

# Induction Programs That Keep New Teachers Teaching and Improving

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*This article features schools and school districts with successful induction programs, all easily replicable. Increasingly, research confirms that teacher and teaching quality are the most powerful predictors of student success. In short, principals ensure higher student achievement by assuring better teaching. To do this, effective administrators have a new teacher induction program available for all newly hired teachers, which then seamlessly becomes part of the lifelong, sustained professional development program for the district or school. What keeps a good teacher are structured, sustained, intensive professional development programs that allow new teachers to observe others, to be observed by others, and to be part of networks or study groups where all teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect each other's work.*

The teachers hired today are the teachers for the next generation. Their success will determine the success of an entire generation of students. Their success can be ensured by providing them with a comprehensive, coherent professional development program.

The ultimate purpose of any school is the success and achievement of its students. Therefore, any efforts that are made must improve student achievement. Improving student achievement boils down to the teacher. What the teacher knows and can do in the classroom is the most important factor resulting in student achievement. Substantial evidence (Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996) shows that teacher qualification is tied to student achievement. Studies that use value-added student achievement data have found that student achievement gains are much more influenced by a student's assigned teacher than other factors like class size and class composition (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). Effective teachers manage to produce better achievement regardless of which curriculum materials, pedagogical approach, or reading program is selected (Allington, 2003).

Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2001) found that the magnitude of the teacher effect is striking. Based on research in Texas, the importance of having an effective teacher instead of an average teacher for 4 or 5 years in a row could essentially close the gap in math performance between students from

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low-income and high-income households. When he was at the University of Tennessee, William Sanders (1996) concluded that the children who had the most effective teachers 3 years in a row posted academic achievement gains that were 54% higher than the gains of children who had the least effective teachers 3 years in a row.

The Islip (NY) Public Schools (Wong, 2003a) implemented a 3-year induction program for new teachers in 1999. They experienced a concomitant improvement in student achievement, which they view as resulting from improved teacher performance. The difference in student achievement is shown in Figure 1.

This article is concerned with teacher induction; it is not about mentoring. A mentor is a component, albeit an important component, of an induction program (see Figure 2). Induction is a systemwide, coherent, comprehensive training and support process that continues for 2 or 3 years and then seamlessly becomes part of the lifelong professional development program of the district to keep new teachers teaching and improving toward increasing their effectiveness.

## **The Difference Between Induction and Mentoring**

There is much confusion and misuse of the words mentoring and induction. The two terms are not synonymous, yet they are often used incorrectly. Induction is a process—a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process—that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning program. Mentoring is an action. It is what mentors do. A mentor is a single person, whose basic function is to help a new teacher. Typically, the help is for survival, not for sustained professional learning that leads to becoming an effective teacher. Mentoring is not induction. A mentor is a component of the induction process (see Figure 3).

The issue is not mentoring; the issue is mentoring alone. Mentors are an important component, perhaps the most important component of an induction program, but they must be part of an induction process aligned to the district's vision, mission, and structure. For a mentor to be effective, the mentor must be used in combination with the other components of the induction process. In fact, in many induction programs, many of the mentors are the trainers of the other components. However, for a mentor to be effective, he or she must be trained to the mission and goals of the district. For instance, Prince George's County in Maryland provides 40 hours of training for each mentor. Forsyth County in Georgia provides 100 hours of training for their mentors.

In Hopewell, Virginia, each new teacher has access to a variety of support help. They each have a personal mentor to go to for immediate, simple help

**Figure 1. Teacher induction as a factor in student achievement.**

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<b>1991–1992</b>	<b>2001–2002</b>
<b>Before Induction</b>	<b>After Induction</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 40% Regents diploma rate</li><li>• 80 students enrolled in Advanced Placement classes with 50% achieving 3 or higher</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 70% Regents diploma rate</li><li>• 120 students enrolled in Advanced Placement classes with 73% achieving 3 or higher</li></ul>

