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## Induction of beginning teachers through mentoring

Leanne M. Junko  
*University of Northern Iowa*

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## Induction of beginning teachers through mentoring

### Abstract

Statistics indicate that approximately fifteen percent of all new teachers will leave the profession after their first year of teaching, thirty percent during the first two years, and forty to fifty percent will abandon teaching altogether during the first seven years. Those high in academic skills are bailing out and choosing other careers at alarming rates (Emrick, 1989; Henry, 1988; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). The accomplishments and commitments of many of the teachers who remain in the profession tend to deteriorate after the initial years of survival (Rosenholtz, 1989). To prevent this trend from continuing, programs must be designed to prepare, nurture, and support those entering the teaching profession (Gold, 1989).

INDUCTION OF BEGINNING TEACHERS THROUGH MENTORING

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of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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by

Leanne M. Junko

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Norman McCumsey

6-17-91  
Date Approved

\_\_\_\_\_  
Adviser

James L. Doud

6-17-91  
Date Approved

\_\_\_\_\_  
Second Reader of Research Paper

Dale R. Jackson

6/17/91  
Date Received

\_\_\_\_\_  
Head, Department of Educational  
Administration and Counseling

Statistics indicate that approximately fifteen percent of all new teachers will leave the profession after their first year of teaching, thirty percent during the first two years, and forty to fifty percent will abandon teaching altogether during the first seven years. Those high in academic skills are bailing out and choosing other careers at alarming rates (Emrick, 1989; Henry, 1988; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). The accomplishments and commitments of many of the teachers who remain in the profession tend to deteriorate after the initial years of survival (Rosenholtz, 1989). To prevent this trend from continuing, programs must be designed to prepare, nurture, and support those entering the teaching profession (Gold, 1989).

Nearly all beginning teachers experience "reality shock"--the transition from student teacher in the academic world to the first-year teacher in the real world of the classroom. Many are idealistic and have unrealistic expectations of what constitutes teaching (Manley, Siudzinski, & Varah, 1989; Stone, 1987). They become discouraged and disillusioned when they come face-to-face with their responsibilities of classroom discipline, student motivation, individual differences, classroom organization, testing and assessment, communication with parents, and insufficient materials and supplies (Veeman, 1984).

Novice teachers are expected to possess the expertise of experienced educators when they are hired by a school district. They frequently experience confusion and frustration when trying to meet the demands of administrators, parents, and students. Many are new to the school district and must cope with loneliness as well as adjust to the new teaching situation. Few teacher preparation programs provide beginning teachers with the self-confidence and self-knowledge they need to become effective teachers (Krajewski & Veatch, 1988). Many muddle through afraid to admit their inadequacies to veteran teachers or their principals.

They are often given the least desirable classrooms, the most difficult students who refuse to learn, classes of low ability students, an assignment that they are ill-prepared to teach, numerous extra-curricular activities to supervise, or a combination of these areas of difficulty. If they persevere, some become marginal teachers who fail to develop new skills or to take risks to develop themselves professionally (Bey & Holmes, 1990; Griffin, 1989; Harris, 1989).

In many professions, beginners are trained on the job over a period of months or years by colleagues proficient in their field. Through supervised internships, apprentices, or residencies, they are allowed to perfect and polish their

newly acquired skills of the profession (Rosenholtz, 1989). This period of development bridges the gap between being a student and becoming a productive member of the profession (Deal & Chatman, 1989; Huling-Austin, Odell, Ishler, Kay, & Edelfelt, 1989).

The latest commissions on effective schooling reminds us that teaching and learning are important facets of the schooling process. Therefore, hiring the best teacher should be the goal of every school district with the retention of teachers as the primary objective (Deal & Chatman, 1989). "If teacher attrition is a problem, investment in creating successful early experience for beginning teachers can be more productive and less costly in dollars and staff morale than extensive recruiting" (Tennessee Education Association & Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1988, p. 14).

Learning to teach is not a one-year process, but a life long procedure of perfecting one's skills and competencies. A continuing professional development program designed to meet the needs of individual teachers must be provided for beginning teachers. This will ensure they are given opportunities to perfect the skills needed to develop a knowledge base, and that they become professionally literate. The program should become part of a larger continuum of learning beginning with the induction program and continuing

to staff development for veteran teachers. As large numbers of teachers retire during this decade, demands for induction programs for first-year teachers will increase (Huling-Austin et al., 1989; Soares, 1989).

The National Education Association Professional Library (Tennessee Education Association & Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1988) listed 34 states as having some kind of statewide induction program for beginning teachers. Some of these programs defined procedures for evaluating new teachers to determine if they are qualified to teach in the district in which they are employed. Others offered formative evaluations and assistance through mentoring or peer coaching.

