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# Building a Innovative Induction Program for Urban Teachers Through a University and District Partnership

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*In response to the challenges of new state-mandated requirements for teacher credentialing, a team of university faculty and school district representatives worked in a collaborative project to support beginning teachers. The outcome of the collaborative is an innovative program that provides support and formative assessment of teachers during their first two years of teaching, the induction period, while providing them with an opportunity to obtain a master's degree. This master's program meets the state induction standards and at the same time enhances the teachers' preparation for educating students in urban schools.*

## The Challenges of Beginning Teachers

Often beginning teachers are overwhelmed by the challenges of a first-year teaching assignment. Unfortunately, many new teachers do not make the move from student to practicing teacher effectively. New teachers have difficulty adjusting to their new roles as teachers in the climate of the public schools which contrasts to their previous experiences in the university setting. Studies indicate that new teachers are most likely to leave the profession during the first three years of teaching (Imazeki, 2002; Ingersoll, 2001; Urban Teacher Collaborative, 2000).

Nationally, there have been efforts to support beginning teachers. In California, the model for beginning teacher support began as the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program and was the initial effort to provide an induction, or support model, for beginning teachers. Initially, the program was district sponsored but was not related to the state teacher-credentialing processes

Findings from studies of California BTSA induction programs demonstrated that teachers who were well supported and mentored were more effective earlier in their careers (Bartell, 1995; Spencer, 2000; CDE, 2002). These findings had a major impact upon the members of the state legislature when new credentialing laws were drafted. Under new credentialing laws, the BTSA program for supporting new teachers was embedded into the credentialing law. The new legislation, Senate Bill

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2042, required an induction component, a 2-year program of support and formative assessment (Alpert/Mazzoni, 1998).

The university and district partnership described in this article was a successful outgrowth of this new direction in teacher credentialing in the state.

### **Changes in Teacher Credentialing**

Under the new California legislation, Senate Bill 2042, the university pre-service programs are seen as the first step in an induction sequence. Credentialing standards for the preliminary (Level I) and advanced credentials (Level II) are more clearly related and standards-based. The standards for both the preliminary and induction programs are based upon the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CDE, 1997). Under the current legislation, universities recommend pre-service candidates for the preliminary credential. However, new teachers are now required to complete an induction program to earn an advanced or clear credential. All districts in the state are required to support the beginning teachers with district induction programs. This includes providing on-site support, formative assessment and classroom embedded work, specific content to meet specific standards as well as a reporting process that includes verification of completion of an induction (Level II) program. Districts, not universities, certify completion of the induction programs and recommend teachers for their clear credentials. As originally designed in the legislation, the majority of the induction work is completed at the school site. However, districts are also encouraged to enter collaborative agreements with universities as part of this process.

### **Building a University and District Partnership: The University's Role and Perspective**

In an effort to meet the new legislation, support beginning teachers, and provide a seamless transition from university to public school classrooms, representatives from a university's college of education and a large urban school district, collaborated to create a joint induction program for beginning teachers. These two entities have a history of working effectively in urban environments. Located in a large, metropolitan area, the university has prepared teachers for urban environments for many years. The university's faculty took part in a reorganization of the college of education as part of the reform movement in 1995 in an effort to better respond to the urban schools in the area. This commitment to urban schools was incorporated into the college of education's mission statement: "Enable educators to meet high standards and ensure the maximum learning and achievement potential of culturally and linguistically diverse urban learners."

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During that reform effort, university faculty determined that collaboration would be a major focus of the new organization. As such, one of the main tenets of the college's vision has been to support and encourage collaboration across the programs in the college and with the district partners in the area. Currently the university works effectively with over thirty-seven school districts. The partner district in this project is the largest local urban district in the service area. This district has a well established beginning teacher support system which was established in 1987. At that time, university's faculty joined district leaders in their effort to support their beginning urban teachers in the BTSA program and developed other partnership programs.

