

# Book provides useful data base for teachers

## **Biting the Apple: Accounts of First Year Teachers**

by Kevin Ryan, Katherine Newman, Gerald Mager, Jane Applegate,

Thomas Lasley, Randall Flora, and John Johnston.  
New York: Longman, 1980. 229 pp. \$7.95

**By Paul R. Burden**

The first year of teaching is a period often requiring tremendous personal and professional adjustment. It can be a troublesome period in which the first year teachers decide whether to continue teaching; at the same time they believe that others do not understand what they are going through.

**Biting the Apple** is based on a series of interviews and classroom observations of first year teachers. The information was collected throughout the 12 teachers' first year to reveal the teachers' perceptions of themselves and of the school environment.

The introduction is divided into three parts. First, Ryan discusses some commonly held beliefs about the first year of teaching. He discusses the beginning teachers' expectations about the first year of teaching and the reality they meet on the job. First year teachers often must make significant adjustments when they recognize that the preconceived expectations do not match the actual teaching. Some major adjustments that the beginning teachers make include moving to a new town, changing social circles, adjusting to a new job, and becoming familiar with a new curriculum. The second part of the introduction reviews some relevant research on first-year teachers and is documented with many bibliographical references. The third part of the introduction describes how the book's information was obtained.

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After the introduction, a separate chapter is included for each of the 12 first-year teachers. The information in these chapters is reported in biographical and autobiographical narrative descriptions to document the experiences throughout the first year. These chapters are written in an easy-to-read style and are free of excessive educational jargon. An illustrative passage follows.

"Testing, grouping, and the real work of the fourth grade began and Scott's planning could not keep up. Tests had revealed a wide range of abilities and Scott wondered how these differences could be met: 'I can't give each student a separate assignment each day in each subject. That would be impossible.'" The curriculum guides sat at home stacked on the dining room table, and each night they haunted; they were what should be done, what had to be done, but what Scott didn't know how to do. They were too much. He found himself sitting, staring blankly at reruns of Lucille Ball comedies, or sleeping well into the evening. He was sapped of his energy, his motivation, and his patience.

The second week melted into the third, the fourth, and the fifth weeks. Planning remained the biggest problem, but was joined by classroom management. Each day Scott brought in new assignments, usually dittoed worksheets and packets. Each day the Katies and the Annes and the Josephs finished early: "Mr. Tanner, I've finished this; now what should I do?" (Pages 127-128)

At the end of the book, study guide questions are included for use in academic settings.

**Biting the Apple** provides information for practitioners and researchers. Principals, supervisors, staff development coordinators, superintendents, school board members, teachers, and others would find **Biting the Apple** valuable for the insight it provides into the realities of the first year teacher's job. Conclusions could be drawn about administrative and supervisory procedures to aid the beginning teacher in this adjustment and induction phase. College instructors of undergraduate programs would find the book helpful in reassessing course content and experiences to provide the preservice teacher with a more realistic view of the first year of teaching. Graduate course offerings also could be examined in terms of meeting the professional needs of first year teachers. The book could be used as a textbook or as supplementary reading.

The book helps the reader understand teaching from the teachers' perspective by providing documented personal and professional experiences and concerns. By providing this rich source of information about the first year, **Biting the Apple** helps build a theory of teacher career development. Although the information in the book cannot be generalized for all teachers, it does help define and refine the descriptions of teacher development. Additional research on the first and subsequent years can further clarify the characteristics and influences on the developmental periods. **Biting the Apple**, therefore, is an important contribution to building a base of information about how teachers change and contributes to a fuller understanding of teacher career development.

**Biting the Apple** is a useful data base for decisions by practitioners, researchers, and prospective teachers.