Mentoring, a method of offering support and assistance to new teachers, is gaining increasing recognition. Many school districts have been experimenting with mentoring programs that pair a beginning teacher with a veteran practitioner. A good support program does not link supervision and assistance with evaluation but instead focuses on the problems new teachers face on a daily basis. Beginning teachers need this nurturing and support from mentors who offer professional instruction and guidance (Daresh & Playko, 1989; Henry, 1988; Moran, 1990).

Quality mentoring programs can be logical and practical approaches to aid in eliminating the teacher shortage. Mentors



work collaboratively with the new teacher to solve problems, help them develop their teaching skills, and encourage them to build upon their educational backgrounds. The program should involve objective and informal coaching which can enhance the teacher's self-concept, improve the work environments, and promote professional commitment while providing individualized training for these teachers. The mentor demonstrates new strategies, observes the beginning teacher, and then provides feedback. The mentor becomes a model, an inspiration, and a guide for the beginning teacher (Gold, 1989; Moran, 1990).

The mentor-teacher relationship is one of professional confidentiality based on mutual trust and belief in one another. Mentors need to be committed to this challenge and to their profession and be open, caring, competent, and effective teacher role models. They need to have skills for resolving conflicts in the workplace and be able to help the new teacher deal with anxieties of survival to reality shock, building of self-concept in addition to having understanding of the theory and practice of teaching (Bey & Holmes, 1990).

In most programs, mentor teachers must possess exemplary teaching performance (Lowney, 1986). They must have appropriate certification, a willingness to assume the responsibilities expected of a mentor, and the desire to

read and study current literature on teaching and learning. Most effective mentor programs match a beginning teacher with a mentor teaching at the same grade level and same content areas. Allowing teachers to be involved in the selection process can encourage acceptance of the mentor program (Tennessee Education Association & Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1988).

Since the goal of induction programs is to keep those teachers with the greatest academic talent from leaving the profession schools need to seriously consider the placement of these novice teachers. They should not be assigned to the most difficult schools nor to classrooms with the most disruptive students. Kurtz (1983) states: "A better balance [of courses and students] is required, a mix that allows the beginning teacher a chance to make mistakes and survive" (p. 43).

They should be given opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and administrators about options and possibilities for choices in the classroom. Goals should be obtainable and clearly defined. Feedback from administrators and colleagues should be frequent, helpful, and positive suggestions given to promote improvement in instruction. Teachers must be encouraged to experiment with innovative teaching strategies to promote students' academic success.

The school must offer a non-threatening environment where new teachers feel comfortable asking for advice from colleagues and sharing problems of teaching with them (Rosenholtz, 1989).

To allow mentors and new teachers to work together in a harmonious relationship that fosters productive learning, Lewis (cited in Howey & Zimpher, 1989) suggests that beginning teachers be given a reduced workload with release time to observe other teachers teaching and to analyze their own classroom situations. Opportunities for problem sharing should be made possible through peer discussions.

For many teachers, the survival of the first year of teaching is the biggest challenge that they will ever face in their lives. Therefore, role models or mentors need to be chosen with care to guide these new teachers and to provide them with practical assistance to immediate problems. This guidance should continue throughout the first year and in some cases, into the second and third years of teaching. The program provided should deal directly with the issues and problems experienced by first year teachers that are seldom addressed in preservice programs at the university level. A plan initiated in the New York City school district employing retired teachers at about half their salaries to train and become mentors for new teachers in an example of a successful pilot program (Ryan, 1986).

According to Neubert (1988), coaching is a significant aspect of the mentoring process. He feels that the mentor and the teacher should collaborate on the planned lesson and should discuss areas of focus. The mentor observes the lesson and provides feedback to the teacher allowing the teacher to work through the process of reflection and inquiry about the theories and practices of learning and teaching. "Future teachers need time to observe, reflect, explore, investigate, and experiment as well as opportunities for comparing and matching the best of what they find and try out with their own abilities" (Soares, 1989, p. 13).

Klug (1988) lists four basic stages mentoring programs must endure in most public school districts. The initial stage is skepticism on the part of administrators, mentors, and beginning teachers as they are asked to integrate this program into their school district. The next step is acceptance as new teachers and mentors collaborate to make the program a successful one. Teachers and mentors begin to feel comfortable with their new roles in the resolution stage. Finally, he refers to the commitment stage where all parties are convinced of the importance of teacher induction programs.

