Overview

Comprehensive induction programs that integrate an array of complimentary components have proven to produce teachers who deliver high-quality instruction and remain in the profession. While mentoring as a practice has merit, as a stand-alone practice it has not proven to be as successful in supporting novice teachers on its own. Numerous studies demonstrate that the implementation of comprehensive induction cuts new teacher turnover rates in half. Comprehensive induction is a sound investment to address teacher recruitment and retention.

Key Components of Comprehensive Induction programs include:

• New Educator Orientation Week at the beginning of the school year
• Mentoring by a qualified and trained teacher mentor the first two years of teaching
• Support teams (i.e., grade level and department colleagues, staff development teachers, and consulting teachers) that meet once a week, in addition to formal mentoring by a mentor
• Courses and workshops for beginning teachers from school district central office on relevant topics
• Continuous training for mentors throughout their coaching career
• Training for principals on how to support beginning educators and mentors
• Evaluation process that focuses on developing teaching skills and professional knowledge

Many school districts implement pieces of a comprehensive induction program, but few districts provide all components.

A Cost-Effective Alternative

The investment in quality induction support not only retains teachers in the profession, but also has a long-term impact on student achievement. School districts spend large amounts of money replacing teachers each year. On average, urban districts spend more than $20,000 per new teacher hired through recruitment, hiring, and training costs. Districts with high teacher turnover rates spend hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to recruit and hire new teachers. Further, districts in communities with high poverty rates are often the most impacted by high teacher turnover. These district investments don’t yield their full potential dividend when teachers leave within the first or second year after being hired.

Teacher Preparation to Induction

Few beginning teachers participate in comprehensive induction programs. Yet nearly all pilots, firefighters, doctors, and nurses receive on-the-job comprehensive training after being hired. Novice teachers should receive the same complete support when hired and begin teaching in the classroom.
Although most teachers attend a teacher preparation program, once on the job, all beginning teachers must adapt to school district contexts, and they must:

- teach to recognized state standards;
- evaluate their instruction on student performance;
- communicate effectively with students, parents, and colleagues;
- use student achievement data for planning and curriculum;
- modify instruction to address specific learning and cultural needs; and
- learn how to prosper in the culture of the school.

Teacher preparation begins to prepare educators through practice teaching, but this is not sufficient to support novice educators in navigating their own classrooms. Teaching involves complex skills that are honed with practice and experience. While all novice teachers need support, they have individual needs—just as their students have diverse learning and cultural needs. Comprehensive induction allows for customization to meet educator needs, allowing novices and students thrive.

**Components of Comprehensive Induction**

A mentoring component is critical for success in any induction program. Mentors must be trained to work with adults and give constructive critiques regarding instructional improvement. Ideally, mentors guide mentees in a shared subject area. To maximize their effectiveness, mentors should be released from their classroom teaching positions to work full time as mentors. A suggested caseload for full-time mentors is 10 mentees at any given time. If a mentor must retain classroom teaching responsibilities, they should be released on a regularly scheduled basis to work with their assigned mentees. Mentors should be compensated for their expertise and additional time, and that expense must be incorporated in the school or district budget.

New teacher orientation and ongoing professional learning courses and/or workshops during the first few years is common practice by most districts. When surveyed, teachers indicated these practices contribute to retention. In addition, principals must better understand their role in working with new teachers and their mentors. Principals often need support and guidance themselves in how to support novice teachers, such as: how to assign course loads to novices; modifying daily schedules so that new teachers may meet with mentors and colleagues on lesson planning and instructional delivery; developing positive relationships and effective listening skills; and giving constructive feedback to help the novice reflect on best instructional practices during the formal evaluation process.

Some districts believe that mentoring is the only component involved in induction. But, mentoring alone has not yielded consistently positive results in reducing turnover. However, mentoring paired with these other pieces of a comprehension induction program have positively impacted teacher retention.

**Funding**

Securing funding for a comprehensive induction program may seem daunting, but districts may be able to align federal and state resources to leverage local resources. First, funds may be secured through Title II of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This Titled money is to be used specifically for professional learning opportunities, and induction is an allowed use.
Second, school districts could reallocate funds from existing budget sources that traditionally are used for teacher recruitment. Teacher recruitment usually involves recruiters and/or district administrators traveling across the United States, and sometimes the world, to hire educators. If a district instead invested a portion of those funds to support novice teachers, the teacher turnover rate would be reduced, and the need to recruit large numbers of new teachers every year would be reduced, as well.

Third, district offices have been known to contract with expensive third-party firms to recruit and sometimes train new teachers (e.g., Teach for America). Research suggests that educators recruited and trained by external, third-party organizations and/or firms leave the district and the profession at high rates. So, although the district is able to fill vacancies using these firms, the expenditures spent on recruiting and training these teachers has ultimately been wasted when they leave the district.

Finally, money saved by reducing the number of new hires, reducing the expenditures in travel to recruit new teachers, and eliminating costly consultant firm contracts could instead be used to resource the components of a comprehensive induction program. In taking these actions, school districts have the ability to directly control the quality of recruited teachers, the professional learning, and the development of instructional skills.

School districts should not have to choose which expenditures to trim in their professional development program to fund comprehensive induction. History shows that when districts need to reduce their budgets, they often cut induction programs first. The positive impact of comprehensive induction supports funding this effort beyond the general teacher professional development line.

**Conclusion**

Student access to a quality education is a civil right. Comprehensive induction for novice teachers is critically important to fulfilling this right and ensuring an equitable education for all students. Fortunately, decades of research on the factors that contribute to attracting and retaining teachers in the classroom can guide district strategies to meet this challenge. Districts should leverage state and federal dollars for comprehensive induction programs in addition to traditional professional learning for teachers.

Local context will determine how funding builds an overall system that supports and retains skilled educators throughout their careers. A set of policies that fully fund all components of comprehensive induction programs is necessary to ensure every child is taught by a competent, committed teacher.

**Resources**

Alliance for Excellent Education. Path to Equity: Improving the Effectiveness of Beginning Teachers, 2014.