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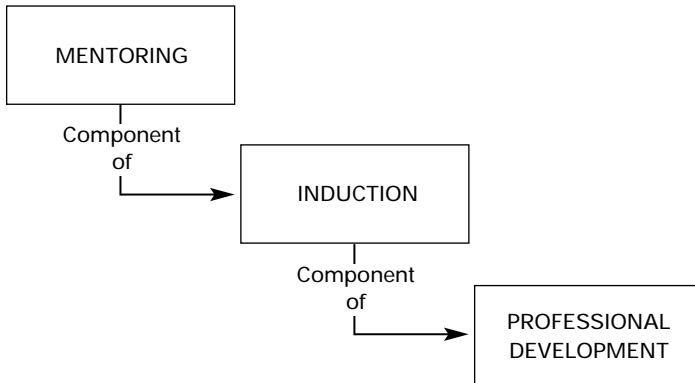
with procedural questions. An assigned mentor is especially important in helping to ease anxiety quickly and serve as a confidante when needed. The new teachers have access to four coaches in each school who have been trained and are compensated, each with expertise in classroom management and instructional skills. On each campus, there are also five lead teachers, also trained and compensated, with knowledge and skills in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and technology. In addition, the new teachers receive assistance from staff developers and administrators from both the central office and the building sites. Most important, there is an administrator who structures and coordinates the entire induction process.

With the plethora of alternative certification teachers, giving such a teacher a mentor alone to meet on occasion is not sufficient. Thus, the Educational Career Alternative Program (ECAP) in Fort Worth, Texas, which is responsible for 1,000 alternative certification teachers each year, provides intensive training with a comprehensive array of subjects, followed by classroom support during the internship year. Support is provided by field advisers (e.g., former principals, special education directors, superintendents, etc.) who observe classes frequently and can be contacted by e-mail or phone. Principals applaud the program and even comment that they wish their regular teachers could have the same training and support, as it has proven to be a good induction model.

The Dallas Public School’s New Teacher Initiative is a multifaceted program with a wide assortment of activities and people all integrated to help teachers, especially the alternative certification teachers. One facet of the initiative is the instructional facilitators who act as an emergency 911 squad of 12 well-trained teachers who will respond in less than 72 hours with a house call to the teacher who needs help. The facilitators work with the building administration, department chairperson, and other teachers to help the teacher in need.

The problem with many school districts is that their mentors are not part of a mentoring program, much less an induction program. The mentor is simply a veteran teacher assigned by a principal. The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission (1995) says, “Giving a teacher a mentor ‘only’

Figure 2. Mentoring, induction, and professional development relationship.



is a convenient and unconsciously foolish way for an administrator to divorce himself or herself from the leadership required to bring a beginning teacher up to professional maturity level.” The Commission found that principals and new teachers rated mentoring the least effective way to help new teachers. One out of four new teachers claimed that they received either poor support or no support from their mentors. Simply assigning a mentor alone does little to remedy the situation of new teachers becoming discouraged and leaving the profession.

Feiman-Nemser (1996) found that after reviewing 20 years of claims about mentoring, few studies existed that showed the context, content, and consequences of mentoring. Serpell and Bozeman (1999) reported on beginning teacher induction and stated that the mentoring component is essential to many induction programs, but it is not helpful in and of itself. Schlager, Fusco, Koch, Crawford, and Phillips (2003) stated that new teachers’ needs are so varied and immediate that the appropriate combination of expertise, experience, and cultural background is unlikely to reside in one mentor who is available when needed. Lehman (2003) wrote that every district should offer a multi-year induction program that provides systematic help and support, and this cannot be done adequately by another teacher with a full-time load who drops by when time permits or when a problem arises.

Britton, Paine, Raizen, and Pimm (2003) reported that currently, in more than 30 states, the universal practice seems remarkably narrow. Mentoring predominates and often there is little more to assist beginning teachers. In many schools, one-on-one mentoring is the dominant or sole strategy for supporting new teachers, often lacking real structure and relying on the willingness of the veteran and new teacher to seek each other out. Britton et al. further reported that many mentors are assigned to respond to a new teacher’s day-to-day crises and provide survival teaching tips. Mentors are simply a safety

**Figure 3. Difference between mentoring and induction.**

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<b>Mentoring</b>	<b>Comprehensive Induction</b>
Focuses on survival and support	Promotes career learning and professional development
Relies on a single mentor or shares a mentor with other teachers	Provides multiple support people and administrators—district and state assistance
Treats mentoring as an isolated phase	Treats induction as part of a lifelong professional development design
Limited resources spent	Investment in an extensive, comprehensive, and sustained induction program
Reacts to whatever arises	Acculturates a vision and aligns content to academic standards

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net for the new teachers. Mentoring, in and of itself, has no purpose, goal, or agenda for student achievement. Thus, mentoring alone fails to provide evidence of the connection between well-executed professional learning communities and student learning.

