

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 147

SP 039 674

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TITLE Critical Issues in the Induction of Secondary School Teachers in Business Education, English and Language Arts, Foreign Language, and Mathematics.

PUB DATE 2000-10-27

NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, October 25-28, 2000).

PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Academic Standards; Articulation (Education); \*Beginning Teacher Induction; \*Beginning Teachers; Business Education; Classroom Environment; Computer Uses in Education; Curriculum Development; Diversity (Student); Educational Technology; English Instruction; English (Second Language); Grammar; Higher Education; Language Arts; Mathematics Education; Politics of Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Second Language Instruction; Secondary Education; Secondary School Mathematics; \*Secondary School Teachers; Student Characteristics; Student Evaluation; Writing Processes

IDENTIFIERS Teacher Support Groups

## ABSTRACT

In this paper, four teacher educators present their ideas about some of the critical induction issues facing graduates of their programs as they begin their careers in secondary schools. A business teacher educator focuses on the ecology of the classroom, structural functions and the political environment, and support networks. An English and language arts teacher educator highlights coherence in the literature curriculum, process-oriented approaches to writing, grammar and usage, and media and technology. A foreign language teacher educator discusses academic standards, grammar wars, isolation and problems of interschool articulation, and foreign language instead of bilingual instruction. A mathematics teacher educator looks at teaching to the levels of the students, issues related to student background, and falling into practice. Common themes that emerge from these discussions include the tension between preparing teachers in general for a wide variety of possible school settings and the distinct characteristics of specific schools; the influence of assessment (particularly standardized testing) on secondary school teachers; and the impact of beginning secondary school teachers' own biographies on their induction into teaching. (Contains 15 references.) (SM)

Critical Issues in the Induction of Secondary School Teachers in Business Education,  
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Paper presented at the 2000 meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research  
Association  
Session No. F.1510.AH  
October 27, 2000  
Chicago, Illinois

Comments and reactions to this paper are welcomed by the authors.

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Critical Issues in the Induction of Secondary School Teachers in Business Education,  
English and Language Arts, Foreign Language, and Mathematics

**Introduction**

Tom Ganser

Preparing effective secondary teachers in the areas of mathematics, English, business education, and foreign language has never been more important than it is today at the beginning of the 21st century. Moreover, the expectation that new teachers are well prepared from the very beginning of their careers has been influenced over the past thirty years from a view of good teaching based largely on platitudes to one based on the exponentially expanding body of research of teaching (e.g., Wittrock, M. C., 1986) and teacher education (e.g., Sikula, Buttery, & Guyton, 1996).

Today's preservice teacher preparation efforts are anchored in standards describing what teachers should know and be able to do, and in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with effective instruction. At a national level, these standards are central to the work of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Professional organizations, most notably the Council for Exceptional Children, are adapting these general standards to the work of their membership. The "Framework for Teaching" espoused by Danielson (1996) has become the focal point of both preservice teacher preparation and continuing professional development.

At the state level, licensing requirements for new teachers and for renewal of teaching licenses are also being tied to national standards for teachers. For example, the Wisconsin Standards for Teaching (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2000) that will go into effect in July, 2004, are adaptations of the INTASC principles. In addition, more than 28 states have planned or enacted measures that require formal induction programs for beginning teachers that typically include a mentor program (*Education Week*, 2000). In Wisconsin, beginning in 2004, new teachers will be issued a five-year non-renewable "Initial Educator" license and school districts will be obligated to provide these teachers with a qualified, trained mentor and support seminars for at

least one year. In addition, every school district will be required to appoint a three-person team comprised of a peer teacher, administrator, and representative of higher education who will monitor every new teacher's "Professional Development Plan." This plan must be directly related to the Wisconsin Teacher Standards and to the local school district's priorities and initiatives (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2000).

