Minnesota Educator Induction Guidelines

written and supported by:

Teacher Support Partnership

TSP

TEACHER
SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Minnesota is recognized nationally for high quality educators. To maintain and improve this quality, we need to be proactive in supporting the preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development of our teachers and other school-based educators. The children of Minnesota deserve our attention to the quality of their educators.

These guidelines provide a framework for developing induction systems for all educators in Minnesota. Professional induction provides professional learning opportunities for developing dispositions and practices that support student learning. The system includes learning opportunities such as orientations to the workplace, a network of peer support, seminars and workshops, and mentoring focused on standards of professional practice and continual professional growth. Induction is a multi-year process of professional learning targeted at significant career transitions. Ultimately, the goals of an induction system are to improve the quality of education for all students by improving the quality of Minnesota's educators.

Many school districts across the state have embraced the challenge of creating induction opportunities. Even in the face of declining resources and rapidly changing demographics, educators in urban and suburban schools, large and small districts, traditional and charter schools, have been working to develop orientations, mentoring programs, and other professional learning opportunities for Minnesota's educators. But all of Minnesota's educators do not yet have access to high quality induction opportunities—and some have no access at all.

Minnesota has no state provision for early career mentoring, while twenty-two states (including Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Indiana) currently have required participation in state-funded induction programs.

Nationally and internationally, induction systems for initial educators are recognized as good educational practice for strengthening teacher performance which can lead to improved student performance. In 2006, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities reported some states have made strides toward developing comprehensive induction programs, but limited and uncertain state funds challenge this process. State-level policy support for teacher induction programs can help teachers realize their full potential, keep them in the profession, promote greater student learning, and save money.

To help all Minnesota school districts and other educational institutions envision a system of supports for early career educators and those who are in career transition, a partnership among several Minnesota educational institutions was established in 2006. The Teacher Support Partnership (TSP) currently has representation from Education Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities. Members of this partnership believe that all initial educators and educators in transition should have access to comprehensive induction supports that will help them be more effective educators for Minnesota's children.

One of the goals of the TSP was to develop this set of guidelines and resources for developing and sustaining comprehensive, multi-year induction systems that can accelerate initial

educators' professional growth. We believe that schools that invest in effective induction practices can provide the support educators need to become highly skilled, committed, and caring professionals. Ultimately, we want to ensure a high-quality teacher in every classroom.

HOW DOES INDUCTION MATTER TO MINNESOTA SCHOOLS?

Improving instructional practices

Wang, Odell, and Schwill (2008) reviewed research studies on teacher induction to determine the effects on beginning teachers' thinking about teaching and teaching practice. Beginning teachers reported that they found support for developing classroom practices, accessing curriculum resources, and developing relationships with students through induction. Beginning teachers also valued mentoring processes that included observations of and discussions about their teaching. Across the collection of research studies, teachers reported that induction and mentoring activities have a positive impact on their teaching practice. However, the effects on teaching are also strongly shaped by the culture and expectations for teaching within the school. For example, schools that had a culture of isolation and individualist teaching limited the effects of induction programs on beginning teachers' practice, and collaborative school cultures supported the development of teaching practices that were part of the professional development in the induction efforts.

Enhancing student achievement

School districts that have evaluated their induction programs cite several benefits. One of the most valuable benefits is enhanced student achievement. While educational researchers have not yet investigated a direct link between induction and student achievement (Lopez et al., 2004; Wang, O'Dell, & Schwill, 2008), it stands to reason that improvements in teacher practices would create improved opportunities to learn for students. With early career support, teachers develop a strong teaching repertoire and competence more quickly than if left on their own. They become more effective teachers for their students in a shorter amount of time. Increasing teacher retention by better supporting initial educators also creates a more stable teaching force, giving teachers time to build their expertise in the classroom and become more effective teachers.

Promoting supportive professional cultures in schools

If induction is taken as the responsibility of the whole school community, then schools can develop professional learning communities. The investment in personnel can create a climate of professionalism, greater trust among building colleagues, and more stable learning environments for students. In evaluation reports of induction programs, building administrators note that initial educator support systems nurture positive and collegial working relationships within the school and create better lines of communication between new staff and the administration. Experienced staff in the building also benefit through their participation in mentoring activities that allow them to learn side-by-side with initial educators.

Aligning with school and district improvement priorities

Induction programming gives the school and district the opportunity to convey their educational priorities and goals to their new hires as well as maintain better communication with other educators within the school system. As more districts are developing continual improvement plans, it will become essential to bring initial educators and transitioning educators into the district conversation as soon as possible.

Retaining teachers in districts and in the profession

National studies suggest that beginning teachers leave the profession at rates of up to 50% within the first five years of practice. The Minnesota Department of Education (2007) reported that for the first-year teachers hired in 2001, 68% were still teaching in Minnesota (but not necessarily in the same school district in which they started) and only 48% were still teaching in the same school district after five years. With almost one third of the teaching force leaving teaching in Minnesota after five years and 20% changing districts in that same time, issues of teacher attrition and turnover are costing Minnesota schools resources and expertise.

Smith and Ingersol's 2004 national study found that teachers who received basic levels of induction support, which included a mentor (from their own field or another) and supportive communication with an administrator had a predicted turnover rate of 39%. This is similar to the rate for those who received no induction supports all. However, as the number of induction supports increased toward comprehensive induction that included mentoring, collaboration opportunities, teacher networks, resources, reduced number of course preparations, and aides in the classroom the predicted probability of turnover decreased to 18%. The findings of this study show that some types of activities appear to be more effective than others in reducing turnover, with the most effective being having a mentor from the same field; having common planning time with other teachers in the same subject or collaboration with other teachers on instruction; and being part of an external network of teachers.

Cost-savings for districts

Some studies suggest that induction efforts may also provide a financial return on investment. It is conservatively estimated that $4.9 billion dollars nationwide is lost each year due to

Central Tasks of Learning to Teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1050)		
Pre-service	**Induction (defined as the first 3 years of teaching)**	**Continuing Professional Development**
Examine beliefs critically in relation to vision of good teaching	Learn the context — students, curriculum, schools, and community	Extend and deepen subject matter knowledge for teaching
Develop subject matter knowledge for teaching	Design responsive instruction programs	Extend and refine repertoire in curriculum, instruction, and assessment
Develop an understanding of learners, learning, and issues of diversity	Create a classroom learning community	Strengthen skills and dispositions to study and improve teaching
Develop a beginning repertoire	Enact a beginning repertoire	Expand responsibilities and develop leadership skills
Develop the tools and dispositions to study teaching	Develop a professional identity	

teacher turnover (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Within Minnesota, this 2005 estimate put the cost for teacher turnover at over $93 million dollars. One cost benefit study of a small district in California estimated that for every $1.00 invested in induction, a return of $1.66 was produced (Villar & Strong, 2007). This return accounted for the costs associated with the preparation, recruitment, and professional development for the new teacher for the district, the state, as well as the benefits to student learning associated with higher performance correlated with high quality induction.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IS A CAREER-LONG PROCESS

The experiences of the first days and years in an educator's career are crucial and can either positively or negatively impact his or her career, as well as student achievement. Feiman-Nemser's (2001) proposal for a professional learning continuum suggests a curricular framework for professional education that accounts for seamless professional development starting in pre-service preparation, transitioning through the induction period of the initial educator, and then shifting to the continuing professional development for the experienced or accomplished professional.

The learning to teach continuum demonstrates that professional learning is a shared responsibility among teacher preparation programs, schools, and districts. With special attention given to the period of induction, the stressful and uncertain transition can become a time to develop a professional repertoire rather than being just a time of survival. A system of induction supports can provide a bridge for initial educators as they learn about the local contexts, develop their professional identities, and launch their instructional programs.

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

These guidelines are designed for a variety of audiences. School districts and schools can use these guidelines to develop an induction support system. Mentor program developers will find the section on mentoring helpful, while institutions of higher education will find that partnerships with schools and districts can be strengthened by knowing how to think broadly about the variety of needs of the initial educator.

