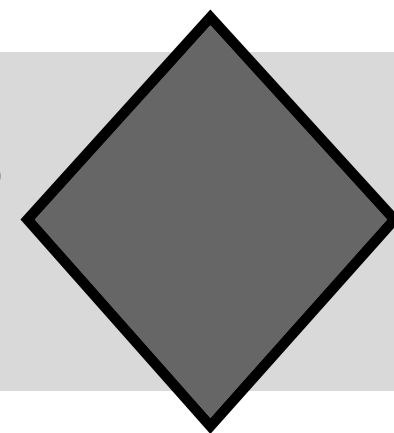


# Mentoring Alone Will Not Help New Teachers



*"My brother-in-law is a first year teacher and was having a horrible time. The district provided no induction program and when he asked for help he was told to contact his mentor. He didn't even know he had a mentor. So he called this teacher and informed her that she was his mentor. She said, 'I am?' He said, 'Thanks, but no thanks' and hung up."*

New secretaries do not receive a mentor. They are trained and helped. Doctors, factory workers, computer programmers, chefs, electricians, and dental hygienists do not receive a mentor. They are trained and helped. Even million dollar per year athletes are trained, every year and all year long. In every aspect of the work world, people are trained and helped.

New teachers, on the other hand, often receive no training. Typically, they are thrown into a classroom to survive. They may be lucky enough to get an effective and caring mentor who has the time to help and may even be compensated for helping.

The problem is that giving a new teacher a mentor only is incorrect and ineffective. The issue is the word "only" not "mentor." To begin, the term mentor and its concept are incorrectly used in education.

In Greek legend, Mentor was the faithful friend of Odysseus (Ulysses in Latin), the hero of the Odyssey. When Odysseus went to fight the Trojans, he made Mentor the guardian of his son, Telemachus, with instructions to be his teacher and advisor.

Thus, Mentor was Telemachus's teacher, not his mentor. Mentor was the name of Telemachus's teacher. This is where educators have misconstrued the whole intent of helping new teachers.

## What Teachers Do Best

**What teachers do best is teach. Recognizing this fact brings dignity to the profession.** Yet, much of the literature on mentoring describes a mentor as a facilitator or support person. What a new teacher needs is a teacher, a tutor, and not a mentor or support person.

In the literature search one particular article said, "a new teacher is provided with a forum for reflection through conversations with a committee of mentors." It is a well-known fact that new teachers will not reveal their weaknesses. Yet this article expected a new teacher to face a forum of mentors. The kids are walking in late; they won't sit down; they are stealing the paintbrushes; they are yelling and throwing chairs; and they are talking back to the teacher. And this frightened new teacher, who goes home and cries each night, is given a forum for reflection? Get real.

Can you imagine an airline that does not have teachers, staff trainers, or administrators to teach and acculturate a new employee? Instead, the new pilot is just given a mentor. And someday, wherever pilots go after they crash an airplane with 250 passengers aboard, the pilot is met by a forum of committee members for reflection. Would you fly on an airline without a training program for its pilots? Oh, but each pilot is given a mentor.

John Dvorak, a leading columnist for many computer magazines and newspapers, made the following statement, after attending the largest annual computer convention called COMDEX:

**"It's inbred thinking. The same bunch of people go to the same conferences with the same friends and see the same demos and hear the same sales pitch and come out thinking the same thoughts. Their thinking is further reinforced as the same people boost and promote what they have heard amongst themselves."**

Education is no different. **What's real scary about all this talk about mentoring only is that it has become institutionalized.** People talk about mentoring and no one stands back and asks why are we talking about mentoring only.

***We are all in favor of mentors, however, mentors must be part of a systematic, sustained induction process.***

## Mentoring: A Critical Review

The following are the highlights of a review, "Teacher Mentoring: A Critical Review<sup>1</sup>," by Sharon Feiman-Nemser of Michigan State University, and published as an *ERIC* Digest, July, 1996.

- Mentoring burst on to the educational scene in 1980 as part of a broad movement aimed at improving education.
- Educational leaders and policy makers have pinned high hopes on mentoring as a vehicle for reforming teaching and teacher education.
- Research has highlighted the conservative influence of cooperating teachers and school cultures on novices' practice, so studies show that mentors promote conventional norms and practices, thus limiting reform.
- Enthusiasm for mentoring has not been matched by clarity about the purpose of mentoring.