The initial design of the current project was developed to show the strong, seamless relationship between the university pre-service program and the district induction program. Representatives of the university and the district met for one year to collaborate and develop this program. Initially, faculty and district partners viewed this program as a continuation of the collaborative efforts that were already part of the university's reform efforts. As part of the reform efforts, university administrators and faculty developed an organizational structure, the "cluster," within the bureaucracy of the university to formalize collaboration efforts. A "cluster" was defined as an organizational structure that would house faculty, staff, and public school personnel who work collaboratively. The faculty members in the clusters often represent many departments within the college so that differing views and expertise can be shared. However, the major emphasis of the cluster design was to improve the interface of faculty with representatives of the public sector to ensure that the education offered at the university was relevant to and supported to work of the public schools. Since the conception of the cluster concept, cluster representatives have worked with district partners in reading initiatives, early childhood programming areas, and other projects including the DELTA project, a part of the Annenberg Initiative.

To respond to the new teachers and to respond to the legislation, faculty and district representatives initiated a new cluster, the Induction Cluster. As the discussions ensued, it was evident that the university and district representatives shared a common vision to support urban schools and to empower teachers to become change agents. The cluster team met for over a year to plan their goals, objectives and form a plan of action. They designed a program that incorporated the best elements of the university master's degree program and the district BTSA program. The members reviewed the relevant legislation and the master's degree options offered in the charter college. Representatives from the two organizations worked to create a program for new teachers that tapped into the strengths of both organizations. The new program was designed

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collaboratively and was based upon the spirit of mutual trust and respect. It offered students the opportunity to complete a joint-sponsored university master's degree and a district induction program at the same time. The degree is a *Master's in Education, Option: Curriculum and Instruction in the Urban School*. To begin the project, the cluster representatives agreed upon the following goals for the program:

- Respond to the new legislation for induction (Senate Bill 2042)
- Provide beginning teachers with an opportunity to obtain a master's degree and meet the induction requirements
- Continue to engage in collaborative programs between school districts and the university
- Meet school district and university visions to empower teachers to become change agents in urban schools

### **Moving from Professional Development to Induction: The District's Role and Perspective**

An important foundation of the new joint master's degree program was the understanding of and commitment to the support of beginning teachers and the principles and goals of the BTSA program. As stated in the BTSA Basics: (BTSA Basics, [www.btsa.ca.gov](http://www.btsa.ca.gov), 2006):

The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System (BTSA) was created by AB 1266 (Mazzoni, 1997). This grew out of legislation established in SB 1422 (Bergeson, 1992) based on research from the California New Teacher Project (CNTP). A central finding of this research identified the need to provide beginning teachers with focused induction support. To be useful, this support must be provided at a sufficient level of intensity to make a difference in the performance, retention, and satisfaction of beginning teachers. The 1997 Mazzoni legislation establishing BTSA encourages collaboration by local school districts, county offices of education, colleges and universities in the organization and delivery of new teacher induction.

The California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (BTSA) (E.C. 44279.2) is administered jointly by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Department of Education (CCTC, 2002). Upon passage of SB2042, BTSA transitioned from an optional professional development program for those who wished to become exemplary educators to a program for completing the requirements for a professional clear teaching credential. The Liu Bill, Assembly Bill B2210, further clarified the role of BTSA in the induction process as well as setting the final date for SB2042 candidates to choose to pursue a university 5<sup>th</sup> year program as August 30, 2004.

The transition period between the availability of former credential options and the new credential requirements for SB2042 candidates was

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source of confusion for many new teachers, university advisors and district human resources divisions. The collaboration between the university and the district has been essential in facilitating the transition between institutions for our students. Representatives from both organizations grew to understand the eligibility requirements and options available to each category of candidate. This served as a foundation for collaborating to design a jointly administered program that allowed candidates to pursue a master's degree in conjunction with completing their induction requirements while maintaining the integrity of the intent of the legislation for candidates to have a field-based experience, which is a requirement for induction.

