



Ben Kriegel, a Missouri teacher, introduces the concept of peer editing to his 2nd graders.

Photo courtesy mentor Carrie Rudebeck

Induction Programs That Work

Universities working in collaboration with school districts have created programs that benefit both, as well as supporting novice teachers.

By Carol Gilles, Barbara Davis, and Sheryl McGlamery

Lindsey, a beginning 3rd-grade teacher, has inherited the smallest classroom — the one without air conditioning — from an experienced teacher who moved away. The older teacher removed all of her self-purchased books, magazines, bulletin boards, materials, and math manipulatives when she left. Lindsey has a mentor, appointed by the district, but she has seen her only twice, once for a quick lunchtime introduction and again in the hallway during the school day. The mentor told Lindsey to ask any questions she might have, but she doesn't seem to have much time to answer them. Looking at her empty room and anticipating the enormous task ahead, Lindsey feels quite alone.

The above scenario is repeated in American schools each year. New teachers are often given the least usable space, the most difficult children, and little real support. At the same time, teaching is the job where, as Dan Brown (2007) suggests, teachers must have perfected all the skills and abilities on the first day that they will have five years later. Many states have created induction programs for new teachers. However, mentors are often full-time teachers who have their own students to teach, so they're not always available to provide the intense support first-year teachers require. Further, bringing experienced teachers together with novice teachers is not

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enough. High-quality induction programs are needed to better support teachers like Lindsey and keep them in teaching. Where are these high-quality induction programs, how do they work, and are they successful in retaining teachers?

COMPREHENSIVE TEACHER INDUCTION CONSORTIUM

The Comprehensive Teacher Induction Consortium, a group of similar teacher induction programs, has used a highly successful model for over 15 years. Although seven programs have been identified in the United States, the consortium currently has three programs actively participating: University of Missouri, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and Texas State University at San Marcos. All three programs are based on the Albuquerque Public Schools/University of New Mexico (APS/UNM) Elementary Teacher Induction Program model, which was established in 1984. This school/university partnership arose in response to the challenges associated with beginning teaching (Odell 1992). Though similar to the APS/UNM partnership, all programs in the consortium have modified the model to meet their unique needs. The University of Missouri (MU) is the largest program, with 87 be-

The consortium encourages collaboration among similar programs so they can share ideas and research opportunities. While many teacher induction programs exist nationwide, there is no central point of connection for these programs. The consortium enables collaboration among programs that share four crucial components:

1. A full year of mentored support for first-year, already certified teachers by full-time master teachers who have been released from their classroom duties. These master teachers mentor new teachers one-third of their time, assist in their schools on special projects one-third, and work with the universities one-third;
2. Coursework leading to a master's degree, which new teachers complete in 15 months;
3. A cohort group of beginning teachers; and
4. Action research (classroom research) projects that form the capstone of each program.

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) define programs that incorporate these various types of support as “comprehensive.”

These programs are faculty exchange programs, which aren't funded by grants or one-time allowances of money. Instead, each district pays the university a set fee (about the same as a

The knowledge, skills, and dispositions emphasized in these programs nurture novice teachers into the profession and give them enough confidence and skills to remain.

Savanna Green works one-on-one with a student.

mid-range teacher) and receives two to three new teachers for the building. The district continues to pay mentor teachers while the university pays the new teachers and uses

some of the funds to run the program. Because the university gets the benefit of the mentor teacher, it waives tuition and course fees for new teachers. Thus, new teachers (hereafter called teaching fellows) receive a small stipend, ranging from \$13,000 to \$15,000 depending on the program, for their full-time teaching, but also receive a free master's degree. Thus, the teaching fellow exits the program in 15 months with a year of mentored teaching, courses that coincide with the needs of a first-year teacher, and a master's degree. Each of these programs,



Photo courtesy mentor, Angie Black

ginning teachers (teaching fellows) this year spread over 300 miles in 15 partnership school districts at elementary, middle, and secondary levels. The University of Nebraska has 35 beginning teachers (cadre teachers) in partnership schools in and around Omaha at the elementary and secondary level. Texas State has 24 teaching fellows at the elementary level in five school districts located within a 60-mile radius of San Marcos. Most of the Texas State teaching fellows are placed in low-income schools with diverse populations.

which are no-additional-cost models, represent win-win collaborations between the university and school districts.

WHAT ABOUT TEACHER RETENTION?

The retention rate of participants in the consortium programs far exceeds the national rate of retention. Nationwide, anywhere from 33% to 50% of teachers leave the profession in the first five years (Ingersoll 2003). Several recent studies have found that teaching fellows have more staying power than that:

- Over 91% of 316 teaching fellows were still in education up to eight years after they left the MU program (Kaiser 2004).
- 82% of 215 graduates from the Texas State program were still in education 10 years after their exit from the program (Davis and Waite 2006).
- 89% of Fellows from the University of Ne-

braska were still in education over five years out of the program (McGlamery and Edick 2004).