These guidelines apply to all educators who serve students, not just teachers. Schools have many administrators and other licensed school professionals (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and nurses) whose role is to support

Definitions

Induction - A system of strategies for developing dispositions and practices that promote continuous improvement of educational practices. The system may include an initial and ongoing orientation, a network of teacher support, seminars and workshops, and structured mentoring focused on standards of professional practice and professional growth.

Educators - Pre-K through grade 12 Minnesota educational practitioners including teachers as well as other specialists such as school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, school nurses, library / media specialists, speech language clinicians, audiologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and administrators.

Initial educators - Educators moving from being a student of the profession during the initial preparation to becoming an educator of students in their own professional practice.

Transitioning educators - Educators who are making a transition to a new role or set of responsibilities such as a grade level change, teaching a new content course, moving to a new school or district, or transitioning from teaching to counseling or administration.

student learning. These guidelines also recognize that induction support applies to not only initial educators who are entering the profession. With high turnover rates across school districts and much movement of educators within and across districts, many educators are in transition to new roles and responsibilities. We believe that both of these groups, initial and transitioning educators, need induction supports.These guidelines are meant to serve as a set of suggestions for designing a support system for initial and transitioning educators based on current research and successful practice in the area of induction. Even if a school district already provides orientations, mentoring programs, or other professional learning opportunities for initial educators, district personnel will find useful guidance from this document for moving toward comprehensive induction systems for educators.

International and national research and practice clearly show that comprehensive support systems are the most desirable approach to induction in terms of demonstrated effects on educators' professional learning and retention in the profession. All too often, educational reforms that are described comprehensively are implemented partially, usually due to limited resources to fully enact the reform. In some cases, partial implementation is an approach that can have some benefits. Readers of this document are encouraged to strive toward full system implementation, even if the development of a comprehensive system is a multi-stage, multi-year process. In the end, administrative leaders, district steering committees, professional development providers, and teachers will determine the ways in which the support system will be developed and implemented.

The guide is broken into six sections, with summaries and checklists that add to the usability of the document as working notebook.

NOTES:

SECTION TWO:
WHAT IS AN INDUCTION SYSTEM?

In this section, a vision of a comprehensive induction system for both initial and transitioning educators is described.

WHAT AN INDUCTION SYSTEM IS

Induction is viewed as a time of early career development for educators as they move from their preparation programs into their first professional assignments. Needs range from the logistical introduction to the work site and its procedures, to the emotional and social support needed during the stressful time of beginning a career, to establishing a pattern of professional learning that will carry forward as a career-long process.

This document also draws attention to the needs that experienced educators have as they transition from one work assignment to another. This may include a transition from one school or district to another, a change to teaching a different grade level, a change to teaching a new course, or a change in professional roles. While some of the needs of these transitioning educators are different from the initial educators, there are many similarities in providing support for learning about new work responsibilities and how to developing reflective practices in their new roles.

Induction systems for both of these groups are comprehensive, coherent, and sustained. They are comprehensive in that they provide for a range of support mechanisms and opportunities for professional learning. They are coherent in that the activities are coordinated and purposeful for the educator's needs. And they are sustained in that the supports last for multiple years and are differentiated as the educator develops his or her repertoire over time.

WHAT AN INDUCTION SYSTEM IS NOT

While induction occurs at a particular time in an educator's career, it is not a short-lived phenomenon that happens in the opening days of the school year. One-day orientations do not address the entirety of an initial or transitioning educator's induction needs.

Induction is also often used synonymously with the idea of providing a mentor or a "buddy" who will check in with the initial or transitioning educator from time to time. While these assignments can be comforting in the short-term, they only partially address the purposes of an induction system designed to support reflective professional learning that can be sustained across an educator's career. Mentoring programs can be strong components of an induction system if the mentors are prepared for their roles and the initial or transitioning educators have regular opportunities to work with them on instructional issues. But an induction system also addresses other dimensions of the initial and transitioning educator's needs. Wong (2003) distinguishes between mentoring and induction by describing induction as "a group process that organizes the expertise of educators within the shared values of a culture, whereas mentoring is a one-on-one process concerned with supporting individual teachers" (pp. 46-47).

Some schools turn to establishing induction supports as a school reform or teacher retention solution. Induction supports will not solve all of the school's problems. Induction supports should be in the company of or be developed simultaneously with a school culture that expects educators to be reflective and collegial about their practices. Educators should have time to participate in induction activities, so over-loaded schedules will defeat the purposes of induction.

Finally, induction systems are not about evaluation. Activities that involve assessment of performance, either self-assessment by the educator or collaboratively with a peer observer, are used for formative purposes. Formal evaluation requirements that lead to summative decisions remain the responsibility of the school administrator. Induction systems are focused on the growth, development, and sustained learning of educators.

COMPREHENSIVE INDUCTION SYSTEM DESIGN

The design of induction systems varies widely internationally, across the country, within states, and even within districts. The majority of approaches to induction represented in the research and policy literature use mentoring of initial educators by more experienced educators as the cornerstone of induction. Other structures within an induction system include orientations, professional seminars or workshops (e.g., on subject matter content, pedagogies, instructional technologies), and collaborative relationships among educators. After reviewing induction programs for science teachers from five different countries, Britton & Raizen (2003) suggested that effective induction should be a multifaceted process that provides a variety of supports to meet the varied needs of initial educators. They described two ends of an induction support continuum illustrating limited induction designs and comprehensive induction designs.

Key Features of Two Ends of an Induction Support Continuum (Britton & Raizen, 2003)

Program Feature	Limited Induction	Comprehensive Induction
Goals	Focuses on teacher orientation, support, enculturation, retention	Also promotes career learning, enhances teaching quality
Policies	Provides optional participation and modest time, usually unpaid	Requires participation and provides substantial, paid time
Overall program design	Employs limited number of ad hoc induction providers and activities	Plans an induction system involving a complementary set of providers and activities
Induction as a transitional phase	Treats induction as an isolated phase, without explicit attention to teachers' prior knowledge or future development	Considers influence of teacher preparation and professional development on induction program design
Initial teaching conditions	Pays limited attention to initial teaching conditions	Pays attention to assigned courses, students, non-teaching duties
Level of effort	Invests limited total effort, or all effort, in few providers, activities	Requires substantial overall effort
Resources	Does not provide resources sufficient to meet program goals	Provides resources sufficient to meet program goals
Levels of education system involved	Involves some levels of the system, perhaps in isolation	Involves all relevant levels of system in articulated roles
Length of program	One year or less	More than one year
Sources of support	Primarily or solely uses one mentor	Uses multiple, complementary induction providers
Conditions for novices/providers	Usually attends to learning conditions for novices	Also provides conditions and training for providers
Activities	Uses a few types of induction activities	Uses a set of articulated, varied activities

COMPONENTS OF AN INDUCTION SYSTEM

As described above, an induction system is comprehensive, coherent, and sustained. A variety of components are necessary to create a comprehensive induction system: administrative leadership that provides vision and support for the system; a range of professional learning opportunities that allow for differentiation based on the educator's needs; and mentoring that allows for individual attention to the development of high quality instructional practices.

Administrative leadership

- Support for the professional growth of initial and transitioning educators is shared by the school community, including the teaching faculty, licensed school professionals who provide pupil services, and support personnel
- School culture is professional and positively supports teacher development
- Time is provided for professional learning and collaboration between the initial educator and mentors
- Expectations for participants are clearly articulated
- Sufficient resources, including time and personnel, support the induction activities and mentoring relationships
- Evaluation processes are in place to assess effectiveness of the system structure, impact on educator development, and impact on student learning

Professional learning

- Orientation processes (e.g., introductory meetings, handbooks, periodic informational meetings) introduce the new teacher to the community, district, school, and teaching assignment
- Standards of professional practice and appropriate content area standards drive professional learning
- Professional seminars and workshops are focused on teacher development and promote reflection in and on practice
- Teacher professional development is differentiated based on teacher and teaching assignment needs
- Regularly scheduled seminars and online learning communities provide opportunities for networking, drawing teachers out of isolation and providing a community of colleagues for reflection, personal support, learning, and collaboration

Mentoring

- A structured, sustained process for supporting professional learning through a relationship with a more experienced professional can be a cornerstone of induction systems
- Mentors meet selection criteria and are prepared for their role to support the improvement of the initial educator's practice
- Regular initial educators' meetings provide opportunities for coaching, collaboration, and reflection on practice
- Professional development plans, linked to teaching practice and student learning, focus on the initial educator's growth
- Ongoing formative assessment and observations measure the initial educator's development and are used to improve their teaching

TYPES OF SUPPORT THAT INDUCTION CAN PROVIDE

Initial educators and transitioning educators have a variety of needs while in their period of induction to a new role or a new set of responsibilities. Emotional, logistical, instructional, political, and cultural dimensions of educators' work make the transition for initial educators particularly complex as they have to navigate all of these dimensions for the first time.