Designing and implementing teacher induction programs has been accomplished through the collaborative efforts of universities, local school districts, regional educational

agencies and the state departments of education (Brooks, 1987). For many districts, the support for these new teachers will hinge on what kind of program can be devised without allocating additional funding. In some states legislatures have earmarked funds for this purpose and in others, schools depend on public agencies to make considerable contributions for the program development. However, schools should consider the money used for these programs as an investment for the future in education.

It is necessary to convince policy-makers of the importance of assistance programs. State supported programs through sufficient funding to all school districts would be the most equitable. Some states mandate programs but do not support them with any money. These districts are left to cope with this new burden the best way they can (Tennessee Education Association & Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1988).

Many mentors are intrinsically motivated by opportunities to share information and reflect on their own teaching methods. Through the inservice training they acquire new information about the teaching and learning processes. Mentoring can increase their communication skills, help them appreciate learning styles other than their own, and increase their skills of organization. The training process allows for continual educational benefits for the mentor as well as for

the new teacher (Huling-Austin et al., 1989; Raney & Robbins, 1989).

Some districts offer extrinsic rewards to mentor teachers as well. In California stipends of \$4000 were awarded to each mentor teacher plus \$2000 for implementation cost to cover salaries for substitute teachers, training session fees, and other miscellaneous costs involving paperwork. Other districts give extended contracts, credits for inservice, release time or released teaching loads, tuition waivers for college classes or travel expenses to seminars and conferences instead of money. Each district must determine ways to motivate those highly qualified practitioners into accepting the position of mentor for beginning teachers (Tennessee Education Association & Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1988).

The program can be simple and practical. Richard Sparks, principal of Fort Washington School in Clovis, California, set up an all day orientation workshop and luncheon for the new teachers at his school (Stone, 1987). At this workshop two mentor teachers discussed all the things new teachers might want to know about the school, its teachers, and the support staff. Then each new teacher was paired with a veteran teacher of the same grade level by the principal. Sparks

helped the newcomers understand the mission of the school and gave them a clear understanding of the goals expectation.

Professional development programs designed for beginning teachers was initiated in Missouri with the passage of the 1985 Missouri Excellence in Education Act (Emrick, 1989). This plan was offered as a support system for teachers with no prior experience to encourage them to stay in the profession while improving their teaching skills.

In the Ferguson-Florissant School District the Human Relations Office developed and implemented the mentoring program for new teachers (Emrick, 1989). A brochure was developed that discussed the program and listed the opportunities for training in effective teaching and peer coaching. The qualifications of a mentor were five years of teaching experience, good communication and interpersonal skills, keeping abreast of current teaching and learning principals, and having knowledge of district policies, school policies, and procedures. Listed were nine expectations for those who wished to be part of the mentoring program.

A handbook was prepared to guide veteran teachers in their role as mentor and the procedure that would be followed. It focused on trust between the mentor and novice teacher, provided encouragement and allowed them to make mistakes without becoming totally frustrated. Mentors were asked to

understand and help teachers meet their needs, become role models for excellent teaching, and through observation and feedback, help the new teachers cope with the day-to-day problems, while keeping in mind the whole picture.

Summer training was planned two days before the district's orientation week. The training emphasized conferencing skills, collecting objective data, analyzing the data collected, and the post-observation conference. Using lists of questions provided, the mentors role played to practice the pre-conferencing skills. The mentoring outcomes provided specific feedback to the teacher about the concerns that were agreed upon, helped the teacher analyze the data, helped her/him interpret the data, and assisted the teacher in determining alternative approaches for teaching a lesson. The success of this program for this school district made aware of the need for all teachers to work collegially together.

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Teacher Induction Program was a similar program started in 1974 (Manley, Siudzinski, & Varah, 1989). Included in this ten-year project was a team of professionals from area schools and a university consultant. The program has received many distinguished education awards including the 1980 Educational Testing Service



Award. Its main emphasis was on assistance and continued support during the entire first year.

The team was composed of the new teacher, the mentor, the administrator, and the university consultant who was a specialist in the subject or grade level of the new teacher. This team involved the first-year teacher in a Personal Development Plan. Weekly meetings were held to help teachers with their plans. Monthly meetings or seminars were conducted during the day or after school. Some administrators hired substitutes to free the mentor and new teacher for these meetings. Topics were based on a needs assessment and effective school research.

Follow-up studies indicated that all new teachers in the mentoring program completed the first year of teaching and 75 percent of these indicated they planned to be teaching five years from now. Only 82 percent of beginning teachers not involved in the induction process finished their first year and only 25 percent of these thought they would still be teaching in 5 years (Manley et al., 1989).