Journal articles typically do not mention the role of the principal, which is one key to why mentoring programs rarely succeed. The role of the principal is reduced to that of someone who assigns veteran teachers to new teachers, and then never oversees the process to see if the new teacher is successful and the resultant students are achieving. Saphier, Freedman, and Aschheim (2001) wrote, “for too many teachers, the mentoring pairing process results in a ‘blind date.’ The teachers do not know each other and neither partner has input into the pairing” (p. 36).

Despite the research indicating that mentoring alone has not been validated, states such as New York, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois, have mandated that by the 2003–2004 school year, all new teachers must have a mentor, nothing else, and states such as New Jersey still continue to mandate such an outdated methodology.

Susan Kardos stated, “we surveyed 110 new teachers in New Jersey. While 97% said they had a mentor, only 17% of the new teachers said that their mentors ever actually watched them teach in the classroom” (Drummond, 2002, Profession section, ¶3). Kardos (2003), with her colleague, Edward Liu (2003), expanded the survey to 486 teachers in four states—California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Michigan—and learned that 56% of new teachers report

that no extra assistance is available to them as new teachers and 43% of new teachers go through their entire first year of teaching without being observed by a mentor or a more experienced teacher.

In contrast to mentoring alone, Britton et al. (2003) reported on the induction programs of Switzerland, Japan, France, Shanghai (China), and New Zealand in a 4-year study. They found that, although the approach to the induction of new teachers in the five countries is diverse and disparate, they do have three major similarities that can provide staff developers responsible for induction programs with useful ideas from around the world:

1. **Comprehensive.** Their respective induction approaches are highly structured, comprehensive, rigorous, and seriously monitored. There are well-defined roles of their leadership personnel: staff developers, administrators, instructors, mentors, or *formateurs* (someone who helps to form a teacher in the French system).
2. **Professional learning.** The induction programs of the five countries each focus on professional learning, and delivering growth and professionalism to their teachers. They achieve this with an organized, sustained professional development system using a variety of methods. These countries all consider their induction program to be one phase or part of a total lifelong professional learning process, with many components in the induction and greater professional learning process.
3. **Collaboration.** Collaboration is the *forté* of each of the five induction programs. Collaborative group work is understood, fostered, and accepted as a part of the teaching culture in the five countries surveyed. There are shared experiences, shared practices, shared tools, and a shared language among all colleagues. And it is the function of the induction phase to engender this sense of group identity and treat new teachers as colleagues and cohorts.

In contrast, in U.S. schools isolation is the common thread and complaint among new teachers. "I never sat in anyone else's classroom even once," lamented first-year teacher Gail A. Saborio of Wakefield, Rhode Island. "Mine is the only teaching style I know. I felt that sometimes I was reinventing the wheel" (DePaul, 2000, p. 2). Educators must go beyond mentoring to comprehensive induction programs, if they hope to redesign professional development (Wong, 2001).

## **Induction: The Beginning Phase of Professional Development**

Current estimates show that over 50% of new teachers will leave in their first 5 years of teaching (Hare & Heap, 2001). The main problem is an exodus of new teachers from the profession, with more than 30% leaving within 5 years and, in low-income schools, as much as 50% or higher than affluent schools (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Christina Asquith lasted 1 year as a new

teacher in Philadelphia (Wong & Asquith, 2002). She wrote, “I received one day of orientation, during which I mostly filled out forms. No one officially welcomed me or the other three new teachers to my school. In fact, the veteran teachers received us with skepticism, at best. Apparently, I was assigned a mentor, but she was busy with her own classroom” (p. 22). Although stories like these are legion, in contrast, Wong (2002a) reported that, from 1999 to 2002, the Leyden High School District in Franklin Park, Illinois, hired 90 teachers and lost only 4, an attrition rate of 4.4%.

