Mentoring: a key to first year survival

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Mentoring: a key to first year survival

Abstract
My research will be directed to answer the following questions: What push/pull factors draw new teachers away from the teaching profession? What strategies can be employed to increase teacher retention? To what degree is a mentoring program effective in teacher retention? What characteristics establish the effectiveness of a mentoring program?
Mentoring: A Key to First Year Survival

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It was a hot August day in the year 2000. I was starting my first teaching job. Like a child with a new toy, I was filled with excitement and enthusiasm. Ready to move into the next phase of my life, I began to prepare for my very own classroom. The first thing I did was hop in my car and drive to the nearest teacher supply store. I bought all that my budget would allow. I was so excited, all I could think of was having my own room, and how I was going to decorate it. As soon as I could I went to visit my classroom, MY CLASSROOM, for the very first time. I opened the door and walked into the room. My expectations of a cozy little room were a little high. The room was all brick with one bulletin board, it was huge and dingy, and all of the shelves, tables, and manipulatives were safely wrapped up in storage boxes. Not the picture I was expecting. I was more than a little overwhelmed. I did not know where to begin. Should I see what I have? Clean out the cabinets? Start with the desks? I decided to call the one person I thought I could count on for good advice. After all, she had the most experience in this field. I asked many questions and got many answers. I finally figured out what to do with the room. However, then I had to figure out what to do with the kids. I was on my own to figure out a curriculum that I wanted to follow throughout the year. There were no set units or lessons, only very general guidelines. What a beginning! I don’t think a new teacher is prepared for that feeling no matter how great their education.

Before the first day of school, there were the basic beginning-of-the-year meetings that cleared up some of my questions, but also generated a whole new level of anxiety. There were mountains of paperwork that had to be filled out each and every month. We also were expected to do home visits in neighborhoods I was warned not to enter alone or at night. I was also introduced to my associate who had 25 years of
experience in the classroom I was entering, the parent advocate who had worked 10 years in this classroom prior to my arrival, and the veteran teacher who decided to leave the school I was entering to find an environment where she could feel like she was teaching and not just surviving. This is not what a new teacher wants to hear!

Not only did the schedule and expectations begin to pile up, but also the stress just increased as the year went on. Ten of my 34 students did not speak English. I had to meet with several workers from the Department of Human Services concerning living situations of my students. I was put in my place when I tried to introduce new ideas to the seasoned veterans of the school. I would faithfully attend the staff meetings with hopes of learning some new ideas to try, but I found that I became the one who was most criticized in front of my peers. I felt like there was no end, and I began to hate my job. I became depressed and burned-out. Don’t get me wrong- I enjoyed my students; I just couldn’t take the environment. I used almost all of my sick days to just avoid going to the place I couldn’t stand. I couldn’t take it anymore; and after much debate, I decided to resign from the district and return to school to earn my master’s degree. I needed to be around teachers who had a positive outlook on life and teaching. So I left.

After removing myself from the negative environment, and finding my sanity again; I began to reflect on the experience. I’m the type of person who looks for the good in everything. I realized that although my year was tough, it was also a great learning experience. I realized how much I learned from those dreaded home visits. I realized that I would have been less understanding and patient if I had not seen first hand some of the living situations these children face every day. I learned how I want to be treated as a professional and a human being. I learned the type of teachers I want to be around, and
the type of district where I would like to work. I learned that a supportive staff and administrator are worth their weight in gold. I also learned the importance of realizing that I cannot solve everyone’s problems. I can try my best, but then I have to step back and let them learn on their own. I do not regret my year in this district, nor do I regret leaving. I am the kind of teacher I am today because of this experience.

It is very typical for new teachers to struggle in their first years of teaching. According to research, this feeling follows many teachers throughout their first year and proves to be too much for some to handle. “Twenty-two percent of new teachers across the nation leave the profession within the first three years. The teacher dropout rate climbs as high as fifty percent after the first five years, with higher rates in impoverished communities” (Bobek, 2002, p. 202). “Forty percent of those who quit say they would not teach again [and] an estimated sixty percent of those who enter teaching through shortcut programs leave by their third year” (Boss, 2001, p. 2,6). These statistics are startling and unfortunate. I learned the hard way; I had become one of the statistics.

Teacher retention is a very personal topic for me. I think about the teacher who took my place and hope she was able to handle it better than I could. I began to wonder what the school could have done differently to make it less stressful. This led to my interest in the topic of teacher retention and what can be done to make the first year of teaching successful for new teachers.

