

I

Induction and Mentoring: Then and Now

<i>Objectives for the Chapter</i>
<p><i>After reading this chapter, the reader will be able to</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">describe the rise of state and district support for new teachers induction and mentoring programs as a result of the educational reform movement of the 1980s.describe the components of an effective induction program.describe what current research says about the impact of an effective induction and mentoring program on instructional practice, student achievement, and teacher retention.

History of Mentoring

From early Greek references to the care a man named Mentor gave to Odysseus's son Telemachus to more recent analysis by researchers like Allen (2004) who describe the positive impact of mentoring in the corporate world, the concept of receiving support from a more experienced mentor has been around for a long time. Mentoring and induction programs for new teachers became more commonly used and even required as part of educational reform in the 1980s. Furtwengler's (1995) review of state policies

for beginning teachers showed 26 states began new teacher programs between 1984 and 1992. The 2005 Quality Counts report indicated 30 states required mentoring and/or induction for new teachers, while 16 states (up from 14 in 1998) supported the programs with some funding (Strong 2009, 7).

Strong (2009, 9) used Quality Counts 2008 data to generate the following table of supports for new teachers at the state level as of 2007–2008.

<i>Support for Beginning Teachers</i>	<i>States</i>
Induction programs for all new teachers funded by state	22
Mentoring programs for all new teachers funded by state	25
Mentoring program standards for selecting, training, and/or matching mentors	20
Reduced workload for all first-year teachers	2

Considering data on the same topic from the point of view of the individual teacher, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) used the National Schools and Staffing Survey for 1999–2000 to determine that about 80 percent of new teachers received some form of induction program. In sum, whether the data is viewed from the point of view of each state (where 30 of 50 states have mandated programs for new teachers) or from the point of view of each individual new teacher (where 80 percent of new teachers reported participating in a new-teacher program), the data shows a clear increase in support for new teachers.

One explanation for the increased attention to retaining new teachers was posited to be an overall shortage of teachers to fill the available jobs. However, research has determined the changing teacher demographic has actually helped to fuel the increase in new-teacher induction programs across the country. Researcher Richard Ingersoll has been following the demographics of the teaching force in the United States for more than a decade. His often quoted 2001 study found 30 percent of new teachers leave the profession by the conclusion of their third year of teaching, and 50 percent leave the profession by their fifth year of teaching. These percentages are as chilling as they are anxiety provoking. Administrators and parents, both of whom want the best teachers for children, have come to understand the significant challenge of recruiting and retaining promising new practitioners.

As we have seen, the importance of induction and mentoring is clearly recognized in districts across the country. However, the way induction programs work varies greatly. Wong (2005) notes induction programs in the United States are “often sporadic, incoherent, poorly aligned, and lacking in adequate follow-up.” Some induction programs consist solely of pairing new teachers with mentors, while others offer new teachers a comprehensive introduction to the community, the school, and the curriculum, as well as specific pedagogical support from a mentor and other staff. As he considered the problem of variability, Wong looked both inside and outside the United States to find successful programs. Based on his observations of effective induction programs in five countries abroad, Wong (2005) used three parameters to describe effective induction programs:

- Highly structured, comprehensive, rigorous, and seriously monitored, with well-defined roles for staff developers, administrators, instructors, and mentors.

- The first phase of a lifelong professional development program for all teachers, using a variety of methods and approaches over time.
- Introduction of new teachers to a shared, collaborative professional culture, engendering a sense of group identity and membership.

Collaborative group work should be seen as an integral part of the teaching culture, with shared experiences, practices, tools, and language.

The following sections of this chapter will describe effective induction programs in more detail.

Building Effective Induction Programs

Framing an effective induction program for new teachers requires careful thought and planning. The New Teacher Center (NTC) at the University of California–Santa Cruz has been focusing on new teacher induction since 1988. NTC is a national non-profit organization whose goal is to “improve student learning by accelerating the effectiveness of new teachers.” In addition to providing support for new teacher induction programs, NTC also conducts its own research on new teacher induction. The six goals NTC has developed to guide their program are found in the section below.

Goals

The primary goal of the New Teacher Project (NTP) is to provide a program of support and assessment in which the advancement of skills and knowledge is a continuous flow from preservice through the first two year of teaching and beyond.

The NTP has worked to develop an interactive and authentic model of teacher assessment in order to provide the most effective support to beginning teachers. Support strategies and practices promote teacher autonomy through the ongoing and recursive processes of self-assessment, inquiry into practice, reflection, and planning. This fully integrated and formative model of support and assessment assists teachers in moving their practice forward.