The interest in providing beginning teachers with appropriate support at the start of their careers has been heightened due to a convergence of three trends that will result in the influx of an estimated 2.2 million teachers over the next decade (Crowe, 2000). The first trend is increasing enrollment in schools. Total enrollment is projected to peak in 2006, with enrollment in kindergarten through grade 8 peaking in 2002 and enrollment in grades 9 through 12 peaking in 2007 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000). The second trend is an ongoing wave of retirements of teachers hired in the late 1960s and the 1970s. The third trend is reflected in a variety of state and national efforts to reduce class size. The challenges of assisting new teachers has never been greater but so too is the window of opportunity to enhance the profession of teaching.

In this paper, four teacher educators present their vision of some of the critical induction issues facing the graduates of their programs as they begin their careers in secondary schools. Melissa Freiberg, John Zbikowski, Harriet Rogers, and Wallace Sherlock are all members of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, a comprehensive university with an enrollment of approximately 10,200, including about 2,200 majors in the College of Education. They serve as methods of teaching instructors for their respective programs and as supervisors for students in preclinical experiences and during a full day, 18-week student teaching assignment. In addition, both Melissa's and John's dissertations focused on beginning teachers.

## **Business Education**

Harriet Rogers

### Ecology of the classroom

Shulman (1986) described "classroom ecology" as the set of expectations and agreements that exist in classrooms. These expectations and agreements include the

views that teachers and students have of their respective roles in the teaching and learning process. Contradiction exists between what the student teacher learned in methods classes regarding student expectations and the reality of teaching in a school setting. New teachers enter the classroom with a set of beliefs as to what it means to be a classroom teacher and that they can make a difference for every student. They are excited about signing their first teaching contract, and they believe enthusiastically that all students want to learn. Reality sets in, followed by disillusionment.

In their business education methods classes teaching strategies are explained for an ideal classroom setting. Creative ideas are discussed with little thought to whether the equipment will function properly or whether students will embrace the activity as enthusiastically as the teacher. Failure is seldom discussed.

Methods classes talk about the truancy problem that occurs in most schools but new teachers are hit with the tremendous work on the part of teachers to keep track of excused or unexcused absences. Methods classes are taught with the assumption that all students want to learn. New teachers find in reality that many students don't care about their grade (particularly during second semester).

A contradiction exists in the teaching delivery system typically used in college classes and the teaching strategy used in the high school. Most college courses use the lecture method—"sit and get" for delivering instruction. New teachers quickly learn that high school students usually don't take notes unless specifically told or are forced to do so. Attention spans are ten to fifteen minutes or less.

Other important areas that are given "lip service" in methods classes are conflict resolution between teacher and student or student and student; working with the special needs student; and alcohol and drug related problems. While real-life scenarios are discussed and role-play situations are set up, these efforts are ineffective in preparing the new teacher for a "real" face-to-face situation.

#### Structural functions and the political environment

Business education content courses attempt to prepare students with the newest technology and software. However, due to budget restrictions, some high schools actually have more up-to-date equipment than the university. Conversely, some high schools have very outdated equipment. Preparing student teachers with knowledge of

every software package and computer environment that might be used in high schools cannot be accomplished. Therefore, new teachers find themselves having to adjust to different computer environments than what they learned in college.

Creative ideas and new teaching strategies are presented to students in methods classes, especially regarding the use of the Internet as a teaching and learning tool. The student teachers are encouraged to try new activities that involve students in the learning process. But when they actually try these ideas, new teachers find resistance on the part of the veteran teachers in the department. These are the reasons cited: “We have never done it that way,” “You’re making me look bad with all your enthusiasm and creativity,” or “We need to keep the classes together, doing the same things.” Pressure is put on new teachers by their colleagues to “do what we do.”

Business education teachers are faced with renewed emphasis on academic standards to the exclusion of many “elective” courses. There are very few business education classes that are required of all students. Certainly, keyboarding skills are basic for all students, but keyboarding is being taught more and more at the elementary level. With the school district’s budget tightening, the required class size has increased, causing many business education courses to be dropped due to low enrollment.

