

**The Preparation of New Teachers for the Profession:  
Ohio's Resident Educator Program**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to learn if teachers believe their experience with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession and increased support and retention. The 189 participants completed a 33 question Likert-based survey and provided more than 406 comments. The findings indicate that the teachers do not believe the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to enact the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession and the program requirements impeded them from receiving the support they needed.

*Keywords:* Teacher induction, resident educator, educational leadership

Teacher evaluation systems and teacher induction programs are not new to the state of Ohio. However, they have recently undergone significant changes that have created immense concern in the field. In 2006, the Ohio State Board of Education adopted educator standards based on what teachers and principals should know and be able to do at various stages of their careers. In continuation of that work, in 2007, the Ohio Department of Education worked with stakeholders to perform a comprehensive analysis of teacher induction programs. The result of these combined efforts is the Ohio Resident Educator Program (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).

According to the Ohio Department of Education, “the Ohio Resident Educator Program is a formal four-year program of support for beginning teachers” (Ohio Department of Education, 2014, p. 4). More specifically, it is “part of a comprehensive system that provides job-embedded, professional growth for Ohio’s teachers from pre-service and throughout their professional life” (p. 4). During the first and second year in the Resident Educator program, teachers (referred to as “resident educators”) discover, practice, and refine their teaching as they learn to self-assess, adjust their teaching, reflect upon their progress, and continually strengthen their teaching practices. In the third and fourth years of the program, resident educators assess their teaching through the Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA). The RESA is a performance-based assessment that requires teachers to demonstrate knowledge and skills in real time

through five tasks: 1) first lesson cycle, 2) formative and summative assessment, 3) second lesson cycle, 4) communication and professional growth, and 5) reflection on teaching practice from students and/or colleagues (Ohio Department of Education, 2014b).

Although the Resident Educator Program is currently in its fourth year, there is limited research on the implementation and impacts of this program on the resident educators that it is intended to “support.” The purpose of this study is twofold: 1) to determine if teachers believe their experiences with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession and 2) to learn if teachers believe their experiences with the Resident Educator Program improved teacher support and retention.

## **Review of the Literature**

The researchers were interested to determine if teachers believe their experiences with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to teach (as defined by the state standards) and if it improved teacher support and retention. California’s Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Induction program was a predecessor to Ohio’s state reforms and process for supporting and mentoring new teachers. As a program to support new teacher candidates, BTSA sought to improve retention rates while also providing a pathway for early-license California teachers to move to credentials (Gillham, 2008). Parallels between the California program BTSA and Ohio’s Resident Educator Program include a plan to support early career teachers, a program to help increase teacher quality, and a means for teachers to move from a provisional teaching license to a professional teaching license.” Although the BTSA program has been in existence for several years, currently minimal research exists on the program. Research on Ohio’s Residential Educator Program has been limited to studying the role of “intermediates” assigned to supporting the implementation of the RESA program (Owens, 2014). This study is in response to the need for further research on these types of teacher induction programs and their teacher-perceived impacts on support and retention.

### **Teacher Perceptions of Induction Programs**

How can a school district be certain that it has a quality induction program? A quick way to assess a program is through teacher feedback. In Joest’s (2003) study of select Texas school districts, teachers who had experienced quality induction programs were quick to voice their pleasure with these programs: “the novice teachers who teach in the districts and campuses with the strongest support could not say enough positive comments about how the support program helped them through the first year” (p. 155). Other studies of induction programs have also received positive comments from participants (Grammatikopoulos, Tsigilis, Gregoriadis, & Bikos, 2013; Marshall, et al., 2013; Allen, 2013). However, teacher feedback about induction programs is not always positive. In California, teachers in two school districts reported broad discontent with the state’s induction program (Gillham, 2008), while other studies also reported some dissatisfaction with induction programs (Cherubini, Kitchen, Goldblatt, & Smith, 2011). However,

Shockley notes that “teacher satisfaction and motivational factors are generally not included or are not part of the intent of most induction programs” (Shockley, Watlington, & Felsher, 2013, p. 373).

In addition, sometimes the perceptions of teachers are mixed in respect to their induction programs in that teachers perceive some aspects of the induction program to be more helpful than others. For example, in one multi-year study, teachers valued the instructional resource teacher, coaching, collaboration with colleagues, and professional development as the most valuable aspects of their induction, while they valued other aspects of the program much less (Nielsen, Lundmark, Barry, & Addison, 2006). In their study of induction programs in North Carolina, Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, and Cowan-Hathcock (2007) identified 21 factors that 80% or more participants favorably described as effective and 9 factors that participants described less favorably.

