

# **Accelerating Teacher Effectiveness:** Lessons Learned from Two Decades of **New Teacher Induction**



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The best induction programs blend support for novice teachers with expertise from veteran teachers, creating collegial groups that benefit all teachers and all students.

## BY ELLEN MOIR

These are inspiring times to be in education. Perhaps you wonder at my statement. You may question whether I've read the discouraging news about student achievement gaps, the conditions of our urban classrooms, and the loss of confidence in our public schools.

I'm an optimist, but no Pollyanna. I'm acutely aware of the challenges facing schools across America. As we hear more and more calls for reform — from politicians to parents, and from educators to employers — what gives me hope is that the conversation has begun to settle on what those of us who have devoted our lives to education have always known: The single most important element in a child's education is the teacher.

Support for new teachers can transform our nation's schools.

It's that radical. By focusing on new teachers, we begin to address the student achievement gap. New teachers are traditionally assigned to the most challenging classrooms in the hardest-to-staff schools. When districts and schools organize to accelerate new teacher development, they break the cycle of inequity and provide children who are most in need of a high-quality education with teachers capable of helping them.

Before founding the New Teacher Center, I was director of teacher education at the University of California at Santa Cruz. The program offered student teachers comprehensive opportunities to participate in multiple classrooms and diverse settings, rigorous assessment, and rich content. Yet despite our best efforts, many of our graduates wanted to quit teaching by October of their first year. It upset me to watch these intelligent, energetic individuals

question why they had chosen a career in teaching.

In response, we developed an induction program that has since grown into the model used by the New Teacher Center. Our robust instructional mentoring program includes careful selection of the district's best teachers to provide one-on-one mentoring of new teachers, ongoing professional development of teachers and mentors within a community of practice, and a standards-based formative assessment system that maintains the focus of new teachers and mentors on student learning.

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Over the past 20 years, we've collected feedback and evaluation data that enhance our work. We've found that the reach of induction programs extends far beyond new teachers and the mentors who work with them. This article describes lessons learned from two decades of new teacher induction.

### **LESSON #1: A NEW TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM REQUIRES A SYSTEMWIDE COMMITMENT TO TEACHER DEVELOPMENT.**

New teacher induction isn't a "plug and play" solution. Before induction begins, a review of the dis-

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strict demographics, capabilities, and learning strategies will ensure the induction program is aligned

## ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

The New Teacher Center has provided induction for new teachers for 20 years. The experience has taught 10 lessons:

1. A new teacher induction program requires a systemwide commitment to teacher development.
2. Induction programs accelerate new teacher effectiveness.
3. Standards-based formative assessment tools document impact.
4. Induction programs build a pathway for leaders.
5. Good principals create a culture of learning.
6. Effective induction programs combine high-quality mentoring with communities of practice.
7. Teaching conditions matter to supporting and keeping new teachers.
8. Online communities provide timely, cost-effective mentoring.
9. Policy complements practice.
10. Good induction programs are accountable, not just compliant.

With these lessons in mind, a school can build a successful induction program that builds leadership and encourages collaboration.

with other initiatives focused on teacher learning. Induction programs are most effective when all stakeholder groups are represented in the program design and when new teacher induction is part of a districtwide initiative to improve teaching and learning.

Pre-assessment may uncover areas that require additional emphasis in order to create the most effective teachers for the district's students. For example, the demographics in one district may indicate that professional development emphasizes ELL support. In other districts, the focus may be on differentiated instruction or special education. The pre-assessment process provides a baseline against which programs can measure impact and frame strategic goals. Thoughtful planning, clear goal setting, and articulated out-

comes will ensure that induction produces strong returns.

### LESSON #2: INDUCTION PROGRAMS ACCELERATE NEW TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS.

Teacher turnover, with the resultant increase in recruiting and retraining costs, negatively affects a district's bottom line. This is especially true in high-poverty, urban districts in which teachers face challenging working conditions. But induction programs are much more than a money-saving tactic. Induction programs accelerate the effectiveness of new teachers, fast-tracking their progress to exemplary teachers with the ability to positively impact student achievement.