New teachers learn the political environment in the school building the hard way—by getting caught up in it. Methods classes cannot prepare student teachers adequately for school politics. New teachers first encounter school politics in contract negotiations. They are so eager to sign a contract that they say “yes” to everything—coaching, student organization advisor, yearbook editor, school newspaper editor, etc. All too quickly they find themselves totally overwhelmed by their many responsibilities. This feeling of being overwhelmed has a direct effect on the retention of new Business Education teachers.

### Support Network

Up to one-third of new teachers leave the profession within the first few years (U.S. Department of Education 1997). Too often new teachers are left to “sink or swim” in the classroom. Support for new teachers is essential in their retention. However, new teachers lack the confidence or are reluctant to seek help when they need it for fear that their colleagues might think they are inadequate or poor teachers. A successful trusting

relationship with other colleagues has not had time to develop and may never develop. New teachers are so exhausted planning and teaching that they seldom attend professional business education conferences and seminars. Even if they would like to attend a conference, only one teacher is given permission to attend and that teacher is usually the veteran Business Education teacher. Ironically, it is the new teacher that needs the mentoring and rejuvenation that occur at professional meetings.

### **English and Language Arts Education**

John Zbikowski

#### Coherence in the literature curriculum

Students in teacher education programs are trained in reader-response pedagogy and critical analysis of texts in context. In the schools where they go to teach, however, the two predominant models of the literature curriculum from the 20th Century still predominate in the upper grades: the focus of the literature curriculum usually represents a combination of literary history (the dominant theme of the first half of the century) and close reading or New Criticism (which predominated in the second half of the century). Beginning teachers try to adapt either by abandoning reader response and rhetorical/political approaches altogether or by tacking on elements of them to literary history and close reading in an awkward, confusing combination.

#### Process-oriented approaches to writing

Students in teacher-education programs are prepared to approach language and literacy development as cognitive processes in which teachers guide learners in the application of linguistic knowledge in actual, functional, communicative activities. They are encouraged to guide students through stages in writing a given piece, and to introduce conventions of writing as they are needed. Partly under pressure of standardized testing, however, teachers in schools can tend to emphasize the production of technically correct written products in specific formats in minimal time, regardless of whether students, in producing them, acquire a sense of the connection between the form and the communicative purpose of the writing, an ability to solve rhetorical problems independently, or the ability to manage writing processes strategically.

A classic example of this phenomenon is the Research Paper. Introduced in the United States in the 19th century as a way of giving college rhetoric students something substantial to write about, the Research Paper (or Term Paper) in many schools has become mainly an exercise in manuscript form. The development of strategies for inquiry and presentation about subjects of interest takes a back seat in some classes to the proper citation of references in text, or even to the proper way of writing information on 3"x5" note cards, which was a popular strategy for writers of papers in the days before photocopiers, word processors, and the Internet.

### Grammar and usage

Experienced teachers rightly recognize the importance of teaching students the elements of usage and the conventions of standard, edited English. However, most do not acknowledge any means of teaching these essential elements of the subject other than a) analysis of words in sentences according to form categories such as noun, article, adjective, etc., b) repetitive drill on series of artificial sentences in isolation, organized in sequences determined by the logic of Latin grammar rather than by the knowledge that particular students need to apply when speaking and writing, and c) still to some extent (though this practice is fading) marking errors on finished pieces of writing. For generations, research has consistently shown, and teachers' daily experience has not contradicted, that analyzing sentences out of context and performing repetitive grammar drill have no effect on students' ability to use the language correctly. The futility of these approaches is embodied in drill-oriented grammar textbooks in which the content is the same in grade 12 as it is in grade 6. Nevertheless, if only as a way of symbolizing how much correct usage is valued, such activities still take up a great amount of instructional time, especially in middle-school language arts classes. Beginning teachers have been trained to use methods that have been shown to be effective, such as sentence combining and sentence-composing activities, as well as in relating grammar instruction to students' writing; yet upon entering the classroom, they find that available materials and curricula, as well as the school culture, constrain them to teach as English teachers taught 50 years ago.