### **Teacher Support and Retention in Induction Programs**

Teaching is a profession with chronically high turnover (Ingersoll, 2003; Maddox, 1997), which researchers have recognized since at least 1932. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF), “about one-third of the country’s new teachers leave teaching sometime during their first three years on the job” (NCTAF in Colgan, 2004a, p. 23). About a third of all beginning teachers leave within their first 3 years of teaching and by the end of 5 years, nearly half of all new teachers (46%) will leave the profession (Colgan, 2004a). American schools hire more than 200,000 new teachers annually, but by the time summer arrives, at least 22,000 of these new hires have quit (Graziano, 2005). In recent years, the number of new hires has been roughly equal to the number of teachers leaving the profession. Statistics such as these have led some students of education to refer to the hiring and subsequent attrition of teachers as a “revolving door” (Easley, 2000, p. 4).

What is it that makes teachers leave the profession in such high numbers? There are numerous reasons why teachers leave their school or leave the profession, some of which are chronicled in particular studies. Unfortunately, a lack of commonly accepted definitions for attrition factors makes comparisons difficult. However, taken as a whole, work-related factors that are associated with attrition can be organized into nine researcher-generated categories: one, working environment (Cochran & Smith, 2004; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kirby & Grissmer, 1993; Ruhland, 2001); two, working conditions (Easley, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Graziano, 2005; Ruhland 2001); three, organizational climate (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004); four, salary and benefits (Darling-Hammond, 2003); five, retirement (Graziano, 2005; Ingersoll, 2003); six, the degree of a teacher’s human capital (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993); seven, the extent to which an individual is beholden to the organization (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993); eight, the quality of pre-service preparation (Graziano, 2005); and nine, the changing expectations of today’s teachers (Johnson in Cochran-Smith, 2004). Some attrition factors cannot be reduced by induction programs, for example a life event unrelated to the family (such as a spouse’s job transfer or needing to care for a sick relative). However, attrition factors more closely connected to the workplace can be mitigated by induction programs. These would include job-related stress, class

management issues, deciding ‘teaching wasn’t for me,’ and a lack of administrative support/recognition.

## **Methods**

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was twofold: one, to determine if teachers believe their experiences with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession and two, to learn if teachers believe their experiences with the Resident Educator Program improved teacher support and retention. To guide this investigation, the following research questions will be utilized:

1. Do teachers believe their experiences with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet the *Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession* (1) Students, 2) Content, 3) Assessment, 4) Instruction, 5) Learning Environment, 6) Collaboration and Communication, and 7) Professional Responsibility and Growth?
2. Do teachers believe their experiences with the Resident Educator Program improved teacher support and retention?

### **Data Collection and Instrument**

The researchers used survey research in this study to learn more about new teacher beliefs related to the Resident Educator Program. More specifically, they created a survey that consisted of 33 Likert-based questions (four-point scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) that focused on the first research question: Do teachers believe their experiences with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession. The 33 questions asked participants the level to which they believe their experience with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession: 1. Students (4 questions), 2. Content (5 questions), 3. Assessment (5 questions), 4. Instruction (7 questions), 5. Learning Environment (5 questions), 6. Collaboration and Communication (3 questions), and 7. Professional Responsibility and Growth (3 questions). The language of the thirty-three questions mirrored the precise language of the Ohio Standards of the Teaching Profession. To address the second research question on teacher support and retention, after each of the seven sections, the participants were provided with a comment box to discuss any of the items in that section. The survey also included a brief demographics section to determine the participant's school district type (rural, urban, suburban), licensure band (early childhood, middle childhood, adolescent/young adult, multi-age), OTES rating (accomplished, skilled, developing, ineffective), year in the Resident Educator Program, and type of education program (undergraduate, graduate).

To disseminate the survey, the researchers utilized the graduate contact information for their three universities. In addition, an email was sent to all Ohio Confederation of Teacher Educator Organization (OCTEO) Field Directors and all Ohio building administrators requesting them to forward the recruitment email to their graduates/teachers in their third and fourth year of the Resident Educator Program. The

email included the link to the survey to be completed electronically and anonymously through Survey Monkey.

