

Teaching in the Early Years of Practice: Fourth-Year Report



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Teachers' Association

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Preface..... | 3 |
| Introduction..... | 4 |
| Literature Review..... | 6 |
| What Do We Already Know About Beginning Teachers?..... | 7 |
| What Do We Already Know About Effective Induction? | 8 |
| What Do We Already Know About How Beginning Teachers Fit into Existing Labour Markets? | 9 |
| Study Findings | 9 |
| Demographics..... | 9 |
| Professional Attitudes and Commitment to Teaching | 10 |
| Stability and Change..... | 12 |
| Stability and Leadership Capacity | 13 |
| Changing Schools and Teaching Assignments..... | 13 |
| Changes in Administration..... | 13 |
| Contract Security | 13 |
| Conditions of Professional Practice..... | 14 |
| Parenting and Work–Life Balance..... | 15 |
| Professional Development..... | 16 |
| Initial Priorities | 16 |
| Ongoing Priorities..... | 18 |
| Supports for New Teachers..... | 18 |
| The Significance of Administration..... | 21 |
| The Engaged Administrator | 21 |
| The “Absent” Administrator | 21 |
| Leadership..... | 22 |
| Focus Group Findings..... | 22 |
| Must Beginning Teaching Always Be Stressful? | 23 |
| The Weight of Responsibility | 23 |
| Time Constraints | 23 |
| Uncertainty..... | 23 |

2 • Teaching in the Early Years of Practice

| | |
|--|----|
| Reducing Stress..... | 24 |
| The Micropolitics of New Teacher Induction..... | 24 |
| Asking for Help..... | 24 |
| Sharing Resources..... | 25 |
| Teaching Assignments and Extracurricular Activities | 26 |
| Learning the Rules | 26 |
| Evolving Professional Development Needs | 27 |
| Feedback and Recognition | 28 |
| The (Hidden) Curricula of Teacher Induction | 29 |
| Sink or Swim..... | 29 |
| Induction as Learning in Collaboration | 30 |
| Reproducing Induction Practices | 30 |
| Breaking the Cycle..... | 31 |
| Future Directions and Policy Implications | 32 |
| A Systems Perspective on New Teacher Induction Programs..... | 32 |
| How to Improve Induction Practices..... | 33 |
| Disrupt Perceived Hierarchies and Status Systems | 33 |
| Increase Stability of Practice for New Teachers | 33 |
| Maximize Collaborative and Experiential Learning..... | 34 |
| Conclusion | 34 |
| References..... | 36 |
| Appendix A | 39 |

Preface

This publication reports the year-four findings of a five-year longitudinal study of beginning teachers that the Alberta Teachers' Association embarked on in 2008. The study was designed to answer the following questions:

- Can the sources of attrition within the first five years of teaching be determined? Why do teachers leave, and where do they go?
- To what extent are mentorship programs and other induction practices being used in Alberta schools, and how effective are they?
- How do working conditions and school cultures affect early-career professional development?

J-C Couture, who oversees the Association's research projects, coordinated the study, which was undertaken by lead researcher Laura Servage and assistant researcher Jamie Beck, both doctoral candidates at the University of Alberta. As in previous years, data was collected by means of 15- to 20-minute telephone interviews with study participants. Of the 135 original participants, 105 took part in the year-four interviews. In addition to asking a number of standard questions designed to measure changes over time, the researchers introduced some new questions intended to explore certain themes that emerged from the earlier data. In year four, the researchers supplemented the telephone interviews by organizing three focus groups in the early summer of 2011, involving 13 of the study participants.

In addition to tracking overall trends, the study offers a unique glimpse into the lived experiences of the early-career teachers who have shared their stories with the research team over the past four years. One thread running through the experiences of the study participants is the sense of hope and promise that the five-year labour agreement with the government of Alberta has brought to the education community. At the same time, this period has, as one participant put it, also been "a roller-coaster ride of hope and frustration."

As this study moves into its fifth and final year, Association staff, in collaboration with the research team, will begin work on a final comprehensive report. By the time it wraps up in the fall of 2012, this study will have made a unique and important contribution to the research on teaching in Alberta and the conditions of practice that foster the optimal growth of teachers.

Gordon R Thomas
Executive Secretary

Introduction

The bulk of this study analyzes data collected in year four of a five-year longitudinal study that the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) initiated in 2008. As in previous years, the researchers conducted 15- to 20-minute telephone interviews with participants using a structured survey (see Appendix A) that included both closed-response and open-response questions. To track changes over time, some of these questions have been asked annually over the course of the study. New questions have also been introduced each year in response to emerging themes. Although this report focuses on year-four findings, it occasionally references findings from previous years to illustrate trends. In year four, the researchers

supplemented the telephone interviews by organizing three focus groups consisting of some of the ongoing participants. Thirteen teachers participated in these focus groups: four males and nine females. Although the focus groups were held in urban centres, some of the participants were from rural areas.

The researchers undertook a thematic analysis of the responses to the telephone interviews. Findings from both the focus groups and the interviews are synthesized in the concluding sections of this report.

At the end of year four, the researchers also endeavoured to track down participants who had dropped out over the course of the study. Although these participants were no longer included in the

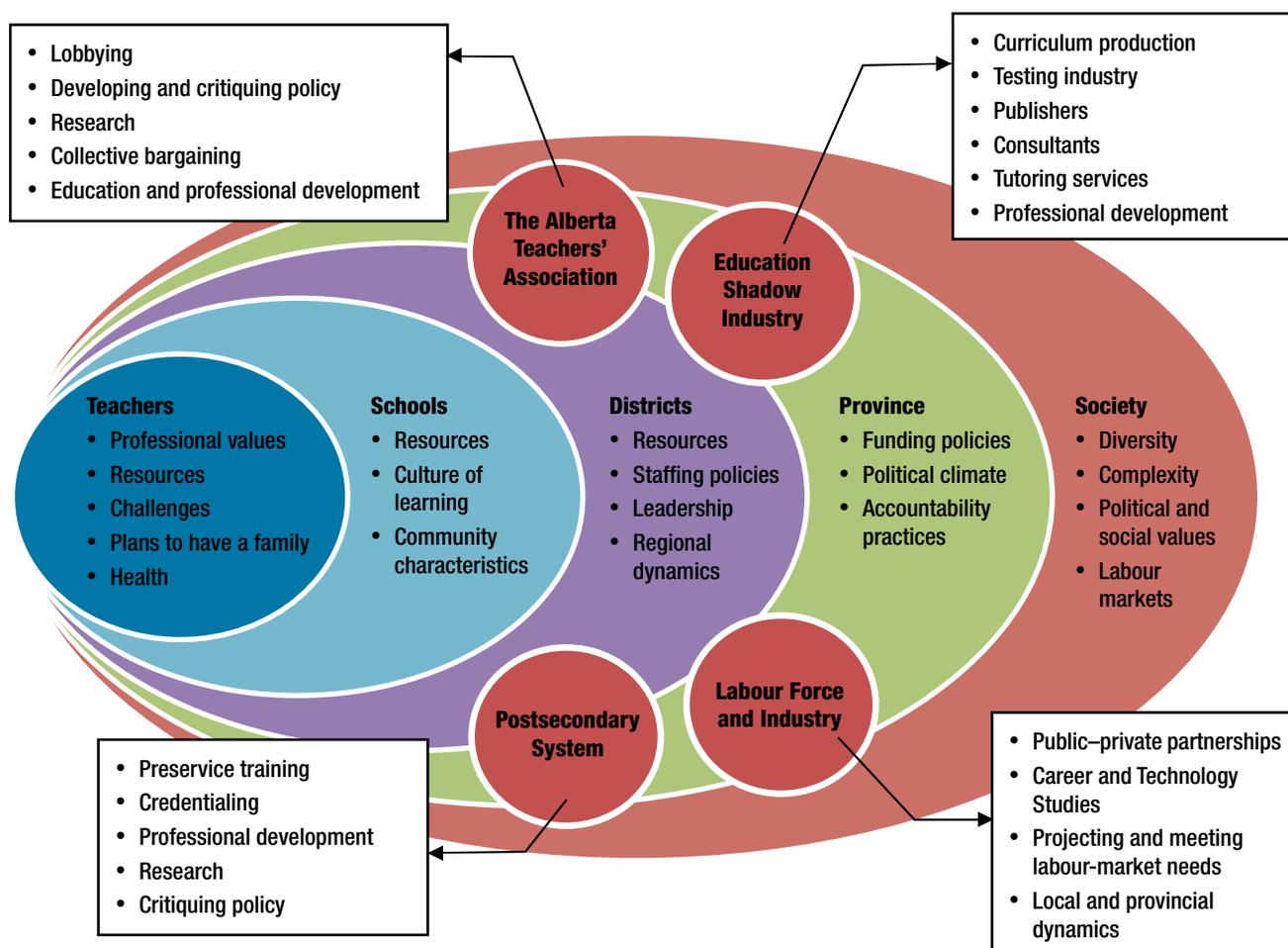


Figure 1: Beginning Teacher Induction and Retention: A Systems Perspective

statistics, some of them, the researchers discovered, were still teaching. In other words, just because a participant could not be reached did not necessarily mean that he or she had left teaching.

