

NAIS Annual Conference
NEW TEACHER CASE STUDY
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Waverly Ingraham was hired last spring to teach 10th grade biology during the 2018-2019 school year at Mission Tech Academy in Los Angeles. Mission Tech is an independent school in the San Fernando Valley that serves grades 9-12. The tuition is roughly \$28,000 a year. Waverly is a first-year teacher, having been hired directly out of college. She has a degree in biochemistry from an elite liberal arts college on the East Coast, and she has experience working with teens in STEM outreach programs. Otherwise, she is completely new to teaching.

There is one additional 10th grade biology teacher at Mission Tech Academy who has been teaching at Mission Tech for over ten years. Her name is Tanya Wu, and she teaches one section of biology. Waverly teaches three sections. Tanya has other administrative duties at the school and is often unavailable for collaboration.

Waverly has been assigned an 11th grade chemistry teacher named Robert Ayres to be her first-year mentor. Robert has never taught 10th grade biology, but is a 30-year veteran at Mission Tech Academy and is considered a master chemistry teacher. The departing biology teacher left Waverly all her course materials, which Waverly has used to map out the curriculum, with occasional input from the department head. But otherwise, she has been left to her own devices to design the biology course.

It is now midway through the year, and the science department head has received multiple angry emails over the last few weeks from parents of students in Waverly's classes. They claim Waverly's expectations of her students are much higher than those of the other biology teacher, Tanya Wu. They complain that Waverly's tests are too tough, and unlike Tanya, Waverly does not offer test corrections, so students report that their grades are markedly lower than those of students in Tanya's class. The parents also cite unaligned curriculum, saying they're worried their students aren't being prepared properly.

Imagine you are the science department head and/or the director of studies in this scenario. In a review of Waverly's curriculum, you find that Waverly will cover all the necessary material by the end of the year. Her tests are not markedly harder than those of Tanya Wu, but she does not offer any way to make up for a low score.

In what ways can you reach out to help Waverly manage students' and parents' expectations? How do you help Waverly organize her curriculum without making her feel that she has done something wrong? There is no rule at Mission Tech that says teachers must teach the material in exactly the same order as their peer teachers, nor is there a rule that suggests test corrections are mandatory. Do you think the school should create a stricter policy or guideline about people teaching the same class collaborating more on curriculum, test corrections, grades, etc.? What supports will you employ to help Waverly regain the trust of her students and their parents?