Here are attrition rates from some districts that had induction programs in the school year 2001–2002:

- Lafourche Parish Schools in Louisiana lost 1 teacher out of 46 hired
- Islip Public Schools in New York lost 3 teachers out of 68 hired
- Leyden High School District in Illinois lost 4 teachers out of 90 hired
- Geneva Community Schools in New York lost 5 teachers out of 67 hired
- Newport-Mesa School District in California lost 5 teachers out of 148 hired.

The Lafourche Parish Public Schools in Thibodaux, Louisiana, lost 1 teacher out of the 46 new teachers hired for the 2001–2002 school year. Even more remarkable, of the 279 teachers the district has hired in the past 4 years, only 11 have left teaching. Those are attrition rates of 2.2% and 3.9%, respectively. More importantly, more than 99% of the new teachers who have participated in the Lafourche induction program have successfully completed the performance-based Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program. The Lafourche induction program is so successful that Louisiana has adopted it as the statewide model for all school districts. (Information regarding the Louisiana model can be found at [www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/OQE/certification/LaFirst\\_r1.pdf](http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/OQE/certification/LaFirst_r1.pdf).)

What these districts with low attrition rates have in common are comprehensive, coherent, and sustained induction programs, which is the typical and ubiquitous process used by all profit and nonprofit organizations, large and small businesses, and even sports teams, professional or Little League. They train and continue to train (Breux & Wong, 2003) their employees or team members according to a structured training program that is part of the induction into the organization’s infrastructure, vision, and culture. Teachers are no different. They want training, they want to fit in, and they want their students to achieve. For the most part, education has failed to recognize what other industries have known almost from the start: formalized sustained training matters. Without carefully thought out professional development programs, school districts will not have effective teachers who can produce student achievement results. A study of seven urban districts (Cross & Rigden,

2002) reported that the only reform effort that clearly resulted in student achievement gains had clear instructional expectations, supported by extensive professional development, over a period of several years.

## Elements of Successful Induction Programs

Induction is a comprehensive, multiyear process designed to train and acculturate new teachers in the academic standards and vision of the district. No two induction programs are exactly alike; each caters to the individual culture and specific needs of its unique school or district. However, there are several common components that underlie the most successful induction programs (see Figure 4):

- Begin with an initial 4 or 5 days of induction before school starts
- Offer a continuum of professional development through systematic training over a period of 2 or 3 years
- Provide study groups in which new teachers can network and build support, commitment, and leadership in a learning community
- Incorporate a strong sense of administrative support
- Integrate a mentoring component into the induction process
- Present a structure for modeling effective teaching during inservices and mentoring
- Provide opportunities for inductees to visit demonstration classrooms.

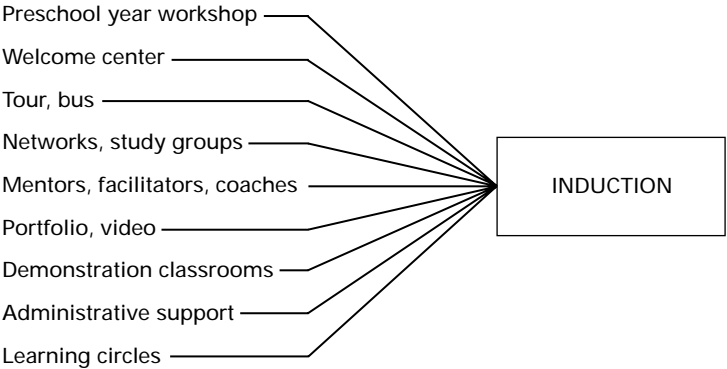
Fullan (2001) stated that sustained success is never just one special event, meeting, or activity; rather, it is a journey of recursive decisions and actions. Britton et al. (2003) reported that many countries outside of the United States already see mentoring as just one piece of the teacher induction puzzle. Teachers receive a broad range of support services as groups of teachers meet weekly with similar groups from other schools, expanding their guidance beyond what can be provided by only a single mentor within their own school.

To produce effective teachers, there must be a professional development program that improves professional skills for educators at every point in their careers. Kardos (2003), in her aforementioned survey of 486 teachers, concluded that few schools acknowledge that learning the art and craft of teaching happens over time. Learning to teach is a developmental process that takes several years. What is important in the life of a new teacher is the presence of a district articulated, coherent, lifelong professional development program.

