

## MORE SWIMMING, LESS SINKING



### A Case for High-Quality Support for New Teachers in Washington

The research is abundantly clear: Resources devoted to comprehensive, high-quality new teacher induction pay off in increased teacher retention and improved student learning. Washington cannot afford to let its new teachers sink or swim in classrooms across the state. When new teachers sink, students flounder with them.

#### The high cost of attrition

Washington loses about 25 percent of its new teachers within their first five years (CSTP, 2004). While not as dire as the 50 percent attrition rate found in parts of the country, this still represents a significant loss to the K–12 system. And it is high-poverty, low-performing schools that are likely to have higher turnover than their wealthier, higher-performing counterparts. The constant churn these schools experience makes it exceedingly difficult for staff to embark on a coherent, multi-year improvement plan, as much of the expertise developed walks out the door each spring. It is difficult for parents to form solid relationships with faculty, as the cast of characters changes frequently.

In addition to retaining teachers in the school and profession (Ingersoll, 2004), a high-quality induction program moves new teachers beyond “survival” to increasingly positive impacts on student learning (Villar, 2004), and it integrates them into the professional communities in their schools and districts.

From a fiscal standpoint, the need for support is clear. By conservative estimates, it costs about \$45,000 to replace a teacher. Multiplying this by the approximately 680 novice teachers lost each year,\* the cost to Washington taxpayers from attrition is nearly \$30.6 million, 10 times the current expenditure on induction. Richard Ingersoll describes the teacher-retention problem as a “leaky bucket.” Plenty of teachers go into the bucket, but we’re losing them at such a rate that we can’t keep the bucket full. The leaky bucket of teachers also is leaking state funds.

#### Teacher Assistance Program: Underfunded and inconsistent

Washington has long recognized the importance of supporting new teachers early in their careers. Since 1987, the Washington legislature has authorized funds for mentor training and other support for first-year teachers through the Teacher Assistance Program (TAP). With these monies, districts are required to assign a mentor to each new teacher and provide training (including orientation), stipends and release time for the pair to observe each other and other colleagues — all program elements supported by research on induction. Because of fiscal restrictions, mentors were and are often buddies — colleagues who assist new teachers when and if they have time, with whatever level of expertise they bring.

With an increase in the number of new teachers and a TAP appropriation that has remained constant, the amount allocated per new teacher has declined. The allocation

*“It is in schools and classrooms where teachers must find success and satisfaction. It is there they will decide whether or not to continue to teach.”*

— Susan Moore Johnson,  
et al., *Harvard Education  
Letter*, July/August 2001\*\*

\*Novice teachers are teachers with one to five years’ experience.

\*\**Harvard Education Letter*, July/August 2001, p. 1. “Retaining the Next Generation of Teachers: The Importance of School-Based Support,” by Susan Moore Johnson, et al., of the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

**District Contributions to Induction Programs: \$0–\$7,000+**

A new teacher's introduction to the profession is highly dependent on the level of funding the district can provide. Some districts allocate funds based solely on the state appropriation. Others, such as Northshore, Peninsula and Lake Washington, use Title II, I-728, and/or maintenance and operations levy funds to provide support that exceeds \$5,000 per teacher. When levies fail, however, the financial underpinning for quality programs collapses.

**Contributions per New Teacher, 2006–07**  
(from sources such as Title II, I-728, and/or maintenance and operations levy funds)

**Lake Washington:** \$6,550

**Northshore:** \$7,200

**Peninsula:** \$7,690

**Vancouver:** \$3,400

**Variance in Total Appropriation Amount per New Teacher**



for 2007–08 was down to \$790 per new teacher. This amount is not sufficient to carry out the directives of the legislation, let alone offer a high-quality induction program.

High-quality new teacher induction is taking place in a limited number of districts in Washington. These districts augment TAP monies substantially with other funding, which is vulnerable to changes in federal, state and local allocation decisions.

**Essential elements of effective induction programs**

Washington's schools and districts must offer their new teachers a robust and comprehensive support/induction program so that these novices:

- develop into highly capable practitioners who positively affect student learning,
- remain invested in the profession and in our public schools, and
- partner with veteran teachers in an integrated model of adult learning.