After my first year was completed, the Mentoring & Induction Program began in the state of Iowa. I feel strongly that if I had been able to participate in this program, I might have stayed in my original teaching assignment. The research I have gathered shows that I am not alone in this thought. I found an abundance of research praising
mentoring programs, and its relationship with teacher retention. I feel this is an important topic for all teachers and administrators.

My research will be directed to answer the following questions: What push/pull factors draw new teachers away from the teaching profession? What strategies can be employed to increase teacher retention? To what degree is a mentoring program effective in teacher retention? What characteristics establish the effectiveness of a mentoring program?

Methodology

The research was gathered through various journals, on the Internet, and in a book written by Harry and Rosemary Wong (1998), “The First Days of School”. I used the keywords ‘teacher retention’, ‘teacher attrition’ and ‘mentoring programs’ to narrow down the search results. After reading the articles I chose those that met the following criteria: written in the last six years; statistics that could be found in several sources; and relevant to my topic.

Analysis and Discussion

Push/Pull: Factors That Contribute To Teacher Attrition

Some of the contributing factors to teacher attrition are the incentives that other professions can offer. One factor is higher salaries. Many school districts cannot afford to offer new teachers appealing salaries. When compared to other professions, the salaries may seem meager and not enough to live on comfortably. Many companies in the business world have the money to draw recent college grads away from a teaching career. As Boss (2001) states, “Salaries are low, and esteem is low” (p. 5). Other researchers
share the same findings. Brewster & Railsback (2001) state that teachers “leave due to low pay” (p. 3). They have also found that this may be the reason for the shortage of math, science, and special education teachers. They state that private sector jobs offer better pay in these areas (p. 4). Birkeland & Johnson (2002) give an example of a teacher who questioned his choice to become a teacher due to the pay. “When Fred left his job as an emergency medical technician to teach high school history, he was not sure about his decision. He wondered if he should continue to pursue a career in health care, where he could expect higher pay and more prestige (p. 18). Some districts are using forms of compensation to compete with private sector jobs. Bobeck (2002) describes one of these methods as “a well articulated promotion ladder using pay, position, and level of responsibility to denote progress through various stages of their career” (p. 204). Other districts offer incentives when recruiting teachers to beat the low pay. Danielson (2002) reports “some areas [offer] recruitment incentives such as housing allowances, education loan forgiveness, and hiring bonuses…” (p. 183). While other districts such as Massachusetts and New York Schools offer $20,000 in signing bonuses, and schools in Brooklyn and the Bronx offer financial aide for Master’s classes and some offer help with down payments on home mortgages (p. 3). This may be feasible for those bigger districts, but once again, in smaller, rural schools, this isn’t even an option.

The second incentive the business world can offer that education can’t is the availability of jobs. While the media may claim that there is a teacher shortage, in many areas of the country, this isn’t always the case. Good elementary teaching positions are very hard to come by, however secondary science and math teaching positions can be easily found in Iowa.
Third, is the workload put on new teachers. In other professions, the new employees are generally trained on the job and given fewer assignments until the job is learned. Teachers do not receive the same treatment. Reynolds, Ross, & Rakow (2002) share a statement that fits this idea:

We expect brand-new, just-out-of-the-wrapper teachers to assume the same responsibilities and duties as our most seasoned professionals, and we expect them to carry out those duties with the same level of expertise and within the same time constraints. We hold new teachers accountable for skills that they don’t yet have and that they can only gain through experience (p. 63).

These expectations can lead to intimidation and definitely stress. However, this probably cannot be changed, and new teachers should be prepared for this. Chubbuck, Clift, Allard, & Quinlan (2002) share a similar belief. “First year teachers are often given the toughest assignments and have very few professional resources to aid them as they take on the most challenging classes and work with some of the most alienated students” (p. 367).

The fourth incentive for teachers to enter the private sector, business world is the prestige and respect these positions can offer. Ogden (n.d) makes his point of teacher shortages by asking the following question: “Why would a bright student go into a low-paying, low-respect job (p. 367)? He goes on to explore the lack of good teachers. He states, “Good students are counseled…out of teaching careers at the same time practicing teachers are criticized and demeaned” (p. 368). And finally, Ogden (n.d.) points out that teaching is more than an eight-hour job with summers off. He states the following:
The public sees teaching as an easy job— all those vacations, home by 4:00 (sometimes)—but it's not! What they don’t see is keeping current in one’s field; attempting to accommodate individuals representing an ever increasing panorama of physical, mental, emotional, cultural, and social attributes; coping with administrative necessities; and all the related activities associated with assessing pupil progress—goals, objectives, performance criteria, tests, grades; parent conferences; and anything else (p. 369).