In Tucson, Arizona, the Flowing Wells Schools' professional development department is organized under the banner of the Institute for Teacher Re-



**Figure 4. Some components of induction programs**



newal and Growth, of which the new teacher induction program is the first phase. The induction program of 5 to 8 years is followed by lifelong, in-house course offerings that are designed for veteran teacher renewal and growth. This program can explain why Flowing Wells has produced 12 finalists for teachers-of-the-year for the state of Arizona, more than any other school district. Such results are arguably the result of an organized, sustained professional development program. Their induction program is so well-known and replicated that they hold an annual workshop to explain their structure to other interested parties (Breux & Wong, 2003).

After attending one of these workshops, a staff developer shared the following:

Words will not adequately describe how impressed I am with Flowing Wells. What amazes me is that no matter who you speak with, from the superintendent to the principals, teachers, students, even the food service workers, everyone truly shares and vocalizes the same vision and mission. The induction program is an incredibly designed, implemented, and focused plan of staff development. The support for new teachers (and all teachers) in Flowing Wells is so evident, and so powerful. When you speak of a school district as a family, Flowing Wells truly exemplifies that.

Whereas the Flowing Wells induction program is orchestrated by a school district, the state of Connecticut has a rather impressive statewide process. Youngs (2003), while researching Connecticut's induction program, found that new teachers must complete a 3-year induction process before they are fully certified. The process is called the Connecticut Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program for new teachers. It was started around 1985,

championed by the efforts of Mark Shedd and Gerald Tirozzi, respective and succeeding commissioners of education.

At the site level, BEST requires that districts provide each new teacher a mentor or a team of mentors for at least the first year of the program. In their second year, new teachers in most content areas must complete a content-specific portfolio, designed to assess their pedagogical knowledge and skill. These entries include a description of their teaching context, a set of lesson plans, two videotapes of instruction during the unit, samples of student work, and teacher commentaries on their planning, instruction, and assessment of student progress. Teams of teachers hired and trained by the Connecticut Department of Education review the portfolios and videos. Teachers who do not receive a passing score, after a second attempt, are denied a license, and may no longer teach in the state's public schools.

Thus, school districts in Connecticut are required to develop a comprehensive, sustained induction program to ensure that all elements for preparing their new teachers are aligned to an effective education system that prepares students, teachers, and schools to succeed. This confirms the research of Hiebert, Gallimore, and Stigler (2002) that consistently supports the need for systematic induction of new teachers and the ongoing professional development of all teachers.

## Teachers Learn Best From Collaboration

To keep good teachers, educators need to realize that people crave connection (Wong, 2003a). New teachers want more than a job. They want to experience success. They want to contribute to a group. They want to make a difference. The best induction programs provide connection because they are structured within learning communities where new and veteran teachers interact and treat each other with respect and are valued for their respective contributions. Teachers remain in teaching when they belong to professional learning communities that have, at their heart, high-quality interpersonal relationships founded on trust and respect. Thus, collegial interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003), reporting on their study of 50 teachers in Massachusetts, concluded, "Our work suggests that schools would do better to rely less on one-to-one mentoring and, instead, develop schoolwide structures that promote the frequent exchange of information and ideas among novice and veteran teachers" (p. 608).

Garet, Porter, Desmoine, Birman, and Kwang (2001), from a study with 1,027 public school math and science teachers in kindergarten through grade 12, reported that teachers learn more: in teacher networks and study groups than with mentoring; in professional development programs that are longer, sustained, and intensive than shorter ones; when there is collective

participation; and when they perceive teacher learning and development as part of the coherent professional development program. Thus, successful induction programs:

- Have networks that create learning communities
- Treat every colleague as a potential valuable contributor
- Turn ownership of learning over to the learners in study groups
- Create learning communities where everyone, new teachers as well as veteran teachers, gains knowledge
- Demonstrate that quality teaching becomes not just an individual responsibility, but a group responsibility as well.