A group of Washington educators met in 2005 to develop a set of standards for new teacher induction and some guidelines for districts in implementing them (see [cstp-wa.org](http://cstp-wa.org)). Their work on developing standards was augmented in 2006 by representatives from both K–12 and higher education who identified the following 10 elements that must be in place for high-quality induction:

*A multiyear program*

A second year of robust support has positive impacts on student learning for teachers who receive it (Fletcher, 2005). In this year, teachers, having solidified classroom management practices, can really focus more intently on curriculum and instruction and transition smoothly to the Professional Certification process in their third year. Currently, most teachers in Washington receive support in the first year but are then assumed to be fine on their own.

*Mandatory participation for all*

Managing new teacher induction takes time, and some administrators, particularly those in small districts, find that the funding does not justify the time necessary to

apply for and meet the program requirements. In some participating districts, new teachers may opt out of the program, not based on performance criteria but simply by choice. If we know that comprehensive and systematic early learning for teachers is critical, we must require *all* districts to provide it and *all* new teachers to participate in it.

#### *Appropriate assignments*

Instead of receiving the most difficult students, the toughest course loads, the least desirable classrooms, tattered materials and extra-duty assignments, new teachers must be placed in situations appropriate for those just beginning their careers as teachers. This commitment begins in the hiring process and requires supportive actions on the part of district and building administrators, associations and school faculty.

#### *An orientation before school starts*

New teachers need a warm welcome, nuts-and-bolts information about the district and the school, and opportunities to work closely with their mentors to set up their classrooms and plan for the first weeks of school.

#### *Carefully selected, highly skilled mentors who understand the needs of new teachers and are appropriately compensated with release time and/or money*

We know the kinds of skills and attributes needed to work with new teachers, and we must ensure that these — not seniority nor convenience — determine who takes on the role. Once chosen and prepared for the work, mentors must have dedicated time to observe new teachers and discuss their observations, examine student work with them, help them plan, and model effective instructional practices. These activities cannot happen in a meaningful way by simply relying on time after school. Studies show that a ratio of one full-time mentor for 15–17 new teachers produces student learning gains — gains that are lost as the ratio rises (Fletcher, 2005).

The OSPI Mentor Academy provides high-quality professional development for mentors and should be expanded to meet immediate needs on the regional level. In addition, to support their continuing growth in this challenging role, mentors must meet regularly to discuss common issues, examine the latest research and move their practices forward. They need opportunities to observe each other working with new teachers so they can provide feedback on the complex skills involved.

#### *Ongoing, timely professional development where novices learn from and with experienced colleagues*

One of the key factors in teacher retention is the school's professional culture (Johnson, 2003). Schools with "veteran cultures," in which most teachers are experienced and used to working in isolation, as well as those with "novice cultures," in which most teachers are quite new and have little focus or experience to address challenges, tend to drive new teachers away. Novices are most likely to stay in schools that have an "integrated professional culture," in which novices collaborate with colleagues who have a range of experience levels, recognize their unique needs and promote their contributions. Effective induction programs move beyond one-on-one mentoring by a district or school-based mentor to integrate new teachers into professional learning communities that connect them to the school.

As the school year unfolds, new teachers need just-in-time assistance with classroom management, parent conferences and communications, report cards, and state tests.

### **An Ideal Induction Program: The First Five Years**

**Year 1:** New Teacher Support Program

**Year 2:** New Teacher Support Program

**Year 3:** Professional Certification: Preassessment Seminar

**Year 4:** Professional Certification: Core — Individual Learning Plan

**Year 5:** Professional Certification: Culminating Seminar

To be most effective, districts need to offer Professional Certification programs that are coordinated by district personnel and connected to district initiatives to ensure that new teachers get systematic and systemic support beyond their first year of teaching.

*“If we hold higher expectations for new teachers as learners and hope to meet ambitious reform goals, the mentoring must move beyond emotional support and brief technical advice to become truly educative, focused on learning opportunities that move novices’ practice forward and challenge their thinking and practice.”*

— Achinstein and  
Athanese, *Mentors in  
the Making*, 2005

This support can happen at the school or district level. In either case, novices can connect with colleagues who are experiencing similar challenges.

