

National Implications: An Analysis of E-Mentoring Induction Year Programs for Novice Alternatively Certified Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to determine how urban school districts, urban schools and urban educational leaders have planned for and implemented into practice induction programs for alternatively certified novice teachers, which will include a E-Mentor, E-mentoring, and mentoring in response to state policy on new teacher training. The topic is of grave concern as on a national level, Darling-Hammond (2000) established that “teacher quality characteristics...are significantly and positively correlated with student outcomes”. As NCLB mandates that every classroom have a highly qualified teacher, research such as this will provide, urban school districts, urban schools, and urban educational leaders with substantial information needed to effectively meet the goals of this challenge.

Introduction

There is a growing concern among researchers and educators that the single most important factor in determining student performance is the quality of his or her teachers. Therefore, the national goal of providing an equitable education to children across the nation is to be met, it is critical that efforts be concentrated on developing and retaining high-quality teachers in every community and at every grade level (Alliance for Excellent Educators, 2005).

Purpose of the Article

The purpose of this article is to discuss novice teachers leaving the profession at an increasingly high rate and the influence of E-Mentoring through induction year programs as a method in retaining novice teachers. The dilemma of inadequate teacher supply has been a constant distress in public education for decades. Even though the number of teachers prepared annually is sufficient to meet marketplace demands (Darling-Hammond 2002, Ingersoll 2002), finding and retaining exemplary classroom teachers is a concern for K-12 schools nationwide. Replacing teachers becomes very expensive for school districts and the finance of education. According to Ingersoll (2002) teacher turnover has been an ongoing concern for years. Continuing concern in the education field is centered on the disproportionately higher resignation rate for beginning teachers than for teachers who have been teaching for more than ten years. (Sclan 1993; see also Futrell 1989; Gunderson and Karge 1992; Karge 1993; Haselkorn 1994). Research indicates that teachers will leave their professions early on when mentoring is not utilized at the beginning of their careers. With nearly 30 percent of new teachers leaving within five years, and even higher attrition rates in disadvantaged districts, a revolving door of candidates makes recruitment a Sisyphean task (Darling-Hammond, 2001).

Providing Equitable Education for Children in the United States

There is a growing concern among researchers and educators that the single most important factor in determining student performance is the quality of his or her teachers. Therefore, the national goal of providing an equitable education to children across the nation is to be met, it is critical that efforts be concentrated on developing and retaining high-quality teachers in every community and at every grade level (Alliance for Excellent Educators, 2005).

Some attrition is inevitable. Some teachers do retire; other teachers leave for personal reasons such as to care for family or children, and relatively small number are dismissed from their jobs and encouraged to leave the profession. But nearly half of all

teachers who enter the field leave it within a mere five years and the best and brightest teachers are often the first to leave (Robin, R. H., Xianglei, C., Geis, S., 2000).

Mentors Provide Support for New Teachers

Beginning teachers are particularly vulnerable because they are more likely than their more experienced colleagues to be assigned low-performing students. Despite the added challenges that come with teaching children and adolescents with higher needs, most new teachers are given little or no mentoring, have to contend with lack of professional support and feedback, and a demonstration of what it takes to help their students succeed. According to the National Center for Education Statistics 1999 -2000 "Public School Teacher Survey", 47 percent of public school teachers worked with a mentor teacher in the same subject area (U.S. Department of Education). Sixty-six percent of teachers who were formally mentored by another teacher reported that it "improved their classroom teaching a lot" (U. S. Department of Education, 2002).

Mentors are an important factor in providing support for new teachers as they enter the real world of the classroom, however mentoring alone is not enough (Alliance for Excellent Educators, 2005). Comprehensive induction proves most effective at keeping good teachers in the classroom. Studies demonstrated that new teacher turnover rates can be cut in half through comprehensive induction - a combination of high quality mentoring, professional development and support, scheduled interaction with other teachers in the school and in the community at large, and formal assessments for new teachers during at least their first two years of teaching (Smith, T. & Ingersoll, R., 2004).