In year four, the researchers focused on identifying both the barriers and the supports that new teachers encounter as they develop their practice.

Research on the attrition, induction and retention of new teachers has been conducted from many perspectives and with groups of various sizes. New teachers encounter supports and barriers to their professional growth at many levels throughout the system of relationships and institutions within which they learn their craft and forge their identities.¹ Figure 1, which was presented in the year-three report, depicts how various systems affect the induction and retention of beginning teachers.

Many researchers have focused on how new teachers form a sense of professional identity at the beginning of their career. Teachers take their cues from various elements in their environments, including mentors, colleagues, administrators, students and parents (Melnick and Meister 2008). These elements form a rich—if not always unproblematic—

interpersonal dimension. The comments of participants in this study confirm that these relationships, which are core to the work of teaching, play a significant role in determining the professional and personal growth of beginning teachers.

Although very important, these relationships can obscure structural and systemic conditions that are beyond the control of individual teachers and even of individual schools (Grossman and Thompson 2004). These conditions include budgetary constraints, the structure of the school day and year, hiring practices and the characteristics of the school population being served.

Figure 1 suggests that well-intentioned efforts to implement reliable induction practices will likely remain “hit and miss” unless institutions at all levels in the system offer support. Implementing an induction “program” may create artificial boundaries around proposed induction practices, making them appear distinct from the system as a whole. Failure to recognize the significance of broader systems is all the more likely given that effects of the system are experienced most acutely at the school level. It is tempting to assume that if the *effects* are felt at this level, the *causes* are also located there.

¹ Achinstein, Ogawa and Speigman (2004) describe a “multilayered system” of “district and school characteristics, state educational policies, and teachers’ backgrounds” that “interact[s] to shape the socialization of new teachers” (p 558).

Literature Review

Although teacher attrition in the early years of practice has been documented in Canada and other countries (Hong 2010), the causes of such attrition are difficult to isolate. Studies on the topic, however, tend to fall into three broad categories. Studies in the first category link attrition to difficult working conditions and weak or nonexistent induction practices. This category includes empirical studies on the efficacy of new teacher induction practices. Most studies in this category include recommendations for improving induction practices and working conditions. Such studies also tend to focus on schools—where most induction occurs—and, to a lesser extent, on school districts.

In the second category are studies that attempt to explain attrition by focusing on the dispositions, backgrounds and preparedness of the individual teacher. Some of these studies rely on objective demographic variables (Alberta Education 2010a) while others focus on the subjective experiences of new teachers (Goddard and Foster 2001; Hong 2010). Research focusing on subjective experiences may assess teachers in terms of such psychological qualities as resilience, self-confidence and efficacy. In assessing disposition, researchers may track such factors as a teacher's social background, experiences at school, preservice training, race, class and gender (Achinstein, Ogawa and Speiglmann 2004). Studies focusing on the individual may also probe the sociocultural context of a school by examining how individual teachers negotiate micropolitics and develop interprofessional relationships (Day and Gu 2010; Kardos and Johnson 2007; Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002).

The third category consists of studies that look at teacher attrition as a function of such broad factors as institutional policies, population demographics and labour market conditions. In their study of teacher attrition in Ontario, for example, Clark and Antonelli

(2009) consider such factors as the elimination of mandatory retirement, projected teacher retirements, graduation rates from teacher preparation programs and declining school enrolments. In the same vein, Alberta Education (2010a) recently developed a workforce planning framework that looks at such variables as population growth, retirement projections and new-graduate forecasts. Other studies (Guarino, Santibanez and Daley 2006; Johnson et al 2005) have compared teachers' working conditions and attrition rates with those of other professions.²

Researchers in the current study have attempted to give equal weight to all these approaches. The complex interaction of many factors makes the attrition of new teachers a difficult problem to understand and address effectively. Teacher attrition may be a product not only of the school culture and other local conditions but also of structural systemic conditions. Teacher attrition rates, for example, are consistently higher in schools in which the majority of students are poor, have as their native tongue a language other than English, belong to a visible minority and/or live in a geographically isolated region. At the same time, provincial and district policies and budgets determine such conditions of teachers' practice as the use of standardized tests, the size and composition of classes (including the number of English-language learners and special-needs students) and the nature of the curriculum.

A great deal of caution needs to be exercised when comparing studies on teacher attrition undertaken in one country with those conducted in another. Canadian researchers and policymakers tend to rely on studies carried out in the United States, where teacher attrition is exacerbated by a number of factors that are not nearly as significant in Canada—factors such as socioeconomic disparity, inconsistency in teacher training and punitive policies that disparage so-called failing schools (Darling-Hammond and Sykes 2003).

2 Guarino, Santibanez and Daley (2006) cite a study undertaken in 2001 that found the attrition rate in teaching to be 18 per cent, similar to that in engineering, law enforcement and legal support. Such cross-profession comparisons provide a useful corrective to studies of teachers only that sometimes report attrition rates as high as 25 to 50 per cent. Such studies fail to take into account some degree of natural attrition and are often plagued by inconsistencies in reporting. Many such studies, for example, do not factor out mobility or exit and re-entry. Furthermore, studies reporting averages can gloss over significant regional disparities in attrition rates.

Although American studies often report teacher attrition rates of 30 per cent or more, the situation in Canada is not nearly as dire. In fact, at least two provinces—British Columbia and Ontario—presently have an oversupply of teachers (Dedyna 2011; MacDonald 2011). Canada also has some unique conditions that affect teacher retention. In northern communities, for example, geography, cultural differences and isolation combine to create conditions that make the retention of teachers, regardless of career stage, particularly challenging (Kitchenham and Chasteauneuf 2010).³

Alberta Education (2011a) has recognized the need to encourage new teachers to accept assignments in remote locations:

The challenge will be to promote career opportunities in northern and rural communities as competition for teaching positions in Alberta's metro regions is extremely high. As a result, graduates who wish to work as teachers need to be open to the possibility of moving to smaller, rural or northern communities.

Alberta Education is predicting that the province's student population will grow substantially in the next few years, particularly in terms of the number of English as an additional language (EAL) and First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students. The challenge will be to develop a teaching workforce that better reflects Alberta's diverse population. To meet this challenge, Alberta may need to certify teachers credentialed outside of Canada and encourage more student teachers to specialize in mathematics, science, and career and technology studies.

The current study of beginning teacher attrition must, therefore, be understood within the Alberta context. At the same time, early career teacher attrition in Alberta is the product of many of the same factors that operate in other Canadian provinces and even in other countries. These factors include the stress of moving from preservice training to teaching, the

challenge of addressing the needs of a diverse student population and the frustration of teaching in high-needs schools.

What Do We Already Know About Beginning Teachers?

New teachers consistently experience what Goddard and Foster (2001) call “praxis shock”—the challenge of coping with classroom realities for which preservice training has not adequately prepared them. Study participants, like those in other studies of this kind (Anagnostopoulos, Smith and Basmadjian 2007), expressed frustration that their degree programs had not prepared them for the complexity of the teaching day.⁴ Many participants, in other words, began their teaching careers feeling that their professional preparation program had betrayed them.

Many teachers begin in temporary contract positions. As a result, administrators and colleagues have little incentive to invest time, energy and resources nurturing what they perceive to be transient members of staff. As many participants pointed out, new teachers also tend to be on their best behaviour when they are working under temporary and probationary contracts. To obtain a continuing contract, they may take on unreasonable workloads, persevere without asking for help and avoid rocking the boat. In addition, they may receive little, inconsistent or no feedback and, as a result, may be unsure as to what colleagues, administrators, parents and students expect of them.

Taken together, these factors cause many beginning teachers to feel “off balance” as they struggle to develop a professional identity. Much of the literature on beginning teachers focuses on their interior life as they gradually develop practices that will ultimately determine their effectiveness as professionals (Day and Gu 2010).

New teachers clearly have professional development needs that are different from those of their more-

3 McCormack, Gore and Thomas (2006) note that Australia faces similar concerns with respect to its aboriginal communities: “Many new teachers are commonly placed in hard to staff or remote areas which might mean they often have inadequate knowledge of the students’ backgrounds, sociocultural factors and expectations of parents and the community in which they find themselves teaching” (p 97).