Induction built solely on a mentoring relationship may expect a mentor to address all of these dimensions. In the comprehensive system described here, initial educator and transitioning educator support is spread across a variety of resources, thus, not burdening any single individual with responsibility for all of these support dimensions. To create a coherent system of induction, the various types of support should be met by a variety of program components.

A coherent system of induction meets a variety of support needs

Type of support needed by initial or transitioning educator		Program component that can meet that need
Psycho-social / Emotional	How am I coping with the emotional dimensions of transition? What are the sources of stress during the transition? How am I developing my professional identity? How do I deal with the potential isolating feeling of teaching?	• Administrative support • Cohort meetings or networking • Mentoring • Consultation time with other licensed school personnel (nurses, psychologists, counselors)
Logistical / Procedural / Technical	What procedures do I need to know about at the school site? What are my legal obligations? What are my contractual obligations?	• Orientation to district, school, and procedures • Handbook • Cohort meetings or networking • Mentoring • School support personnel
Instructional	Where can I find instructional resources? How do I get to know the students I am working with? What do I do to initially develop my practice of classroom management, planning lessons, motivating students, and evaluating students? How do I know if I am teaching well? How do I continue to develop my practice?	• Mentoring interactions within the context of the educator's classroom • Cohort meetings or networking • School culture supports discussion of classroom instruction among teachers • Consultation time with other licensed school personnel (nurses, psychologists, counselors)

Type of support needed by initial or transitioning educator		Program component that can meet that need
Political	What are the official levels of decision-making in the school and district? What are the hidden power dynamics of the school and district? How can I build strong collegial relationships in the school and district? How do I build relationships with parents and community? What are the local, state, and national expectations for me and my students?	• Administrative leadership • Cohort meetings or networking • Mentoring • Consultation time with other licensed school personnel (nurses, psychologists, counselors) • Local education association
Cultural	What are the collegial norms in the school that I should know? What are the professional norms in the school that I should know? What do I need to know about my students' home cultures? What do I need to know about my students' social culture within the school?	• Orientation to community, district, and school • Consultation time with other licensed school personnel (nurses, psychologists, counselors)

WORKING IN COLLABORATION

Large school districts will often have a significant size group of initial educators every year and may be able to administer a support system involving different buildings, grade levels, and subject areas. Pooling educators and resources across the district can often create a diverse set of opportunities for initial and transitioning educators. Small school districts, on the other hand, hire fewer educators and will frequently have small numbers of educators in specialist areas. This results in fewer opportunities for networking with role-alike colleagues and fewer offerings of low-demand workshops or seminars.

Collaborations across several school districts, partnerships with teacher preparation programs and other educational agencies, and using distance technology can help address the variety of needs for initial and transitioning educators when a single district cannot support a comprehensive induction system. Such collaborations can do several things for an induction system when resources are limited:

- Create greater coherency in that various organizations offering professional development opportunities for teachers are working together with the same overall message about the transition to teaching and how to develop effective teaching practices.
- Support networks of educators with role-alike responsibilities (e.g., content area teachers, school counselors, mentors).

- Provide more comprehensive programming as resources are pooled so that a greater diversity of professional development is available to educators.
- Create access to a wider variety of expertise as institutions of higher education, regional professional development offices, and educators with specialist preparation become more widely available to educators.

NOTES

Examples of collaborations in induction systems

- Regional education centers for specialized programming
- Networks of teachers within and across districts (e.g., with opportunities to meet face-to-face and/or on-line)
- Professional development school partnerships with teacher preparation programs
- Content area specialists collaborations
- Cohorts of educators in graduate courses in higher education
- Institutes and conferences with professional organizations (staff development organizations, subject area professional organizations)
- On-line induction systems that stretch across several school districts

SECTION THREE:
DEVELOPING A DISTRICT-LEVEL EDUCATOR SUPPORT SYSTEM

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to the organization of an educator support system. Districts across Minnesota—from pine to prairie, from Metro to out-state—differ in size, in student and teacher demographics, and in their existing induction processes. For some Minnesota districts, the induction needs of the initial and transitioning educators will include learning about the variety of cultural backgrounds of the students in their schools. For others, the special situations of long student commutes to regional schools, the history of the Native American community, or how to work in partnership with migrant families will be of particular interest. Subject matter emphasis may have a strong role in a district induction system as might particular pedagogical strategies or a newly adopted curriculum. In the face of all of these differences, this section will address how a school district can begin to envision and enact an induction support system for its initial and transitioning educators.

VISION FOR THE INDUCTION SYSTEM

According to preliminary results of a state-wide survey of school districts in Minnesota that asked about activities related to supporting initial educators with induction supports, there is great variation across the state (Bertucci, 2008). Some districts have no supports for initial educators in place while a common feature is a limited orientation to the school and district procedures. While most districts reported that they do assign mentors to initial educators, one third of

Questions that help establish and maintain a vision of the district induction system[1]

- What is the district's vision of effective teaching?
- What are the particular needs of initial educators in the district?
- What specific induction goals would meet the needs of initial educators?
- How are the district's vision of effective teaching and the induction goals related?
- How are educators given opportunities to see examples of effective instruction in the context of their school and in their subject area or grade assignment?
- How do educators accurately assess their own needs for, and progress in meeting Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers?
- Who is responsible for assessing and meeting the needs of initial educators as they change over time?
- Who is responsible for integrating initial and transitioning educators into the work environment and culture of the district and school?
- What policies and practices are barriers to creating educator induction support systems?
- How are educators helped to feel they are an important part of the school and district?
- How are educators assisted in learning and adopting the philosophy and culture of the district and building?
- How do educators learn about the availability and use of district resources (e.g., school personnel, instructional materials, and community supports)?

[1] Some of these questions were adapted from the Initial Educator Support System District Guide published by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

the districts that responded reported that they did not have a systemic or programmatic approach to supporting new teachers. The most common challenges reported by the districts for implementing and maintaining a high quality induction system were "lack of adequate funding," "budget cuts," and "more pressing issues in the district."

Based on these results, the induction goals of Minnesota's school districts are strongly influenced by the availability of financial resources and district priorities. This document will not provide an easy solution to the funding issues that school districts face. Rather, the questions are suggested as part of the induction system design process that will help inform how important induction is in the district vision of professional learning for its educators.

BUILDING AN INDUCTION SYSTEM OVER TIME

When establishing an induction system, the following dimensions should form the core of the system:

- institutional commitment
- supportive leadership
- collaborative school culture
- vision of effective teaching (e.g., based on the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers)
- career-long learning of professional educators
- differentiation of learning opportunities for educators
- coherent system of professional development
- quality mentoring
- focus on student learning

Identifying specific goals related to these core dimensions can help districts build an induction system over time by starting with small steps that can build on each other. For example, a goal of providing an effective transition into teaching might be addressed through orientation programs. However, induction cannot stop with an orientation experience. Goals related to all the core dimensions can be developed over time to build a comprehensive induction system that promotes career-long learning of educators. The bulleted list below provides some examples of goals for an induction system. All of the goals rest on the fundamental goal of **supporting student learning by improving the quality of teaching**.