- Claims about mentoring have not been subjected to rigorous empirical scrutiny.
- A review of the literature found few comprehensive studies well informed by theory and designed to examine in depth the context, content, and consequences of mentoring.
- To inform mentoring policy and practice, we need more direct studies of mentoring and its affect on teaching and teacher retention.

Very simply put, after 20 years of trying mentoring as a process for helping new teachers

- there is no data to validate this process,
- few programs can be cited for its success, and
- we still need more "direct studies."

## Teaching Is Unique

"In no other profession other than teaching are **inexperienced, untrained, and untried** beginners left to their own devices and allowed to have autonomous responsibility to make substantive professional decisions.

"With a lawyer, doctor, reporter, or peace officer, there is a structure that provides **training, daily guidance, tutelage, and supervision.**"

Dennis Evans  
Univ. of Calif. at Irvine  
"Assistance for Underqualified Teachers."  
*Education Week*, February 3, 1999. p. 35.

<sup>1</sup> ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education. American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, One Dupont Circle, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20036. (202) 293-2450, 1-800-822-9229. (<http://www.ericsp.org>, [ericsp@inet.ed.gov](mailto:ericsp@inet.ed.gov))

## New Teachers Need a Tutor, a Teacher

**A new teacher should not be given a mentor.** A new teacher should be given a teacher, a master teacher, or even better, a group of teachers who will teach the new teacher and get him or her up to speed. We give dignity to the profession when we, who are teachers, teach.

**Tutor** New teachers need a tutor, a teacher—someone who will teach and show them what to do.

**Coach** Experienced teachers want a coach—someone who helps you refine what you already know but you need help to do it better like a personal health coach.

**Mentor** Successful teachers and administrators want a mentor—someone who serves as an inspiration and because of that person's stature and success in life, that is what you aspire to become. The accomplished, effective teacher and administrator who wants to move on in the profession values the help of a mentor.

## Unconsciously Foolish Way

We cannot jeopardize an entire generation of new teachers with a process that has produced few sustained results in 20 years and still needs more "direct studies." The personal computer was introduced in 1980, and in 20 years it has become the focal point, financially and intellectually, in the world. Whereas, no advances have been made in 20 years of work with mentors as presently conceived.

**New teachers rated mentors the least effective way to help new teachers.**

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission<sup>2</sup> 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."

**The same Commission also found that principals and new teachers rated mentors the least effective way to help new teachers.** One out of four new teachers claimed that they received either "poor" or "no support" from their mentors.

**Simply assigning a mentor teacher does little to remedy the situation of teachers becoming discouraged and leaving the profession.**

Leslie Huling, a nationally acclaimed expert on teacher induction and mentoring, says, "Simply assigning a mentor teacher does little to remedy the situation of teachers becoming discouraged and leaving the profession. Induction and mentoring must go hand-in-hand. You cannot do one without the other."

Katherine Perez at St. Mary's College in Moraga, California, writes what should be an obvious conclusion to a study in "An Analysis of Practices Used to Support New Teachers," *New Teacher Quarterly*, Spring, 1997. She says, "Effective new teacher programs should provide an integrated, systematic approach to prepare confident teachers who will remain in the profession."

<sup>2</sup> *A Profession in Jeopardy: Why Teachers Leave and What We Can Do About It and Keeping Talented Teachers.* (1995). Raleigh, NC: The Public School Forum of North Carolina, 3739 National Drive, Suite 210, Raleigh, NC 27612. TEL 919-781-6833 FAX 919-781-6527. (www.ncforum.org)

## Induction Is Mandated

Seven states have mandated induction: Colorado, Connecticut, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and West Virginia. The Pennsylvania state document is even titled "Guidelines for Teacher Induction and Professional Development."

Several, such as California, Illinois, and Utah, are developing or contemplating legislation requiring induction programs. Whether mandated or not, hundreds of districts and thousands of schools have their own induction programs. **These people know that new teachers must be trained if you want them to succeed and stay.**

Arizona has not mandated induction, yet two of the finest induction programs can be found in Mesa and the Flowing Wells Schools of Tucson. The Flowing Wells induction program has been in existence since 1985 and has been called the "mother-of-all" induction programs.