4 Participants were particularly critical of the failure of their preservice training to prepare them for their first year of practice. University classes, they observed, were too theoretical and created unrealistic expectations about what teaching would entail. Participants felt that more time should be devoted to practicums and that practicums should coincide with key transition points in the school year such as the beginning of the term and reporting periods.

experienced colleagues. Some of these needs can be addressed through induction practices. However, many participants have emphasized that professional learning is an ongoing process and that new-teacher induction, while distinctive in some ways from other forms of professional development, does not constitute a separate stage of professional learning.

What Do We Already Know About Effective Induction?

Most experts agree on the conditions that help new teachers to grow professionally (Glassford and Salinitri 2007; Howe 2006). These conditions include vibrant professional learning communities, effective orientation practices and supportive administrators and colleagues, conditions that are equally effective in helping other newcomers to the school—substitute teachers, teachers on temporary contract and teachers transferring from another school—adjust to their new environment.⁵

Although mentorship is a cornerstone of an effective induction program, it is not, in and of itself, sufficient to meet new teachers' needs. According to the research, mentorship programs are more likely to be successful if they are voluntary, if both parties teach the same grade or subject(s), and if the mentor and the mentee have regular embedded professional development time to work together. Mentorship programs that do not embody these elements and are poorly run are, at best, neutral. At their worst, they create negative feelings and perpetuate substandard practices (Feiman-Nemser 2001).

Focusing on mentorships may cause system leaders to overlook or underestimate the value of other forms of professional interaction. Many study participants had the good fortune to work in schools that were viable learning communities. While not geared specifically to meeting the inductee's needs, these learning communities tended to focus on planning, developing resources and designing teaching strategies—all basic skills that new teachers need to master. The potential benefits of these learning communities to new teachers have not been adequately researched. Learning communities enable new teachers to compare and evaluate a range of teaching styles and philosophies and to decide which to

incorporate into their own evolving practice. Learning communities also have the advantage of portraying collaboration as a norm of practice during a teacher's formative years (Carroll 2005).

The current study also suggests that classroom observation is another underused form of professional learning. Only 3 of the 135 participants in year one of the study reported that they had been given a formal opportunity to observe a colleague's classes during their first year of practice. Year-four participants emphasized that they had benefited during their first year by having a colleague observe their teaching and provide advice on how they could improve.

Another factor that affects the ability of new teachers to learn is the nature of their teaching assignment. Expecting new teachers to take on special needs students, split-level classes and numerous extracurricular activities is not only unfair but detrimental to their ability to develop important basic skills (Ingersoll 2001; Wilson et al 2004).

The basic skills that new teachers need to develop in their first year include classroom management, curriculum mastery and lesson planning (Grossman and Thompson 2004). In addition, they need to develop effective time-management skills so that they can work "smarter, not harder." Based on participants' comments, these basic skills cannot, for the most part, be taught but must be acquired by doing. Participants also consistently emphasized that their colleagues, including administrators, had an enormous impact on their quality of life and their ability to learn during their difficult first years of practice.

Building effective learning relationships is especially challenging for rural teachers at all stages of their careers. Because a rural teacher is often the only grade-level or subject-area specialist in the school, engaging in collaborative learning or participating in a mentoring relationships onsite can be challenging. Collaborating with colleagues in other schools, while a possibility, is often difficult because of the distances and travel times involved. Based on participants' comments, technology-facilitated professional development has not really caught on in rural schools as a way of overcoming isolation. At the same time, participants report that many rural districts are working hard to create districtwide collaboration opportunities.

5 See ATA (2010b) for an account of how professional isolation, poor school orientations, inconsistent evaluation practices and organizational concerns at the school and district levels plague substitute teachers. Also see Wilson et al (2004).

What Do We Already Know About How Beginning Teachers Fit into Existing Labour Markets?

Workforce planning is highly desirable in public sectors that employ and serve large numbers of people. It is also a difficult and inexact science, complicated by such factors as labour agreements, enrolment quotas in postsecondary programs, graduation rates, geography, population demographics and unique local conditions.

In *A Transformation in Progress*, Alberta Education (2011a) expresses concern about the early-career attrition of teachers, especially in rural and northern schools. Although the document proposes several strategies for attracting and retaining teachers, it does not directly address the mismatch between the supply of and the demand for teachers in Alberta.

The study being reported here, together with other studies that the ATA has recently undertaken on substitute teachers, suggest that many teachers survive by accepting a series of temporary contracts and substitute teaching jobs. Many teachers in these studies report encountering hiring and evaluation practices that are neither transparent nor systematic. The exact unemployment rate of untenured teachers is unknown, but some studies have suggested that it is exacerbated by district hiring practices and labour market agreements (Smylie, Miretzky and Konkol 2004).

Study Findings

Demographics

In year four of the study, researchers contacted and conducted telephone interviews with 98 of the original 135 study participants. Researchers were also able to locate a number of the participants who had dropped out of the study and confirm their employment status. Presently, nine teachers out of the original 135 remain unaccounted for.

Of the original 135 study participants, 9 are unaccounted for, 4 withdrew from the study and 4 left the profession. The remaining 118 are actively teaching. Of these, 95 (80 per cent) have continuing contracts, while 16 (13 per cent) either hold temporary

| Employment/Study Status | Number | Per cent of Total |
|---|--------|-------------------|
| Teaching on a full-time continuing contract | 84 | 62% |
| Post maternity leave, returned to continuing contract | 5 | 4% |
| On maternity leave, returning to continuing contract | 7 | 5% |
| Part-time continuous by choice | 2 | 1% |
| Temporary contract or substitute, no maternity leave | 12 | 9% |
| Temporary contract or substitute, maternity leave | 4 | 3% |
| Substitute teaching by choice | 2 | 1% |
| Teaching in another province | 2 | 1% |
| Withdrew from study | 4 | 3% |
| Left profession | 4 | 3% |
| Unknown | 9 | 7% |
| | 135 | 100% |

Table 1: Employment/Study Status of Participants (n=135)

contracts and/or are substitute teaching while seeking permanent employment. Twelve participants have either taken maternity leaves or are presently on maternity leave, and 4 are on maternity leave with no contract to return to.

Here are some observations based on the 98 participants who were interviewed at the end of year four:

- In the initial sample, approximately half of the participants were teaching in urban centres, slightly more than half were primarily elementary teachers and teachers from all convention areas were represented. Attrition has not significantly affected the relative composition of the sample with respect to these factors.
- Teachers remaining in the study have become more settled over time. Seventy-five per cent of participants in year four taught in the same school as in the previous year, compared with 69 per cent who remained in the same school in the previous year. Of the 15 per cent of year-four participants who had changed schools, half had done so

10 • Teaching in the Early Years of Practice

voluntarily and half had been asked to move.

- Ninety per cent of respondents taught in the same district as in the previous year. The most frequently cited reasons, by the remaining 10 per cent, for changing districts were spousal employment and pursuit of a continuous contract. In the course of the study, few teachers overall have changed districts. In year two (n=112), 87 per cent of respondents had remained in the same district as the previous year, and 89 per cent were in the same district in year three (n=106).
- Eight per cent of year-four respondents taught full-time in year four, and 77 per cent had a continuing

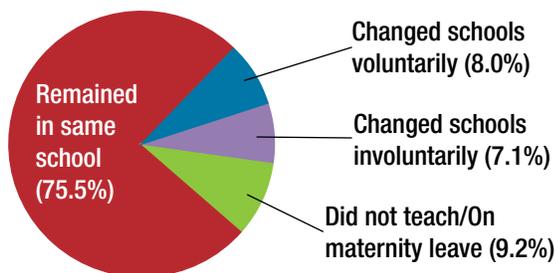


Figure 2: Portion of Year-Four Participants Who Changed Schools

contract. Over time, approximately 15 per cent of respondents have been reduced to substitute teaching or working on temporary contract. In almost all cases, these participants were looking for more stable employment. Ninety-five percent of year-four respondents stated that, when they entered teaching, their employment goal was to find a full-time permanent contract.

- Nine percent of year-four participants were on maternity leave and, of these, about half are returning to continuous contracts. Participants who became parents form an interesting subset of the study because of the additional challenges they have faced in achieving a work–life balance.