Goals for induction systems

- Provide effective transition into the teaching career
- Increase content knowledge of educators
- Promote reflective practice
- Provide support for improving instruction
- Introduce teachers to new or current pedagogical practices
- Introduce new learning technologies
- Build a collegial culture within the school

- Support professional learning communities
- Increase professional success and retention of new teachers

This section is a reminder to district leadership that it is important to work toward the comprehensive system of induction and to not stop short with a few activities (such as an orientation or a buddy system). At the same time, it is important to recognize that developing a comprehensive system takes time and resources. The table that follows on page 15 describes how an induction system can be built over time from the early stages of system development to a more comprehensive system of induction.

BUILDING AN INDUCTION SYSTEM OVER TIME

This table may be used as a self-assessment tool by districts by checking the boxes below.

Components of an induction system	Example features of early stage induction	Example features of comprehensive induction
Basic operating procedures	❑ Orientation to school early in the school year	❑ Multi-day orientation to community, district, school, classroom, profession that occurs throughout the school year
Instruction / Teaching	❑ Location of instructional resources ❑ Introduction to teaching evaluation procedures ❑ Introduction to curriculum	❑ Vision of teaching based on professional teaching standards or professional frameworks for teaching ❑ Emphasis on student learning (e.g., data-discussions, student progress updates, classroom assessment analysis)
Mentoring	❑ Assign school-based mentor ❑ Meetings happen occasionally or whenever the mentor and teacher are available ❑ Mentoring focuses on daily and immediate needs, strategies, teaching resources ❑ Reflective practice may be emphasized	❑ Mentor assignment is based on similar teaching responsibilities (seek collaborations with local schools or electronic distance-mentoring programs to ensure match between mentor and protégé) ❑ Sanctioned time for mentor-teacher interactions on a weekly basis ❑ Mentoring focuses on beginning teacher development and instilling career-long dispositions for reflective practice ❑ Ongoing professional development and support for mentors

Professional development	❑ Mentoring is a short-term process (e.g., one year only) ❑ Occasional workshops or district sponsored professional development	❑ Initial educator development is viewed as part of a professional learning continuum that takes place over the first few years of practice ❑ Differentiated professional learning plans ❑ Opportunities to engage in high quality professional seminars or workshops ❑ Mentoring is viewed as a professional learning experience for the mentors
Professional collaboration	❑ Periodic time for meeting with grade level or department colleagues	❑ Regular (e.g., weekly) time to collaborate with grade level or department colleagues ❑ Investment in technologies to facilitate networking across school sites (e.g., subject matter networks, connecting educators in rural locations to larger community) ❑ School culture is collaborative and focuses on student learning
Organizing for the induction system	❑ Programming is kept local ❑ Leadership for programming is based on an individual or is done as a part-time responsibility	❑ Collaborations with higher education and regional education collaboratives ❑ Collaboration among administration, school-based educators, institutions of higher education, and other educational organizations

EVALUATION OF INDUCTION SYSTEMS

Although the goal of induction is improved practice for teachers and improved learning for students, not all programs are equally effective in achieving these results. Evaluating induction programming is vital to its effectiveness and success and should include formative and summative dimensions. Formative evaluation strategies occur throughout the program and encourage constant adjustments to align the program with its intended outcomes. Summative evaluation occurs at the end of the program cycle to determine the value of the program and identify needed changes.

Program evaluation is best done when it becomes a routine part of ongoing professional learning activities. Induction program assessment should focus on the effectiveness of the program and should never be confused with the assessment of the initial educators or the mentors themselves. Carol Bartell (2005) offers a list of evaluation questions that relate to critical induction program features and will be helpful for school leaders to ask when initiating

the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the induction program. The evaluation questions below are written with beginning teacher induction in mind, but they are applicable to all educator induction systems.

- **Purpose and goals**: Are the purposes and goals clear to all participants? Are program plans aligned with the goals?
- **Intended outcomes**: How well and how consistently are the intended outcomes (i.e., retention, teacher satisfaction, improved teacher and student performance) being met?
- **Leadership and administration**: What are the qualifications of those selected for leadership roles? What are the perceived and actual roles of the leadership team? How are resources allocated?
- **Collaboration**: What are the collaborative arrangements? How are the collaborations implemented? What is the commitment level of the partners? What roles do they play? What makes the collaborations successful or not successful?
- **Support of site administrators**: How are site administrators oriented to their roles? To what extent do they understand and accept their responsibilities? What roles do they actually play? How do program participants perceive the participation of site administrators?
- **Linkages with university preparation**: What is the relationship of preservice learning and professional development in induction? How and to what extent are these linkages made?
- **New-teacher assignment**: How are new-teacher assignments made? How are new teachers made aware of the expectations of their specific assignments?
- **Context**: How do new teachers come to understand the contexts in which they work? What aspects of the context contribute to new-teacher satisfaction or dissatisfaction?
- **Mentoring**: Who is selected as mentors and how are they selected and trained? How do they evaluate their own training and follow-up activities? How do they work with new teachers? What ongoing support is provided to mentors? How do new teachers perceive the effectiveness of the mentors?
- **Provision of scheduled, structured time**: How much time is spent working together and what takes place during that time? How helpful is it perceived to be by the new teachers? What assistance is perceived to be most helpful or least helpful?
- **Professional development**: How are professional development activities geared to stages of readiness? How do new teachers rate each of the activities? What training is sought and why?
- **Individual follow-up**: What follow-up is provided and how is it provided? How does the training and follow up impact classroom practice?
- **Feedback to beginning teachers**: How is teacher performance assessed? What feedback is provided? How is that feedback used to inform conversations with new teachers? How does teacher performance change as a result of receiving feedback?
- **Evaluation**: Are all important aspects of the program evaluated? How are evaluation findings used to shape the program?

Quantitative data can be used for statistical analysis and used in planning professional development activities. Examples of quantitative information include:

- Number of new teachers and mentors participating in the program
- Mentor and protégé logs that document the time and focus of conferences and observations
- Retention statistics on new and veteran teachers
- Attitudinal surveys (possibly administered mid-year and end-of-year)

Qualitative data provide a rich picture of the impact that the program is having on the school community. Examples of qualitative information include:

- Open-ended questionnaires after professional development or networking events
- Participant reports about program impact on practice through journals, interviews, or focus groups
- Observations of teachers participating in induction programming
- Formal and informal feedback on program improvement
- Inventory of professional development opportunities in which new teachers and mentors participated

The evaluation plan should reflect the vision and goals of the induction system. A formalized process that enables a district to collect, analyze, and act on data about the program's effectiveness is key to the continued improvement and success of the system.

ASSESSING COMPREHENSIVE INDUCTION PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The following tables show examples of data sources that are linked to induction program components and specific goals (Bird, 2008). Specific documents provide tangible evidence for the evaluation.

Data Sources for Criteria-Based Selection and Matching of Mentors			
Goal	**Description**	**Possible Indicators**	**Sources of Evidence**
The induction program carefully matches mentors and protogés.	There is an established mentor selection and match process.	• Mentors are matched based on three key components (grade level, proximity, and content area) whenever possible • Mentors are part of the interview process • Mentors and mentees are matched based on personality or other match indicators • Mentors and mentees can "bail out" if the match doesn't work	• Process for "bailing out" • Mentor-protogé match documents • Mentor applications
Relationship between mentors and protogés is based on a high level of trust.	The induction program requires that mentors maintain a high level of confidentiality.	• Mentor is not an evaluator • Protogé is confident that mentor doesn't share confidential information with administration	• Documented confidentiality statement • Confidentiality survey

Data Sources for District-Wide Planning Process			
Goals	**Description**	**Possible Indicators**	**Sources of Evidence**
The induction program has established goals.	The induction program has goals that focus on teaching and learning in the classroom. A multi-year PD plan is established	• Goals are articulated and communicated with stakeholders • Stakeholder perspectives are included in goal setting process	• Survey results • Goals are visible on all distributed materials • Mission statement
The induction program has on-going assessment.	A variety of assessments are used to evaluate program components.	• Surveys are administered at end of seminars • Attendance is documented at all activities	• Survey and assessment results • Attendance and criterion achievement data

