

# Educational Leadership

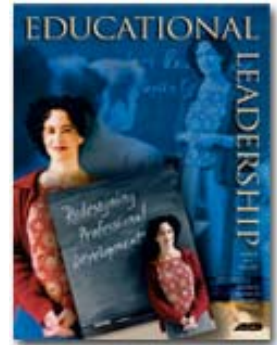
March 2002 | Volume 59 | Number 6

Redesigning Professional Development Pages 52-55

## Induction: The Best Form of Professional Development

**New teachers need more than mentors; they need induction programs that acculturate them to the school and equip them for the classroom.**

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March 2002

You don't wait until after school begins and new teachers are in trouble to start a professional development program. Instead, you create a culture of professional growth and lifelong learning before beginning teachers ever see their first class. The best way to support, develop, and cultivate an attitude of lifelong learning in beginning teachers is through a new teacher induction program focused on teacher training, support, and retention.

What makes a successful induction program? The best programs kick off with four or five days of workshops before school begins. They offer new teachers systematic training over two or three years. They have administrative support. They integrate a mentoring component and a structure for modeling effective teaching during inservice and mentoring experiences. They also include opportunities for inductees to visit demonstration classrooms.

Although induction programs differ from school district to school district, they share certain characteristics. For example, all successful induction programs help new teachers establish effective classroom management procedures, routines, and instructional practices. They help develop teachers' sensitivity to and understanding of the community, as well as their passion for lifelong learning and professional growth. Successful programs also promote unity and teamwork among the entire learning community.

If we hope to redesign professional development, we must go beyond mentoring to comprehensive induction programs. You don't prepare lifelong learners—much less leaders—simply by giving them a mentor to call when they are in trouble. Induction includes all the activities that train and support new teachers, and it acculturates them to the mission and philosophy of their school and district. And the good news is that teachers stay where they feel successful, supported, and part of a team working toward the achievement of common goals.

### Exemplary Induction Programs

**Flowing Wells School District Tucson, Arizona**

More than 6,000 students attend the Flowing Wells School District's six elementary schools, junior high school, and high school on the northwest side of Tucson, Arizona. Despite the community's lower-middle-income status, the district has produced 12 Arizona teachers of the year. Since the early 1980s, the five-year Flowing Wells induction program, directed by Susie Heintz, has taken teachers through five stages: novice, advanced beginner, competent teacher, proficient teacher, and expert.

The induction program kicks off with several days of activities for novice teachers before the beginning of the school year. Induction activities include

- A bus tour—The district superintendent acts as a tour guide on a chartered bus trip through the school district. A trivia contest introduces new teachers to the district's culture. For example, one question asks, How did the Flowing Wells School District get its name? (In 1881, the Allison brothers discovered water at the base of Sentinel Park.)
- Demonstration classrooms—Master teachers set up their rooms to model the first day of school in an effective classroom. Afterward, observers can discuss with the master teacher the strategies that the new teachers found useful.
- A SPA (Special Professional Assistance) Day with a mentor—New teachers and their mentors observe each other teach. After observations, mentors and protégés have lunch together.
- A graduation luncheon—At the end of several days of new teacher induction activities, Flowing Wells honors new teachers with a graduation celebration in a beautifully decorated boardroom. Induction graduates sit with their principals and district administrators and enjoy a formal, candlelit luncheon. The superintendent presents framed certificates to the graduates.

Toby Gregory, who teaches at Flowing Wells High School, says that after induction he was so excited to be an English teacher that I went in [to the classroom], started with a few procedures, and then went right into teaching English, which is what I had been waiting to do.

The Flowing Wells induction process is so successful that educators from around the country come to the district to attend an annual workshop to learn how to implement such a program in their own districts.

### **Lafourche Parish Public Schools Thibodaux, Louisiana**

If you dare to teach, you must never cease to learn. Lafourche Parish, located southwest of New Orleans along the banks of the Bayou Lafourche, educates 15,200 students—72 percent white and 28 percent nonwhite—in 30 schools. Trainers for the Lafourche Parish Public Schools induction program strive to immerse new teachers in the district's lifelong learning culture and help them become part of a cohesive, supportive instructional team. The program has become an important teacher recruitment tool for the district.