Professional Attitudes and Commitment to Teaching

Participants in each year of the study have been asked to respond to a number of closed-response items designed to assess their attitudes to teaching:

Table 2 suggests that, over time, teachers' sense of confidence and preparedness has increased, a finding that is hardly surprising given the experience

| | Very High | Somewhat High | Moderate | Somewhat Low | Very Low | NA/Maternity Leave |
|--|-----------|---------------|----------|--------------|----------|--------------------|
| Your confidence in your professional abilities | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 35.7% | 54.1% | 4.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 6.1% |
| Y1 | 20.0% | 54.8% | 24.4% | 0.7% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Your level of preparedness to teach this coming school year | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 39.8% | 35.7% | 8.2% | 2.0% | 0.0% | 14.3% |
| Y1 | 26.7% | 52.6% | 16.3% | 3.7% | 0.7% | 0.0% |
| Your level of professional satisfaction | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 36.7% | 49.0% | 6.1% | 2.0% | 0.0% | 6.1% |
| Y1 | 45.2% | 37.0% | 15.6% | 2.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Your overall stress level last year | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 12.2% | 25.5% | 32.7% | 16.3% | 5.1% | 8.2% |
| Y1 | 26.9% | 29.9% | 29.1% | 11.2% | 3.0% | 0.0% |
| Your belief that you can make a difference | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 45.9% | 41.8% | 5.1% | 1.0% | 0.0% | 6.1% |
| Y1 | 52.6% | 38.5% | 8.1% | 0.7% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Your enthusiasm | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 50.0% | 35.7% | 6.1% | 2.0% | 0.0% | 6.1% |
| Y1 | 64.9% | 29.9% | 4.5% | 0.7% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

Table 2: How Participants Rated Their Outlook in Years One and Four

that they have gained over four years of teaching. Participants also report a reduction in stress, although their comments suggest that what has actually changed is the *nature* of their stress rather than the amount. Year-one respondents tended to attribute their stress to uncertainty and lack of experience. Throughout the study, however, participants have consistently cited working conditions and relationships as sources of stress. These data also suggest a modest decline, over time, in participants' enthusiasm and efficacy, a natural waning, perhaps, of the idealism that attracts many young teachers to the profession. Overall, however, participants did not appear to experience a significant loss of commitment or morale during their early years, an observation that parallels findings from ATA member opinion surveys conducted over the years. Even in year one, participants appeared to be struggling to balance the challenges and the rewards of teaching, recognizing both as pronounced characteristics of their chosen profession.

Interestingly, the responses of individual teachers to these questions about attitude have changed little over time: those who were ambivalent at the beginning of the study about their confidence, sense of commitment, conviction that they could make a difference and overall enthusiasm have tended to remain ambivalent. Those who clearly regarded teaching as a calling from the onset tended to retain that view, even though, in many cases, they subsequently assessed their working conditions, successes, goals and challenges in more tempered and realistic terms.⁶

The reasons that participants cite for weakened morale and decreased job satisfaction now differ little from those offered by the general teaching population: difficult teaching assignments, poor school leadership, perceived lack of professionalism among staff, inability to attain a work–life balance and lack of resources. The factor that participants cite most frequently as compensating for these sources of

dissatisfaction is the relationships that they enjoy with students. As one teacher put it, “After a rough couple of days, [my frustration] had nothing to do with the students. I love the students and the work, ... just not all the other stuff.”

Based on their comments, participants who reported being *somewhat* as opposed to *very* satisfied tended to feel that, because of politics, the profession had not entirely lived up to their ideals and expectations.

The expectations placed on teachers are increasing every year. It's not the teaching aspect of it; it's all the other things that go with it like dealing with parents. All the extra things that are expected of teachers.

These participants often noted that they knew how to help a particular student but lacked the resources to do so. They had also reconciled themselves, albeit

reluctantly, to the fact that teaching imposes intense and often competing demands on their time.

Over the course of the study, the concerns that participants reported tended to shift not so much in essence as in degree. Although new teachers have qualitatively different professional development needs than their more experienced colleagues, their underlying *concerns* are not substantially different.

As Figure 3 demonstrates, 70 per cent of respondents stated that, if they had a chance tomorrow to start a new career with the same salary and benefits, they would not do so. Asked in each year of the study, this question has yielded similar results each time. The reasons given by respondents who indicated that they were considering a change of career tended to fall into two groups. Some respondents indicated that they were being “pushed” out of teaching by such factors as workload and the sense of never being off duty. Others—and they tended to be less serious about changing their career—stated that they were being “pulled” out of teaching because they had other interests.

As in previous years of the study, participants were asked whether they would recommend teaching to others. Seventy-six per cent of respondents said they would recommend teaching as a career, a portion similar to that found in previous years. However, participants continue to be cautious in recommending teaching, stressing that people who enter teaching as a career must be strongly committed to students,

⁶ This observation is based on a selective analysis of individual teachers' responses to open-ended questions over the course of the study. See also Hoy (2008) who, after reviewing a number of studies, concludes that, although teachers bring varying personal characteristics and motivations to their work, the teaching environment plays a significant role in how individual teacher's tendencies will be manifested.

How Satisfied Are You with Teaching?

Disappointed ...

- I really wanted to teach for the rest of my life, but I didn't find it very fulfilling. A lot of bureaucracy got in the way of teaching.
- I just don't like caring more than the students do. I put my heart and soul into it and the kids couldn't care less.
- I'm open to change, for sure. I'm tired of never knowing where I'll be next year. I find that very stressful.

Ambivalent ...

- I wouldn't say I'm "over the roof" satisfied. The workload is awful, and I always think somehow I might be able to do better. But maybe not. Maybe this is it?
- I will always be involved in education, but I'm not sure I'll always be in a classroom. Everyone should have to do an individualized program plan before they decide to teach. People don't realize the work involved.

Satisfied ...

- I come to work and have fun every day. How many people can say that? Now that I have more teaching experience, it gets easier and easier every day to come to work.
- Teaching is in my blood. Even in the summer, I'm doing work for my class, thinking of new ideas, thinking about students.
- If I ever did lose that feeling of teaching being in my blood, I don't think I would feel right about staying. I feel that drive to continuously do better. I would like to think I will always be reflecting on how I've changed. Have I grown to be a better teacher? If I stop doing that, that's a problem.

willing to work long hours and capable of deal with complexity. Others pointed out the lack of opportunities for permanent positions in teaching. One participant put it this way: "I would absolutely recommend [teaching], but right now it's awful for people trying to get jobs. My boyfriend has applied for 20 jobs and has been interviewed for 4."

Many teachers emphasized that "loving kids" is the most important job requirement. Throughout

Stability has helped me to feel part of the community and to know that there is always somebody there that I can talk to. It's very important to have those relationships in the early years. It's been a huge help. Finding those people on staff that can really help you. If you move every year, it's harder.

the study, participants have consistently cited relationships with students as the most satisfying aspect of the job and one that helps to offset the negative aspects of teaching.

Stability and Change

Some participants have found greater job stability than others. Factors contributing to stability include remaining in the same school, having the same administration, having a consistently present mentor or collegial support system, and receiving similar teaching assignments in consecutive years. Here's how one teacher, who has remained in the same school for most of her career, described her experience:

Amazing, because I've been able to build those bonds with certain teachers. You get familiar with routines, you're not guessing every year. You don't wander aimlessly, you know where to find things and you know what's expected of you. You can focus on where you want to grow instead of just on survival.

In a similar vein, several other participants remarked that, once they had established relationships and had adjusted to the school culture, they were more able to focus on improving their teaching. Participants also

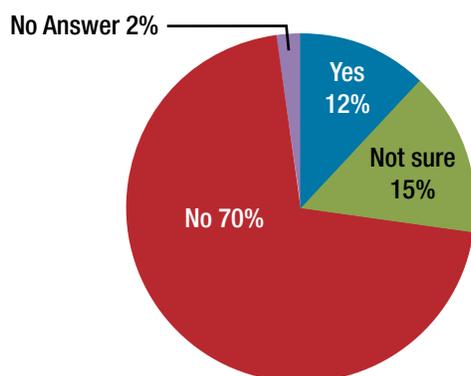


Figure 3: Percentage of Respondents Who Would Start a New Career If They Could

valued receiving consistent teaching assignments. As one respondent remarked, having a similar assignment means “you spend less time creating and more time teaching and tweaking.”

Another participant stated, “It’s nice to get to teach the same grade more than once, to actually get good at something.” Teachers who had the same assignment in consecutive years also achieved a better work–life balance and were relieved of the constant pressure of planning all new lessons.

Stability and Leadership Capacity

For some teachers, finding a degree of stability enabled them to take on leadership roles. One respondent who had a stable school placement began participating in an AISI project:

I’ve been able to help educate other teachers on the course our district is promoting right now. In August, I’m going to teach teachers out of our district. It has given me a chance to be a leader.

Another AISI leader said that the stability of her placement had allowed her to “grow professionally. When moving from school to school you don’t necessarily get to do that because you are getting to know staff.” Stability allows teachers to forge relationships, develop networks, take on peer leadership roles and become more engaged in the school community. One participant noted that, as parents, students and teachers discover “who you are,” they are more likely to come to you for support. For this participant, “being known” helped him to have a positive impact.

Changing Schools and Teaching Assignments

Participants who were moved from school to school or who received new teaching assignments reported more stress and uncertainty. Learning school routines, understanding the school culture, acquiring needed resources and building relationships, although essential activities, take up time and energy that could otherwise be expended on mastering the practice of teaching.