## Three Options Face a Newly Hired Teacher

### Assigned

You are simply given an assignment and told to go and teach. There is no person or plan to help you if you need help.

### Mentor

You are simply given a mentor to contact if you need help. With luck, this person may be trained, compensated, accessible, knowledgeable, and willing to help.

### Induction

You are part of a systematic, integrated plan formulated by the district's core of administrators, teachers, and perhaps the union, designed to welcome you, make you feel a part of the school or the district, and assigned a trained mentor. The purpose of this multi-year process is to help you become an effective and professional educator who will stay with the school or district.

## Induction and Achievement

"If a bad hire costs a company nearly 2½ times the employee's initial salary in recruitment and personnel costs, as well as lost productivity, then each teacher who leaves the profession during the induction years likely costs taxpayers in excess of \$50,000.

"An even more important cost is that related to student achievement. When a novice teacher resigns and is replaced by a second novice teacher who is unsuccessful and is replaced yet again by another novice teacher, it is easy to see how three years down the road, the instruction being provided in that classroom is not as high a quality as it would likely be with a teacher who had three years teaching experience. If an administrator is serious about student achievement, he/she must also be serious about induction support for novice teachers."

## A Sustained Process

Teaching is far too difficult and complex to just give a new teacher an available veteran teacher or mentor. Mentors are important, but they must be trained, compensated, and part of an existing induction process. A district or school induction program always has a defined mission or set of goals. Without goals,

- What are the mentors going to mentor to?
- What will be assessed if there are no goals to form the assessment?

During the induction process, the administrators and staff developers provide ongoing training for the new teachers. The mentors then help the new teachers to implement what has been learned. In fact, mentors are often an integral part of the training process, resulting in a more consistent implementation of the district's or school's vision for effective teaching.

**The induction process must be formal, in-depth, and sustained.**

Terry Dozier of the U. S. Dept of Education says, "I agree that strong and sustained induction programs are critical to retaining teachers and to making sure that they develop excellent teaching skills. That is why we made certain that induction is a required element of the new Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants (authorized under Title II of the Higher Education Act). We have proposed a priority in all professional development grant programs for strong induction for new teachers."

Warren Hope of Florida A&M, writing in the Sept/Oct 1999 issue of *The Clearing House*, "Principals' Orientation and Induction Activities as Factors in Teaching Retention" says, "Even though principals are busy, the amount of time and the quality of attention they invest in assisting first-year teachers to grow and develop in the profession may change the dreadful statistics on new teachers leaving teaching."

Elizabeth F. Fideler, executive vice president of Recruiting New Teachers, writes on, "State-Initiated Induction Programs: Supporting, Assisting, Training, Assessing, and Keeping Teachers." in the Winter, 2000, issue of *The State Education Standard*. Inherent in the title is everything you would want to know about successfully recruiting, preparing, selecting, inducting, retaining, and developing a teaching force of excellence and diversity.

Some people in education only talk about giving a new teacher a mentor—for a year.

Mentoring is an isolated act, whereas induction is a multi-year, developmental process that supports, assists, trains, and assesses teachers in their first three years of employment.

Virginia Resta and Leslie Huling

## Retention of Effective Teachers

A principal builds an effective school by retaining trained, effective teachers. The research says the attrition rate in education is 50% in the first seven years.

However, in Las Vegas, where they hire 1800 new teachers each year, the attrition rate is 5 percent, and they can do this with an induction program that is still being refined.

The attrition rate at Goldfarb Elementary School in Las Vegas is 0 percent. The principal, Bridget Phillips, builds on the district's induction program by conducting her own site induction program. As the instructional leader at her school, she and her staff spend one semester training all of their student teachers, from which she plucks off the good ones to add to her staff. She also spends another semester continuing the induction training of the first year teachers ensuring that they will become successful and be part of the Goldfarb culture.

**Effective schools have a culture of effective teachers, but the school leader must work at building that culture.** A visit to Goldfarb Elementary School is a joy to behold. The teachers are positive; the students are happy; and everyone at the school from the principal to the students is learning.

In the Lafourche Parish Schools in Thibodaux, Louisiana, of the 218 new teachers hired in the past three years, 99 percent are still teaching and 88 percent are still in the Lafourche Parish Schools.

The attrition rate at the aforementioned Flowing Wells School District is 5 percent and it's less than 5 percent at the Leyden High School District in Franklin Park, Illinois.

