



# Play<sub>for</sub> Keeps

*A strong induction program helps teachers acclimate and continue to learn and helps principals keep the teachers they hire. All in all, it's an investment that pays off for everyone—especially students.*

BY HARRY K. WONG

**If you want to win the game of education,** you need to play for keeps. But current estimates show that between 40% and 50% of new teachers will leave the profession during the first seven years of their career, and more than two-thirds of those will leave in the first four years of teaching. In urban schools, up to 17% will leave within their first year of teaching (Hare & Heap, 2001).

In contrast, Leyden High School District in Franklin Park, IL, has an attrition rate of only 4.4%—in the past three years, 86 of the 90 new teachers hired stayed in the district. Lafourche Parish Public Schools, in Thibodaux, LA, 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 four years, only 11 have left teaching. Those are attrition rates of 2.2% and 3.9%, respectively.

The Leyden and Lafourche districts have something in common that explains their low attrition rates: new-teacher induction programs.

Kathryn Robbins, superintendent of Leyden, who runs the induction program, says, "Our induction program has proved to be one of our best investments. Every district should absolutely be doing it." In the Leyden High School

District, 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.

The Lafourche induction program—Framework of Inducting, Retaining, and Supporting Teachers (FIRST)—is so successful that Louisiana has adopted it as the statewide model for all school districts.

More important, 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, which is required for teacher certification in the state.

When a new teacher is hired, an administrator can do three things:

**Nothing** but give the teacher an assignment. Ineffective teaching and lack of student achievement will bounce right back to the principal. Teachers quickly leave situations where their principal does not have a coherent vision.

**Provide a mentor** and hope that the mentor gives adequate support. Mentoring has been in vogue for 20 years, and it alone does not guarantee a successful induction period for new teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 1996).

**Provide an induction program** that will train, support, and retain new teachers. The goal of a structured, comprehensive, sustained induction program is to produce effective teachers. Effective teachers are successful; students of effective teachers are successful; and, most important, successful teachers stay.

What Is Induction?

Induction is the process of training, supporting, and retaining new teachers by:

- Providing instruction in classroom management and effective teaching techniques
- Reducing the difficulty of the transition into teaching
- Maximizing the retention rate of highly qualified teachers.

A good induction process begins before the first day of school and typically runs for two or three years. The new-teacher induction program of the Community Consolidated School District 15, Palatine, IL, is a mandatory four-year program, at the end of which the teachers are prepared to apply for national board certification.

And the quintessential induction program, which has been in existence for 17 years, is the five-year program at the Flowing Wells School District in Tucson, AZ, which aims to turn novice teachers into experts. Flowing Wells' model is so widely copied that its administrators hold an annual workshop to answer all the inquiries they receive.

Teachers Stay When They Are Trained

In every aspect of the real world, people are trained. Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and American Airlines train their employees. Even local small businesses—real estate offices, dentists, and grocery stores—train their new workers. Compare this with many schools where training is nonexistent. It's little wonder that many teachers don't succeed—and neither do their students—and quickly leave the profession. Then, administrators hire more unsupported teachers. As a result, many promising new teachers leave the profession after only a few years. The classroom becomes a battlefield, and the strategy is to keep sending in fresh troops. The military spends considerably more time training, supporting, and retaining its troops than we do for our teachers. All too commonly, new teachers are hired, handed a key, given an assignment, and told to go forth and teach. Many are never introduced to their colleagues nor even walked to their room.

As one teacher said, "I walked to the other building in a daze. Wasn't somebody going to walk over with me and tell me a little bit about what to expect? Wasn't anyone going to show me where the bathroom was or tell me what the other teachers do for lunch? Wasn't I going to get a few words of encouragement, or, for heaven's sake, an idea of what time the first period started? I felt very alone. I started to really understand that I was totally on my own."

**Mentoring Itself Is Not Induction**

It is important to understand that one day of orientation or

simply assigning a teacher to a mentor is not induction. Orientation and mentoring are components of a comprehensive, sustained induction program.

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission says, "Giving a teacher a mentor 'only' 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" (North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission, 1995). The commission has found that principals and new teachers rated mentoring as 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 (North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission, 1995). Simply assigning a mentor does little to remedy the likelihood that new teachers will become discouraged and leave the profession. Even worse, by only assigning a mentor, principals relinquish their responsibilities as educational and instructional leaders and cast their problem teachers on mentors, who are expected to solve their inadequacies.

Inherent in the title of *Beyond Mentoring* (Saphier, Freedman, & Aschheim, 2001) is the direction leaders and well-informed administrators are moving. If we are to train, support, and retain new teachers, we must recognize that mentoring is only one component of a successful induction program. If this is not taken into account, there is the danger that mentors will be viewed incorrectly as substitutes for the school community of teachers, teacher leaders, administrators, staff developers, and others who have the professional responsibility to help new teachers become successful.

Components of Successful Induction Programs

All new teaching employees should be formally welcomed and introduced to the district's mission, philosophies, procedures, and culture. New teachers need initial training in classroom management to ensure their success from the very first day of school, an understanding of exactly what will be expected of them, and the necessary ongoing training and support to carry out those duties and responsibilities. They need the guiding hands of mentors as well as the understanding and support of administrators, faculty members, and staff members. They need to feel accepted as vital contributors to the overall effectiveness of their schools. When they have all these things *and* receive affirmation of their success, they will stay.

No two induction programs are exactly alike; each caters to the individual culture and specific needs of its school or district. However, there are several common components that underlie the most successful induction programs. The following are all components of more than 30 replicable induction programs (Breaux & Wong, 2002):

- Four or five days of induction workshops before school begins



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- Professional development through systematic training over two or three years
- Strong administrative support
- Mentoring
- Modeling effective teaching during inservice training and mentoring
- Opportunities to visit demonstration classrooms.

