Reflection Exercises Modified for Aspiring Teachers

This document features modified versions of the reflection exercises from each chapter in the book *First Aid for Teacher Burnout: How You Can Find Peace and Success*. These versions speak more directly to aspiring teachers’ (as opposed to current teachers’) circumstances.

2. Mindset: “My Attitude Is (Only Partly) Everything”

*Reflection Exercises*

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. How will you identify colleagues who are overly negative? What strategies will you enlist to steer clear of (or influence) their negativity?
2. What generally causes you to feel stressed or overwhelmed? When you begin teaching, what strategies will you enlist to guard against burnout? Return to this item after reading the rest of this book to add additional strategies you learn.

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3. Practice replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. Record negative thoughts you sometimes have and pair them with positive alternatives.

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4. What healthy approach to venting will you enlist? Consider where you vent (e.g., to whom) and how you vent.

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5. What unhealthy habits do you have, and what healthy habit or ritual will replace each of these?

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3. Environment: “My Classroom Looks like a Room without Class”

Reflection Exercises

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. Imagine your first classroom. What types of items (e.g., visuals) will you post to best support student learning?
2. Imagine your first classroom. Describe how you will decorate it so it is both refreshing and effective.

3. What room plan will you utilize that facilitates best practice (e.g., cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, non-lecture, etc.)? Draw it below.
4. What mantra or quote will you post for daily encouragement, and where will you post it?

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5. What types of evidence of your impact will you display in your classroom?

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6. Describe three systems you will employ to keep your classroom clean, orderly, and smooth-running.

A. __________________________________________________________________________
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B. __________________________________________________________________________
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C. __________________________________________________________________________
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7. What beneficial items might be hard for you to get for your classroom? How will you acquire them, or are you able to easily get by without them?

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4. Overstimulation: “My Brain Needs a Union Rep”

Reflection Exercises

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. Identify areas in which others could infringe on your time once you are a teacher, when that time should be yours alone. Describe how you will set boundaries to keep that time as your own.

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2. Pick (✓) three distractions with which you are prone to struggle and explain how you will prevent them from stealing an excessive amount of your time.

☐ devices (smartphone, tablet, laptop, etc.)  ☐ work (toted home to work on there)

☐ social media  ☐ work time (infringing on home time)

☐ email  ☐ other: ______________________________

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3. Describe how you will (or do) keep track of important, pending tasks you need to complete. This method should be one that will prove most efficient for you, even if it requires advancing your technology skills and comfort level.

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4. Describe how you will (or do) maintain a calendar of important, upcoming events. This method should be one that will prove most efficient for you, even if it requires advancing your technology skills and comfort level.

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5. In the email account you currently use most, list the steps required to set up an inbox filter for unwanted emails. You might need to get help from someone or search online for directions.

A. _____________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

B. _____________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

C. _____________________________________________________________

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5. Grading: “My Hobbies Are Grading, Grading, and More Grading”

Reflection Exercises

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. Explain three ways in which graded assignments (and the comments teachers write on such assignments) are limited in their abilities to impact students learning.

   A. __________________________________________________________

   B. __________________________________________________________

   C. __________________________________________________________

2. Consider teachers of the class (grade, subject, etc.) you aspire to teach. Describe the types of items that most likely take most of those teachers’ time to grade.

   __________________________________________________________

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3. Describe three systems you will employ to reduce time spent grading. Be specific in the items being graded, the technology used, details you’ll consider to make the systems successful, etc.

A. ____________________________________________________________

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B. ____________________________________________________________

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C. ____________________________________________________________

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4. Describe a new means you’ll employ to provide students with feedback that is immediate and meaningful.

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5. Pick a new technology you will use to automate (and thus reduce your time needed for) the grading of some assignments. Answer the following questions about this arrangement:

What is the technology? _____________________________________________________________

Where/how will you acquire it? ______________________________________________________

How will its use solve a specific problem and/or support student learning? ________________

In what specific way will you use the technology in your classroom? ______________________

______________________________________________________________________________

6. Volume: “I Can Do Everything I Want, in Just 48 Hours per Day”
Reflection Exercises

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. How many hours per week maximum, outside of your official work hours, can you comfortably devote to work? This should be a limitation that allows you time for loved ones and time for yourself (e.g., exercise, hobbies, and quiet time). _______

2. Consider the class (grade, subject, etc.) you aspire to teach. Find the content standards you would be charged with teaching (e.g., grade 7 English Language Arts/Literacy CCSS, grade 7 NGSS, etc.). For every set of content standards you will be teaching (elementary school teachers will have multiple sets), write:

   • the URL (web address) where these standards are found,

   • the number of standards contained within the set (you can opt to count or not count sub-standards like “1A.”), and

   • which specific standard you would likely teach first.