*Informal, standards-based assessment of new teacher practice that promotes a focus on student learning*

New teachers must be guided in using evidence of student learning to determine the strengths and challenges in their teaching and make adjustments accordingly. Using the Professional Certification standards as a benchmark, mentors can help compile the mosaic of resources necessary to help a new teacher fill in the gaps.

*Administrative capacity at the school and district levels*

Principals need training on how to best support new teachers. Principals and district office personnel must own responsibility for new teacher induction, ensuring that each new teacher receives appropriate assistance and becomes integrated into the professional culture of the school or district, and that all the elements of the program are in place and coordinated with each other.

*Collective responsibility*

Sustained, coordinated support for new teachers is the responsibility of principals, central office administrators, mentors, instructional coaches and other teachers in the school. Without several people being involved and responsible for how to best support new teachers, induction becomes the project of one or two people, which does not create sustainability. Because true induction is a five-year process, it is critical to have many people involved in the various components to allow for multilevel and multilayered support.

*Dedicated, ongoing state funding*

It only makes sense that funding to support new teachers in the early years of their careers should go to districts based on how many new teachers they actually have, as currently happens. But it also must be true that the amount per new teacher remains stable from year to year so that districts can plan and implement a robust induction program, no matter the number of new teachers statewide.

This amount must be more than \$800. A comprehensive, robust program of induction, including mentoring, orientation and professional development, costs about \$5,300 for a first-year teacher and \$3,700 for a second-year teacher. Compared to the \$45,000 it costs to replace one of these teachers, we are still money ahead.

Districts in rural and remote areas need additional regional assistance. Administrators already wear too many hats and may have limited capacity to plan an induction program. There is the distinct possibility that a district may have, for example, a new science teacher with no one to serve as the mentor. Assistance might range from support for a consortium of districts for orientation and professional development purposes to regional mentors who serve new teachers in several districts.

It has been 12 years since the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future issued its groundbreaking report on the current conditions and critical needs of our system of recruiting, preparing and retaining teachers. While significant, positive changes have taken place in Washington, we must do more to ensure that new teachers in every school across the state can swim upstream in the churning waters of the teaching profession.

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**SUPPORT FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS: A COMPARISON OF STATE ASSISTANCE**

	<b>Washington</b>	<b>Oregon</b>	<b>California</b>	<b>Connecticut</b>
Induction program	TAP — Teacher Assistance Program	No current name — allocation through Bill 2574 begins 2008–09	BTSA — Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment	CT BEST — Beginning Educator Support and Training
Duration	1 year	2 years	2 years	2 years with an extension to 3 years if necessary
Participation — mandatory or grant requested	Grant requested	Grant requested	Mandatory	Mandatory
Number of participants	2,410	Funding for approximately 1,000 teachers in 2008–09 (about 3,000 eligible)	28,193	Approximately 5,000
State allocation per teacher	\$790	Up to \$5,000	\$4,069	\$760
Categories of state assistance	Law requires mentor and mentee stipends and training; release time for observations	Release time for mentoring, professional development, stipends, etc.  Depends on the proposed program, which varies by district	Release time for mentoring, professional development, stipends, etc.  Depends on the proposed program, which varies by district	Operating costs, trainings, portfolio grading
District allocation	Districts may supplement state contribution with Title I, Title IIA, Title V, I-728 or local funds; some provide thousands of dollars — some none	Unknown — program under development	Variable — districts must provide at least \$2,000 in-kind, e.g., donating a room; some districts provide much more	Variable — districts must pay for all elements of locally designed program
Mentorship	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stipends for mentors	Yes — district determines amount	Yes — district may use state money to compensate mentors	Yes — district determines amount	Possible — district determines; cannot be covered by state monies
Training for mentors	Yes — at district's discretion; state provides Mentor Academy as an option	Yes — required by law, currently under development	Yes — district or regional collaboratives	Yes — state training