
Preface

The initial years of teaching are the most challenging for new teachers. Typically, new teachers are struggling to survive day-to-day. It is during these entry years that teachers are most likely to become disillusioned and leave their initial teaching positions or even the profession. For those who stay, the early years are ones in which teachers establish patterns and practices that often last throughout their career.

The realization of the importance of these early years has led us to give special attention to the induction phase of teaching—most frequently defined as the first one to three years. Teachers need to be guided and supported during these early years. We want teachers to be able to do more than just survive. We want them to become successful, contributing members of a profession.

One of the longest running and best-funded state-sponsored induction programs has been operating in California. The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program has grown from pilot project involving fifteen districts beginning in 1988 to a statewide effort and a permanent part of the credential structure. During that time, educators have learned a great deal from the extensive research on this program as well as other programs around the country. This book draws heavily, but not exclusively, on the research and experience with teacher induction in California in the last two decades. It includes the voices of new teachers, their mentors, and those who direct induction programs and activities. It also incorporates findings from some key national efforts.

Teacher induction takes on special meaning in the context of contemporary schools, where student achievement gaps have been put in the spotlight by recent accountability efforts. What are the special challenges of inducting teachers in urban schools where the turnover is high and many teachers are not fully certified? How do we help all teachers so that all students can be successful? What are the specific concerns and issues noted by teachers who enter with a full academic preparation? How can these new teachers be assisted so that they can be more effective in the classroom and contribute to enhanced learning for their students? How

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can all teachers be nurtured, supported, and developed so that they will be successful and will become contributing career professionals?

In this book, I focus on new teachers' needs and the strategies that are a part of an effective induction experience. I take into account the challenges of beginning teachers at varying points of readiness and in a variety of school contexts.

While much has been written about mentoring, less attention has been paid to the broader view of the entire induction experience. Induction and mentoring are too often narrowly focused on the "survival-level" strategies teachers need to cope with the demands of their first few years of teaching. While these initial survival strategies are important, the teacher development literature indicates that good teaching develops over time and that teachers have different learning needs at particular stages of their career. Teachers need to look beyond merely surviving and begin early to focus on student achievement and success in their own long-term professional development.

This book will help those who plan and implement induction programs to use strategies that foster new teacher and student success. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction to frame the major points discussed in the chapter. The chapter concludes with some implications for practice and suggested further readings.

Chapter 1 begins with a description of the challenges that new teachers face and defines the need for a strong induction program that is geared to the needs of individual new teachers. Chapter 2 looks at stages of teacher development, with an emphasis on teacher induction as a specific career stage that needs special attention. It also highlights the need to consider that induction occurs within a specific context. Chapter 3 outlines the key elements of an effective plan for induction and Chapter 4 discusses the role of effective mentoring in the induction program. Chapter 5 focuses on induction in the most challenging setting of urban schools. In Chapter 6, the point is made that induction programs should seek to move teachers beyond the survival stage and engage teachers in a critical look at their own practice and the learning of their students. Chapter 7 encourages induction planners to include an assessment of teaching in the induction period to foster reflective practice. Models and approaches are presented. The final chapter addresses induction policies and practices for local schools, districts, and states, and concludes with a vision for the future of induction.

The boxed quotations are drawn from interviews with teachers and their support providers in California, unless otherwise indicated. These quotations are included to bring the concepts to life and ground them in actual practice.

Throughout the book, there is an emphasis on the following:

- A developmental approach to assisting and supporting new teachers that moves teachers to a higher level of accomplished practice;

- A focus on induction in all settings, with special emphasis on the most challenging, hard-to-staff school settings; and
- A vision of teaching and learning that extends beyond the “survival level” and focuses on engaged student learning.

This book will help district and school administrators, mentors/support providers, staff developers, and others to develop and implement induction programs that focus on improved practice and high levels of accomplishment. It will help teacher educators understand and better prepare teachers for entry into the world of schooling. It will help policy makers understand how to shape induction policies that lead to teacher retention and improved student achievement.