**Islip Public Schools New Teacher Induction Program**  
 The Islip (NJ) School District has a comprehensive, three-year induction program that begins with an orientation program before the first year begins and continues as ongoing professional development throughout the initial tenure school years.

**Year 1:** Teachers attend a three-day orientation that is facilitated by the director of human resources. The orientation combines basic procedural information; introductions; a bus tour through the community; team-building activities; food; first-day advice; icebreakers; organizational strategies; and meetings with central office administrators, the payroll account clerk, building principals, and the union president. The new teachers proceed through the three-year tenure-track program, building relationships in support groups. They meet monthly with the director of human resources and focus on *The Effective Teacher* video series as a catalyst for conversation and discussion. Collegial circles are held between formal monthly meetings.

**Year 2:** Teachers have a one-day orientation that includes an introduction to Linda Albert's Cooperative Discipline program, which becomes the focus of monthly meetings. The program addresses classroom management techniques and interventions for encouraging appropriate behavior and understanding that discipline means "to teach." Team-building activities are also included to promote a sense of cohesion and belonging.

**Year 3:** Teachers attend a one-day orientation that is facilitated by the director of human resources that focuses on reviewing the intervention strategies espoused by Cooperative Discipline. Third-year teachers also meet monthly, but each meeting is shaped by a needs assessment, and has appropriate workshop presenters.

A newsletter called TIPS (Teacher Induction Program Stuff) is distributed three times throughout the school year to new staff members and includes information about teaching strategies, cooperative learning, and district information.

At the end of the year, after the board of education has approved tenure for eligible teachers, a celebration is held. The theme one year was "I Believe," based on Nancy Sifford Alana's poem from *The Effective Teacher* series. Each teacher was asked to create an "I Believe" statement that, with their picture, was presented to the community as they received their "diploma" of "That Noble Title, Teacher" by Trish Marcuzzo.

**New Haven Unified School District, CA**

Another example of a school district able to keep many of its new teachers is New Haven, a district that has a total grasp of its system. Perhaps this is why every school in the district has been recognized as a Distinguished School by the state of California and 5 of the 12 schools in the district have received national Blue Ribbon awards. Chris Ryan, a language arts teacher at Logan High School, in Union City, CA, summarizes the overall atmosphere by saying, "Don't come to New Haven if you want to be a good teacher; come to New Haven if you want to be the best teacher you can possibly be. The atmosphere is creative, energetic, supportive, and challenging. Working here keeps me on the 'high' road."

The school district has used the Internet to develop a world-class recruitment program that has received an award

for exemplary use of technology in recruiting. There is no recruitment problem in the New Haven Unified School District because retention is so high.

#### Principals Need Induction, Too

In December 2001, Steve Zickafoose, director of the new-teacher induction program for Manatee County, FL, received the New Staff Developer award from the National Staff Development Council. Zickafoose is one of many who have already started to think way beyond mentoring. He calls his program a complete professional development framework that encompasses induction for professionals—from teacher's aides to principals and beyond.

A study from Harvard University's Principals' Center reports that more than half of the nation's 92,000 principals are expected to retire or quit in the next five years (Portner, 2001). With many principals retiring, one new principal said, "I was given a set of keys and told to take over the school. There was no induction program for principals—not even a mentor." But many associations and schools are building their own programs:

- Wake County (NC) Public School System has teamed with North Carolina State University to create a training program, Leaders for a New Millennium, to groom new principals.
- The Louisiana Principal Internship Program is a mandatory induction program for principals. It provides new principals with two years of ongoing training and support in the areas of leadership and management. Much of the program exists as a virtual network that principals can use to work on online modules and stay in direct contact with their peers through the state.
- New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) is a national non-profit organization devoted to attracting and preparing the next generation of outstanding leaders for urban public schools. NLNS, which has offices in Boston and New York, aggressively recruits educators and provides rigorous hands-on training for them to become principals of urban schools. Its induction process includes three components: recruitment, training, and support.

#### How an Induction Program Can Keep Teachers

As a central office staff developer, I truly believe in the induction process. If you do not transmit a district's culture, mission, and beliefs as employees join the family, then when do you?

—Joan Hearne, Wichita (KS) Public Schools

The bottom line is that there is no way to create good schools without good teachers and active administrators. The best way to have effective teachers is to create a culture of effective teaching and to train your new teachers with an induction program. You know you've succeeded with your teachers when they say, as Carla Holzer of Thibodaux (LA)

High School did, "On the last day of our induction program, I felt that I had definitely made the right choice of a career. I have seen the joy that teaching can bring to both teachers and students, and I can't wait to begin what I know will be a very rewarding career."

An induction program will foster a culture of effective teaching. Without effective teachers, we cannot and will not have effective schools. And with an effective school, your teachers are there for keeps. PL

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#### RESOURCES

Louisiana FIRST [www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/OQE/certification/LaFirst.asp](http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/OQE/certification/LaFirst.asp)

Louisiana Principal Internship Program [www.teachlouisiana.net/pages.asp?PageName=prinInternship](http://www.teachlouisiana.net/pages.asp?PageName=prinInternship)

New Haven Unified School District [www.nhusd.k12.ca.us](http://www.nhusd.k12.ca.us)

New Leaders for New Schools [www.nlns.org](http://www.nlns.org)

[NewTeacher.com](http://NewTeacher.com)

[Teachers.net](http://Teachers.net)

*The Effective Teacher* video [www.effectiveteaching.com](http://www.effectiveteaching.com)