The benefits of this mentoring program included an increased commitment to teaching, improvement of teaching skills, and a plan to stay in teaching longer. Mentor teachers felt challenged professionally, were considered teachers of

strength and competence, and felt they made a contribution to their school and profession.

This program has also been implemented in the North Cook Educational Service Center which serves 40 school districts (Manley et al., 1989). Its purpose was to provide opportunities for staff development for teachers and administrators. It can provide services on a regional basis, because it has resources, expertise, professional collegial relationships, mentors and administrators in neighboring districts and university consultants that facilitate implementation in all 40 districts. It was composed of many educational institutions working together to provide support and training for new teachers.

The Lennox California School District implemented an inservice training program for first- and second-year teachers and experienced teachers new to the district (Moffett, St. John, & Isken, 1987). Planners felt it was important to monitor a teacher's first year in the classroom, because teaching styles are usually developed early. Only 5 to 10 percent of teachers will apply new skills in their classrooms if skills are taught in isolation. Demonstration, practice, and individual coaching will ensure 90 percent applications of new skills. Coaches as well as beginning teachers continue training to improve their skills in monthly follow-up sessions.

They have a full week of training each year plus 2 or 3 days of staff development providing new content and motivational speakers.

Teachers in this program responded favorably to Madeline Hunter's effective teaching model as a basis for their coaching sessions. New teachers felt their coaches were helpful, understanding and someone they could share their doubts and frustrations with. It relieved much of the stress of new teachers since coaches were available as a resource.

In Ohio the Teacher Development Program received funding from the Ohio General Assembly. The program used a nine-step planning model which must be evaluated every five years to determine if the requirements have been met (Bowers & Eberhart, 1988). A planning committee was created which included teacher leaders, a building principal, a person involved in staff development, and a representative of the school board. Through the committee's collaborative efforts, a high quality staff development program was designed that was consistent with the new policy.

The Arizona Teacher Residency Project (ATRP) was an effort to link preservice and inservice education collaboratively together to promote excellence in education. It was funded by the state department which required a sixteen hour training program for mentors and beginning teachers.

The research base was located at Arizona State University which evaluated the training, provided feedback on the mentoring process and assisted school districts in development of needs assessments to determine specific staff needs for training (Huling-Austin et al., 1989).

Rosenholtz (1989) indicated that new teachers need reassurance and emotional support from administrators as well. Giving information on procedures of the school, guidelines of the district, and appropriate materials for their classroom by the principal can be the first step toward two-way communication with that teacher. Specific suggestions for improvement given in a non-threatening way by the principal can show the teacher that she/he is interested in his/her success as a teacher. Whether a teacher fails or not can depend on the resourcefulness of the principal in inducting new teachers.

Principals must value and support peer coaching in order for it to succeed (Garmston, 1987). They must provide the resources and allow discussion of coaching topics at staff meetings. Substitutes can be provided so the new teacher can observe other colleagues in the building. It is important that mentors be trained in the processes of peer coaching to provide positive working relationships with new teachers.

Follow-up workshops can help mentors stay attuned to new coaching practices and problem-solving techniques.

There are many ways a principal can help new teachers succeed. To do this, the principal must have a planned program for the orientation of new teachers instead of leaving it up to chance. It must be a program to help new teachers move from reality shock and loneliness to the professional role of the veteran teacher. It should involve theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching (Moffett et al., 1987).

Research has shown that changes in the school structure regarding first year teachers are vital (Bullough, 1990). The mentoring process has been proven successful in developing better communication and teaching skills and in assisting beginning teachers succeed in their first teaching assignments (Daresh & Playko, 1989).

Some teachers will fail, while others will flourish with peer-coaching sessions. The emotional support and positive reinforcement provided to beginning teachers will help them feel more secure in their role as a teacher, but they may still require specific assistance in some areas that need improvement (Stone, 1987).

With statistics showing that a teacher shortage could be a reality in the near future, it's time to act. Because

more and more teachers are retiring and because of increasing demands in education standards being put on teacher candidates, we could be facing the problem of supply and demand.

Policymakers, educators, and researchers need to continue to work collaboratively to develop new programs for inducting new teachers into the profession. "Beginning teacher programs are investments in human capital and reflect visions of confidence" (Orlich, 1989, p. 79).

The challenge of helping teachers in their professional role can be a rewarding step for the principal as well as the rest of the staff. The pay-off can be turning a new inexperienced teacher into an outstanding professional educator. The induction of new teachers is an involved process on the part of the principals and staff, but it's not without its benefits. "The aim is to help more novice teachers to survive, and more survivors to become expert" (Bullough, 1990).

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