In the aforementioned Islip Public Schools, the induction program features collaborative study group activities. During their comprehensive, 3-year induction program, new teachers proceed through their tenure-track program in which team-building activities are included to promote a sense of cohesion and belonging as they build relationships in support groups. Collegial circles meet informally in between formal monthly meetings. John Christie, a social studies teacher, noted, "At Islip, the induction program allowed me to share new teacher concerns, realize I wasn't alone, and discover solutions in a collegial environment." Lorraine Knoblauch, a new teacher, stated, "The best part of this year was how our relationships with the other teachers developed. We really have developed into a family. We share concerns and triumphs and meet after school on many occasions. The connections are invaluable."

The Port Huron area schools in Michigan (Wong, 2002c) began a new teacher induction program in 1991. The program is a cooperative effort between the school's staff development department and the teachers' union. William Kimball, who was responsible for initiating the program and who became the district superintendent in 1998, remarked, "After 7 years, there were more induction-bred teachers than veteran teachers in our system, and you can see it today by the change in our culture." Cathy Lozen, director of the induction program, commented that at the end of one of the 4-day, pre-school year workshops, she returned to her office to find flowers from all the participants and a card thanking those responsible for the workshop. The card read, "We now feel like welcomed members of the Port Huron family." Lozen added, "We had become a cohesive and caring group in 4 days. We all bonded and our district is truly better for it. What a feeling!"

Because of the success of districts such as these in producing effective teachers, educators know the following:

- The era of isolated teaching is over. Good teaching thrives in a collaborative learning environment created by teachers and school leaders

working together to improve learning in strong professional learning communities.

- Teachers thrive when they feel connected to their schools and colleagues. This is only possible when there is a strong professional learning community.
- Teachers want and need to belong. If they do not belong in a positive way, they will belong in a negative way.
- Effective schools have a high-performance culture, with a trademark of collaborative responsibility for the learning of all students.
- Teachers remain with a district when they feel supported by administrators, have strong bonds with their colleagues, and are collectively committed to pursuing a common vision for student learning in a performance-oriented culture as they build capacity and community.

What keeps good teachers teaching is structured, sustained, intensive professional development programs that allow new teachers to observe others, to be observed by others, and to be part of networks or study groups where all teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect each other's work. Fullan (2003) stated that what is needed is a "distributed leadership," which requires people to operate in networks of shared and complementary expertise rather than in hierarchies.

Teachers express more satisfaction in schools when schools give them more time to work and learn together, and when teaching teams can work with groups of students. Palombo (2003) reported how the Ipswich (MA) Public Schools designed a professional development model where they publish their model lessons and curriculum materials resulting from collaborative action research and workshops. These documented lessons help solidify teachers' knowledge, demonstrate what they learned, and allow that learning to be shared with other teachers in a useful and efficient way. Professional development is effective when it focuses on student learning, promotes collaboration, and ensures sustainability.

The Annenberg Challenge Foundation (Rothman, 2002/2003) reported on high schools that are reforming teacher learning by bringing teachers together to focus on improving instruction. Teachers work together, creating collaborative teams that analyze and critique each other's work. They situate collegial teacher learning at the school as a routine part of the workday and make public the work of teaching, sharing with the larger community what has been learned. Collaboration supports sustainability where teachers feel they are working together to benefit students and the district at large with a collegial mindset and in a collaborative culture.

## How Principals Can Implement an Induction Program

A comprehensive professional development program is required to prepare effective teachers. Elmore (2002) wrote, “Schools that seem to do best are those that have a clear idea of what kind of instructional practice they want to produce, and then design a structure to go with it” (Introduction, ¶1). The task is to engage in practice around the notion of “SUSTAINED and continuous progress toward a performance goal over time” (Introduction, ¶5).

In their examination of and reporting about more than 30 new teacher induction programs, Breaux and Wong (2003) discovered the inevitable presence of a leader. They do not usurp their leadership role by simply giving each new teacher a mentor without rigorous monitoring. Outstanding administrator leaders have a deep understanding of the teachers and students they lead. They work with a firm conviction that all teachers have the potential to become effective teachers. They are eager to collaborate with their teachers and even teach them. They are active learners themselves, cultivating their own professional growth throughout their careers. Finally, they are role models, instilling a passion for learning in their teachers.

