, Virginia. As part of their orientation, the district sponsors

a pool party at a local apartment complex. The district gets to use the site for free, and the apartment building gets to host a group of newcomers, who may also be looking for housing.

2 Give a Gift of Appreciation

What better way to show appreciation than with a small gift bag?

The Hampton City Schools give their new teachers a goody bag with discounts and coupons for local stores and restaurants. Get a group of veteran teachers together to brainstorm favorite establishments and then solicit donations. (Craft stores, supermarkets, and coffee shops are >>

10 ways to...

good choices.) Throughout the year, continue to share information on resources for free and low-cost. You know how much they spend setting up their rooms.

3 Listen to Them

"I had a dream that I would have no control and the kids would be running around all over the place," an incoming teacher told mentor Linda Pschoegl. "It's my biggest fear." For the past two years, Pschoegl has been a mentor teacher at Skyview Community Middle School in Oakdale, Minnesota. Before her official duties start, she hosts a dinner at her home for all of Skyview's new staff members. Over the meal, Pschoegl encourages everyone to talk about their worries and hopes for the year. Give new teachers the opportunity to talk about what's on their minds. Most likely they'll appreciate the chance to share.

4 Show Them the Sights

Last year at Thomas Starr King Middle School in Los Angeles, the principal helped teachers get acquainted with the community through a guided bus tour. They saw the feeder elementary schools and local community center and visited markets and stores that represented the different ethnicities of the school's population. To organize your own tour, try asking the local government or police force if they would provide you with a charter bus and host (another L.A. middle school did this). If you aren't able to get a bus, organize a group of knowledgeable veteran teachers with vans and SUVs to show new teachers around.

5 Welcome Their Families

When thinking of ways to make new teachers feel at home, don't forget to include their friends and family members. At Mary Paxton Keeley Elementary School in Columbia, Missouri, the school has a catered BBQ with teachers and their families. Last year, Kelly Green attended her first event. "It was great to get a chance to meet the other teachers before the first day of school," she says. Going to a social function without knowing anyone can be tough on new



And If You're a New Teacher...

Here are three tips for a smooth transition.

■ **GET TO KNOW EVERYONE.** This includes secretaries, custodians, and cooks. They usually work all year long and don't receive the appreciation they deserve!

■ **SKIP THE WATER COOLER.** Schools are notorious for gossip. Don't share anything unless you don't mind everyone knowing.

■ **TALK IT OUT WITH COLLEAGUES.** Try to handle problems with coworkers yourself, before going to the principal.

FROM YOU'VE GOT THE JOB—NOW KEEP IT! T.I.P.S. FOR TACKLING YOUR FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING, BY MARIA CALAMITO-PROTO AND RACHEL JAMES (T.I.P.S., 2004)

teachers. Include guests and you'll have more to talk about in the teachers' lounge once the school year kicks off!

6 Thank Fridays (and New Teachers)

Teachers from Chesterfield Elementary School in Detroit's Chesterfield Township gather once a month for TGIFridays. Invitations are emailed out to the entire staff, giving new teachers the opportunity to meet and socialize with teachers outside of their grade level at a local restaurant. After getting the reservation scoop on one of your favorite restaurants, send out an email to the teachers at your school. You can keep track of RSVPs using an online service such as www.evite.com.

7 Have a Happy Hour

When you get together informally with friends at work, invite a new teacher, as one laugh-loving group from Fairview Elementary School in Columbia, Missouri, likes to do. Members of the Fairview staff frequently head to comedy shows at a local club. If happy hours and comedy aren't your pace, ask first-year teachers along for a museum trip, coffee night, or teatime. Or host a movie night, a favorite activity for the staff at Black

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Vertical
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Mountain School in Golden Valley, Arizona. Give the newbies a chance to know you outside of work.

8 Volunteer Your Expertise

Many public schools have a mentoring program that pays veterans to mentor new teachers. If your school doesn't, you can start a more informal one yourself. For instance, teacher Cathi Hogan volunteered to help out three new colleagues at St. Peter's Catholic School in North St. Paul, Minnesota. Don't shy away from offering your services to the first-year teachers. They may not realize how invaluable a mentor can be.

9 Make Them Newsworthy

In charge of your school's newspaper or parent newsletter? The back-to-school newsletter at St. Ignatius Antioch Elementary School in Cleveland, Ohio, includes a picture of each new staff member as well as a student-conducted interview. The welcome article gives students and staff the opportunity to learn more about new teachers. If your school doesn't have a newsletter, have your class interview new faces—then distribute the write-ups to parents, students in other classes, and teachers' mailboxes.

10 Host a Lunch Club

Toward the end of my first year teaching at Nimitz Middle School in Huntington Park, California, an informal group of us began to take turns bringing in lunch to share. Because our staff was so diverse, we feasted on everything from sushi purchased from Costco to traditionally-prepared Chinese cabbage to homemade enchiladas. It was fun and easy to bond over recipes, delicious food, and professional and personal conversations. As a new teacher, this was the first time I truly felt like a part of the faculty.

Pass around a lunch sign-up sheet and spark the comraderie. You can be the veteran that helps a new teacher begin to love teaching and your school. □

A FIRST-YEAR TEACHER IN 2003–2004, JAYNA RUST TAUGHT EIGHTH GRADERS IN LOS ANGELES. SEND YOUR IDEAS FOR WELCOMING NEW TEACHERS TO INSTRUCTOR@SCHOLASTIC.COM.

2/3 Vertical Right