A complicating factor here is that English majors in teacher-education programs are themselves ignorant of grammar and usage in alarming numbers. Many of these

students, who were attracted to English because of literature and not language study or writing, are all too eager to abandon not just the traditional, drill-based teaching of grammar, but any teaching of grammar, not because traditional methods are useless, but because "grammar is boring" or "kids need to express themselves creatively," etc. These rationalizations, perhaps related to new teachers' lack of knowledge of grammar, hinder the credibility of new teachers in attempting to introduce more effective ways of teaching grammar, which few attempt to do anyway.

Each of these areas of conflict is more pronounced, in general, in higher grades than in earlier ones, with the teaching of grammar being especially problematic in grades 6-9.

### Media and technology

The professional organizations for Reading and Language Arts have claimed media study (film, television, and now computer-based multimedia and the WWW) as an integral part of the language-arts curriculum. Yet many teacher-education programs have yet to emphasize this increasingly important concern for English teachers. Similarly, many school districts in their curricula are moving slowly in this direction.

## **Foreign Language**

Wallace Sherlock

Foreign language teaching is undergoing major changes in all its aspects from philosophical considerations of its purposes in the curriculum to technical innovations in methods of classroom instruction. This period of transition is exciting and stimulating for new teachers, but it also poses problems and dilemmas. Since the most vexing problems for beginning teachers are for the most part the same problems that vex all foreign language teachers, I will mention some of the major issues in the field as a whole, and focus closely on how these problems are experienced by beginning teachers.

### Academic standards

The most important new development in foreign language education is the introduction of the Academic Standards. Support for the standards movement has been strong in Wisconsin where it is being actively promoted by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Wisconsin Association of Foreign Language Teachers

(WAFLT), the teachers' professional organization. It was largely local teachers who elaborated the skeletal national standards into a curricular document for teachers, and the information dissemination workshops and summer institutes for teachers sponsored by DPI have been well attended. In parallel efforts at the local level, many, if not most, school districts are making attempts to align the district curriculum with the standards. While the effort is laudable, it sometimes falls on the shoulders of beginning teachers. This is not only an onerous burden for a new teacher, but also one fraught with chances for misunderstanding by the administration because the foreign language standards are not prescriptive, but are rather intended as a prompt to creative curriculum development. Administrators often do not understand the subtleties of this purpose and look at the standards as an assessment checklist. One new teacher reported to me that the principal wanted to know why she, a middle school teacher, is aiming instruction at the elementary standards. The reason is, of course, that the school district has no elementary foreign language program, so the students must attain elementary proficiency at the middle school level. The political aspect of such problems is further complicated when senior teachers regard the standards as unnecessary or as just a new fad that will soon pass. Then the new teacher must consider the consequences of taking a position on a controversial issue. The controversy is one that the writers of the standards intentionally engendered.

#### Grammar wars

Problems of overload notwithstanding, the standards are problematic for new teachers because they are purposely intended to redirect the traditional purposes and methods of foreign language instruction toward a performance-oriented approach to foreign language instruction. New teachers under pressure to implement the standards may find themselves caught up in a local skirmish of the wide-ranging grammar wars now taking place in the foreign language profession. Many older teachers feel that the performance-oriented approach neglects the teaching of grammar. Unfortunately, this mistaken understanding is reinforced by the vogue among text book writers to treat grammar implicitly rather than explicitly and to relegate grammar tables to the appendices.

New teachers who actively experiment with performance-oriented methods are frequently discouraged by the tepid response or outright hostility of students whose prior experience has not prepared them for extended authentic communication in the classroom. The implication here for pre-service courses is clear; methods instructors need to make explicit not only the performance-oriented techniques themselves, but also prepare future teachers to make the transition from traditional techniques to performance techniques.