Data Sources for Services for Mentors			
Goal	**Description**	**Possible Indicators**	**Sources of Evidence**
The induction program is differentiated to meet the needs of the protogé.	Mentors provide feedback and coaching that deepens protogés capacity to analyze and make decisions.	• Mentors observe mentees and facilitate pre- and post-conferences. • Mentors and mentees engage together in analyses of student work. • Mentors collaborate and plan lessons with mentees. • Mentors assist mentees with problem solving.	• Classroom observation data • Mentor-protogé survey data • Action steps derived from observation summary (What's working, what's not?) • Mentor training modules flowchart

Data Sources for Administrators, School Board, and Community Development			
Goal	**Description**	**Possible Indicators**	**Sources of Evidence**
The induction program includes show of support by the administration, school board through-out the school year.	Administrators understand the challenges of being a new teacher. Stakeholders are committed to providing a comprehensive induction program for all staff	• Welcoming process during orientation week • Supportive statements and actions for the induction program by board members and education association	• Informal visits with affirmation during first week of school • Board policy • Contract language • Annual reports

Data Sources for Services for New Teachers			
Goal	**Description**	**Possible Indicators**	**Sources of Evidence**
The induction program includes the participation of all new teachers.	All buildings in the district have a strong commitment to ensuring support of beginning and new-to-district teachers. Induction program includes support services for first, second, and third year teachers.	• New teachers paired with veteran teachers • Participation in staff development programs for new teachers • Weekly conferences between new teacher and veteran • Informal visits by mentor • Problem solving sessions with mentor	• Roster of mentors and protogés. • Seminar feedback • Sign-in sheets • Contact log • Anecdotal notes • Feedback statements • Action plans
The induction program includes an orientation session and continues throughout the year.	Provide information on a schedule to meet protogé's needs – not a new teacher's "information dump."	• Develop a schedule and calendar • Provide information on a smaller scale (i.e. at the building level) • More frequent meetings – small amount of info at each	• Bulletins • Guidelines • Surveys • Schedule agendas

Data Sources for On-Going Assessment			
Goal	**Description**	**Possible Indicators**	**Sources of Evidence**
The induction program positively impacts instructional practices of all teachers	Professional teaching standards are the primary source of reference for new teacher practice.	• New teachers engage in reflection and self-assessment according to district adopted standards. • New teachers engage in goal setting and action planning for personal growth. • Observation procedures utilize the standards of effective practice. • Coaching practices are implemented using the standards as a basis for planning and reflecting conversations.	• Self-assessment documents (pre-and post) • Action plans and summaries of goal attainment (generalized) • Observation data-collection forms (included with permission of new teacher) • Mentor-mentee survey result comparisons • District summative evaluation documents (aligned) • Videotaped conference/ meta-coaching documents (included with permission of new teacher and mentor) • Media coverage • Board presentations

The induction program is integrated with other programs that support the school staff as a learning community.	School programs have access to training and/or other program strategies that improve teacher practice.	• Seminars challenge veteran teachers at an appropriate level. • Teachers receive classroom-based instructional support.	• Participant feedback forms • Administrator interviews • Staff survey (needs aligned with program offerings) • Teacher Association support statements • Veteran teacher portfolio documents and artifacts • Annual report (goal statements and achievement summaries) • Retention statistics

Evaluation summaries should be shared with key stakeholders. Reports should include the purpose of the evaluation, a description of the induction program components, the evaluation questions, the data-gathering process used in the program evaluation, results, conclusions, and recommendations. Different versions of the evaluation reports may serve the interests and needs of different audiences. Ways to distribute the evaluation results might include:

- District web site
- Presentations to groups and/or committees, such as the school board, administrative team, department chairs, and parent organizations
- Media coverage, such as community newspapers, television, cable
- Inclusion in other reports such as quarterly and annual reports or newsletters

NOTES:

SECTION FOUR:
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INDUCTION SYSTEMS

Induction of initial and transitioning educators should be viewed as professional development that both bridges educators through the stressful time of beginning a career and establishs a mindset and set of practices for career-long development through collaborative, reflective practice. This section describes the vision of professional development that can guide the establishment of induction systems.

Professional development is an active, engaging process by which learning and professional growth is promoted. Professional development that supports teachers in this manner should meet guidelines developed by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2008) by being research-based, data-driven, and deepening teacher knowledge.

Because the objective of professional development activities is most often to increase student achievement, it should be long-term and job-embedded, with opportunities for guided practice and modeling of new strategies in the educators' own classroom or learning environment. Planning for professional development should also be differentiated to include activities that meet individual needs of initial educators so it is perceived as relevant, challenging, and interesting to those participating. Districts, schools, and other stakeholders such as teacher professional organizations, higher education, and regional professional development collaboratives all play a critical role in supporting the development of educators.

Professional development should tap local expertise and collective wisdom that teachers can generate by working together. Ongoing professional development should also provide opportunities for educators to engage in professional discourse with colleagues grounded in the content and tasks of teaching and learning. Through reflection and dialogue about their instruction, initial educators can gain deeper insight into their craft and are better able to autonomously address problems that arise. Well-designed professional development for initial educators can deepen their knowledge of subject matter and curriculum, refine their instructional repertoire, hone their inquiry skills, and help them become critical colleagues.

Content to include in professional growth plan

- Description of long-term knowledge or skills to be developed connected to the district vision of effective teaching based on Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers or other district-adopted criteria
- Identification of short-term goals focused on specific knowledge or skills to be developed or understood
- Steps or activities to be completed and a timeline for accomplishing them
- Indicators that show how the goals were accomplished
- Resources and support needed
- Evidence of improvement
- Reflection and evaluation about how the initial steps were taken and the quality of the results
- Reassessment of long and short-term goals for improvement

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLANS

Professional development activities must be guided by an overall vision of teaching practice. Researchers have characterized teacher development as a staged progression from novice to expert, from teacher-centered to child-centered, or from classroom management oriented to instructionally oriented. These developmental schemes can be helpful in organizing experiences for initial educators, but they can also oversimplify the professional needs of educators.

Induction systems should envision the work of educators as multi-dimensional. This can be done by aligning induction programming with professional teaching standards such as those developed by Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and state developed standards like the Minnesota Standards for Effective Practice for Teachers. By using standards as a conceptual framework for defining teaching, induction experiences can quickly focus educators on supporting student learning for deep understanding in supportive learning environments.

Teaching standards provide a bridge between initial educators' preparation and their current practice. All teachers prepared in Minnesota are required to demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and dispositions according to the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers. Using this framework, or other similar frameworks, provides a common language for analytic and reflective conversations among initial educators and professional developers. Initially licensed educators need assistance in putting the skills and knowledge learned in pre-service courses and field experience into practice. Using teaching standards helps to provide clear focus toward achieving this.

Individual growth plans, aligned with professional teaching standards, provide initial educators with the opportunity to self-assess and to choose appropriate professional development goals that meet their needs. Additionally, the growth plans provide them with direction to select workshops, seminars, and collaborative professional development activities that align with their goals. Initial educators must be aware of their own needs and choose to do what is necessary to develop their knowledge and skills to meet those needs. They must have time to engage in professional development activities and be willing to accept support from mentors, colleagues, and peers. The next section will show how professional growth plans can be used in conjunction with mentoring to focus observation and other mentoring activities.

Across Minnesota, many district performance review documents already use professional teaching standards such as the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers, framework documents such as Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*, and other district evaluation tools developed for Quality Compensation (Q-Comp) programs. These examples of performance criteria for teachers already share strong similarities as demonstrated in the example that begins on the following page.