Besides staying in teaching, former teaching fellows appear to be on the 'fast track' to success. They often assume leadership roles on committees and present at local, state and national conferences within their first five years (Davis et al. 2008). One former fellow, Stephanie Vickers, a 6th-grade teacher from Independence, Missouri, was chosen in 2008 for the national Teaching Fellows Ambassador Program, a U.S. program that taps exemplary teachers to "improve education by involving teachers in national policy" (U.S. Department of Education 2009).

Stephanie is a strong example of how teaching fellows continue to grow and achieve. Davis and Higdon (2008) conducted a yearlong comparative study of teaching fellows and nonteaching fellows.

An analysis of classroom observations revealed that the instructional practices of teaching fellows improved significantly over those of nonteaching fellows by the end of their first year of teaching. McGlamery, Fluckiger, and Edick (2006) tracked matched pairs of teaching fellows and novice teachers over seven years through classroom observation. They found that although the two groups began evenly, the teaching fellows continued to improve, and at five years the teaching fellows exceeded their control matches by 30% or better on 27 measures of teacher skill. Furthermore, as time passed, many of the control teachers began to drop out of teaching, and by the fifth year of the study, only 37% of the original control teachers remained. In an additional study by Fluckiger, McGlamery, and Edick (2006), mentor teachers (as part of the comprehensive induction experience) were found to greatly influence the success rates and retention rates of their mentees. Mentees reported that the sup-

port and coaching made available to them by their mentors was responsible for their perseverance in teaching. We hypothesize that the knowledge, skills, and dispositions emphasized in these programs nurture novice teachers into the profession and give



Photo courtesy mentor Elaine Hansett

Jennifer Gross and 1st graders engage in a writing workshop mini-lesson about using dialogue in their stories. Students share conversations they want to use and peers work together to figure out the correct way to use the dialogue.

them enough confidence and skills to remain. Although the programs are unique, they do share common characteristics.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONSORTIUM PROGRAMS

Mentoring. Each program provides a mentor for every two to three teaching fellows. The mentors are master teachers, chosen by their schools as those who are able to communicate well and understand the needs of novice teachers. Mentors spend one-third of their time with their fellows — which means that they see them each day. Mentors are available to plan with fellows, observe in the classroom, co-teach, work with a small group, answer questions, listen to ideas, etc. In the fall, mentors visit each day and provide the most support. As fellows feel more comfortable, the kind and intensity of support changes. Fellows say mentors are the most important part of the program. As one teaching fellow said, “My mentor was my lifeline. At times, I thought I was sinking, but she was always there with a listening ear, a bit of humor, and chocolate!” The mentors and fellows are not just brought together. Mentors spend time each month in professional development with one another and the facilitators of the program in order to hone their skills with adults and learn more about effective teaching, problem solving with the fellows, and new instructional strategies.

Sometimes, personalities of the mentor and the mentee don't mesh and problems arise. This happens quite rarely but can be extremely intense when it does occur. Texas State has instituted a social contract that each group creates at the beginning of the relationship (Flippen 2005). Through this agreement, mentors and mentees establish expectations for how they will treat one another and create guidelines for resolving conflicts (Davis and Waite 2006). Taking time to establish these relationships is crucial for success.

ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

The Comprehensive Teacher Induction Consortium, a group of similar teacher induction programs, has used a highly successful model for over 15 years. Four crucial aspects of that model are a full year of mentored support for first-year teachers, coursework leading to a master's degree, opportunities for sharing with other beginning teachers, and action research projects. Teachers who completed these programs tend to stay in education longer and are more successful in their careers than those who did not participate in an induction program.

Mentors not only give a great deal in these programs, they also receive. Because they aren't teaching each day, but working with their schools on special projects (such as working with other new teachers, writing grants, tutoring children, etc.) and with the university, they're able to step out of the isolated world of a classroom teacher and see the larger picture of the school. Mentors have suggested that they're able to retool, read, learn, expand their roles, and better understand the complexity of schooling during their mentor years (Gilles and Wilson 2004). After the mentoring years have ended, mentors often move on to administrative positions or go back to the classroom as enriched teachers.