The Lafourche Parish program begins with a highly structured four-day training session for all

new teachers before school begins and includes three years of ongoing training and support. Three district-level curriculum coordinators oversee the entire program and provide all the training to the new teachers, principals, curriculum facilitators, and mentors. Lafourche Parish also offers demonstration classrooms and a graduation ceremony at which new teachers receive certificates of achievement along with hugs and words of encouragement from master teachers. Additional induction offerings include

- Monthly support group meetings—At district and school-site meetings, new teachers can discuss their concerns, challenges, and successes and receive ongoing guidance and support.
- Curriculum facilitators—In addition to mentors, both new and veteran teachers have daily access to on-site curriculum facilitators. These master teachers provide ongoing support, teach demonstration lessons, conduct informal teacher observations, and offer constructive suggestions for improvement.

One result of the district's emphasis on new teacher induction is the overwhelming enthusiasm of new teachers, mentors, school and district administrators, school board members, and the community. New teachers use a variety of effective teaching techniques that they learn in the district's induction program, which is very different from the old lecture-and-endless-worksheets approach. Principals say that induction-trained teachers are much more classroom-ready from day one. A telling statistic: More than 99 percent of new teachers who have participated in the district's induction program have successfully completed the performance-based Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program, required for teacher certification in the state.

Another outgrowth of the induction program is a drop in the teacher attrition rate. Before implementing the program in 1996, Lafourche Parish had a 51 percent annual teacher attrition rate. That rate decreased to 15 percent almost immediately upon implementing the program. Today, the district's teacher attrition hovers around 7 percent—a decrease of approximately 80 percent since the inception of the induction program. In fact, the Lafourche Parish induction program is so successful that Louisiana has adopted it as the statewide model for all school districts.<sup>1</sup>

### **Port Huron Area Schools Port Huron, Michigan**

The Port Huron Area School District serves 11,850 students in 13 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 2 high schools. Port Huron personnel developed the district's induction program in conjunction with the Port Huron Education Association, the area teachers' union. The joint work of the education association and school district administrators models teamwork as a way of achieving mutually desired goals.

Cathy Lozen, director of Port Huron's new teacher induction program for 10 years, says,

One-shot staff development meetings do not work. We wanted a sustained training program, one where we could keep new teachers close to us for a year, nurture them, and take them step-by-step through the year—and beyond. Then they'd have

a really solid foundation about the district, about teaching, and about our expectations. We're kind of a "no excuses" district; the job of the teacher is to help all students succeed.

The program begins with a four-day orientation before the beginning of the school year that includes workshops introducing new teachers to district departments and programs, principles of classroom management, professional standards and expectations, and effective preparation for the first day and week of school. The induction program continues with monthly seminars during the teachers' first year. In addition, the Port Huron Education Association appoints support or mentor teachers for every newly hired teacher.

Describing the results of the induction workshops, Lozen said, "We became a cohesive and caring group in four days. We all bonded, and our district is truly better for it. What a feeling!"

The district's induction program has reaped additional unforeseen benefits. William Kimball, responsible for initiating the program, became the superintendent of Port Huron in 1998. Commenting on the induction program, he said,

After seven 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.

## **Treating New Teachers with Dignity**

Annette L. Breaux, director of the Lafourche Parish new teacher induction program, writes

- Every child—and every new teacher—should be treated with dignity and respect.
- Every child—and every new teacher—can learn and succeed.
- Every new teacher is a human resource, a person who has invested years in preparing for a life dedicated to helping young people; we have a responsibility to ensure that these new teachers will learn and succeed, just as we have a responsibility to ensure that every child will learn and succeed.
- New teachers must be trained if we want them to succeed; it is much better to train new teachers and risk losing them than not to train them and risk keeping them.
- An induction process is the best way to send a message to your teachers that you value them and want them to succeed and stay.<sup>2</sup>

If we want quality teachers in our classrooms, we must make new teacher training, support, and retention top priorities. School districts that develop and implement new teacher induction programs send a message to teachers that the district values them, wants them to excel, and hopes they will stay.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Information on Louisiana's induction program is available at [www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/OQE/certification/LaFirst\\_r1.pdf](http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/OQE/certification/LaFirst_r1.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Breaux, A. L., & Wong, H. K. (2002). *New teacher induction: How to train, support, and retain new teachers* (p. i). Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong.

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