There are so many strong factors that push people away from the teaching profession. Fortunately for the profession, there are those who choose to teach despite these circumstances.

Strategies to Increase Teacher Retention

New teachers are leaving in mass quantities for a variety of reasons. Some districts are taking steps to attract and retain new teachers. According to several sources, a large number of states have recognized teacher attrition as a problem and are working hard to lessen the numbers. Brewster & Railsback (2001) state that districts that provide extra support for new teachers have higher retention rates (p. 4). This extra support should include alleviating isolation and loneliness, providing a feeling of safety, building resiliency, providing effective professional development opportunities, reducing the demands placed on new teachers, and building relationships with the administrators and co-workers.

The first strategy in retaining new teachers is to welcome them into the school. Often, new teachers feel alone and isolated, leading to a less than positive experience for
the new teacher. Walsdorf & Lynn (2002) suggest preventing loneliness to boost teacher retention. Some ideas of preventing loneliness are the following:

- Stay in contact with support group of peers, professors,
- Be involved in your school
- Meet with your principal monthly (p. 191)

Loneliness can lead to a feeling of isolation. New teachers can easily get in the habit of “hiding” in their classroom. If relationships don’t exist, that new teacher may not feel comfortable venturing outside of his/her classroom.

Isolation can be lessened by establishing meaningful learning communities within schools and between schools and universities. Teachers grow professionally when they seek out peers for professional dialogue and turn to each other for constructive feedback, affirmation, and support (Danielson, 2002, p. 183).

The second strategy is to make a new teacher feel safe. We all know that in order for people to feel comfortable taking risks and trying new things, they need to feel safe. Instead of treating new teachers as veterans reach out and help. New teachers need to be surrounded by positive peer administrative support. This will create a feeling of safety for that teacher and allow them the confidence to try new things. “Novice teachers need real safety to make and learn from mistakes in their initial practice” (Chubbuck, Clift, Allard, & Quinlan, 2001, p. 374). In my opinion, it is a sign of a friendly, welcoming staff, if they take the time to stop in and welcome the new teacher. Schools whose staff doesn’t do this may not have the supportive staff a new teacher is hoping for.
The third strategy to improve teacher retention is to increase resiliency in new teachers. Bobek (2002) describes teacher resiliency as "the ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions, [and] is a critical element in classroom success and teacher retention" (p. 202). He also tells us the importance of this concept. "The promotion of teacher resiliency can enhance teaching effectiveness, heighten career satisfaction, and better prepare teachers to adjust to education's ever-changing conditions" (p. 204). This is a great way to be proactive in a teacher's life. To build resiliency before entering a stressful environment would be most helpful to a beginning teacher.

One key aspect that is important in teacher's resilience is humor. "The incorporation of humor into the classroom facilitates rapport between students and teachers, fosters creative thinking, increases self-esteem, and advances the overall socialization of children" (Bobek, 2002, p. 204). Knowing how to find the humor in stressful situations can be a very useful tool. Making new teachers more open to a variety of situations will decrease the amount of stress on a new teacher. They will also know how to handle the stress they may encounter. If a new teacher is prepared for the stress and how to handle it, it won't be quite so overwhelming.

The fourth strategy is to provide teachers with effective professional development opportunities. Professional development can have the potential to help a new teacher survive the first year.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) recommended that: all teachers have access to high-quality professional development and regular time for collegial work and planning; teachers'
salaries be based on knowledge and skills; quality teaching become the central investment of schools; all teacher education programs meet professional standards or be closed (Hancock, 1998, p. 166).

Professional development is an opportunity to strengthen all teachers. It can be a great time to build that resiliency and focus teaching methods around standards. Yost (2002) tells us that it’s only worth the time if it is a good program. “If the focus of professional growth opportunities is not on teacher learning, staff development opportunities will continue to be temporary and ineffective” (p. 195). This can be a great growing opportunity for new teachers. Learning new teaching methods while teaching is thrilling and provides immediate opportunity to try these new concepts.

The fifth strategy is to reduce the amount of demands placed on a teacher. One example of this is to cut out extra duties such as lunch and recess duty. This time should be used for planning and collaboration (Hancock, 1998, p. 168). While this could be a good idea, in a smaller district, it may not be feasible. There just isn’t enough staff to go around.

