



**POLICY  
MATTERS**

## Teacher Induction Programs: Trends and Opportunities

***State-level policy support for teacher induction programs can help teachers realize their full potential, keep them in the profession, promote greater student learning, and save money. Higher education institutions and school districts must work together to provide high-quality and well-designed induction programs.***

### Context

The traditional “sink-or-swim” model for beginning teachers has not worked very well. Facing challenging work conditions and insufficient support, nearly half of new teachers leave the classroom within the first five years. Among those who stay, it can take years to develop the skills they need to be most effective in the classroom. These factors have a negative impact on student learning, particularly in poor and low-performing schools where new teachers are often assigned. The financial cost of teacher turnover adds to the problem, draining resources from already tight budgets.

In order to remedy these problems, there has been a rapid growth of teacher mentoring and induction programs in recent decades: more than 80 percent of new teachers participate in some kind of program, up from 40 percent in 1990-91. “Mentoring” refers to one-on-one assistance and support given by an experienced professional to a novice. “Induction”

refers to a more comprehensive program. The Alliance for Excellent Education identifies the components of comprehensive induction as high-quality mentoring, common planning time and collaboration, ongoing professional development, participation in an external network of teachers, and standards-based evaluation.

Though states have increasingly been involved in mandating and funding induction programs, there is by no means consistency across districts and states, nor adequate services for all novice teachers. Far too often, what have been called “induction” programs have been limited to one-on-one mentoring designed to help teachers “survive” their first year. There has been a lack of ongoing support, and mentors may be under-trained and over-extended. Funding is often inadequate and unstable.

If teachers are to become the skilled professionals they need to be and if they are to stay in the field, stakeholders need to take coordinated action to



programs, compared to other new teachers, used more complex and challenging instructional materials, were more successful in motivating students and setting high expectations for students with diverse backgrounds, and made greater use of state curriculum frameworks. Teacher attrition was reduced by two thirds, and the programs were especially successful in supporting minority teachers. This work laid the foundation for development of subsequent induction programs.

Investigating the impact of induction programs on student learning is a growing area. Research by the Educational Testing Service has found some impact of these programs on student achievement. Last year, the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Services began a five-year evaluation study that will examine the effects on student achievement of two programs, the NTC Induction Model and ETS Pathwise. More research is needed to sort out what aspects of induction most affect teacher quality and retention, which, in turn, affect student learning and district costs.

**Though many states require teacher induction, current state policy leaves much to be desired.**

Recent studies have found that 30 or more states have some form of mandated mentoring program. Merely requiring this mentoring, however, does not assure that programs are comprehensive and effective, or that funding is secure.

*Education Week* reports that only 16 states require and finance mentoring for all new teachers. Only five states provide a minimum of two or more years of state-financed mentoring, down from eight in 2003. More in-depth data collected by Education Week in 2003 indicate that nine states specified a minimum amount of time for mentors and new teachers to meet; eight required mentors and teachers to be matched by school, subject, and/or grade; nine required mentors to be compensated for their work; and seven required release time for mentors.

**Some states have made strides toward developing comprehensive induction programs, but limited and uncertain state funds challenge this progress.**

Two years ago, a partnership between the University of Alaska and the Alaska Department of Education

began the Statewide Mentor Project that was based on the NTC model. Data have supported the effectiveness of the program in increasing teacher retention and the legislature approved funding for a state-wide program.

California's New Teacher Project funded and evaluated several induction models in the late 1980s. The project's success led to legislation that provides for Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment programs throughout the state.

New Jersey has been involved in mentoring programs for two decades, but funding has been uneven. Currently all districts are required to have a Mentoring for Quality Induction plan in place, but they vary widely from district to district.

Legislation enacted in Michigan more than a decade ago mandated the New Teacher Induction/Teacher Mentoring Program requiring three years of mentoring. The state Department of Education has developed guidelines and tools for districts as well as program standards. There is currently an effort underway to foster a network of support among teacher preparation institutions.

Virginia mandates mentoring for all beginning teachers and funds about half the costs for this program. The state Department of Education developed guidelines for effectiveness, and with federal funding, supports 20 pilot induction programs across the state.