The heart of our model is regular, one-on-one mentoring in which new teachers are matched with exemplary teachers who analyze their practice and, using classroom data, offer constructive suggestions for improvement. Ideally, mentors are released full time from their teaching duties in order to concentrate on mentoring a portfolio of new teachers. Dur-

ing individual coaching sessions, mentors help new teachers set professional goals, plan lessons, analyze student work, and reflect on their progress. Mentors may teach a lesson while the new teacher observes. From this experience, new teachers learn to develop the habits of mind of exceptional teachers.

### LESSON #3: STANDARDS-BASED FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT TOOLS DOCUMENT IMPACT.

NTC has developed a Formative Assessment System (FAS) to ensure that mentor discussions with beginning teachers are grounded in standards-based instructional practice and are driven by data. The tools and protocols of the assessment system help mentors tailor the mentoring experience by identifying teacher strengths and challenges, clarifying student academic needs, and providing a context for improvement based on specific student needs and the capabilities of the teacher.

FAS tools help the district establish professional norms, collect evidence of student learning, and measure teacher growth over time. Many districts require that all district coaches use FAS tools. For example, our Collaborative Assessment Log identifies what works, current challenges, and next steps for the teacher and the mentor, establishing a framework that can be used by literacy coaches as well as induction mentors. The Analysis of Student Work tool (see pages 20-21) helps identify student needs in order to plan for differentiated instruction. When formative assessment tools are used consistently across the district, measuring the impact of all professional development programs is easier.

### LESSON #4: INDUCTION PROGRAMS BUILD A PATHWAY FOR LEADERS.

Although districts may feel reluctant to recruit their best teachers away from the classroom, induction programs provide talented teachers with a mid-career boost and a powerful opportunity to develop leadership skills. Teachers gain a fresh perspective on their districts by working in various classrooms and schools, and they build a repertoire of instructional strategies. Through the process of coaching others, mentors learn to codify and value their own experience and skills. This renewal of experienced teachers is a powerful result of an induction program. They gain a vision of education that extends beyond their classrooms. When we value exemplary teachers, they thrive and, most important, they become more effective teachers.

Recruiting the best teachers to serve as mentors is only the first step. Mentors need job-embedded professional development tailored to meet the needs of adult learners and their coaches. An effective course of training for mentors includes such topics

as coaching and feedback strategies, working with adult learners, and mentoring for equity. In addition to formal professional development, weekly forums allow mentors to build a professional learning community as they review and apply skills, delve into case studies, and plan their next steps.

The career ladder created by an induction program is a program by-product that is particularly relevant to mid-career teachers. The NTC model encourages mentors to serve a three-year rotation as a mentor, after which they return to the classroom or assume other leadership roles within the district. Our research shows that a significant percentage of mentors move on to leadership roles in administration, content coaching, grade-level or subject-area leadership, or curriculum design after completing their assignment as a mentor.

This career progression makes sense and can be a strategic “grow-your-own” approach to leadership development. After all, mentors have years of experience in advancing the progress of other adult professionals. They’ve gained skills in communication, coaching, observing, and assessing instructional practice — all part of an administrator’s job. Mentors who return to the classroom do so with a greater understanding of how to impact student learning, influence school policies, and contribute to school reform. As much as we should be concerned about retaining new teachers — and it’s critical — we also want to ensure that we retain, challenge, and learn from our most experienced teachers.

#### **LESSON #5: GOOD PRINCIPALS CREATE A CULTURE OF LEARNING.**

As the instructional leaders of their schools, principals are a critical component of the induction program. Principals who value adult learning support a commitment to ongoing professional development. They find time to get into classrooms and are skilled at observing and providing feedback.

Mentors are encouraged to meet regularly with site administrators to discuss the induction program and ensure it’s aligned with school goals. Together, they can discuss mentoring strategies and learn how to advance teacher effectiveness and student learning. Through their work with multiple teachers and sometimes multiple schools, mentors gain a unique perspective and may uncover such problems as the inequitable allocation of resources. If the mentor has a comfortable working relationship with the principal, issues can be addressed without divulging confidential information.

Mentors and teachers need time to work together and collaborate. When principals understand the goals of the induction program, they’re more likely to support teacher/mentor and collaborative grade-

level meetings and less likely to schedule conflicting activities. By working together, principals and mentors can create environments where teacher learning is supported and students benefit.