**What these districts have is a new teacher induction program—a systematic plan designed to train, support, and retain new teachers with the mission of building a culture of effective schools.**

## What's Wrong With Mentoring Only

- Mentors are given to novice teachers only, whereas an induction program enculturates all newly hired teachers.
- Veteran teachers who are mentors are getting older and are retiring, thus there will be a shortage of mentors.
- Some districts have up to a 50% attrition rate each year, thus there are no qualified mentors.
- All the talk about mentoring (only) leaves administrators, such as staff developers and principals, out of the training and support process.
- Mentoring is a one-to-one support process, whereas induction is a group process. You build a culture with a group process.

**“The nature of the relationship among the adults at the school has more to do with the school's quality, its characteristics, and the achievement of its students than any other factor.”**

Roland Barth

## Reform in One Decade

There are two million teachers scheduled to enter the profession over a ten-year period. In 2000, 50% of the teachers will have been in the classroom seven years or less. Of the teachers teaching in the year 2000, 75% will have been trained after 1990. Education will never be reformed by continuing to use the concept of providing new teachers with a mentor only. It has not been successful.

**Education can be reformed within a decade by using an induction process that trains new teachers in effective teaching practices. What it will take are administrators who**

- want effective schools,
- know what constitutes an effective school, and
- have an induction process that trains people to teach effectively in an effective school.

A principal builds an effective school by retaining trained, effective teachers. New teachers must be trained if you want them to succeed and stay.

**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 Herne  
Unified School District 259  
Wichita Public Schools, Kansas

## Rappahannock High School, Virginia Reports—“Only Two Referrals”

“I used *The First Days of School* and *The Effective Teacher*.<sup>3</sup>

During pre-school, I showed one tape per day. The staff worked in groups discussing the book and videos. We implemented the procedures described.

“I have been principal here for five years. **This has been the most dramatic, positive change in atmosphere.**

“By fourth period the students knew the assignments were on the board and got to work. Last year by this time we had had 130 referrals. This same time this year we have had only two referrals.”

Jack Raines  
Principal

“Because of the drastic decrease in referrals, I can now focus on the instructional process rather than on discipline chores. I am able to get out into the classroom more and become an instructional leader.

**“I can focus on teachers, helping them become better teachers.”**

Mike Tupper  
Assistant Principal

“Our school now is like an office building, where people come to work.

**“I am able to help my students because they know what to do.”**

Vicky Eastham  
Teacher

<sup>3</sup> See [www.effectiveteaching.com](http://www.effectiveteaching.com)

## Induction: What It IS and IS NOT

What is induction? Induction is the process of systematically training and supporting new teachers, beginning before the first day of school and continuing throughout the first two or three years of teaching. Its purposes include, but are not limited to 1) easing the transition into teaching, 2) improving teacher effectiveness through training in classroom management and effective teaching techniques, 3) promoting the district's culture—its philosophies, missions, policies, procedures, and goals, and 4) increasing the retention of greater numbers of highly qualified teachers.

The process begins with four or five days of initial training prior to the first day of school where new teachers are instructed in the rudiments of classroom management, first-day procedures, discipline, instructional strategies, and more. Support and training continue, systematically, over a period of two or three years.

**The term “induction” is often mistakenly used synonymously with the terms mentoring and orientation.** Mentoring is only one component of an induction program. Orientation is another. Mentoring and orientation in and of themselves will do little to aid in the retention of highly qualified new teachers. However, as integral components of a structured induction program, they are valuable. Induction is an ongoing and systematic process that provides assistance, support, information, feedback, coaching, guidance, modeling, and much more. It unfolds in progressive stages, following the teacher's development over a period of time.

Teacher induction programs provide beginning teachers the support needed during the often difficult transition from preservice education to actual classroom teaching—from students of teaching to teachers of students. Clearly, the research supports not only the success of induction programs but also the importance of developing such programs for all new teachers.

**Therefore, the question is no longer whether or not to provide induction, but rather how to develop an induction program, in every school district, that will help to ensure the success and retention of highly qualified teachers in every classroom.**

Breaux, Annette and Harry K. Wong. *Induction: Recruiting, Training, Supporting, and Retaining New Teachers*. A forthcoming book for release in 2000.