### *A Beginning Teacher's Eligibility for Induction*

Teachers must hold a Ryan or SB2042 Preliminary Credential from an accredited teacher preparation program to be eligible for the induction program to clear their credentials. Clear Credential teachers in their first or second year of teaching as well as those with an education specialist credential may participate in the program to receive the benefits of a support provider and the professional development opportunities. In order to be eligible to participate in an induction program candidates must be employed as a register carrying teacher in a California classroom based on a Preliminary or Clear teaching credential. Although teachers working on their Tier II Education Specialist credential are welcome to participate for the advantages of the professional development and the assistance of a support provider they are unable to clear their credential through an induction program. Participants who wish to participate in the Joint Induction Master's Program must also meet all eligibility requirements to be accepted to university and the charter college of education as a graduate student.

Candidates who are not eligible for participation, such as substitute teachers or those who have not yet been contracted by a school district must wait until they are employed in a qualifying position. However, if they are certain that they wish to pursue a master's degree they may begin the non-induction portion of the program (i.e. the research class) pending employment. Each student selecting this option must assume the risk that they will not be employed by a district cooperating in the Joint Induction Master's Program in which case it is their responsibility to determine which classes may transfer into a different degree program (pre-advisement assists them in selecting appropriate courses).

TABLE 1

*Pathways to Clear Teaching Credentials in California*

Preliminary Issued	Credential	Options to Clear Credential
Out of State	Ryan	May complete University 5 <sup>th</sup> Year or Induction (Candidates entering with National Board Certification are granted a Clear Credential)
California	Ryan	May complete University 5 <sup>th</sup> Year or Induction
California	SB2042 before 8/30/04	May complete Induction or Approved SB2042 5 <sup>th</sup> Year Program if given a release form from their School District
California	SB2042 on or after 8/30/04	Approved Induction Program only
Out of State or California	Education Specialist	Must Complete Level II (Clear) Credential at a University May participate in BTSA for Professional Development
Out of State or California	Professional Clear Credential	May participate in BTSA for Professional Development in first two years of teaching

*Funding of Induction Programs*

State and district funding provides for the costs of induction and support activities for teachers participating within the first two years of qualifying for the program. Although the legislation indicates that candidates must enroll in an Induction program within 120 days of receiving their preliminary credential and a qualifying teaching position, some participants are out of compliance and may be required to pay fees once they begin the program. Participants who elect to enroll in the Joint Induction Master's Program have all district level expenses covered but must pay any university expenses themselves.

In the district, a series of orientation days are held to advise all new teachers of the program requirements and assist them to determine whether they are eligible to participate and whether the program is optional or mandatory. Due to the ongoing collaboration more new teachers are arriving to the district with the understanding that they must enroll in the Induction program to clear their credential.

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## **An Innovative Joint Induction Master’s Program**

The innovative Joint Induction Master’s Program that was designed is based on the purposes and goals set out in the initial BTSA education code as well as the *Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Teacher Induction Programs* (Induction Standards) (SB2042, March 2003). The “innovativeness” of our program involves the following elements:

- the program was the first university-school district joint master’s program of its kind in California
- the courses in the program were jointly developed by experts in beginning teacher programs from the school district and professors from the university
- academic advisement responsibilities are shared between university faculty and district personnel

The purpose and goals of Induction are to:

- Provide an effective transition into the teaching career for first- and second-year teachers in California
- Improve the educational performance of students through improved training, information, and assistance for new teachers
- Enable beginning teachers to be effective in teaching students who are culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse
- Ensure the professional success and retention of new teachers
- Ensure that a support provider provides intensive individualized support and assistance to each participating beginning teacher
- Improve the rigor and consistency of individual teacher performance assessments and the usefulness of assessment results to teachers and decision makers
- Establish an effective, coherent system of performance assessments that are based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession
- Examine alternative ways in which the general public and the education profession may be assured that new teachers who remain in teaching have attained acceptable levels of professional competence
- Ensure that an individual induction plan is in place for each participating beginning teacher and is based on an ongoing assessment of the development of the beginning teacher
- Ensure continuous program improvement through ongoing research, development, and evaluation

The Induction Standards are in sections as follows:

1. Foundational Standards for All Multiple Subject and Single Subject Professional Teacher Induction Programs (Standards 1-9)