Interestingly, some participants interpreted

I have friends whose assignment has changed every year, and I think their stress level is way higher than mine. I think it takes a good year to get comfortable and confident. I am comfortable and know exactly what to do. I don’t know if I would have stayed if I had to change every year.

uncertainties as “learning experiences.” One respondent, for example, reflected that it was “good to have moved around a bit because you become very open to new ideas, and you don’t get set in ‘this is how

it’s done and this is how it’s always been done.”

However, most respondents in insecure employment situations regarded flexibility and experience as virtues born of necessity. One respondent, who has never had the same assignment twice, put it this way: “In some ways, you have to develop more because you learn different curriculum areas and grades. But you’re always starting from new—treading water and making new plans. There’s no opportunity to improve.”

Changes in Administration

As noted in the year-three report, administrators have an enormous impact on the experiences of beginning teachers. Nevertheless, participants interviewed in years three and four tended to be more concerned about changes in their teaching and school assignments than they were about changes in administration. Participants who did broach the topic of administrative change tended to talk about different styles of administration and how exposure to these different styles constituted learning experiences for them. A small number of respondents who had experienced very frequent administrative changes emphasized that such changes can be destabilizing: “You feel like the school’s not being supported. You’re not sure if anyone’s looking out for you or if your best interests are being kept in mind because every new administrator has to get used to the school first.” Another participant noted that “changeovers in staff and in administration have been okay from the standpoint of teaching; in terms of communication, it’s been awful. It’s been hard to communicate with so many changes.” Beginning teachers appear to have a particularly difficult time coming into a school in which the administrator is also new.

Contract Security

Unsurprisingly, 95 per cent of the participants interviewed in year four indicated that, when they began teaching, their goal was to obtain a permanent full-time contract. Table 3 shows the percentage of participants in each year who hoped to obtain a

14 • Teaching in the Early Years of Practice

permanent contract as opposed to the percentage who actually did so.

Most participants expected to obtain a continuing contract after having worked two years on a probationary contract. In practice, receiving a temporary contract in the first year is not particularly uncommon. Overall, the data suggest that, though somewhat overly optimistic in their career planning, teachers were realistic enough not to allow their expectations to affect their life decisions. Indeed, in their comments on this question, a number of participants mentioned their willingness to “wait it out” for the first couple of years.

Unfortunately, a significant number (18 per cent) of participants contacted in year four had not yet achieved secure teaching positions, relying, instead, on substitute teaching and temporary contracts. Some of these teachers had delayed starting a family in the hope of obtaining a secure contract. The extent to which a teacher can hold out for a continuous contract depends, to a large measure, on such factors as spousal income, spousal benefits and other sources of employment. Depending on substitute teaching alone to earn a living is difficult.⁷ Some of the participants in the current study are gradually drifting out of the profession. Unable to obtain a permanent contract, they continue to substitute teach while exploring other career opportunities.

Conditions of Professional Practice

In each year of the study, participants have been asked about their conditions of professional practice. Their answers to these questions, summarized in

Table 4, have remained fairly consistent from year to year. Indeed, much of the gap between year-one and year-four figures can be accounted for by teachers who were not working in year four, mostly because they were on maternity leaves. The concerns expressed by teachers in this study also mirror the concerns cited by members generally (ATA 2010a).

As in previous years, participants reported that their greatest sources of stress were directly related to classroom conditions: class size, class composition, supports for special needs students and adequate resources.⁸ Supports for special needs students, inadequate access to technology and expectations that they would participate in extracurricular activities were the items that participants elaborated on most in their comments:

I had no support in the classroom at all; nobody did in that school. I had a lot of English as a second language students and a couple of individualized program plans (IPPs) and students who probably should have been on IPPs. Inquiry-based learning was very hard for them. They needed more monitoring than I could provide.

What the numbers fail to capture is how new teachers’ *discernment* of their conditions of professional practice change over time. Their comments, however, suggest that, as teachers develop a sense of professional identity and come to understand their own interests and professional development needs, they become more critical of professional development that does not meet their needs.

Overall, beginning teachers identify concerns similar to those of their more experienced colleagues.

| Timeline | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | Not Yet | NA/Other |
|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|----------|
| Expected | 3.0% | 38.4% | 33.3% | 13.1% | 6.1% | 0.0% | 6.1% |
| Actual | 10.3% | 33.0% | 23.7% | 7.2% | 5.2% | 18.6% | 2.1% |

Table 3: Teachers’ Expectations with Respect to Achieving a Permanent Contract

7 In a recent study, the Alberta Teachers’ Association (2010b) found that up to half of substitute teachers want to obtain permanent contracts. Most such teachers have fewer than 10 years of experience.

8 These findings echo what Naylor and White (2010) found in their study of teachers in British Columbia. Of the top 10 stressors documented in that study, fully half are directly related to classroom compositions and lack of supports for students with special needs. Other stressors that Naylor and White identified were relationships with colleagues and administrators, lack of needed resources, lack of professional autonomy and, for substitute teachers and early career teachers, lack of job security.

| | Very Positive Influence | Somewhat Positive Influence | Not an Influence | Somewhat Negative Influence | Very Negative Influence | NA (maternity leave or other) |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Size of your classes | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 30.2% | 22.9% | 12.5% | 22.9% | 2.1% | 9.6% |
| Y1 | 34.8% | 22.2% | 12.6% | 28.1% | 2.2% | 0.0% |
| Support for students with special needs | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 21.9% | 38.5% | 7.3% | 15.6% | 4.2% | 12.5% |
| Y1 | 26.7% | 39.3% | 10.4% | 18.5% | 3.7% | 1.5% |
| Access to computers and other IT | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 44.8% | 31.3% | 2.1% | 11.5% | 2.1% | 8.3% |
| Y1 | 39.6% | 30.6% | 6.7% | 18.7% | 3.0% | 1.5% |
| Access to traditional print and lesson planning resources | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 37.5% | 40.6% | 7.3% | 4.2% | 1.0% | 9.6% |
| Y1 | 26.9% | 49.3% | 11.9% | 11.2% | 0.7% | 0.0% |
| Access to professional development | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 42.7% | 35.4% | 3.1% | 7.3% | 2.1% | 9.4% |
| Y1 | 55.3% | 36.4% | 3.8% | 3.8% | 0.8% | 0.0% |
| The number of different classes you have to prepare for | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 19.8% | 14.6% | 16.7% | 5.2% | 2.1% | 41.7% |
| Y1 | 12.7% | 17.2% | 50.7% | 17.9% | 1.5% | 0.0% |
| Expectations to participate in extracurricular activities | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 24.0% | 18.8% | 27.1% | 18.8% | 0.0% | 11.5% |
| Y1 | 20.7% | 39.3% | 25.2% | 11.1% | 3.0% | 0.7% |
| Overall quality of relationships with students | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 78.1% | 12.5% | 1.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 8.3% |
| Y1 | 86.6% | 13.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Overall quality of relationships with parents and community | | | | | | |
| Y4 | 58.3% | 26.0% | 4.2% | 2.1% | 1.0% | 8.3% |
| Y1 | 54.5% | 34.3% | 6.0% | 5.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

Table 4: Conditions of Professional Practice: Year Four and Year One

What is less clear is how teachers' awareness of the root causes and significance of those conditions of professional practice changes as they gain experience and become more politically astute.

Parenting and Work–Life Balance

Most participants in the study are young adults who have either started families or are planning to do so. Others are somewhat older, having become

teachers after their own children were old enough to go to school. Almost one-quarter (23 per cent) of the participants interviewed in year four either have had at least one child in the last four years or are expecting a child. Of these women (only women took parental leave), half have had, or will have, continuing contracts to return to.

Because so many participants in the study had become parents in the course of the study, the researchers asked, in the year-four interviews, some specific questions

16 • Teaching in the Early Years of Practice

about how the presence of children had affected the work–life balance of participants and the decisions they made about employment. Attaining a work–life balance is a significant issue for many early-career teachers. One respondent stated that, since becoming a parent, she “felt much more strongly that work–life balance is important.” Given the choice, many participants stated that they would work part-time:

At this stage, I would prefer to work part-time. Before having children, I would have worked full-time. I was talking to a friend who works full-time and has a child, and she was describing her day. She is so busy in the mornings, has supper with her son and then has to go back to work for the evening. You don't realize how intense it is until you get into it.

| Parenting Status | Portion of Sample |
|--|-------------------|
| Have taken parental leave in the past and returned to teaching | 10% |
| Took a parental leave in year 4 | 9% |
| Will be taking a parental leave in year 5 | 6% |
| Have not taken a parental leave but may in the future | 41% |
| Have not taken parental leave and likely won't | 33% |

Table 5: Parenting Status of Participants in Year Four (n=98)

For some respondents, working part-time was not feasible, either because the family required the teacher's full-time income or because part-time positions were not available. Having children at home appeared to make the inability of some participants to obtain a full-time position somewhat easier to swallow. One teacher called working part-time a “blessing in disguise.”