“Just in time” coursework. Each program includes coursework resulting in a master's degree. Teaching fellows attend classes one night a week or on Saturdays. Courses are carefully chosen to support novice teachers in a variety of professional learning experiences designed to assist them in achieving the professional skill and judgment that characterize a well-qualified teacher. For example, in the University of Missouri's program, the classroom management course begins early in August of the fellows' first year. Fellows learn how to create strong classroom communities, set up their classrooms, and investigate various management programs that they'll be using shortly. The class continues into the fall, offering fellows support and ideas for management. The coursework isn't bound by semesters, and many of the courses continue across semester lines to give fellows necessary information and support. Fellows regularly tell us, “I'm using the information I learned on Thursday in my classes on Monday.”

The Texas State coursework also begins in the summer before teaching and focuses on classroom management, instructional strategies, and curriculum development. Courses are crafted with new teachers in mind, and fellows can use the coursework to plan for their year. This is quite different than the typical M.Ed. program, in which students select courses that fit their personal

Programs that share similar characteristics include Minnesota State University, Mankato, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Ohio University, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, Texas State University-San Marcos, Winona State University, and University of Missouri.

For more information, visit these web sites:

University of Missouri

<http://education.missouri.edu/orgs/mpcr/fellows/index.php>

University of Nebraska

www.unomaha.edu/coe/cadre/

Texas State University

www.education.txstate.edu/ci/degrees-programs/graduate/Teacher-Fellows.html

schedule and interests over a long period of time.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha's CADRE (Career Advancement and Development for Recruits and Experienced Teachers) teachers (teaching fellows) also begin their program of study in the summer. CADRE teachers take 12 hours of coursework in the first summer, six additional hours in the fall and spring semesters, and 12 hours of coursework in the final summer. The CADRE seminar runs throughout the year and culminates in a professional portfolio presentation given in late May just before the final summer term.

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A cohort group of beginning teachers. Teaching fellows from all three programs identify the cohort group as one of the important parts of induction. First-year teaching is a difficult endeavor, and having others who are going through the same program gives the teaching fellows support and hope. As Lortie (1975) points out in *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*, a common complaint from teachers is a feeling of isolation and a lack of time for meaningful collaboration with colleagues. Consortium programs, however, provide opportunities for sharing with other beginning teachers. Often, time is provided in their classes so grade-level conversations can occur and fellows can exchange ideas and perspectives. Many of the cohort groups build such close relationships that members continue to seek out one another after the year ends. One such group of 10 continued to have dinner once a month, while former fellows have asked the MU office to publish a newsletter three times a year to connect them.

Inquiry at the heart. Each teaching fellow conducts action research throughout the year as part of the final project required for graduation from the program. Fellows identify a question early in the fall and collect and analyze data through the winter, culminating in a project to be shared with others in the summer. Davis (2007) has found that action research aided fellows in becoming more systematic observers of student behaviors and academic performance and more able to form a plan to refine their teaching, which yielded improved teaching practices. In addition, classroom research helped teaching fellows connect theory with practice. Teaching fellows regularly based their practices on professional literature they read in classes and found during their classroom research. Finally, classroom research projects helped fellows take control of their own professional growth. "They developed an 'inquiry stance' toward teaching and learning" (Davis 2007, p. 12). They came to view themselves as

teacher-researchers and used the problem-solving methods even after leaving the program.

Gilles, Wilson, and Eaton (2009) examined how the classroom research group influenced a school over time. At MU, the action research class takes place in schools, and other teachers besides fellows are encouraged to take the class for university credit, for district credit, or just to participate. Thus, in some schools, up to 30% of teachers may be involved. Interviewing teachers, principals, and past and present teaching fellows in one school, Gilles, Wilson, and Eaton found that action research deepened the professional community, encouraged internal accountability of the participants, and created a renewable professional growth cycle. For these things to occur, a strong principal was necessary, as well as teacher ownership of the process. They concluded that grassroots classroom research within a university partnership was a powerful agent for teacher induction and renewal of both new and experienced teachers.

CONCLUSION

The model used by the Comprehensive Teacher Induction Consortium is one of give and take. Each party gives up something and gets something in return. The teaching fellows give up a larger salary but get a full year of mentored teaching and a free master's degree with courses designed specifically for them. The mentor gives up classroom teaching but gains a larger view of the school, a relationship with new teachers, and time to study and hone skills. The school gives up the master teacher in the classroom but gains two new and eager teachers and a mentor teacher who can provide specialized services for the school. The university waives the tuition for teaching fellows but secures mentor teachers who can supervise student teachers, serve on committees, or work on specialized projects at the university. This give and take results in teaching fellows getting a strong start in their profession and often continuing in education long after their induction year. The largest benefit is to the U.S. teaching force, being filled with knowledgeable, confident teachers ready to meet the challenges of today's youth. New teachers like Lindsey, who feels so alone, deserve the strong start that such programs can provide. **K**

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