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3. Think of a routine or process you are likely to employ once you are teaching in your own classroom. Imagine how you can ensure this process is as efficient as possible and makes adequate use of available technology. Describe the ideal process below.

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4. List three resources that will help you reduce or manage work volume.

A. _______________________________________________________________________
B. _______________________________________________________________________
C. _______________________________________________________________________

5. Pick two kinds of helpers you will enlist to help you with your workload. Answer the following questions for each of these.

What kind of helper will you enlist?

A. __________________________________________ B. ________________________________
How, specifically, will you recruit this helper’s help? Peek at the “Community Relations:” chapter if necessary.

A. ___________________________  B. ___________________________


How will you prepare for this helper in order to make best use of his or her time?

A. ___________________________  B. ___________________________


With what kind of tasks will this helper help?

A. ___________________________  B. ___________________________


6. What steps will you take to ensure student privacy when your helper is interacting with student work or near student information?

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7. Overcommitting: “I’m My Schools’ ‘Go to’ Volunteer”

Reflection Exercises

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. Compose a “no” statement you feel comfortable saying when asked to make an optional commitment that would leave you overburdened.

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2. Consider schools with which you are familiar (e.g., those you attended or at which you student taught). Describe the types of volunteer commitments you imagine teachers are asked to do that would leave you overtaxed versus those to which you could comfortably commit.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overtaxing Commitments:</th>
<th>Comfortable Commitments:</th>
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3. Think of a typical task for which teachers are asked to volunteer that would also be a suitable task for non-teachers volunteers. Write what you could say to your administrator to propose non-teacher volunteers for the task. Include details on how such an arrangement could work and be a favorable, viable option.

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4. Reflect on your current or most recent workplace. Describe its gender balance or imbalance among workplace “housework,” as described in this chapter.

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5. Reflect on your current or most recent workplace. Describe how a current volunteer task could possibly be made more efficient.

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8. Collaboration: “No Offense, but I Prefer to Work Alone”

*Reflection Exercises*

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. Describe any reservations you have about collaborating with colleagues.

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______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
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2. Explain three ways in which collaboration is necessary for teachers’ lesson planning.

A. __________________________________________________________________________

B. __________________________________________________________________________

C. __________________________________________________________________________
3. Of all the people you know, identify three with whom you could collaborate effectively if you were all teachers at the same school.

A. ___________________ B. ___________________ C. ___________________

4. Imagine you and the three people you identified above (in question 3) were planning to collaborate on all of the school year’s lesson plans and lesson components. Then answer the following questions:

What content standards will be followed?

______________________________________________________________________________

What will be the group’s ground rules/norms when meeting and collaborating?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

What tools will you use to delineate and track who is doing what and when?

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______________________________________________________________________________

What pattern (e.g., two days before teach date) will the completion deadlines follow?

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*Reflection Exercises*

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. Describe how you feel about change. Include relevant examples from your professional or personal life.

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   __________________________________________

2. Identify tasks within the teaching profession that would likely bore or annoy you. What alternatives are there to these tasks that would achieve the same results in a more enjoyable manner?

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   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
3. List three small ways in which you can introduce variety into your daily routines.

A. ______________________________________________________

B. _____________________________________________________

C. _____________________________________________________

4. Pick (✓) one of the following instructional endeavors that you have not yet employed in your classroom but could, then answer the question that follows.

- blended learning
- cooperative learning
- flipped learning
- gamification
- global education
- greater technology integration
- highly differentiated instruction
- maker spaces
- personalized learning
- project-based learning (PBL)
- response to intervention (RTI)
- other: ______________________________

How, specifically, will you employ this instructional endeavor in your classroom so that it helps students learn while simultaneously offering you all an exciting experience?
5. If your inbox is overloaded: List four education-related publications to which you could subscribe if a time comes when you have more time to read. If your inbox is not overloaded: Subscribe to four education-related publications and list them below.

A. ___________________________________________________________

B. ___________________________________________________________

C. ___________________________________________________________

D. ___________________________________________________________

6. Find teacher PD content at PBS LearningMedia, Teaching Channel, or TED-Ed. Watch a video there that interests you and describe it below.

________________________________________________________________________

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7. Who in your life would make a great mentee for you?
8. Pick (✓) one of the following endeavors to do, then explain how you will do it.

☐ grow in this area: ____________________  ☐ serve as a judge

☐ join a community  ☐ take on a new project

☐ present at a conference  ☐ teach a class to teachers

☐ present to your colleagues  ☐ volunteer


10. Curriculum: “I Create More from Scratch than Martha Stewart”

Reflection Exercises
The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. Design a lesson-sharing system that will allow you and your (current or future) colleagues to share lessons with one another. Describe this system below and include specific details like what technology you will use and how you will promote use of the sharing system.