- To develop teacher capacity as defined in the California Standards for the Teaching Profession;
- To direct support toward improving student achievement;
- To use formative assessment practices to guide support;
- To document professional growth over time;
- To model and encourage ongoing self-assessment and reflection;
- To foster collaboration and leadership among teachers.

Articulating goals provides a solid starting point when developing a comprehensive induction program. A next step in creating a successful program is to determine the program’s parameters. As mentioned above, Wong’s research on successful induction programs identifies three important parameters to consider. A program must be comprehensive, coherent, and sustained to be effective. These three parameters provide a framework to create and implement an effective induction program. For example, researchers from the Public Education Network (2004) identified 12 components of effective induction program practices. In Table 1-2, we have cross-referenced Wong’s parameters with the Public Education Network’s components as a way to insure a program developed using these components takes advantage of the available research on the scope of effective programs.

Table 1-2
Public Education Network's 12 Components of Effective Induction Programs
Referenced Using Wong's Three Parameters for Effective Induction Programs

Comprehensive

- A strong sense of institutional commitment with strong administrator support and involvement;
- Participation by all new teachers, whether entering the profession from traditional or alternative pathways;
- Input from beginning and veteran teachers on program design and structure.

Coherent

- Practices aligned with professional standards as well as state and local student-learning standards;
- Quality mentoring, with careful selection, training, and ongoing support for mentors;
- Adequate time and resources for implementation;
- Reduced workloads, release time, and placement in classes with less, rather than more, demanding students;
- Opportunities for inductees to visit demonstration classrooms;
- Study groups in which new teachers can network and build support, commitment, and leadership in a learning community.

Sustained

- Long-term planning for improving teaching and learning aligned with the instructional philosophy of the school;
- A time frame that begins prior to, extends throughout, and continues beyond the new teacher's first year of teaching;
- Ongoing assessment to determine whether the program is having its desired impact.

What Does Research Tell Us about the Impact of Mentoring and Induction Programs?

Improvement in Teaching Practice and Student Achievement

Research in this area was not abundant in 2001. The New Teacher Center (NTC) in California, a state requiring a two-year induction program for new teachers, studied the relationship between new teacher induction and student achievement. Finding no published research addressing the question, NTC conducted their own study in three different school districts and found students of new teachers given a full-release mentor for two years improved more in reading than those of new teachers who received reduced support in the second year. A second NTC study found no difference in student achievement scores when student achievement data of veteran teachers was compared with student achievement data of new teachers receiving two years of mentoring. From this limited examination, the second year of an intense induction program with mentoring has an impact on student achievement.

In 2005, Fletcher, Strong, and Villar found mentor-based induction was "associated with positive gains in student achievement if mentor selectivity is high, mentors have the opportunity for professional development, and mentors meet with new teachers on a regular basis."

A more current review of the research in this area by Strong and Ingersoll (2011) indicated a positive relationship between two years of mentoring and teacher classroom

instructional practices. The specific practices included: keeping students on task, using effective questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and managing the classroom. In addition to the impact on instructional practice, students whose teachers participated in induction and mentoring had higher scores, or gains, on academic achievement tests. These research findings are powerful and enticing. We will have to stay tuned for more studies that plumb the relationship between the exact composition of the induction program and its specific impact on student achievement.

Teacher Retention

As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, retaining new teachers has become a significant challenge. In a study done in California, Strong (2005) found a positive correlation between mentoring and retention in the profession. That study also noted this positive correlation may be related to decreased turnover among district and among schools. In an earlier study, Strong and St. John (2001) found 88 percent of teachers in the mentoring program remained in the classroom and an additional 6 percent were employed in other positions in education. The contrast with data collected from other districts, the state of California, and the United States is striking. During this same time period, about 50 percent of teachers in nearby districts remained in teaching. Data for the state of California show 84 percent still teaching after four years, and nationwide the number is 67 percent for the same time period. These authors concluded comprehensive induction programs appear to have a positive effect on teacher retention.

Along with the induction and student achievement studies cited by Ingersoll (2011) above, these researchers summarized their review literature by concluding that two years of induction and mentoring "have a positive impact on teacher retention, including job satisfaction, commitment, retention/turnover."

In sum, current studies indicate mentor-based induction, maintained for at least two years, can have a positive impact on student achievement, teacher retention, and improved classroom instructional practices. Research cited here would indicate new teachers continue to improve their teaching practice through the second year of their induction program.

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