In Georgia, higher education institutions have been involved in developing resources for new teacher support. Albany State University, the University of Georgia, and Valdosta State University founded the Georgia Systemic Teacher Education Program in 2000 which has a BRIDGE (Building Resources: Induction and Development of Georgia Educators) component. This is a peer-reviewed, interactive online resource and mentoring site for teachers.

Other notable state programs include Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training and Louisiana's Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program.

There is evidence from several states that competition for funding has led to reduced state support for

induction programs. Some states depend on foundation funding or the U.S. Department of Education Title II teacher quality grants. Without a steady source of funding, these programs remain in precarious situations.

## Conclusion

As states increasingly hold their teacher preparation programs accountable for the success of new teachers, higher education institutions need to work with school districts to ensure that induction is high-quality and well-designed. They need to work toward greater alignment between what is taught in schools of education and what occurs in the classroom. They need to evaluate programs to document their effectiveness and ensure their quality.

Long-term policy support for teacher induction programs and adequate funding at the state level can help teachers realize their full potential, keep them in the profession, promote greater student learning, and save money. Mentoring and induction can bridge the gap between pre-service education and the classroom, and higher education institutions must be an important part of this picture.

## Resources

### American Association of State Colleges and Universities

**(AASCU).** AASCU's Task Force on Professional Development for Teachers made recommendations on induction in the report *To Create A Profession: Supporting Teachers as Professionals* (2001). *Boundary Spanners: A Key to Success in Urban P-16 University-School Partnerships* (2006) is a guide for educators who are seeking to link universities and schools in a quest for better outcomes. [aascu.org](http://aascu.org)

**Alliance for Excellent Education.** *Tapping the Potential: Retaining and Developing High-Quality New Teachers* (2004) discusses comprehensive induction programs as the single most effective strategy for developing and retaining high-quality teachers across the nation. [all4ed.org/](http://all4ed.org/)

**Education Commission of the States.** An analysis by Richard Ingersoll and Jeffrey M. Kralik, "The Impact of Mentoring on Teacher Retention: What the Research Says" (2004), summarizes what is known—and not known—about the effectiveness of teacher induction programs, focusing on teacher retention. [ecs.org/clearinghouse/50/36/5036.doc](http://ecs.org/clearinghouse/50/36/5036.doc)

**Education Week.** *Quality Counts*, an annual report on policies that affect K-12 public education, contains state-by-state information on teacher mentoring efforts. The 2003 report includes an in-depth study of this topic. [edweek.org](http://edweek.org)

**Educational Testing Service.** ETS has developed the Pathwise Framework Induction Program and conducts research on the impact of teacher induction, particularly on student learning. [ets.org](http://ets.org)

**National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF).** *Induction Into Learning Communities* (2005) summarizes NCTAF's research on induction programs in the United States and abroad and offers policy recommendations. Related projects include the Cost of Teacher Turnover Study, the Strengthening and Sustaining Teachers Project, and Teachers Learning in Networked Communities. [nctaf.org/](http://nctaf.org/)

**National Staff Development Council (NSDC).** NSDC offers Standards for Staff Development and other resources related to high-quality staff development programs, including mentoring. [nsdc.org/index.cfm](http://nsdc.org/index.cfm)

**New Teacher Center (NTC),** University of California, Santa Cruz. NTC works with school districts, universities, policymakers, and educational leaders to create support systems for new teachers. Its work builds on the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project, an intensive mentor-based induction model created in 1988. NTC has consulted with a number of states on issues related to state policy and has conducted policy surveys in Alaska, California, New Jersey, Michigan, Virginia, and Washington. [newteachercenter.org/](http://newteachercenter.org/)

### Selected state resources include:

California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment [btsa.ca.gov/default.html](http://btsa.ca.gov/default.html)

Connecticut Beginning Educator Support and Training [ctbest.org/default.asp](http://ctbest.org/default.asp)

Georgia Systemic Teacher Education Program [coe.uga.edu/gstep/](http://coe.uga.edu/gstep/)

Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program [doe.state.la.us/lda/////pd/623.html](http://doe.state.la.us/lda/////pd/623.html)