

New Teacher Induction Programs: Why the District of Columbia Public Schools Should Make An Investment

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Rationale

Hundreds of new teachers enter the District of Columbia Public School System each year with high hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Yet, we continue to see a decline in our teacher retention rates. In fact, teacher retention is a critical issue across the country. According to the National Commission on Teaching America's Future (2011), "teacher attrition has grown by 50 percent over the past fifteen years. The national teacher rate has risen to 16.8 percent. In urban school districts, it is over 20 percent, and, in some school districts, the teacher drop rate is actually higher than the student dropout rate."

In efforts to decrease teacher turnover at my school, my former principal and I created the Brightwood New Teacher Induction Program in the Fall of 2012. We had 20 new teachers, who were paired with 20 veterans in the building. We wanted our new teachers to be instructionally prepared, culturally aware, and invested in the professional learning community at the school. Four years later, 10 out of the 20 teachers, who were a part of the inaugural cohort remain in their teaching positions. Why? This action research project seeks to confirm why new teacher induction programs are critical to a new teacher's success and why every school across the district should invest in this type of induction program.

Literature Review

In her article, "Beyond Solo Teaching" (2012), Sharon Feiman Nemser states, "Teacher induction needs to be more than just ease new teachers' entry into their role; it needs to welcome them into a collaborative learning community." She believes the following three areas are critical to developing a high quality induction program.

Temporary Support- Veteran teachers help novice teachers to get off to a good start by having a buddy system (veteran teachers serve as technical and emotional support).

Induction as Individualized Professional Development- Mentoring is still the dominant induction strategy, but has been transformed into a professional role. Advocates use different terms (educative, standards-based, reform minded, instructionally insensitive, high quality) to distinguish this kind of mentoring to feel-good support. This induction style requires the mentor and mentee to be in close proximity, grade-level, and or subject matter matches, personality matches, and allotted time. (Requires at least two years of mentoring, so that the mentor can adequately provide the mentee with curricular guidance and help them navigate the school community.

Induction as Cultural Transformation- This model incorporates teachers into an integrated school community that supports the continuous learning of all teachers. Promotes more effective teaching and learning for all students. Reduces the achievement gap. It also affords schools the opportunity to create intergenerational learning teams and involves administration.

Hayes and Perry (2010) states, "a good teacher induction program has the potential to increase the retention rate of new teachers and the quality of the instruction they deliver."

Darling Hammond (2011) states, "new teachers are most effective when they are part of a community that allows them to reflect on what they are doing well and what needs to improve."

Data Methodology

I distributed paper and electronic surveys to teachers, including ten of the participants who participated in the Brightwood Education Campus Teacher Induction (BECTI) during the 2012-2013 school year. The participants included general education, special education, and special subject education teachers. All of the teachers submitted an electronic survey via Google Forms. In addition to the survey, I gave the participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in a written format or a personal interview

Data Analysis

The participants were asked three essential questions, regarding their BECTI experience. The results were as follows:

Question One

Was BECTI effective in helping you to meet the instructional needs of your students?

70% strongly agreed (7 respondents)

30% agreed (3 respondents)

Question Two

Was the program effective in preparing you to respond to the cultural needs/differences at our school?

50% strongly agreed (5 respondents)

40% agreed (4 respondents)

10% undecided (1 respondent)

Question Three

Did the program build collaboration and serve as a conduit for building relationships among staff?

70% Strongly Agreed (7 respondents)

30% Agreed (3 respondents)

Recommendations/ Implications

The data and research conducted in this project proves that new teacher induction programs are beneficial and play a vital role in teacher retention. When schools are designing an induction program, it

is imperative that administrators and instructional coaches design their programs to meet the wide-range of instructional needs that teachers may have. Furthermore, when planning trainings and activities related to culture and diversity as they relate to teachers and students, they should be researched and tailored to each school.

This study could serve as the beginning of a system-wide induction program throughout DCPS. In the future, I hope to survey principals across the city to see how many schools actually have or do not have induction programs. Upon receiving this information, I will begin to help schools design and implement a high quality new teacher induction program.

References

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