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2. Implementation Standards for All Multiple Subject and Single Subject Professional Teacher Induction Programs which has three subsections:

- a. Program Design (Standards 10-14)
- b. Teaching Curriculum to All Students In California Schools Standards 15 and 16)
- c. Teaching All Students in California Schools (Standards 17-20)

During the planning meetings of the Induction Cluster, some critical decisions were made. They included the make-up of the collaborative team and the time set aside for working together. Key university and district personnel were included in the design team from the beginning and a generous timeline was designed to allow for an authentic collaborative process to occur. The process was aided by the history of previous collaborative projects that several of the committee participants had shared in the past. It was critical to clearly identify the needs of both institutions from the outset in order to facilitate negotiations around difficult and very important decisions. Understanding of needs, goals and expectations were discussed in order to be able to negotiate meaningfully. For example, organizational issues that are second nature to the personnel working in one institution may be taken for granted while representatives from the other institution may not recognize and understand the issues involved. The approval process and timelines for the university and the district as well as approval of the Program Modification at the state level needed to be considered as well.

Furthermore, the collaboration in the design from the initial development of ideas to the final product of the Joint Induction Master's Program maintained a focus and ensured that both the integrity of the district program design as approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the rigorous master's degree expectations of the charter college of education. The Design Framework was also put in place to consider the following:

- Student Needs
- State Induction Standards
- Master's Degree Requirements
- University Policy
- District Policy

The program was designed to meet the needs of students who were dedicated to pursuing a master's degree and did not wish to delay for two years while completing the induction program. Committee members were thoughtful about designing a strong program while recognizing concerns regarding over burdening beginning teachers who should be focused on classroom instruction. The area of emphasis for the program included a focus on urban learning, curriculum and instruction and

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teacher leadership. In the final program design both institutions shared responsibility for advisement and feedback for each student.

### *Induction Program Components*

#### Core Induction Standards

The following are the Induction Standards that were addressed:

Standard 16: Using Technology to Support Student Learning

Standard 17: Supporting Equity, Diversity and Access to the Core Curriculum

Standard 18: Creating a Supportive and Healthy Environment for Student Learning

Standard 19: Teaching English Learners

Standard 20: Teaching Special Populations

Standards 16- 20 of the induction standards are met through core courses in the university program which meet SB2042 Professional Clear Credential criteria. (These courses will also satisfy Ryan credential requirements in these areas.)

Discussions over time generated a process where each induction program syllabus includes fieldwork assignments which are co-designed by district representatives and the faculty teaching the class to ensure that they maintain congruence with district policy and initiatives while not losing the level of academic rigor and research-based practice required of a university graduate level course. The willingness of university faculty to collaborate on course design is remarkable. Both the university courses and district level courses are enhanced from the collaborative process. The process also ensures that the legislative intent for students to have an induction program authentic to their teaching assignment is honored.

Additionally, Standard 15: K-12 Core Academic Content and Subject Specific Pedagogy are addressed through assignments woven throughout the other courses, mandatory district in-services and the formative assessment process.

#### Formative Assessment

The formative assessment process was built in as a component of the master's degree program. Formative Assessment within the induction program is a reflective assessment and support process designed to assist participating teacher's professional development through a structured series of critical thinking tasks that are completed within the context of the participating teachers' classroom with the assistance of a qualified Support Provider. The formative assessment course is designed to be taught in two segments which align with the end of the year reflective process for the approved formative assessment program used in the partner district and incorporates the process

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completed throughout the year. In order to ensure that the program was flexible enough to include other districts that might wish to have an agreement to collaborate in the joint induction master's program, the formative assessment portion of the program was written to align with Standard 13: Formative Assessment System for Participating Teachers rather than to align to a specific program. As a part of this process participating teachers will also attend a year-end Colloquium. During which participants will celebrate and reflect on their accomplishments and professional growth throughout the year based on sharing the evidence of their growth which they collected in their Induction Portfolios.