The sixth strategy to increase retention is to alleviate stress. Stress is one avenue Hancock (1998) chose to explore as a reason for teacher attrition. He defines stress and then relates it to teacher attrition. “Stress results when a person perceives the demands of a situation to be greater than his [or] her capabilities to meet those demands. If excessive stress is not lowered... those experiencing it often flee the environment causing it” (p.167). Chubbuck, Clift, Allard, and Quinlan (2001) state the following:

Adverse school environments had a strong and negative impact on new teachers but that there was some evidence that programs that planned to
meet teachers’ psychological needs along with their professional needs clearly can lead to greater satisfaction, productivity, and lower attrition rates (p. 367).

This statement hints at resolving some of these issues by assigning mentors to new teachers. There are also other researchers who back up this opinion, “The first years of teaching are particularly challenging, yet new teachers often get the least desirable courses and classrooms” (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p. 21). Wong (1998) and Walsdorf & Lynn (2002) share these same beliefs. It seems to be common knowledge that new teachers are given tough assignments, and that this can lead to teachers leaving.

The final strategy in retaining new teachers is to provide a lot of support. According to Segan, “A primary reason that teachers give for leaving the profession is poor administrative support” (Bobek, 2002, p. 203): Not only do teachers feel lack of support from administrators, but also from their co-workers. “They join faculties wherein friendships are already formed, and the cultural norms and shared history of the school are unknown to them (Walsdorf & Lynn, 2002, p. 190). This adds to the already stressful first year of teaching. Administrators hold an important leadership role in a district. They should feel some obligation to keeping their teachers and creating an environment of support.

New teachers need to understand the importance of building relationships in the new school. Beginning teachers need to ask for support. They need to take the initiative to get to know the other staff members in the building; this includes the support staff and administration. Principals are key in supporting and guiding new teachers. They should be able to provide positive reinforcement (Walsdorf & Lynn, 2002, p. 191-192). They are
a few concepts a new teacher should find in their relationship with the administration.

The partnership between a beginning teacher and the administrator should include "a willingness to listen and learn from one another [making] the work environment more positive and productive" (Bobek, 2002, p. 203). One of the key phrases in these statements is 'positive support'. Hancock (1998) also recommends positive support in his article. He suggests, "training sessions to help teachers experiencing dysfunctional stress acquire and/or recognize that they have the skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the classroom" (p. 169).

Overall, there are many reasons why new teachers leave the profession and/or the district they begin with. The many strategies discussed may keep new teachers who are leaving in search of their ideal teaching assignment. Johnson & Birkeland (2003) state the following:

New teachers moving from one district to another used this opportunity to look for appropriate course assignments, sufficient curriculum guidelines; and efficient systems for discipline, communication with parents, and smooth transitions between classes. They looked for schools where they could feel like professionals sharing ideals and resources with colleagues and receiving respect and guidance from the principal (p. 21).

In other words, these teachers were in pursuit of schools where good teaching was possible, where schools were less chaotic and more predictable (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p. 21).
Of all the suggestions for retaining new teachers, an underlying theme can be found: Creating a positive environment for the new teacher. A positive, supportive environment can help alleviate all of the other factors involved in teacher attrition.

*The Role of a Mentoring Program in Teacher Retention*

A good mentoring and induction program can have positive results in retaining new teachers. Wong quotes Gayle Wilkinson as saying the following: "Fully ninety-five percent of beginning teachers who experienced support during the initial years remain in teaching after three years, and eighty percent of the supported teachers remain after five years" (Wong, 1998, p. v). With these results, a district has nothing to lose by committing to support their new teachers. "Retaining good teachers requires a commitment to professional growth, a goal that can be addressed through quality mentoring" (Danielson, 2002, p. 185). Another opinion in support of the mentoring program states the following: "Providing on-site support and guidance is especially critical during the beginning years of teaching. New teachers really have two jobs to do- they have to teach, and they have to learn to teach" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 18).