## **Participants**

A total of 189 resident educators participated in the study. Of the 189 participants, 169 of them reported their demographic information. The majority (52.66%) of the resident educators identified their district as rural, while 32.54% identified suburban and 21.89% urban. Within these districts, 37.28% of the participants teach in the Early Childhood licensure band, 26.04% in Middle Childhood, 28.99% in Adolescent/Young Adult, and 20.71% in Multi-Age. Although the survey was intended for third and fourth year resident educators, some of the participants were only in their first and second of the Resident Educator program. Approximately 54% of the participants were in the third year, 25.44% in their fourth year, 11.24% in their second year, and 4.14% in their first year. Of the 169 participants who reported their Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) rating, 35.5% reported that they earned an Accomplished rating, 49.11% Proficient, and 3.55% were Developing, with 11.83% who selected N/A. None of the participants reported receiving an Ineffective OTES rating. Finally, the majority (79.88%) of the participants obtained their initial licensure in an undergraduate teacher education program and 20.12% at the graduate level.

## **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed through the computation of descriptive statistics (means, standard deviation, and frequencies) to compute the overall perception reported for each statement (Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession grouped by each of the seven standards) and the demographic information. In addition, factor scores were generated by calculating the mean participant response to all statements associated with each of the research questions. A frequency analysis was conducted on all responses, and responses were grouped by the items' associated research questions.

## **Research Question 1**

For Research Question 1 (Do teachers believe their experiences with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession?), each item was grouped by its relation to the seven standards: Students, Content, Assessment, Instruction, Learning Environment, Collaboration and Communication, and Professional Responsibility and Growth and then analyzed. For Standard 1: Students: Teachers understand student learning and development, and respect the diversity of the students they teach, the resident educators overwhelming did not believe their experience with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to understand student learning and development and to respect the diversity of the students they teach. Thirty-seven percent of the resident educators disagreed and 33.54% strongly disagreed, while only 4.44% strongly agreed and 24.98% agreed (see Table 1).

**Table 1***Response Frequency to Research Question 1- Summary of All Standards (N = 189)*

| My experience with the Resident Educator Program improved my ability to: | SA    | A      | D      | SD     |
|--|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Standard 1: Students   | 4.44% | 24.98% | 37.04% | 33.54% |
| Standard 2: Content  | 2.87% | 25.69% | 36.71% | 34.73% |
| Standard 3: Assessment   | 3.13% | 30.65% | 34.34% | 31.88% |
| Standard 4: Instruction  | 3.66% | 26.92% | 37.84% | 31.57% |
| Standard 5: Learning Environment   | 4.09% | 22.96% | 37.39% | 35.57% |
| Standard 6: Collaboration and Communication                              | 6.13% | 28.54% | 30.65% | 34.66% |
| Standard 7: Professional Responsibility and Growth                       | 6.91% | 27.83% | 30.71% | 34.55% |

For Standard 1, they perceived the Resident Educator Program most improved their ability to “display knowledge of how students learn and of the developmental characteristics of age groups.” However, they believed the program least improved their ability to “expect that all students will achieve to their full potential.”

The resident educators reported similar concern with Standard 2: Content: Teachers know and understand the content area for which they have instructional responsibility. Again, the resident educators overwhelmingly did not believe their experience with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to know and understand the content area for which they have instructional responsibility. Of the 182 participants who answered the Standard 2 questions, 36.71% of the resident educators selected disagree and 34.73% selected strongly disagree, only 2.87% and 25.69% selected strongly agree and agree respectively (see Table 1). Their agreement was strongest in respect to “understand and use content-specific instructional strategies to effectively teach the central concepts and skills of the discipline” and weakest in respect to “understand the relationship of knowledge within discipline to other content areas.”

For Standard 3, the resident educators were more positive in that more of them perceived that their experience with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet Standard 3: Assessment: Teachers understand and use varied assessments to inform instruction, evaluate and ensure student learning. Of the 179 participants who answered the questions on Standard 3, only 34.34% chose disagree and 31.88% chose strongly disagree, while 30.65% and 3.13% chose agree and strongly agree respectively (see Table 1). In the area of Assessment, the resident educators thought the program most improved their ability to “be knowledgeable about assessment types, their purposes and the data they generate” and least improved their ability to “collaborate and communicate student progress with students, parents and colleagues.”

For Standard 4, the resident educators were still positive in that a greater number of them perceived that their experience with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet Standard 4: Instruction: Teachers plan and deliver effective instruction that advances the learning of each individual student. However, 37.84% and 31.57% of 176 resident educators still selected disagree and strongly disagree respectively, while only 3.66% and 26.92% selected strongly agree and agree

respectively (see Table 1). For this standard, they felt more confident in their improved ability to align instructional goals and activities with school and district priorities and Ohio's academic content standards but were quite a bit less confident in their ability to use information about students' learning and performance to plan and deliver instruction that will close the achievement gap.