### Support Providers

Each participating teacher is paired with a highly trained Support Provider, an experienced, qualified teacher, taking into consideration the credentials held, subject matter knowledge, orientation to learning, relevant experience, current assignments, and geographic proximity. Support Providers develop a confidential relationship of support and assistance with the participating teachers they serve. The support provided includes, but is not limited to, weekly visits to observe teaching practice and provide feedback, demonstration lessons, assistance with planning lessons and assessing student learning, and release time to observe others. The support provider is assigned and supported through the partner district.

### Induction Portfolio

Compilation and review of the Induction Portfolio, a comprehensive collection of authentic assessment activities compiled to demonstrate and document participating teachers' attainment of each element of Induction Standards 15-20, is also included in the master's program and is jointly administered. Teachers reflect on their practice and it is an integral part of the portfolio (Schulman, 1992; Zubizarreta, 1994).

### Local Context

Participants in the Joint Induction Master's Program also complete 15 hours of professional development to ensure that they are informed of district initiatives and procedures which they are responsible for implementing.

### Master's Degree

The Joint Induction Master's degree, the *Master's in Education, Option: Curriculum and Instruction in the Urban School*, developed by this collaborative effort meets the university requirements for advanced

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studies. It has a strong pedagogical foundation, includes research courses in both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry, and as stated above, addresses the induction standards through coursework that incorporates classroom-embedded fieldwork in each instructional area. Students receive credit for their work in the formative assessment process completed in the district, the development and completion of a professional portfolio and for their reflective practice. Additionally, students may select two or three courses in advanced studies in early childhood, science or mathematics from a pre-approved list compiled by each division from the charter college. The courses are specifically designed to build a pathway for a student to obtain a second master's by completing an additional 24 quarter units. Beginning teachers' instructional practice is further enhanced through the themes of urban learning, curriculum and instruction, and teacher leadership in urban schools that are intertwined throughout the program. This is a unique university-district collaborative program that has been designed to benefit beginning urban teachers by jointly supporting their professional growth and development.

### Program Evaluation

Continuous improvement based upon the on-going feedback from all program stakeholders is necessary to provide an exceptional program that meets the needs of its participants. With this in mind, all participants complete multiple program evaluations throughout the year in regard to the various program components.

A proposed evaluation program will include the following:

1. interviews and focus groups with participants in the program
2. interviews with school and district administrators and university faculty
3. review of the BTSA portfolios as part of the assessment plan
4. compare participants in the innovative joint master's program with non participants
5. pre and post survey of self report knowledge and attitudes about working in urban schools

The feedback and results of the assessment activities will be analyzed and shared with all stakeholders and improvements to the program will be made.

The Induction Cluster continues to meet on a monthly basis to refine the process of communication regarding the progress of the Joint Induction Master's Program students, consider additional options as submitted by other university divisions, and continue to monitor the implementation of the newly founded program.

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## Conclusion

The building of a partnership between a university and school district to address state mandates and changes in teacher credentialing provided a challenge as well as an opportunity for a team of university faculty and district personnel. The team worked together to meet their goals of supporting beginning urban teachers. They began the process of collaboration by building on their past history of relationships and cooperation and ventured into new ground by exploring and building an innovative Joint Induction Master's Program. The program was developed to meet the state guidelines for Induction and teacher credentialing and at the same time provide beginning teachers access to a higher education degree. The project was successful in that it strengthened the relationships of the persons involved and helped them meet their goals. The team's collaborative work was based on meaningful communication, and mutual trust and respect. They listened to each other's needs, made critical decisions, and remained focused on their central mission of supporting beginning teachers. It is important to remember that support for the program was also provided by caring administrators in both organizations that facilitated the process of collaboration and encouraged the members of the cluster to move forward with their ideas and trusted their judgment and decision-making.

The team will continue to build and refine their program to enhance and strengthen it as it begins its first year of implementation. The mission to address the growing needs of beginning teachers, especially those that teach in urban schools remains in the forefront of their endeavors as they realize that these teachers deserve a high quality support system that will help them to be successful in their careers of educating their urban students.

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