Teachers who returned to full-time work after having children indicated that they were more likely to guard their work–life balance than was the case before they had children.

Teachers who do not have contracts face a difficult choice: they can go ahead and have children even though they have no guaranteed job to return to, or they can delay having children until they find more secure employment. One participant who decided to

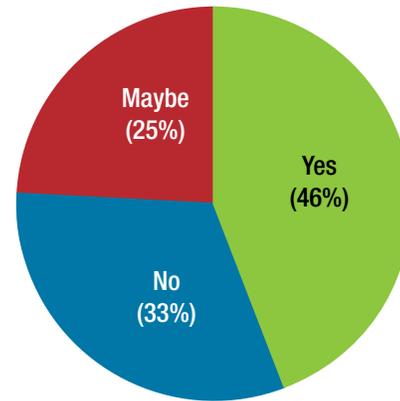


Figure 4: Portion of Respondents Who Have Considered Reducing Their Teaching Time to Improve Their Work–Life Balance

wait described her situation as follows: “I would like to have a family, and it would be nice to have something to go back to. The instability is hard; every year you're not sure.” On the other hand, some teachers who had taken maternity leave in the past or were presently on leave chose to start a family even though they had not secured a contract. One participant who was on maternity leave during year four of the study predicted that she would “probably have to go back subbing. However, it was more important to start a family because achieving job security was going to take longer than we were willing to wait.”

For at least two participants, substitute teaching has proved a good way to maintain work–life balance. One teacher, who regularly substitutes for a handful of her colleagues, describes the advantages of this arrangement as follows: “I don't have to deal with politics and demands of full-time teaching, and it works well for my family life.”

Other participants who had not secured contracts very much wished to teach but were gradually drifting out of the profession because they were unable to make a living either through substitute teaching or working on part-time contracts. These young women, like most participants in the study, had expected to obtain a continuous contract and then have children.

Professional Development

Initial Priorities

Participants were asked to reflect on their teaching careers to date and to evaluate the various sources of professional development that contributed to their

early career growth. As Figure 5 shows, participants, as in earlier years of the study, were more likely to value mentors that they had chosen for themselves (94 per cent) than they were mentors that had been assigned to them (79 per cent). However, only about half of participants had a mentor at all.

Mentorships, however, do not tell the whole story. Participants in each year of the study have consistently rated professional learning communities as being “somewhat” or “very” valuable.

Participants’ evaluations of the professional development available to them confirm what other studies have shown: the most effective induction is that which gives beginning teachers opportunities to engage with colleagues in multiple settings.

Based on their comments, participants found the most effective form of professional development in their first year to be feedback from their administrator

The expectations placed on teachers are increasing every year. It’s not the teaching aspect of it; it’s all the other things that go with it like dealing with parents. All the extra things that are expected of teachers.

and the chance to partner with a colleague teaching the same grade and/or subject. Teachers who did not have a partner in the school found collaboration days

organized by the district to be a valuable alternative. Many participants indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to network with, and learn from, colleagues outside their own school:

We’ve done lots of sharing at the district level, which has been great because it’s practical stuff made by teachers for teachers. Networking with people from other schools has been a really positive experience.

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) appears to have played an important role in facilitating opportunities for new teachers to learn from their colleagues. Although participants seldom rated AISI as a “very important” source of professional development, they nevertheless

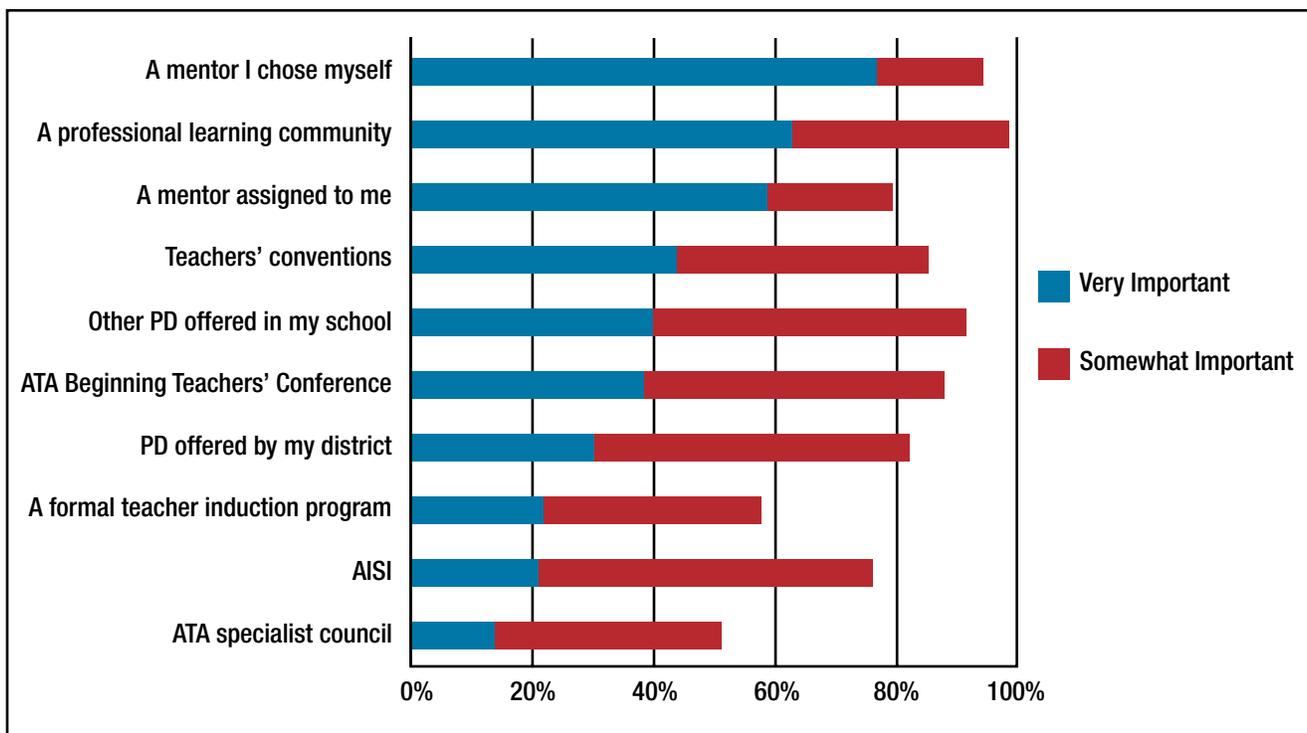


Figure 5: Sources of Professional Development Rated Most Valuable, All Years⁹

⁹ The data are based on responses from participants who had access to the type of professional development cited. For example, of the respondents having had access to an induction program offered by their district, approximately 60 per cent found the program “somewhat” or “very” valuable.

acknowledged that it provided structure, focus and funding for collaboration.

Overall, participants rated induction programs coordinated by the district to be less valuable than those available from the school.¹⁰ Participants tended to weigh what they gained from these opportunities against the time that they spent planning for a substitute teacher and travelling to the venue.

Furthermore, participants gave a lower rating to professional development events at which they were “talked at” about matters that they felt they could easily have learned on their own:

Events that did happen were compulsory, so if was something you already knew or something that was not applicable to you, it took up a lot of time and it was tedious. It was also overwhelming because your whole year is overwhelming.

Another problem with structured induction programs is that they sometimes repeat information that new teachers have just learned in university:

[Organizers] feel that they're doing something good, and I can understand why they feel that way. Because they're learning new things like this. This is all new to them. But meanwhile, we spent two years doing it [in university], but it's just reaching classrooms now. And so they don't really know what to offer.

By contrast, teachers placed the most value on district-level initiatives that gave them time and space to work with their colleagues and/or their mentor.

The beginning teachers' conference offered by the ATA appears to have stood the test of time, and many participants consider the conference, in retrospect, to have been a valuable learning opportunity in their first year. ATA specialist councils, on the other hand, received a lower rating. Comments from participants in year one and year two suggest that beginning teachers are often either unaware of the existence of specialist councils or so busy navigating the professional development opportunities available from their school and their district that they do not have time to avail themselves of this learning option.

Ongoing Priorities

Each year, participants have been asked to rate their professional development priorities for the coming year. Their responses to this question, summarized in Table 6, have changed over time. For example, participants have gradually assigned less importance to their personal professional growth plan, probably

because they now have a greater sense of ownership over their own planning. Some respondents observed that they would set learning goals and plan professional development activities around those goals on their

own, regardless of a plan. At the same time, most participants did not consider documenting these goals an onerous task. Not surprisingly, teachers tend to place less priority on their growth plans when they are not made accountable for them. In other words, they regarded the exercise of writing goals as a waste of time if their progress was not evaluated in any meaningful way. A number of participants reported that they received little or no evaluation with respect to their professional growth plans.