#### **LESSON #6: EFFECTIVE INDUCTION PROGRAMS COMBINE HIGH-QUALITY MENTORING WITH COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE.**

Learning communities that bring together experienced and new teachers build teacher capacity while providing a structure for student learning. For primary grades, learning teams are usually formed by grade level within a site or a district. In middle and sec-

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ondary schools, teams are usually grouped by subject area either within the school or across a district. The group identifies an inquiry subject, such as curriculum planning, and establishes norms. In learning teams, teachers collaborate to design powerful lessons, observe each other teach when possible, and analyze student data to ensure that students are learning.

Teams require commitment from each team

#### **Key Elements of the New Teacher Center Induction Model**

- A carefully selected mentor
- Full or substantial released time for mentors
- Participation by all first- and second-year teachers
- Formal mentor orientation and training
- Ongoing professional development for mentors
- Professional standards used to articulate best practices
- Formative Assessment System
- Classroom instruction and content focused mentoring
- Beginning teacher network for professional development
- Clear role for and communication with site administrators
- Participation by key stakeholder groups
- Focus on equity and English language development
- Linkages to preservice
- Program evaluation
- Beginning teacher advocacy

[www.newteachercenter.org](http://www.newteachercenter.org)

member and from administrators. Results take time. As teams become more established, the group dynamics become more automatic and the focus turns to inquiry. Ultimately, learning teams result in a strong teaching culture where lines between new and experienced teachers are blurred and all teachers feel they have a voice in school improvement.

#### **LESSON #7: TEACHING CONDITIONS MATTER TO SUPPORTING AND KEEPING NEW TEACHERS.**

Supportive school environments, where educators are valued, trusted, and have the time and ability to collaborate to improve instruction, are necessary for teachers to be successful. The workplace can either encourage or constrain good teaching and ultimately impact student learning and teacher retention. We've conducted statewide surveys of teaching conditions in 10 states, heard from more than 300,000 educators, and provided results to almost 8,000 schools to empower teachers and administrators to better understand and improve their school environments. For mentoring to affect the enculturation and instructional practice of beginning teachers, schools need sufficient resources, empowered educators, and the

#### **New Teacher Center**

Established in 1998, the New Teacher Center is a national organization dedicated to improving teaching and learning in America's schools. NTC works with induction programs in over 40 states, including urban school districts in Chicago, Durham, Austin, East Palo Alto, and Boston. NTC strives to support essential research, well-informed policy, and thoughtful practice that encourage teacher and administrator development from preservice throughout a teacher's career.

Learn more about NTC programs and services at [www.newteachercenter.org](http://www.newteachercenter.org).

time and professional development to work closely with colleagues. These same conditions are essential to teacher retention because such factors as school facilities, safety, and the quality of school leadership have a greater effect on mobility than salary.

#### **LESSON #8: ONLINE COMMUNITIES PROVIDE TIMELY, COST-EFFECTIVE MENTORING.**

Online learning communities can supplement in-person meetings and professional development training and extend the mentoring relationship. Online technology allows beginning teachers to pose questions in discussion groups and communicate with mentors at their convenience. It also helps immerse new teachers into a community of experienced teachers in which they move beyond the sup-

port of the individual mentor into collegial relationships that develop lifelong habits of learning.

One specific application of online learning is the ability to provide access to content-matched mentors, such as the NTC's *Electronic Mentoring for Student Success* program for new math and science teachers. In secondary schools, the goal is to match a new teacher with a mentor from the same content area. But that is not always possible. Even robust mentoring programs may be challenged to provide qualified mentors in specific content areas. For example, a district may not have sufficient breadth to have a mentor with a background in the physical sciences available to mentor a new chemistry teacher. In cases like these, local induction mentors can focus their support of the new teacher on pedagogy and an online mentor can focus on connecting subject matter to content-specific pedagogy.

Online learning communities offer access to resources — experienced teachers, content facilitators, and content experts — that are not always available within the district. These online communities extend and deepen in-person professional development trainings by scaffolding long-term knowledge construction around solutions to immediate pedagogical questions and providing a cost-effective solution to matching new teachers with content-specific mentors.