#### Isolation and problems of interschool articulation

The recently adopted Wisconsin requirement that middle schools provide foreign language instruction is hailed by the profession, but it poses new difficulties for teachers caught in the scissors of mandated services and limited budgets. In spite of traditionally being considered an academic track subject in the high school, something for college-bound students, foreign language is not considered a core academic subject in the elementary and middle school, and is relegated to the margin along with music, art, and physical education. Ironically, progressive innovations such as dividing schools into houses and grouping teachers into core teams to promote curricular integration sometimes only increase the foreign language teacher's isolation. One new teacher reports that foreign language in her middle school is intentionally scheduled so that she has the children while the core teachers meet to plan integrated lessons. Furthermore, the special system of incentives and sanctions that have been instituted across the core subjects do not extend to foreign language. Consequently, students make the rational decision to "blow off" Spanish rather than math homework because the penalties will be less. Injury follows insult when senior faculty frown on her as an intruder because she has no room of her own and teaches from a cart.

Another problem that comes with the extension of foreign language to the middle school is interschool curriculum articulation. Since most schools function as self-contained administrative units, it is difficult for teachers to plan vertical integration of the curriculum. New teachers in new middle school programs sometimes meet resistance from high school teachers who don't want to advance the curriculum or complain that the instruction in the middle school is not sufficiently academic. This last complaint arises

from misunderstanding or disagreement about the philosophical shift taking place in the rationale for foreign language instruction.

The extension of foreign language to the middle school substantiates a philosophical shift from the traditional elitist view that foreign language is for the academically gifted, to a democratic view that all students can benefit from foreign language study. For the foreign language teacher the cost of this commitment is heavy class loads, complex schedules, and inadequate instructional time for students to meet the performance expectations of administrators and parents.

#### Foreign language instead of bilingual instruction

As immigration from Mexico and Central America continues in Wisconsin, Spanish teachers increasingly find native Spanish speakers in their classes because the school lacks adequate bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. This is a poor solution to the ESL problem that falls on the shoulders of foreign language teachers. Foreign language instruction and second language instruction share theoretical foundations and many classroom techniques, but the needs of the learners in each of these groups are typically very different. Foreign language learners belong to the dominant cultural group and have similar (and usually advanced) literacy abilities. The aims of instruction are general elementary communication skills and the broadening of cultural horizons. Second language learners belong to a minority cultural group and usually have widely varying literacy abilities. The aims of instruction are basic literacy and advanced communication skills for day-to-day exchanges in actual social settings. Most beginning foreign language teachers do not have training in ESL and are not prepared to meet the needs of second language learners. They are doubly burdened and frustrated. First, because they plainly see that the needs of the two groups are different and they try to meet them, but don't know how. Second, foreign language teachers are typically not native speakers, and beginning teachers feel intimidated by native speakers who may correct them, or even worse, mock them.

## **Mathematics Education**

Melissa Freiberg

### Teaching to student levels

Probably the most critical adjustment factor for beginning math teachers is reaching out to students at their own level. Although the mathematics courses taken in college certainly build a foundation of understanding of subject matter, very little of the content from college courses directly relate to the content the beginning teacher will teach. A good math student learns to make numerous connections and relationships among concepts and skills, so often when they become teachers, they have a hard time unraveling those threads for students. As a result, beginning math teachers often have unreasonable expectations of students as to how much content to cover and how quickly students can assimilate the information.

New teachers often assume students' familiarity with concepts and processes to which they may not have been exposed or with which they are not yet proficient. So new teachers have a tendency to move too quickly through material, to make assessments too lengthy and too difficult, and to expect instant learning. Mentors, or other experienced teachers, can help new teachers by identifying major concepts that should be emphasized, offering possible problem areas that students will have, and suggesting time frames for teaching various topics.

### Student background

Confounding the problem of unrealistic expectations of students, new teachers often come to schools with little knowledge of the students, the program, or the community. This lack of knowledge gives the new teacher little solid ground from which to build. Without knowing what prerequisite knowledge and skills have already been taught, beginning teachers may start at a point that skips key material. On the other hand, and maybe just as destructive to students' learning, beginning teachers may choose to simply teach as much as possible in order to not produce any gaps. When information is taught that most students already know, besides boring them, they are resentful.

One of the most important things that new teachers need is information that helps them approach students in a confident and supportive manner. That means familiarity with the entire curriculum scope and sequence, or at least knowing where to find that

information. It also means having copies of the district's expectations, knowing where to get or how to order materials, what other teachers at earlier grades have done, and how parents and other community members are involved in the schools.