The number of participants considering graduate studies has not changed significantly over the course of the study, a finding that is not particularly surprising given that teachers are still early in their careers. Some teachers also stated that they would wait until they had started their families before pursuing graduate studies and taking on leadership roles. Some teachers who were pursuing graduate studies were doing so through cohort programs.

Overall, participants appear to be relying less on online or distance collaboration opportunities. Their dependence on these forms of learning may have declined because they are now more aware of other professional development opportunities available to them.

Supports for New Teachers

Over the course of the study, participants have gradually moved away from identifying themselves as novice teachers. They now see themselves as relatively experienced staff who, in some cases, are working alongside new teachers who have joined the

10 This observation echoes what Cherubini (2007) found in a study of new-teacher induction programs in Ontario.

| | Very High Priority | Moderate Priority | Low Priority | Not at All a Priority | NA |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----|
| Refining and implementing my professional growth plan | | | | | |
| Y4 | 21% | 41% | 12% | 9% | 16% |
| Y1 | 30% | 60% | 8% | 2% | — |
| Taking graduate-level courses for university credit | | | | | |
| Y4 | 8% | 8% | 24% | 47% | 13% |
| Y1 | 6% | 15% | 27% | 52% | — |
| Collaborating in a professional learning community | | | | | |
| Y4 | 66% | 19% | 2% | 0% | 13% |
| Y1 | 83% | 15% | 2% | 0% | — |
| Online/distance collaboration or professional development | | | | | |
| Y4 | 15% | 33% | 22% | 14% | 15% |
| Y1 | 53% | 40% | 6% | 1.5% | — |

Table 6: Present Professional Development Priorities

school within the last year or so. In the year-four interviews, researchers asked participants (questions E.5 and E.6) to discuss the supports that their school offers new teachers and to evaluate these supports in light of what they remember from their own teaching experiences.

Interestingly, some participants had little knowledge of how new teachers were treated in their school. Others remained as passionate about their induction experiences as they had been in year one. Teachers who had had positive experiences were happy to serve as more senior colleagues in the new environment. Others who had not felt well supported went out of their way to reach out to new teachers:

We have some new teachers this year, and I remember what I didn't know. I remember what no one told me. And so I say, "Do you know

Even though everyone was really nice, they were concerned about their own grade and their own thing. I had administrators who were really nice, but everyone was just doing their own job and didn't have time to worry about the new kid doing Grade 6.

about this?" It feels good to be able to alleviate some of [the stress].

Table 7 summarizes the various approaches that, according to participants,

schools have taken to support new teachers. Some participants reported working in schools that were welcoming and highly collaborative. Others worked in environments in which inductees were truly isolated, receiving little support from either administrators or colleagues. Participants also described supports that ranged from passive to active. Some schools that portrayed themselves as "welcoming" could still be considered passive in that, rather than seeking out and supporting new teachers, they waited for new teachers to reach out and establish relationships on their own. Schools also varied in the extent to which they relied on formal as opposed to informal systems of support for new teachers.

20 • Teaching in the Early Years of Practice

| | Collegial Approach The entire school staff is involved in offering support. | Individual Approach Support is offered on a one-on-one basis. |
|--|--|--|
| Active Support Staff anticipate new teachers' needs. | <p>Staff share responsibility for approaching and engaging with new teachers.</p> <p>"There's definitely a community presence in the school, a sense of welcome that's pretty warm. I had a personal walkthrough of the school. There's definitely outreach in terms of giving new teachers resources. We've got coordinators for our junior high core who are responsible for developing resources and support for beginning teachers."</p> <p>"We try to create a culture in which it's okay to ask for help. We give them a support network of teachers who teach similar things. We are also creating a digital handbook for new staff."</p> | <p>An individual teacher recognizes a new teacher's needs and finds ways to help. May lead to an informal mentoring relationship.</p> <p>"I think a lot of our staff go out of their way to help new teachers because they remember being there. So giving advice, giving lesson plans."</p> <p>"I do seek out new and student teachers and ask what they need help with. No one gets the 'nitty-gritty' so I give advice and tell them to tell other people."</p> |
| Passive Support New teachers must take the initiative in getting help. | <p>Staff perceive themselves as "welcoming" and "friendly" but do not critically examine these perceptions, or make active efforts to ensure that new teachers feels supported. The culture of individualism is upheld.¹¹</p> <p>"Very open-door policy if someone asks you for things."</p> <p>"We tell beginning teachers where to seek help. We inform them and try to make them feel welcome when they come. Don't know what else, really."</p> | <p>A teacher will answer questions and may offer support and resources if the new teacher asks. Supports are incidental and are not couched within an ongoing collegial relationship.</p> <p>"If you approach administrators, they are really good about guiding you through things. Always supportive, but you have to approach them."</p> <p>"Support is all informal. There's no formal mentorship. If new teachers ask questions, staff will help out, but there are no set meetings to discuss things."</p> |
| Formal, Structured Programs | <p>New teacher learning is supported through formal programs at the school and/or district levels. New teachers collaborate and network with colleagues.</p> <p>"I'm part of a division wide 'unit-build' team led by the coordinator. The unit is shared on a website for everyone to use, and there are common assessments."</p> <p>"A mentor teacher is assigned. We also have grade-level teacher collaboration, so even if you're just new to the school (not the profession), you're 'plugged in' right away."</p> | <p>Administrators or assigned mentors are responsible for the inductee in a structured setting. There are no collaborative components.</p> <p>"Last year our administrator set aside a double block during the school day to enable a mentor to meet with a new teacher for support or classroom observation."</p> <p>"Last year I was new to the school and had to teach outside of my speciality. They gave me professional development time to help me teach a new curriculum and learn the marking program."</p> |
| Informal, Ad Hoc Support | <p>A "culture of collaboration" is present. Help is ad hoc but is offered and is widely available.</p> <p>"Teacher collaboration and offering resources and help where they could."</p> <p>"Within our department, colleagues and the department head will try to help out. Lots of help."</p> <p>"Our school really encourages mentorship. Beginning teachers are given some relief time to visit different classrooms. We had a beginning teacher this year and her grade-level partner mentored her."</p> | <p>Individual teachers form relationships with mentoring components. These may or may not be identified by the participants as mentoring relationships but do provide help and support.</p> <p>"I'm working with a new teacher and am available to help her, answer questions and show her how things work. We are teaching the same subject and she is right across the hall, so it's informal."</p> <p>"I was new to the school and I partnered with a friend to help me out. There really wasn't any formal support."</p> |

Table 7: School Approaches to Teacher Induction

¹¹ Kardos and Johnson (2007) describe a school culture in which "veteran colleagues might be socially friendly, [but] professional norms of privacy and autonomy prevailed. Thus, new teachers reported that experienced teachers rarely collaborated with them or discussed their work in any depth" (2,087).

The Significance of Administration

Most experts agree that a school's administration plays a crucial role in determining the school culture and, by extension, the way in which early-career teachers will experience their work.¹² In discussing the supports that they—or new teachers coming on board after them—were offered, participants frequently mentioned the actions of principals. Here are some of the supportive administrator behaviours that participants mentioned:

- Frequently touching base with the new teacher
- Helping the new teacher to build relationships with colleagues
- Creating embedded professional development time for mentorship, professional learning communities and classroom observations
- Limiting extracurricular expectations
- Reducing the complexity of teaching assignments
- Ensuring that new teachers have a school orientation
- Keeping an open-door policy so that new teachers feel comfortable discussing their concerns
- Helping new teachers access appropriate professional development opportunities such as district mentorship programs and the ATA's Beginning Teachers' Conference
- Helping the new teacher with classroom management and discipline issues

Administrators are most effective when their support is proactive and intentional. Participants reported receiving varying degrees of administrative support in their first years and emphasized that such support had a strong impact on them. As one teacher put it, "administration is key. Support, feedback and the communication in each school affected my experience, either positively or negatively."

In my first year, I did a lot of online learning because our division is so spread out. I didn't mind a mixture of online and face-to-face meetings. It was a good way to get material I needed, and I didn't have to drive for an hour to get it.

The Engaged Administrator

At the positive end of the spectrum were principals who made active efforts to meet the needs of new teachers. New teachers appreciated principals who had an open-door policy, and they took advantage of this safe space. However, administrators who visited new teachers' classrooms, either formally or informally, were perceived as even more supportive of new teachers. Teachers count on their administrators for feedback and guidance.

One teacher noted that the administrators in her school "helped our new teachers do all the planning for the first little while, helped them set up their classroom and helped them write report cards."