#### **LESSON #9: POLICY COMPLEMENTS PRACTICE.**

At last count, more than 30 states require some sort of mentored induction experience for new teachers. While we're glad to see the attention paid to induction, unfunded mandates that require that districts assign mentors to new teachers without regard to program quality won't improve teacher practice or student learning. In most cases, mentoring becomes "check the box" compliance. Many programs set their sights too low and overlook opportunities to influence the next generation of their teachers.

Robust induction programs that improve teacher practice and student learning don't come easy — and they don't come free of charge. Policy makers need to set the bar high and then point the way to resources if induction programs are going to realize their full impact. Clear expectations coupled with support for mentor released time and reduced teaching loads for beginning teachers, mentor professional development, and the collection of program impact data are critical. State-level infrastructure, such as well-designed program and teacher performance standards (far beyond the traditional behavioral checklists that foster compliance), and a system of communication and support for induction efforts can help.

Program leaders need tools to assess the performance of mentors, just as mentors assess new teach-

ers. When accountability is built into an induction program, participants can document growth toward defined objectives.

### LESSON #10: GOOD INDUCTION PROGRAMS ARE ACCOUNTABLE, NOT JUST COMPLIANT.

Strong induction programs need to embrace a robust, well-articulated vision and then work toward impacting teacher effectiveness and equitable student learning. Those are the only outcomes that count. State policies can guide the development of that vision, but accountability ultimately rests at the district level. Program leaders need to ask themselves if their induction efforts are making a difference in the instructional practices of new teachers and the academic lives of children regardless of their state policy context.

Accountability begins with clarity of expectations, roles, and responsibilities. Program leaders need to communicate expectations to everyone involved, especially to the program's mentors and new teachers. But expectations alone aren't enough. We need to equip our mentors with high-quality professional development, adequate time and tools to advance a new teacher's practice, and a supportive environment where they can share their work.

And, we need to collect data related to teacher retention, student achievement, job satisfaction, and student engagement. Human nature is such that our drive for success is enhanced when the outcome matters and when someone cares about whether we are successful. All of us must pay attention. Program leaders must pay attention to their mentors and new teachers; they must assume responsibility for supporting mentors in gathering and collecting data, making their work public, and regularly assessing their effectiveness. This sort of accountability transcends compliance and moves toward a cycle of continuous improvement — the essence of any strong induction program that seeks to accelerate new teacher effectiveness.

After two decades of teacher induction, I remain optimistic about the possibilities and welcome the current focus on our nation's teachers. Successful induction programs require the involvement of stakeholders throughout the district as well as policy makers across the country. They provide a lever for school change that builds leadership and encourages collaboration. Most important, successful induction programs incorporate both the passion of new teachers and the expertise of experienced teachers to ensure that all students in America receive the best education. **K**

See **Analysis of Student Work assessment tool next page.**

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# Analysis of Student Work

For use where content standards may not be appropriate (e.g. Art, P.E., Special Education using Alternate/Substitute/Functional Curriculum...)

Name: Reggie

Mentor: Ronnie

Grade Level/Subject Area: 7th-8th Grade, Special Education—  
Resource Specialist Program

Date: 11/21

Student Performance Area Selected for Analysis: 3 Paragraph Essay

Performance Objective: 4.1 Create multiple paragraph composition

**1. Using a district assessment or other appropriate rubric, describe expectations for student work/performance.**

Students will develop factual multiple paragraph compositions to include: min. 3 paragraphs, topic sent. @ beginning, intro., supportive facts, conclusion, correct indentation

**2. Sort the students' work and write the students' names in the appropriate column.**

objective not met	objective partially met	objective met	exceeding objective
<p>Christian Sam Alex Jose</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>29</u> % of class</p>	<p>Carl John Arron</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>21</u> % of class</p>	<p>Brian Raquel Jake Juan Ebony</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>36</u> % of class</p>	<p>Omar Frankie</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>14</u> % of class</p>