In respect to the classroom learning environment, the resident educators reported the most skepticism. For Standard 5: Learning Environment: Teachers create learning environments that promote high levels of learning and achievement for all students, a total of 176 participants responded: 37.39% of the resident educators disagreed, 35.57% strongly disagreed, 22.96% agreed, and 4.09% strongly agreed (see Table 1). The highest level of confidence for Standard 5 was in response to "create learning situations in which students work independently, collaboratively and/or as a whole class" and the lowest level of confidence was in response to "create an environment that is physically and emotionally safe."

For Standard 6, the resident educators were again more positive in that a greater number of them perceived that their experience with the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet Standard 6: Teachers collaborate and communicate with other educators, administrators, students and parents and the community to support student learning. However, the majority (65%) still responded within the disagreement categories. Thirty-five percent of them strongly disagreed, 30.65% disagreed, 28.54% agreed, and 6.13% strongly agreed that their experiences in the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to address this standard (see Table 1). The resident educators were most confident in their ability to "collaborate effectively with other teachers, administrators and school and district staff," and least confident in their ability to "share responsibility with parents and caregivers to support student learning, emotional and physical development and mental health."

Finally, for Standard 7: Professional Responsibility and Growth: Teachers assume professional responsibility for professional growth, performance, and involvement as an individual and as a member of a learning community, the resident educators were most positive. Of the 174 participants who responded to the Standard 7 questions, thirty-five percent of them still selected strongly disagree, 30.71% disagree; however, 27.83% agreed, and 6.91% strongly agreed for this standard (see Table 1). They perceived an improved ability to "take responsibility for engaging in continuous, purposeful professional development" and yet they perceived a lower ability to "understand, uphold and follow professional ethics, policies and legal codes of professional conduct."

## **Research Question 2**

For Research Question 2 (Do teachers believe their experiences with the Resident Educator Program improved teacher support and retention?), the researchers coded the 8 comment boxes for themes related to teacher support and retention. The participants left 406 comments: Standard 1 - 79 comments; Standard 2 - 56 comments; Standard 3 - 49 comments; Standard 4 - 44 comments; Standard 5 - 40 comments; Standard 6 - 36 comments; Standard 7 - 25 comments; and Overall General Comments - 77 comments.

**New teacher support.** The majority of the resident educator participants did not believe the Resident Educator Program supported them as a new teacher. Overwhelmingly, the participants who provided comments in respect to support perceived the Resident Educator Program requirements were in opposition to the purpose of the program to support them as new teachers. For example, one participant stated in respect to the language in Standard 6:

Going into my first year I believed that the Resident Educator Program would be somewhat of a support system for new teachers; a place where we would be able to share ideas and give feedback to one another about our current practices and ways to improve them. In reality, the meetings have become a mixture of a step-by-step instruction manual on "how to pass" combined with the grumblings of teachers trying to find time to do what their job titles decree: teach!

A second participant shared similar concerns with the requirements of the program and provided possible recommendations for improvement:

I think that it is very important to support beginning teachers. However, completing the tasks of the RESA has felt more like busy work than a process for expanding my pedagogical knowledge and skills. I think that one of the things that would greatly improve the RESA is timely feedback NOT a numerical score more than a year later. If you truly want beginning teachers to improve their skills, then timely and constructive feedback that teachers can immediately incorporate would be most helpful.

The paperwork was perceived as an especially problematic requirement of the Resident Educator Program, shown by the fact that the word "paperwork" was mentioned 45 times in 30 comments (7.39%) out of the 406 comments. One participant did note, however, that there was a positive aspect that resulted from his/her experience in the mentor program related to the mentor requirement, even though he/she did not perceive the program as beneficial:

I don't believe the RESA program helped me in any way be a better teacher. It was just added stress for the first very stressful years of teaching. The only good thing that came out of it was meeting the mentor I had for years 1 and 2. She was a knowledgeable retired educator and it was very helpful to meet with her for support those first two years and learn from her experience. However, these helpful conversations took place when we were discussing real-life teaching issues or lesson planning and did not have anything to do with the documents provided for the RE program.

While other participants made positive comments about mentors, an equal number of participants reported negative experiences with their mentors.