What new teachers need is sustained, school-based professional development guided by expert colleagues. Principals and teacher leaders have the largest roles to play in fostering such experiences (Johnson & Kardos, 2002):

- Administrators, staff developers, and teacher leaders must have the knowledge and skills to direct an induction process that creates and supports a results-driven, team-focused, professional learning and collaborative culture that is part of every teacher’s work day.
- Only with a structured, sustained, multiyear induction program will a professional culture be created in which teachers thrive and grow throughout their careers, a critical element in reducing the exceedingly high rate of teacher attrition, resulting in quality teaching in all classrooms.

Charlotte Neill, assistant superintendent of personnel and director of the Carlsbad, New Mexico, New Teacher Induction Program, noted,

We teach our teachers how to teach the required benchmarks and standards, manage the classroom environment, set appropriate procedures, and maximize instructional time. We are a very cohesive district and we want new staff to feel wanted, valued, and respected by the way we support them through the induction process. We want them to be comfortable to take the risks of trying new things and learning from their peers and their coaches.

In the 2001–2002 school year, Carlsbad hired 30 new teachers and lost only 1. The teachers are not only learning in the induction program, they are staying in Carlsbad.

Kathryn Robbins, superintendent of the Leyden High Schools District 212, Franklin Park, IL, who directs the district's induction program, says, "Our induction program has proved to be one of our best investments. Every district should absolutely be doing it." All the teachers attend Leyden University, an in-house, lifelong learning community. This program capitalizes on the fact that successful teachers stay in districts where administrators are visible, academic leaders.

Three-time winner of the National School of Excellence award, the Homewood-Flossmoor High School District, Flossmoor, IL, calls their sustained professional development plan Homewood-Flossmoor University, their euphemism for all the components that make up a lifelong, collaborative learning academy. Using the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory's professional development plan, *Professional Development: Learning From the Best* (Hassel, 1999), administrators determine their professional development needs with the following formula:

What are our student performances?	-	What are our actual learning gaps?	=	What are our student educational goals?
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What staff skills are needed to close student gaps?	-	What are our actual staff skills?	=	Our professional development needs
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The Homewood-Flossmoor High School District uses this model to formulate a clear plan of what kind of instructional practice they want to promote, from which they design a structure with a clear plan for improvement (Martin, 2003). They determine which leadership and instructional skills are needed to improve and then engage in sustained and continuous progress toward a performance goal over time. The Homewood-Flossmoor New Teacher Induction Program immediately transmits and acculturates the newly hired teachers into the educational goals, mission, and beliefs of the district (Wong, 2003c). The Homewood-Flossmoor new teacher retention rate has improved dramatically with the advent of an induction program. They have improved from a loss of 64% of those hired in 1999 (many went to teach in other districts) to a zero net loss of those hired in 2002.

Thus, to acculturate new teachers into a school, the school or district needs to ask:

- Is there a clear plan that includes a professional development needs assessment process?
- Is there a clear plan that includes professional development goals and the long-term plans of the school and district?

- Is there a clear plan that includes professional development to build teacher skills that will result in student achievement?
- Does the professional development program build on the induction program?

Effective districts connect their teachers' professional development to district goals and student needs. These goals and needs are formulated from collected data, and implemented to engage in practice that results in sustained and continuous progress for both teachers and students. These districts have a coherent and organized set of strategies and have a vision that guides instructional improvement. It is basic: students learn what they are taught; so, students will learn more if they are taught well. Thus, how well teachers are prepared to be effective in the classroom determines student achievement.

Belonging, a basic human need, translates into keeping skilled teachers when sustained, structured, intensive training programs are in place that prepare new teachers and renew veteran teachers for the rigor of the classroom. Induction programs provide that connection because they are structured around a learning community where new and veteran teachers are treated with respect and their contributions are valued.

Successful teachers, especially in hard-to-staff schools, must have strong leaders. Good teachers do not choose to remain at schools where principals perform poorly. Effective leadership means involving teachers in key instructional decisions and providing opportunities for teachers to learn from each other. Good teachers know that they must have colleagues who have similar standards and expectations. Accomplished teachers are more likely to choose to work in schools when there will be a "critical mass" of like-minded colleagues who share their commitment to student achievement and where the principal is the key to establishing this commitment to teacher improvement and student achievement. The bottom line is good teachers make the difference. Trained teachers are effective teachers. Districts that provide structured, sustained training for their teachers achieve what every school district seeks to achieve—improving student learning. ✍

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