**3. Choose one sample from each category and describe the performance of each selected student.**

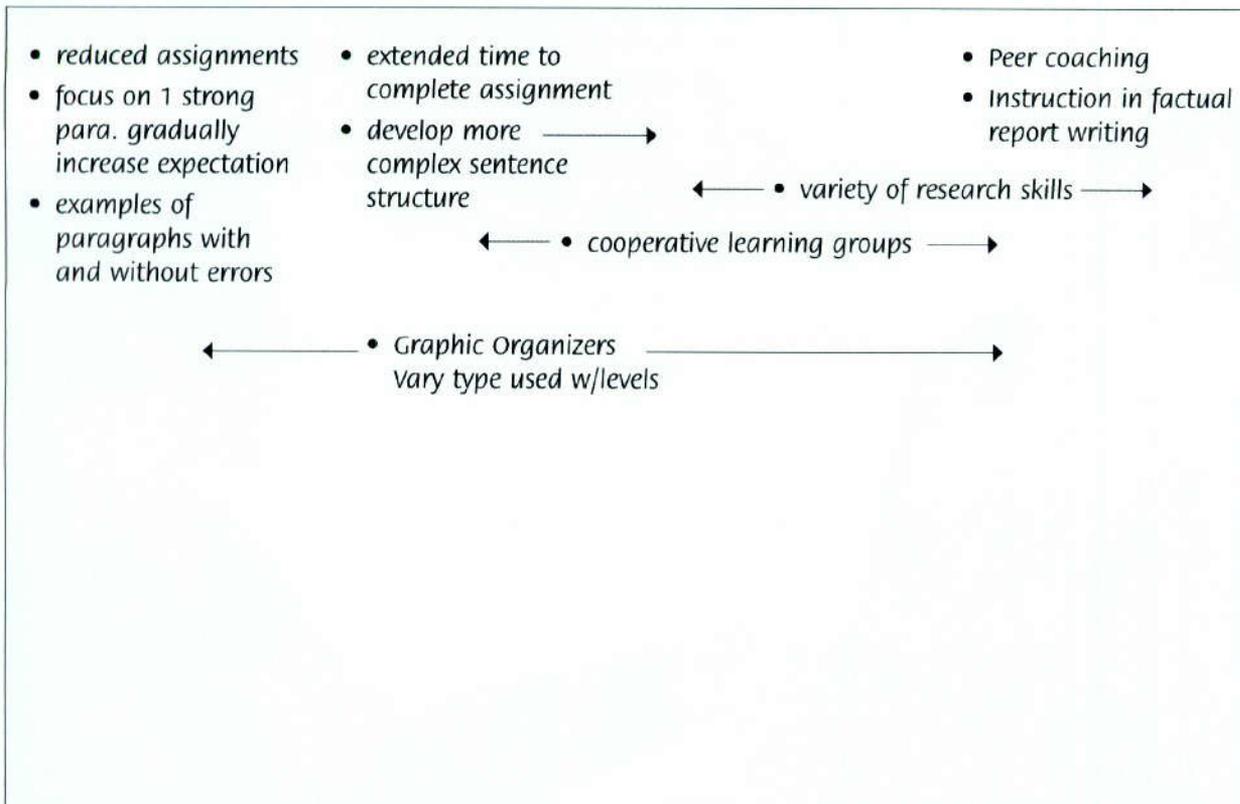
objective not met	objective partially met	objective met	exceeding objective
<p>Sam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 paragraph</li> <li>• unclear topic sentence</li> <li>• did not indent</li> <li>• no factual information</li> <li>• no supporting details</li> </ul>	<p>Carl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 strong paragraphs</li> <li>• brief conclusion</li> <li>• limited facts</li> <li>• clear topic sentence</li> <li>• indentation</li> </ul>	<p>Ebony:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 paragraphs</li> <li>• 1st sentence— →</li> <li>• intro., support (using facts) →</li> <li>• clear conclusion →</li> <li>• proper indentation →</li> </ul>	<p>Frankie:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 paragraphs</li> <li>• includes illustration</li> </ul>



**4. Describe the learning needs of the identified students.**

objective not met	objective partially met	objective met	exceeding objective
<p><b>Sam:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• examples (visual) that match criteria</li> <li>• 1:1 or peer tutor—paragraphs, review basic structure + how to gather factual info</li> </ul>	<p><b>Carl:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review conclusion + indentation</li> <li>• fact gathering tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ebony:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop more complex sent. structure</li> <li>• expand composition →</li> </ul>	<p><b>Frankie:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use variety or research tools</li> <li>• develop factual reports</li> </ul>

**5. Identify differentiated strategies/instruction to move students forward. Note any patterns and trends. Consider resources and/or personnel to support you.**





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