**New teacher retention.** Overwhelmingly, the resident educator participants in this study did not perceive that the Resident Educator Program helped retain them in the profession. More specifically, they believed the Resident Educator Program added unnecessary stress to their already stressful first years in the profession. Of the 406 comments, 39 comments, or almost 10% of the total comments, contained the word “stress.” Similar to the previous section on new teacher support, the participants perceived the Resident Educator Program requirements as a hindrance to retention. For example, one participant stated: “I do not feel the resident educator program has increased my abilities as a teacher. I feel it has done nothing but add a large amount of stress and unneeded busy work.” Another participant explained, “Beginning teachers have enough to deal with when it comes to keeping their head above water navigating the day to day inner workings of their school building.” One participant even described how the Resident Educator Program actually made him/her contemplate leaving the profession: “These tasks did nothing but make me consider strongly just stopping and quitting education well before I've hardly started. I'm 8 years into this because of switching states, and this is the most ridiculous program I have ever seen.”

An additional common theme akin to the stress the participants reported as a result of the program was their belief that the Resident Educator Program should be aligned with the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES), which is another accountability system for teachers. Forty-three comments (11%) of the 406 comments provided by the participants contained the acronym “OTES.” One participant explained:

Keep the mentors and let new teachers use the OTES as proof of our dedication and work ethic. Require new teachers to keep a portfolio and have the mentor keep tabs on it and the teacher, but please do something about the load of paperwork required for this program—or revisit the questions again and make them less complicated and repetitive. If the idea of the program was to retain new teachers—think again. This has almost burned me out and I truly LOVE teaching.

Again, much like the previous comments, this resident educator participant also speaks to the problematic paperwork but also the “saving grace of this program” in his/her mentor.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Based on the descriptive analysis of the data, the resident educator participants do not believe the Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession. They reported the most positive improvement in Standard 7: Professional Responsibility and Growth, most strongly agreeing with “take responsibility for engaging in continuous, purposeful professional development.” Participants also responded relatively positively to “collaborate effectively with other teachers, administrators and school and district staff” in Standard 6. The participants reported the least improvement in Standard 5: Learning Environment. However, the item with which they most strongly disagreed was in Standard 2: “know the content I teach and how to use the knowledge of content-area concepts, assumptions and skills to plan instruction.”

Standard 2: Content was the standard in which the resident educator participants believed they improved the second least (see Table 1). In summary, the participants believed their experience with the Resident Educator Program helped them improve their ability to meet the standards on professional responsibility and growth the most, and the learning environment the least.

In addition, the participants who provided comments in respect to the second research question on support perceived the Resident Educator Program requirements to be in opposition to the purpose of the program to support them as new teachers. This was especially true of the paperwork. Regarding the program's ability to retain them, they were equally as negative in that they reported the Resident Educator program actually made them think about leaving the profession due to the immense stress it created. Prior research on teacher induction programs indicates that job-related stress is a cause of teacher attrition (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993; Ruhland, 2001) and a teacher's resilience to factors such as stress is also associated with greater retention (Bernshausen & Cunningham, 2001).

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The findings of this study have immense implications for the field in respect to teacher induction programs and their ability to prepare teachers for the profession, as well as to support and retain them. These findings are particularly relevant to Educational Administration programs in that they have the ability to train future administrators to work with new teachers through teacher induction programs such as Ohio's Resident Educator Program. The participants in this study were particularly supportive of their administrators' abilities to evaluate and support them, stating "my principal is more than capable of evaluating me" and "I feel my university equipped me with all I needed to be an effective teacher and my principal is able to determine how I am as a teacher with OTES" and, finally, "it is my principal's job to tell me that and to help me improve." This is reflective of previous research in the field (Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mondragon, & Stottlemeyer, 2000; Ruhland, 2001; Starzynski, 2001). Ohio Educational Administration Programs should better prepare their administration candidates to leverage this type of feedback to: 1. help new teachers further develop their ability to meet Standard 5: Learning Environments, followed closely by Standard 2: Content and 2. provide increased support to new teachers and a reduction in their perceived stress levels through and in addition to the Resident Educator Program by aligning the requirements as much as possible to OTES and reducing the paperwork. However, there is a continued need for further research in this area. A large, statewide, longitudinal study, similar to this study is needed to better determine not only teacher perceptions on how they feel with respect to preparation for the profession through these types of induction programs but also how they specifically feel supported and retained through these types of programs. In addition, research needs to be conducted to determine the level of effectiveness in the implementation of these teacher induction programs as well as the evidence to support their continued existence.

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