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2. In the “Collaboration:” chapter’s reflection exercise #4 you designed a collaboration plan for lesson planning with your colleagues who teach the same classes. If you did not already complete that exercise, imagine a collaboration plan likely to work for your (current or future) colleagues and you. Below, write an email to the colleagues involved in which you persuade them to participate. The email should also describe what you’d like to collaborate on and how you propose to collaborate (include specific details like technology used and deadline patterns).

Dear Colleagues,  __________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
3. Find a curriculum sample most like what you will likely be charged with teaching for the class (grade, subject, etc.) you aspire to teach. For example, you might have access to a curriculum series from your student teaching, or you might have to look at online lesson collections from the “OERs” list in this chapter. Evaluate how well the curriculum is aligned to the content standards you will be charged with teaching. Describe significant gaps below.
4. Find lesson planning software that you can use. Identify the software and its website.

5. Find at least one quality lesson bank you will use and answer the following questions about it.

What is the lesson bank’s name and website?

For what types of lessons or lesson components will you use the lesson bank?

What is the name and URL (website) for one specific lesson or lesson component you found there that you plan to use?
11. Technology: “Using the TV Remote Is as Techie as I Get”

Reflection Exercises

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group. When it comes to implementing the tools described below, note it is usually best to only implement one new tool at a time. Thus the plans you describe need not be followed simultaneously.

1. In order of who or what you would approach first, list four people and/or resources you can turn to if you need help using technology in your classroom.

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2. Research edtools that can help you with organization (this can include lesson preparation, such as a CMS). Select one new tool you plan to use. Describe how this tool will help you with your job, and name your next step for implementation (e.g., securing funding, locating hardware, syncing with other software… whatever you need to do next to start using this tool).

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3. Research edtools that can help you with communication. Select one new tool you plan to use. Describe how this tool will help you with your job, and name your next step for implementation.


4. Research edtools that can help you with grading. Select one new tool you plan to use. Describe how this tool will help you with your job, and name your next step for implementation.


5. Research edtools that can help you with classroom management. Select one new tool you plan to use. Describe how this tool will help you with your job, and name your next step for implementation.
6. If you don’t have a Twitter account, set create one. Post a tweet of your choice, and write what it said below.

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12. Behavior: “I’m Bullied or Disregarded … by My Students”

*Reflection Exercises*

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. List three specific resources to which you will turn to expand your knowledge of classroom management techniques.

   A. _________________________________________________________________

   B. _________________________________________________________________

   C. _________________________________________________________________

2. Write your new classroom norms below, or else describe specifically *how* you will go about creating them with students.

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______________________________________________________________________________
3. Describe three ways in which you will formally solicit student feedback and use it to improve the environment or instruction.

A. ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________

B. __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________

C. __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________

4. Describe what you will do to seize and hold students’ attention from the very beginning of class.

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   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
5. Describe specific ways in which you will ensure your class is highly engaging for students (no “interesting lecture” answers allowed).

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6. A student enters class with her head down, ignores you when you say good morning, and slumps into her chair. You are busy getting class started. How do you find a way to reach out to her (e.g., let her know you care) within the first five minutes of class?

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7. During class a student shouts, “This is f---ing stupid!” How do you respond?

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Reflection Exercises

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. Describe conditions that could make an administrator ineffective even when he or she wants to do a good job.

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2. Describe four things you can do to help your administrator(s) understand your needs and/or a point you are trying to make.
3. Describe how you can assert yourself when working with an administrator (e.g., by employing options within your power).

4. Imagine you run into a problem with an administrator who is increasingly combative. What steps can you take to garner outside help?
5. Imagine you are going to write to your administrator about an important, specific need to improve conditions for staff and/or students. Write the key point you will make below, taking care to ask how you can do something or solve something, and taking care to cite your statement with facts, statistics, research, and/or testimonies.

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Reflection Exercises

The following items can be answered individually and/or discussed as a group.

1. List five things you will do to make the most of Back to School Night and/or Open House.
2. List five things you will do to make the most of parent-teacher conferences.

A. 

B. 

C. 

D. 

E. 

3. Describe a well-rounded plan you will utilize to get many adults involved in your classroom. Be sure to appeal to varied adults with varied schedules.

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4. Imagine you have a parent who becomes increasingly aggravated about your dealings with his or her child. What are some things you would do to improve the situation while preparing for the worst?

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5. Imagine that same parent becomes combative on the phone and yells at you. What do you do?

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______________________________________________________________________________

6. What are some things you can do to reach out to the community, provide insight into things great things you do in your classroom, and thus promote your profession?