It is so important for new teachers to have support and not that "phantom mentor" that was mentioned earlier, but an available mentor who can lead a new teacher into an exciting year. A mentor should help the new teacher feel prepared and confident in meeting the challenges of the upcoming year. As we all know, being prepared for your first year involves more than having the supplies to decorate your room. "Organizing a classroom, developing effective classroom management strategies, assessing individual student needs, and planning and implementing appropriate curricula are complex and difficult tasks" (Birkeland & Johnson, 2002, p. 19). Making new teachers aware of these
important first steps is important, but more importantly, getting them started. “Because
teachers who believe in themselves and their abilities to teach also believe in their
students abilities to learn” (Yost, 2002, p. 195). Beginning the year on the right foot is
key to having a great year.

educational reform in the 1980s as part of a broader effort to professionalize teaching” (p.
28). In the beginning, mentoring was viewed as a temporary support for first-year
teachers (p. 28). It became clear, however, that in order to meet maximum potential,
mentoring needed to support new teachers for more than a year. Feiman-Nemser (2001)
found this to be true also. “Mentoring has the potential to foster powerful teaching and to
develop the dispositions and skills of continuous improvement (p. 28). Holloway (2003)
states the following, “For mentoring to have a sustained effect on teaching…new teachers
must be mentored not just in their first year, but through their third or fourth year of
teaching (p. 87).

I have found this to be true in my two teaching experiences. My first year was
extremely difficult and so I left. After two years of subbing, I earned a teaching position
in a small district. I was assigned a mentor whom I got to see every day. We attended
monthly classes together, team taught, we were able to observe each other, and had time
to collaborate and reflect. I was able to ask questions when I needed to and received
positive reinforcement and feedback. It was such a positive experience for me and for my
teaching. I am not the only teacher who has seen such great results from this program.
Teachers state that being a mentor can be a powerful experience professionally and
personally (Ganser, 2002, p. 380). “The benefits that teachers gain from being mentored
include help in socialization into the school culture, refinement of teaching skills, and support when facing unexpected dilemmas" (Danielson, 2002, p. 184). He also states the following:

Quality mentoring helps novices learn to teach in accordance with professional standards, views becoming a good teacher as a developmental process, views mentoring as a professional practice, is collaboratively planned, implemented, and evaluated by key stake-holders, and contributes to improving school and district cultures (Danielson, 2002, p. 184).

Mentors have a large impact on a new teacher’s first years, but it doesn’t stop there. Cooperating teachers and mentors can influence the career trajectory of beginning teachers for years to come” (Ganser, 2002, p. 380).

Characteristics of an Effective Mentoring Program

An effective mentoring program has many characteristics. Researchers list a wide variety of qualities for a good mentoring program. Danielson (2002) lists elements of a great mentoring and induction program. They are the following:

Quality mentoring includes the following: knowing what to observe and how to provide feedback; understanding how to keep communication open and resolve conflicts; being able to study one’s own teaching and to communicate our own processes so others can learn from them; providing appropriate challenges for the novice; fostering reflective thinking (p.184).
Mentoring also includes “assistance in planning and delivering lessons, working with students with special needs, interacting with parents and staff, and providing encouragement” (Danielson, 2002, p. 184).

According to Boss (2001), “Well-designed induction programs… hold promise to slow teacher attrition; remove incompetent teachers and retain talented ones; help novices continue to develop as proficient, knowledgeable, and successful teachers; improve the climate for teaching and learning; and build community between new and veteran teachers (p. 6). Walsdorf & Lynn quote Brock, Grady, Ganser, & Valli (2002) as stating the following:

Induction research indicates that organizational factors related to isolation and loneliness, discipline and classroom management, conflict with colleagues, lack of understanding of students’ needs and interests, difficult teaching assignments, and lack of spare time frequently affect beginning teachers’ feelings of success and ultimately their desire to remain in the profession (p.190).

Brewster & Railsback (2001) offer another recommendation, which could lead to more effective mentors and programs. Mentors should be trained, paid, and provided regular meeting times. They also state that new teachers in districts with an effective mentoring program had stronger classroom management skills, were far more satisfied with their assignments, [and] experienced lower levels of stress (p. 5, 10).

Harry Wong (1998) also states the importance of an induction program. “The enculturation of new teachers begins with an induction program. Without help and enculturation, beginning teachers perpetuate the status quo by teaching as they remember being taught…Induction has three purposes: To reduce the intensity of the transition into
teaching; to help you improve your teaching effectiveness; to increase the retention of greater number of highly qualified teachers” (p. v, 16).

According to Feiman-Nemser (2001), a good mentor helps new teachers make connections between practice and theory, works with the new teacher on reflection by asking open-ended questions, and helps new teachers find their own way of doing things (p. 20-24). She also states that “how mentors define and enact their role, what kind of preparation and support they receive, whether mentors have time to mentor, and whether the culture of teaching reinforces their work all influence the character and quality of mentoring and its influence on novices’ practice” (p. 28). All of these are important for an administrator to consider when assigning a mentor. If he/she doesn’t have time or doesn’t feel motivated to be involved with the “mentee”, then the program will fail. The new teacher will not benefit from the program.