Example of district alignment of teaching performance with other professional standards and frameworks			
	INTASC Standards (aligned with Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers.)	Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*	Example District Teacher Performance Rubric Item
Subject Matter	Understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structure of the disciplines taught; creates learning experiences to make them meaningful to students.	Demonstrates knowledge of content and best practice. Designs coherent instruction. Ensures student involvement; engages students in learning.	1e 1d 3b
Student Learning	Understands how children learn and develop; provides learning opportunities that support their development.	Demonstrates knowledge of students. Aligns instructional objectives to learner outcomes. Assesses student learning. Ensures student involvement; uses questioning and discussion techniques and engages students in learning.	1a 1b 1f 3b
Diverse Learners	Understand how students differ in their approaches to learning; creates instructional opportunities adapted to diverse learners.	Demonstrates knowledge of students. Designs coherent instruction. Creates an environment of respect and rapport. Establishes a culture for learning.	1a 1d 2a 2b 3b to 3d
Instructional Strategies	Understands and uses variety of instructional strategies.	Demonstrates knowledge of resources. Designs coherent instruction.	1c 1d 3b to 3d
Learning Environment	Creates a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.	Designs coherent instruction. Creates an environment of respect and rapport; establishes a culture for learning; manages classroom procedures; manages student behavior; organizes physical space. Ensures student involvement; engages students in learning.	1d 2a to 2e 3b

Communication	Uses knowledge of communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction.	Creates an environment of respect and rapport. Communicates clearly and accurately. Ensures student involvement; engages students in learning.	2a 3a 3b
Planning Instruction	Plans instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.	Ensures student involvement; engages students in learning. Demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness to students' needs.	1a to 1e 3b 3d
Assessment	Understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies.	Demonstrates knowledge of students. Assesses student learning. Provides feedback to students. Demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness to students' needs. Reflects on teaching. Maintains accurate records. Communicates with families.	1a 1f 3c 3d 4a 4b 4c
Reflection and Professional Development	Reflects on teaching.	Reflects on teaching. Contributes to the school and district. Grows and develops professionally.	4a 4d 4e
Collaboration, Ethics, and Relationships	Fosters relationships with colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community.	Demonstrates knowledge of resources. Communicates with families. Contributes to the school and district. Shows professionalism	1c 4c 4d 4f

Although the focus for professional development could be aligned with performance review, it should not be confused with or interpreted as an evaluation system. This process is about growth and support for improved practice. Ultimately evaluation remains the responsibility of the building administrator or instructional supervisor and should not be included in the list of activities associated with the induction system.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN AN INDUCTION SYSTEM

As the level of support for initial educators increases (e.g., orientation, seminars, peer networks, reduced course load, and collaborative professional development) the probability of retaining promising educators increases (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). It cannot be the sole responsibility of a mentor to induct initial and transitioning educators into the profession. Research on the needs of initial educators shows that they benefit from a variety of professional development opportunities. Different kinds of professional learning opportunities can provide personal and emotional support, facilitate access to resources and materials, provide information on school and district policies and procedures, help refine classroom management techniques, and help generate ideas for improving instruction (Wang, Odell, & Schwill, 2008). These opportunities include orientation activities, seminars and workshops, ongoing collaborative professional development opportunities, and mentoring. The first three types of support will be discussed in this section; mentoring will be discussed in the following section. However, while workshops and seminars can be effective delivery strategies for introducing new instructional ideas, going deeper into critical topics that are linked to long term school or district strategic development can have larger pay-offs for the investment of professional development resources. Long-term, collaborative professional learning designs have proven to be the most effective in supporting professional learning (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001).

Types of professional development within induction systems

- *Orientation* - Addresses informational and technical issues as they arise throughout the school year
- *Seminars and workshops* - Short term opportunities for introducing new content-based instructional strategies and other knowledge and skills
- *Collaborative professional development* - Longer term opportunities to work regularly with colleagues on practice-based inquiries and instructional development
- *Mentoring* - A non-evaluative process by which a highly skilled and experienced educator facilitates the development of an initial educator in a structured and sustained support process with strong focus on improving instructional practices

Case example

A professional developer chooses to focus a monthly peer group meeting of initial educators around a particular dimension of practice such as MNSEPT Standard 3: Diverse Learners, which says "A teacher must understand how students differ in their approaches to learning and create instructional opportunities that are adapted to students with diverse backgrounds and exceptionalities." Through facilitated conversations, the professional developer helps initial educators examine their own classroom practices in relationship to the specifications that accompany this standard. The participants can share particular strategies they use, curriculum resources that they have gathered, and their understanding of how student diversity plays a role in their instructional planning and assessment. In addition, they relate what they have learned and previously experienced to their new context. It may be helpful, in some instances, to have initial educators share some of the resources and strategies from their initial preparation programs with the other educators in the school.

ORIENTATIONS

Orientations are designed to increase beginning educators' opportunity for success the first time they have a new professional experience throughout the school year. Orientation can also

Potential topics for orientation of initial and transitioning educators

(Adapted from Minneapolis Public Schools and Shakopee Public Schools)

Community

- Overview (history, business/industry, culture)
- Tour of community

School District

- District overview (demographics, culture, history, leadership structure)
- District support systems (e.g., human resources, curriculum coordinators)
- Expectations / professional conduct (professional dress, timeliness, snow days)
- Resources (district / community / business / industry / volunteer)
- Professional development opportunities
- Payroll information (sick days, pay checks, personal days)
- Medical insurance information
- District committees
- District Website
- School calendar (snow days)
- Tour of district
- Emergency procedures
- School closing procedures

Teaching / Instruction

- Evaluation /review protocol
- Attendance /grading procedures and policies
- Student discipline policy and procedures
- Field trip policy /procedure
- Parent teacher conferences
- Teaching schedule
- How/where to obtain teaching resources
- Class lists
- Expectations for student learning
- Support & assistance available

School

- Administrative vision / school mission
- School goals for the year
- Building culture / history / demographics / leadership structure
- Building policies / procedures for obtaining services
- Building support systems
- School directory
- Expectations / professional conduct
- Professional development
- Budget / ordering procedures
- Building committees
- Technology / media center / internet policy
- Office procedures (keys, copying, building access, school mail, phones)
- Defined work day
- School nurse
- School website
- Tour of school/classrooms

Professional Union

- Local union history
- Union leadership structure
- Contract Rights / responsibilities / obligations
- Salary schedule
- Tenure requirements
- Professional organizations
- Professional development plans
- Education Minnesota fall conference
- Websites (Education Minnesota, AFT, NEA)
- Fair share / dues
- Contract overview
- Contract negotiations

Minnesota Department of Education

- New teacher area on Website
- Guidelines for new teacher induction
- Licensure requirements
- Department of Education support systems
- Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers

Minnesota Colleges and Universities

- Classes / Workshops designed to support new educators
- Other support systems

provide awareness of resources and norms of the school and district. Orientations should be considered as only one component of initial and transitioning educators' induction.

An initial orientation is usually held before school starts for all educators new to the district or school. The needs of initial educators, however, may unfold over the course of the school year. Subsequent orientation sessions can be organized for when the initial educator has other "first time experiences" that occur later in the school year, such as completing a grading cycle, holding parent conferences, or working as part of an Individualized Education Plan team meeting for students with special needs.

Orientations can include individual and group meetings ranging from 2-5 days. Opportunities to engage during several brief sessions before and during the school year avoids overload on the beginning and transitioning educator. Information disseminated during brief periods interspersed with time for questions and reflection is more likely to be understood and remembered. Handbooks and websites are also useful ways to make important information available to initial and transitioning educators.

Potential topics for seminars and workshops for initial and transitioning educators

- Managing classroom learning environments
- Differentiating instruction
- Inclusion of students with special needs
- Response to Intervention
- Teaching English Language Learners
- Evaluating student achievement (assessment)
- Communicating with students, parents, and colleagues (conferencing)
- Planning and organizing curriculum
- Culturally relevant pedagogy
- Motivating students

SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Seminars and workshops provide short term opportunities for initial educators to learn and refine content-based instructional strategies and other general knowledge and skills aligned with professional teaching standards. These activities can also be aligned with Minnesota Academic Standards to provide a content specific focus. Seminars and workshops can be used for the purpose of introducing new ideas, curriculum, or research. To support deeper understanding of ideas and the adaptation of ideas into practice, workshops should be followed by ongoing collaborative work or focused mentoring activities.

