

# Selecting a District that's Right for Me

To be successful as a teacher and to remain in the profession, you need to have your personal and professional needs met. The position you select may become your teaching position for many years to come.

Even if you don't have a choice of positions, you should ask yourself the following, so there will be no surprises in your first year.

## **Working Conditions**

- Is there positive support for teachers in the school?
- How do teachers relate to parents?
- Would you have a mentor teacher assisting you?
- Extra duty assignments?
- Classroom aides?
- Class size?
- Budget for teaching supplies during the academic year?

## **Benefits**

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Salary                  | Sick leave days          |
| Job security            | Medical Insurance        |
| Promotion opportunities | Dental Insurance         |
| Schedule                | Professional development |
| Vacations               |                          |

## **Match your personal goals**

- Does the school/district match your goal for the type of school? Public, private, international?
- Does the district support the success of beginning teachers?
- Does the district/school match your teaching philosophy?

Analyze the answers to these questions. A key question is "Does the district provide a mentor teacher to support you during the first year?"

If you have more than one choice, lay out the schools on a grid and compare. Then think about your "intrinsic" rewards that you are looking for. Does this match your philosophy?

# Signing a Contract

Public school employees in most states have contract agreements with their local school boards that list their salaries and benefits. Ask for a copy of the contract when you are asked to sign your agreement.

Review contracts before signing them. If you are not sure about some language, ask if you can take it home to review. **DO NOT SIGN** if you are not sure or if you have other offers pending. Be open and tell the district or school you are waiting to hear from another district and ask if you have a few more days.

Ethics are involved in making and keeping an agreement. When you sign a contract, you are stating to the school district that you have made a commitment to the students in the classroom that you will be assigned. Breaking a contract is a serious matter. Breaking a contract because another job comes along that pays a higher salary or offers other benefits is an ethical issue. Think of the agreement in reverse: How would you feel if the district came back to you several months later and said they had found a stronger candidate and were letting you go?

Be sure your commitment is with this district before you sign a contract.