Danielson (2002) also shares, “If non-threatening feedback is provided, teachers can ask mentors questions about their practice and benefit from ongoing evaluation of their instruction.” This reflection “helps teachers to recognize the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching, which in turn provides knowledge that will assist them in improving their teaching processes.” Mentoring provides an important opportunity for reflection (p. 184-185). This is important for all teachers to learn, and will benefit both veteran and novice teachers.

The mentoring program can be organized in different ways while holding true to the same principles. In Iowa, the Mentoring & Induction Program is a two to three year program. The first two are required; the third is for teachers who may need an extra year to prove that their teaching is aligned with the eight teaching standards. If the teacher
cannot prove this after the third year, his/her administration can prevent the teacher from ever receiving his/her Iowa teaching certificate. The program involves monthly meetings, observations, collaboration, and preparation of a portfolio that demonstrates the Iowa Teaching Standards. Upon completion of the two-year program, the teacher becomes eligible for transition from an Initial to a Standard teaching license.

The following is another example of a mentoring program. Pete Frazer, a veteran teacher was excused from his classroom for two years so that he could be a full-time support teacher in an induction program. He worked with fourteen new teachers. He identifies two key factors in being a good support teacher. The first is helping novices find ways to express who they are in their work. The second is helping novices develop a practice that is responsive to the community and reflects what we know about children and learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 20).

In New Mexico, through the Graduate Intern/Teacher Induction Program, “fifteen veteran teachers were pulled from their classroom for two years to work full-time with twenty-eight interns. These interns carried out the responsibilities of a first year teacher while earning half a beginning teachers’ salary” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 26).

All of the above characteristics are important for a quality mentoring program. Of all the positive results mentoring programs can provide, not all school districts have a program in place. In a study by Sweeney & DeBolt, 2000, it was found that “twenty-eight states require districts to offer induction programs” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). It’s a very positive message that more than fifty percent of states already have a mentoring program in place. Now, we need to ensure quality mentors and standards that must be met in all states so that teacher turnover can be lessened.
Conclusions and Recommendations

With the number of new teachers entering and leaving the profession, administrators and new teachers need to take a stand. Administrators need to become aware of the demands placed on these new teachers, and what can be done to alleviate some of these stressors. “As many as half of the profession’s new teachers will leave within their first five years” (Danielson, 2002, p. 183). Harry Wong (1998) states that, “educational reform can be accomplished in the next ten years by changing the culture of the new teachers coming into the profession” (p. v). Part of this changing culture is convincing all fifty states to offer a solid mentoring program for all new teachers. According to the research in this review both the new teacher and the mentor support those programs that are in place. Feiman-Nemser (2001) states, “Assigning mentors to work with beginning teachers creates new incentives and career opportunities for experienced teachers” (p. 18).

New teachers do have to claim some responsibility. If the district doesn’t offer enough support, the new teacher needs to ask for help. They also need to avoid negative people and situations, meet with the principal, and join professional organizations (Brewster & Railsback, 2001, p. 15-16). Veteran teachers and new teachers need to take the initiative to making a new teacher a part of the community.

Renard (2003) offers some recommendations for administrators. “Avoid assigning new teachers to the most challenging grade levels or students, [and] make certain that new teachers and their mentors have the same planning period, and occasionally provide substitute teachers so that novices can either meet with their mentors for extended periods or observe the mentors’ classrooms [and] keep first-year teachers in the same courses or
grade levels for two or three years" (p. 64). According to Bobek (2002), “In addition, new teachers thrive in environments where school personnel endorse collaboration, flexibility, nonjudgmental attitudes, and high expectations” (p. 203).

Many districts are having problems with attrition and teacher retention. This review provides many strategies for keeping new teachers. After all, losing trained teachers, and hiring new teachers year after year can be exhausting and expensive. In my opinion, the best option is to provide a mentor for the new teacher, and create an environment of positive support. This combination will be most effective to a new teacher in learning to handle all kinds of adverse situations. I suggest to administrators to start with the current staff and build a supportive community. This will ensure that any mentoring program introduced into the district will be of quality. Renard (2003) makes a powerful statement that really says it all: “In the end, new teachers ought to emerge from their first few years of teaching feeling empowered, supported, and capable in all roles of the classroom teacher” (p. 64). This will be the most effective solution to the problem of retaining new teachers.
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