Content specific, specialized professional development can be provided for groups within larger districts or can be provided for groups arranged through regional partnerships, online programs, and teacher professional organizations. Topics for these seminars and workshops can be selected by soliciting the current needs of initial educators related to the learning needs of their students. An additional advantage of forming content specific groups can be the formation of professional learning communities in which these ideas can be explored in depth, over time.

COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Collaborative professional development is a long term approach to developing skills of teaching related to inquiry and reflection. They include work with initial and more experienced colleagues around authentic activities embedded in practice. Authentic activities might include action research, teacher inquiry, teacher study groups, peer support groups, book groups, literacy circles, professional learning communities, student work analysis, video analysis of practice, curriculum development, and work with school improvement initiatives.

Authentic, embedded learning facilitates the transfer of skills to the classroom, builds stronger professional relationships, and increases teacher investment in learning. Much of this collaborative work should be aligned with the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teaching. This collaborative work can also be aligned to content within Minnesota's Academic Standards.

Common features of collaborative professional development

- Practice-embedded and authentic
- Collegial
- Interactive
- Ongoing (not a one-time workshop)
- Critical reflection on one's own practice
- Purposeful toward student learning
- Relevant to everyday practice
- Opportunity to discuss interests and concerns
- Supports experimentation and problem-solving

Potential activities of collaborative professional development

- Identifying questions that arise from practice
- Analyzing practice based on student work, video, reflections
- Synthesizing and evaluating resources and new ideas
- Supporting colleagues
- Assessing areas of needed development in practice
- Gathering data from teaching (observations, student conferences, student achievement results, feedback from students)
- Journaling
- Reading and responding to educational research
- Modeling of instructional strategies
- Systematically reflecting on the quality of instruction
- Developing action plans

NOTES:

SECTION FIVE: MENTORING

Mentoring is the cornerstone of a comprehensive induction system, especially for initial educators who are learning many new aspects of their practice, their context, and how to become self-directed in their professional learning. Well-prepared and supported mentors can help initial educators make a successful transition from pre-service preparation into professional practice.

According to summaries of mentor programs developed in other states (e.g. Virginia Department of Education, 2000), districts that support initial educators with programs that include mentoring tended to attract highly qualified teaching candidates. These teachers also remained in teaching longer than those who did not begin their careers with a mentor. Virginia also reported that initial educators who are mentored received higher evaluation ratings from their supervisors, developed better planning skills, handled discipline problems more effectively, conducted more productive classroom discussions, and remained in districts longer than educators who were left to "sink or swim" without assistance from a mentor. Veteran educators who served as mentors reported increased professional revitalization, less isolation, greater recognition, and a belief that they impacted the profession more than educators who are not involved in mentoring new professionals (p. 6-7).

Mentoring for initial educators has become legislated practice in at least twenty-two states in the U.S. (Education Week, 2008). Research is now showing that beginning teachers are coming to expect structured mentoring programs built on relationships with a mentor who observes their lessons and works with them on lesson-based discussions (Wang, O'Dell, & Schwill, 2008). Mentor programs tend to be highly regarded by initial educators.

This section summarizes some of the recommended practices from long-standing mentoring programs. While transitioning educators can certainly benefit from the support that mentoring provides, this section primarily speaks to the needs of initial educators.

WHAT MENTORING IS

Mentoring is a non-evaluative process by which a highly skilled and experienced educator facilitates the development of an

What mentors do:

- Model classroom instructional practices that are aligned with district-adopted professional standards
- Focus initial educators' instructional planning on student learning needs and achievement
- Pose questions that promote analysis of practice
- Listen actively to the initial educator analyze, reflect, and strategize about their practice
- Provide specific feedback that informs practice
- Coach educators to be reflective practitioners
- Facilitate and model self-directed, career-long learning
- Deliberate about strategies for managing classroom dilemmas
- Offer support and guidance as a colleague or confidant
- Advocate for the needs of initial educators
- Collaborate with educators
- Provide educational resources

initial educator. Mentoring is a structured and sustained support process with strong focus on improving instructional practices. Mentors are educational leaders and agents of change who help increase the impact of professional development on student learning through peer coaching, collaboration, and reflection on practice. With well-prepared mentors, initial educators have the support they need to become self-directed learners who are able to reflect on their practice and exhibit higher levels of educational competence and confidence.

WHAT MENTORING IS NOT

Mentoring is not a substitute for formal evaluation processes that the school, district, or state require. Mentoring has a formative assessment purpose that provides initialeducators with the expectations for their practice and techniques for providing feedback about how their practice is meeting those expectations. This feedback is given with the intent of professional growth, not as a formal evaluation process. A mentor's purpose is much more aligned with coaching and advising to improve practice than to supervise the initial educator.

In providing feedback, mentors are not in a position of telling initial educators what exactly they should do. There are many contextual and individual reasons for an initial educator's decisions in practice. A mentor knows how to elicit reasoning and advise initial educators on strategies that will improve student learning opportunities. Mentors are not expected to be experts in all areas or to be able to provide all the "right" answers. Mentors serve a facilitative, supportive, and collaborative role that is meant to help initial educators develop skills in managing classroom dilemmas through systematic reflective practices.

Some traditional notions of assigning a mentor to an initial educator as a "buddy" for the purposes of "being there if they have questions" or to "show them the ropes" fall short of more current conceptions of the mentor role and the desired outcomes. Mentors are much more proactive in working with initial educators on a regular and sustained basis with the intentional purpose of coaching reflective practices, improving instructional practices, and working toward improved student achievement.

DESIGNING A MENTORING PROGRAM

Mentoring programs may take many forms depending on the size, structure, and available resources in the district. There are, however, some design principles for mentoring programs that have demonstrated effectiveness and are strongly recommended by the professional community.

Mentor program design principles

- Careful selection of mentors
- As much as possible, assignment of mentors based on grade level, subject matter, and geography
- Ongoing preparation and development of mentors
- Protected time to engage in mentoring activities
- Articulated alignment of mentoring practices and teaching evaluation

Careful selection of mentors

Several selection criteria will help identify strong candidates to serve as mentors for initial educators. It is generally recommended that mentors have five or more years of successful teaching experience and that they are highly regarded by their peers and administration as a role model in the profession. Mentors will engage in coaching and modeling of classroom instructions, therefore, mentors should be selected with attention to their own classroom teaching practices and instructional skills. If the induction system is designed within a broader conception of effective teaching, such as alignment with the

Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers or other district-adopted standards, then mentor's instructional practices should demonstrate alignment with those criteria.

Mentor selection should also consider mentoring knowledge and skills for working with adult learners and facilitating the professional growth of initial educators. While the mentoring program should also provide the necessary preparation and ongoing support for mentors to develop this set of professional skills, potential mentors should be cognizant of the processes for learning to teach from the perspectives of the initial educator, the district adopted standards for effective practice, and the intersections of theory, research, and practice.

The mentor's conversations with initial educators should focus attention on the relationships between subject matter, instruction, student learning, and learning environment, in addition to classroom management strategies. Therefore, mentors need to demonstrate a bifocal perspective on both the quality of the instruction that is taking place to support student learning and how they will, in turn, support the learning of initial educators (Atchenstein & Athenases, 2006). Potential mentors should be open to ideas about how to plan for differentiated support based on the needs and development of individual initial educators by drawing on practices such as coaching, modeling, reflection, student work analysis, and goal setting.

Mentors also have personal and professional dispositions that will shape how they provide emotional and social support to others. These dispositions speak to the mentor's ability to develop relationships with others, to communicate effectively, to work with a diverse population of initial educators, and to maintain a facilitative stance toward helping initial educators develop their own reflective practices. It is not the mentor's goal to develop a mirror image if his/her own work.