Teacher Accountability and Highly Qualified Teachers

According to the NCLB act, a teacher must possess the following to be deemed as highly qualified, 1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach (NCLB). Teacher accountability is more evident than it has ever been. Teachers are held accountable on every forefront. No Child Left Behind is a conceptual framework that guides novice and veteran teachers to being highly qualified. The ultimate goal is to have higher rates of student achievement for all children regardless of their socio-economic status (Darling -Hammond, 2002; Stone, 1998). Oftentimes the efforts to reach such a goal should be distinct and innovative steps which ensure that equal access to a quality education is achieved (Clark & Estes, 2003). Mentoring is a major obstacle that limits alternatively certified teachers, who are not aware of the induction year programs.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, the primary concern is that all classrooms are housed with highly qualified teachers. At the present moment, novice teacher attrition

is on the rise. Many classrooms across the United States have either a novice teacher or a non-certified person instructing students. Exceedingly high rates of teachers are leaving the profession within the first five years. Clearly, the majority of teachers leaving the field of education are in poor, urban and diversity populated schools (Education Week, 2003).

Accountability and Evaluation Efforts in Longitudinal Research

In order for teachers to be held accountable, educators, law makers, stakeholders, and other constituents, should make rigorous attempts to prepare novice teachers, recruitment, educate, and retain the novice teachers once they are on board. A study by Clark & Estes (2002) supports the premise that these efforts should include goal setting, and analysis, cost effective analysis, and evaluation efforts in longitudinal research.

Beginning teachers' reasons for leaving the profession have less to do with insufficient salaries, than with a lack of professionalism, collegiality, and administrative support (Metropolitan Life 1986; Karge 1993). Utilizing new teacher mentor programs seems to be critical in the area of novice teacher retention. Oftentimes, new teachers are overlooked and they are thrown into to the profession without life support. It is imperative to examine the possible factors that are assisting in the increase of novice teacher attrition.

Mentoring is a vital tool in the field of education. When we consider (a) the United States' need for retaining the potential teachers our colleges are graduating, (b) the need for new teachers to be able to teach their students to state-mandated standards, and (c) the students' needs to perform well on standardized tests as well as pass high-stakes exit exams, it becomes obvious that we need a positive change in the way new teachers are inducted into the profession (Darling-Hammond 1997, 2000a; Huling-Austin et al. 1989; Moir and Gless 2001; Shulman 1999; Sykes 1999). Mentoring is an important aspect when it comes to primary teachers, but unfortunately, novice teachers are frequently unaware of their mentors.

If E-Mentoring is going to be recognized as a strategy for novice teachers, it must be connected to a guided vision for teaching, full comprehension of teacher learning, and favored by the specialized culture that supports partnership and inquisition. E-Mentoring programs will unlock new opportunities for veteran teachers. In terms, it will also create an atmosphere that is conducive to the novice teacher to learn differing pedagogical styles. With strong leadership, novice teachers will have the ability to implement the information into everyday practice.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, one main objective is to establish grounds for implementation of E-Mentoring programs for urban school districts, understanding the principles of mentoring, the influence mentors have on the turnover rates of novice teachers, and understanding how motivation influence novice teachers, will lead to lower novice teacher attrition. According to the National Education Association (NEA), new teachers who participate in induction programs like mentoring are nearly twice as likely to stay in the profession. Some even believe that mentoring programs can cut the dropout rate from roughly 50 to 15 percent during the first five years of teaching. Research on mentoring programs for beginning teachers showed that mentoring was an effective strategy in efforts to recruit and retain teachers (Feiman-Nemser & Beasley, 1996). Finally, Borsuk (2000) reported the results of a federal study stated that teachers are nearly twice as likely to leave after their first three years of teaching if they do not have mentoring or other induction programming at the start of their careers.

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