### Falling into practice

Although many beginning teachers find themselves in the position of falling back on more traditional methods when actually faced with their own classrooms or when they experience some failures in the classroom, it seems even more acute with math teachers. When students are having difficulty understanding mathematical concepts or skills, beginning teachers appear to get more controlling. Teachers tend to lecture more and listen less, use cooperative work less and test more, tell more and guide less. Included in this, especially when some students understand the material and others don't, is reliance on quick "tricks" and memorization rather than working toward full comprehension. Usually because teachers feel the time pressure for "getting through the book," beginning teachers are more likely to drop an activity or teaching technique after only one trial rather than analyzing it and trying to alter it for future use.

Finally, beginning math teachers tend to rely more on numbers from assessment than from other factors. Whether this is because of the quantitative nature of their discipline or because of their lack of confidence in their ability to use more subjective forms of assessment is a matter of debate. However, when formal, quantitative measures do not seem to match informal or performance measures, beginning teachers are more likely to just accept the numerical measure when they should be determining which measures are not valid.

Support for beginning mathematics teachers really should take the form of "reality checks." Helping them should take the form of technical support—how much can be covered in one lesson, what concepts have already been covered, what major projects or activities have been done in earlier grades, where students might have trouble, and what kind of questions can be expected. However, support must also have an affective component as well: it is OKI to ask students what they know or have had before and how to encourage them to try something new without fear. Knowing students goes a long way in motivating teachers to admit errors and to trust in their own instincts.

Most importantly, beginning teachers need to refocus on learning, not teaching, mathematics.

### Emerging Themes

Tom Ganser

The analysis of critical issues faced by beginning secondary teachers in mathematics, English, business education, and foreign language that is outlined above suggest some important common themes. One of these is the tension between preparing teachers in general for a wide variety of possible school settings, and the distinct characteristics of specific schools, especially in terms of scope and sequence of curriculum. What is often perceived as a debilitating "disconnect" between preservice teacher preparation and school district needs and priorities can only be offset significantly if the preparation of prospective teachers is tailored completely to a specific school, a model that is most evident in professional development schools.<sup>1</sup>

A second theme is the influence of assessment and particularly standardized testing on secondary school teachers. These processes, as well as the standards for acceptable levels and kinds of achievement that they represent, result in a clear reduction in the degrees of freedom that teachers have in conducting their work.<sup>2</sup>

A third theme highlights what appears to be the nearly inescapable impact of beginning secondary school teachers' own biography on their induction into teaching. The influence of the "apprenticeship by observation" document by Lortie (1975) in *Schoolteacher* appears to be as strong today as it was a generation of teachers ago. A fourth, and related, common theme is the continuing evidence of the great power of schools as complex, formal organizations to form newcomers to meet the pre-existing demands of the organization. This power of schools to socialize beginning teachers has been well-documented since Waller (1932) seminal study, *The Sociology of Teaching* (e.g., Blase, 1985; Hoy & Rees, 1977; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Zeichner and Tabachnick's (1981) question, "Are the effects of university teacher education 'washed out' by school experience?" clearly is as relevant today as it was 20 years ago.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> This is not just an issue for teacher educators in the United States. In a study of beginning teaching in Jamaica in May 2000, beginning teachers, principals, and college lecturers regularly reported to Tom Ganser that there is a wide gap between how teachers are prepared in Jamaica and the "reality" of schools.

<sup>2</sup> Assessment may affect teacher preparation in yet another way. A secretary who attended a Parent-Teacher Organization meeting told Tom Ganser that concerns about the importance of high stakes testing led parents to recommend that student teachers not be assigned to teachers at grades of the tests for fear of negatively influencing the performance of their students on the tests. Conceptually, it follows that these concerns may be extended to the teachers of the students the preceding grade and the grade before that. Carried to the extreme, this line of thinking suggests that preservice teachers be completely prohibited from assuming any significant teaching responsibilities in schools.



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