Mentor Selection Criteria

Instructional skills

- Completed five or more years of successful teaching experience
- Demonstrates solid content knowledge
- Considers diverse student needs to personalize and differentiate instruction to promote achievement for all students
- Creates and manages a productive classroom learning environment
- Demonstrates a broad repertoire of instructional practices
- Assesses student learning and modifies instruction to meet student needs

Mentoring knowledge and skills

- Understands beginning teacher development and adult learning theory
- Knows how to analyze instruction based on criteria of professional teaching standards
- Understands the reciprocal relationships among educational theory, research, and practice
- Uses an inquiry approach for problem solving
- Uses a continuous improvement, professional growth model

Personal and professional dispositions

- Communicates openly, honestly, and sensitively with students, staff, and parents
- Encourages and nurtures an appreciation of diversity
- Is friendly, approachable, and accessible
- Is enthusiastic and optimistic
- Is dependable and trustworthy
- Demonstrates patient, helpful, and caring attitude
- Models reflective practices
- Demonstrates commitment to own professional growth and learning

The selection process for mentors should reflect these qualifications of mentors. For example, the selection and hiring of mentors may include an application, letters of recommendation, an interview protocol, review of professional development records, or review of formal teaching evaluations.

Ongoing preparation and development of mentors

Once identified, mentors are provided with preparation experiences and ongoing support for developing their repertoires through formal experiences, informal networking with peers, and access to current professional materials. Mentor preparation should include an articulation of the roles and responsibilities of mentoring as well as practice in the processes and skills of instructional coaching.

Districts may have differing needs and may envision specialized roles for mentors. In most examples of mentoring programs around the state and country, mentors focus on instructional improvement. It may be necessary, though, in some districts to identify content-area specialist mentors (e.g., if a new content curriculum is adopted). Another example may be identifying a special education mentor who can assist classroom teachers with how to work with students with special needs.

Components of Mentor Preparation and Development

Instructional coaching

- Assisting initial educators in setting professional goals and developing strategies to work toward those goals
- Supporting initial educators in taking action toward their professional goals
- Conducting observations of instructional practice
- Using questioning skills to effectively clarify initial educators' thinking and promote reflection about practices related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Using non-judgmental language in mentoring conversations
- Providing specific feedback linked to professional teaching standards
- Modeling reflective thinking to promote improved instructional practice

Communication and facilitation skills

- Listening empathetically and reading body language for underlying needs
- Diplomatically honoring confidentiality while promoting teacher growth
- Organizing and managing time to work with initial educators in one-on-one and group settings
- Communicating school and district policies and procedures
- Crisis management and conflict resolution

Processes for developing mentor knowledge and skills are much like the high quality professional learning experiences described in the previous section on professional development. Seminars on facilitation strategies, opportunities to work with other mentors to analyze and assess cases from practice, and engagement with professional networks of mentors regionally and nationally can help mentors develop and expand their repertoire of practice.

Teachers often become mentors because they have a desire to work with their colleagues in an expanded career role. Mentors often develop a sense of satisfaction through helping to strengthen the profession by improving the quality of teaching in their schools or districts. Teachers also gain current professional development on research and instructional strategies when they are working within a program that supports the mentor's professional growth. Mentors also report a feeling of professional rejuvenation—a new challenge, new ideas about teaching, and the opportunity to see other teachers in their classrooms—through their mentoring role. Professional development for mentors has a double benefit. It not only strengthens the mentors' skills and improves their practice, but it also increases the capacity of the school to support professional learning communities.

Intentional assignment of mentors

When pairing mentors with initial educators, some criteria to consider may be geographic proximity, grade level assignments, subject area, and compatibility of teaching schedules (Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, & Niles, 1992). Research strongly supports matching mentors with initial educators based on commonalities in their teaching assignments. Sweeney (2008) writes:

> The highest priority is close proximity of mentor and protégé work areas or classrooms. In the daily press of activities, consistent and frequent mentoring can happen only if they are near one another. The next priority is to match mentors who have or recently have had similar job assignment to that of the protégé. This is helpful, since curriculum and related work tasks are very big areas for protégé learning. (p. 139)

This matching based on teaching assignment allows stronger connections in instructional coaching and a more astute analysis of the curriculum coherence and content accuracy of the initial educator's practice. Strong matches based on teaching assignment provide not only emotional and technical support, but the specific content and student focus that keep the mentoring relationship striving toward improvement of teaching practices and student learning gains. Content area or grade level assignment of mentors to initial educators is not always available to districts, especially in districts that have small numbers of specialized teaching assignments or those that have few mentors. Partnerships with other stakeholders (higher education, regional professional development providers, and electronic networks of educators) can prove to be invaluable in these instances.

Protected time to engage in mentoring activities

Mentors should be given release time from educational responsibilities to perform the role of the mentor (e.g., observations, debriefing, student work analysis, coaching sessions). Similarly, initial educators should have time allotted in their schedules for mentoring and professional development activities. Weekly engagement between mentor and initial educators is recommended in order to develop and sustain the professional trust in the relationship, provide regular and predictable opportunities for feedback on practice, and maintain progress on professional growth plans.

To gain this time, school scheduling considerations should be part of the mentor program design. Initial educators should be given teaching assignments that will allow them time to focus on developing and improving their initial practice. This can include a reduced number of different courses preparations, a reduced teaching load, or common planning time with mentors. Similarly, the culture of the school can play a significant role in how initial educators engage in professional learning. Collaborative cultures in which teachers regularly talk with each other about instruction and student learning are more productive learning environments for both the professional staff and the students (Bryk & Schneider, 2006). Initial and transitioning educators are best supported when schools view mentoring as a shared responsibility across the school (including faculty, staff, and administration) with a formal mentoring process aimed at specific professional development targets.

Mentors should also be professionally compensated for their work with initial educators. This compensation might include a stipend, additional personal days, release time, or reassigned time. Mentoring is a full-time responsibility when done regularly and done well. The most highly recommended model for mentoring calls for full-time release of teachers who fulfill mentoring roles in their school or district. For example, in Mankato Area Public Schools, teachers rotate into the mentoring role for a three-year period, working collaboratively with initial educators, supporting other district initiatives, and engaging in professional development school activities with the local university.

Alignment of mentoring practices and teaching evaluation

As described in the opening of this section, mentoring is not intended to include an evaluative process. The mentor is to assist and support the development of the initial educator in formative ways and should not be expected to perform formal performance evaluations. However, the expectations of the mentoring process should be clearly aligned with the evaluation criteria of the school and district in order for the teacher's formative development to lead to successful evaluation.

Districts should have indicators of quality teaching based on Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers or a district-adopted framework for effective teaching. These indicators of quality can serve as both the performance review criteria and as a self-assessment guide for the initial educator. The mentor can systematically incorporate the initial educators' self-assessment on the indicators of quality in a process of developing performance goals for the initial educator.

This process allows initial educators to recognize and understand their own challenges and develop strategies for improvement in consultation with their mentor. Through the mentor's feedback and guidance and the educator's self-assessment of their own practice, the educator becomes a reflective practitioner; one whose routines include taking time to look back on what was done, to decide what was successful, and to modify the routine to make it even better for

student learning. The articulated performance indicators for evaluation in conjunction with a mentored process of reflection, assessment, and goal-setting help initial educators develop the skills and dispositions of reflective practice and continual improvement, thus allowing educators to advance their practice.

NOTES:

SECTION SIX: RESOURCES

A resource list is also available at: http://www.worldcat.org/profiles/pxrocks/lists/287856

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MENTORING PROGRAM MODELS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

New Teacher Center at Santa Cruz http://www.newteachercenter.org/index.php

Performance Learning Systems http://www.plsweb.com/topics/coaching_and_mentoring/

Center for Cognitive Coaching http://www.cognitivecoaching.com/

Science Technology Engineering Mathematics Mentoring Program
http://stemmp.googlepages.com/

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

National Staff Development Council Standards http://www.nsdc.org/standards/index.cfm

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Standards
http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/corestrd.pdf

Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes: Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers
https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/rules/?id=8710.2000

EXAMPLES OF STATE INDUCTION STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Washington State http://www.cstp-wa.org/Navigational/Policies_practices/Teacher_induction/CSTP_ind-standards.final_08.pdf

Wisconsin

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NOTES

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Minnesota STATE COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

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