Administrators can also show their support for new teachers by creating and monitoring embedded learning opportunities.

One participant described her experience as follows: "At my first school, they ensured I had time to meet with a mentor. My administrators observed me and gave me good feedback. They were supportive and encouraging, and they gave me time to observe other classes." In these cases, the administrators, though acting in a supervisory capacity, signaled their commitment to the new teachers' professional growth by ensuring that supportive collegial relationships and learning opportunities were available.

The "Absent" Administrator

Teachers who did not receive adequate support from their administrator described the experience as "being on your own." "It's not that [administrators] don't want to be helpful; they've just got such huge loads themselves," one participant said. Another observed that administrators "can be very human but they're not accessible. They are so busy with their own stuff that you can barely ever talk to them about anything."

In some cases, new teachers received most of their support from colleagues. As one teacher put it, "There were some veteran teachers who give a lot of information. Administrators don't really do anything."

12 See Beauchamp and Parsons (2011) and Youngs (2007) for a discussion of effective administrative behaviours.

Another recounted, “When I started only a few years ago, there was more administrator time. Now the administrator has to teach and is stressed to the limit. Our administrator was principal at three schools and was never there.” This participant went on to describe how the administrator’s absence affected both the new teachers themselves and the teachers who were trying to support them:

When you tried to offer support, you got in trouble because they [new teachers] are supposed to be going through the administrator. New teachers don’t know where to turn. You can’t make the right choices because they’re damned if you do and damned if you don’t. You feel powerless.

In short, administrators have difficulty providing active, visible support to new teachers, especially if their staff is spread too thin. Some participants also noted that frequent turnovers in leadership can make getting feedback and support almost impossible for new teachers.

Leadership

Participants’ comments about their own experiences and their observations about induction practices in their schools suggest that the school administrator sets the tone for how staff receive, regard and support new teachers. One teacher described the “trickle-down” effect of a distant administrative team as follows:

Our administrator is fair but certainly never warm or helpful. In your first year, there’s so much that goes on, and so much happens to your personal life and so much goes on emotionally. You need someone to share these things with, or to talk to about your difficulties, or to ask for help. My administrator definitely wasn’t like that and, while some teachers at my school were open to that type of thing, some of them really weren’t.

In contrast, this teacher described her school as very supportive:

It’s not just the willingness of other teachers to help, but it’s the administration setting the tone and pushing for that support, and being willing

The principal and vice-principal provided me with acres and acres of support. I had meetings with them every day. If I had had the administrative team that was there previously, I would have never taught again. The previous team was like, “Nope, it’s your classroom. You figure it out.”

to offer it themselves. Everyone just “does it,” and once they do it and realize how they [veteran teachers] are helped by the beginning teachers, they get more enthusiastic. ... It helps to form a good community.

Leadership by the administrator is required to implement structures that support beginning teachers. Although some participants described effective informal systems of support, such systems cannot guarantee that new teachers’ learning needs will be met. Collegial supports can operate in pockets within the school culture. However, in the absence of formal structures, induction can, as one teacher put it, “fall through the cracks.”

Focus Group Findings

Although telephone interviews have proved an effective way, over the last four years, of staying in touch with a fairly large sample of teachers, they do not lend themselves to exploring identified themes in much depth. To address this concern, the researchers organized three focus groups, involving a total of 13 teachers, in the spring of 2011. The focus groups were designed to explore three broad topics:

1. *Conditions of practice in the first year of teaching:* Participants were asked to consider whether the stressors commonly experienced in the first year of teaching are inevitable. Participants were also asked to identify a key formative incident from their first year and to reflect on how this incident shaped their practice.
2. *Supports for new teachers:* Drawing on their own experiences, participants were asked to suggest how colleagues, administrators and school divisions could best support beginning teachers.
3. *Professional development:* Participants were asked to describe how their professional learning has

changed over time and to reflect on whether the professional development needs of new teachers are unique.

These questions served only as a rough guide for the focus group conversations. Although participants were asked to draw on their first year of practice in answering the questions, most of them had difficulty isolating their first-year experiences from the overall growth and change that they had experienced to date. Nonetheless, the conversations in each group yielded rich thematic data.

Must Beginning Teaching Always Be Stressful?

All new situations, including starting a job, involve an adjustment period that is likely to engender a degree of uncertainty and anxiety. As Wilson et al (2004, 159) observe, “Some challenges associated with learning to teach are unavoidable, for learning how to put ideas into practice requires practice. This is a problem all professions face.”

Starting out as a new teacher is often regarded as an exceptionally stressful experience. Participants were asked to consider the extent to which stressors are inherent to beginning teaching as opposed to being the product of poor or absent induction practices. The researchers hoped that the answers to this question would also shed light on another issue, namely, the extent to which induction practices and experiences, whether good or bad, are reproduced.

Overall, participants agreed that some aspects of a teacher’s first year are inevitably stressful because beginning teachers lack experience and have much to learn. Participants also identified a number of conditions that contribute to stress in the first year.

The Weight of Responsibility

According to participants, one key source of stress is the absence of any transition between the practicum, when a new teacher’s responsibility is buffered, and the first year of teaching, when the full weight of responsibility and accountability falls squarely on the shoulders of the beginning teacher. This “praxis shock” occurs, in part, because new teachers feel insufficiently prepared for the level of responsibility that is placed on them. McCormack, Gore and Thomas (2006) emphasize that, ideally, immersion into full practice in the first year of teaching should be

considered a critical stage of professional learning. In practice, as one of the participants noted, “you are in charge of 20 or 18 or 40 students. You are responsible for their learning. You are a teacher and you need to be teaching these kids.”

Time Constraints

Teachers consider their work to be inherently complex and intensive. Study participants have, by and large, reconciled themselves to the fact that teaching is a “busy” career. As one participant put it, “Teachers don’t ever get less busy. They just get used to it.” She went on to describe how “being busy” affects new teachers: “I think that’s part of the difficulty, feeling like you’re imposing on people, because there [are] no teachers who are just sitting back with their feet up on the desk. Never.” In addition to the stress that comes from working long hours, then, is the sense that, by “not knowing,” new teachers will be a burden to their colleagues:

You tell yourself, “I’m supposed to know what I’m doing here. I was hired to do a job. I got hired because I’m competent. I can do this.” You don’t want to appear needy. But you have no idea.

Because their colleagues are so busy, new teachers may not receive important information on how to use report card software, complete an individualized program plan, access professional development opportunities and perform other basic functions. Participants recounted cases in which busy administrators had missed classroom visits, rubberstamped teacher evaluations and been unavailable when new teachers needed assistance.

Lack of time also undermined administrators’ well-intentioned efforts to provide structured support for new teachers. Participants who had been in a mentorship relationship that didn’t work out observed that the problem, in most cases, was rooted in the fact that both the mentor and the mentee were “too busy” to set aside focused time to work together.¹³

Uncertainty

Most participants reported that they had reconciled themselves to the fact that their first years were certain to be uncertain. The desire to be competent means that new teachers put a great deal of pressure on themselves to perform well. Year-one participants

often demonstrated a stoicism that, in some cases, rendered them reluctant to ask for help that they desperately needed. Here's how one participant described a new colleague:

This teacher had a “steel wall” and didn't want help. She wanted to do everything herself. She didn't seek out help when she was having issues. She felt she needed to be self-sufficient. I think she came from an environment without much support and brought that with her.

Similar accounts of uncertainty and shaky confidence are amply documented in the literature (Day and Gu 2010; Goddard and Foster 2001).

Reducing Stress

Although participants agreed that the first year of teaching is inevitably stressful, they also observed that many of the stressors that they encountered could have been alleviated had better supports been in place. They agreed, for example, that much stress could be eliminated simply by making new teachers feel welcome in the school and by assuring them that the school is a safe space for them to undertake their early professional learning. Many of the small but cumulative stressors that new teachers face—finding supplies, getting to know parents and disciplining students—can be lessened if beginning teachers feel that they can call upon their colleagues without being judged.

Better induction practices can also help to reduce some of the other sources of stress that are beyond the power of the school to control. The structure of the school day and school year, district-supported programs, hiring practices, classroom conditions, the curriculum and government priorities for education all affect the resources that schools are able to dedicate to professional learning for beginning and veteran teachers alike.

The Micropolitics of New Teacher Induction

Meyer and MacMillan (2011) define micropolitics as “the formal and informal use of legitimate and illegitimate power by the principal and teachers to

further individual or group goals, with such goals based on values, beliefs, needs and ideologies.” They go on to note that “shifts in balances of power can be created through collaborative efforts and may shift with time and circumstance.” Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) observe that the emphasis on “learning to teach” during the first years of practice tends to overshadow “the fact that beginning teachers also become members of an organization. Nevertheless this organizational socialization constitutes an essential task for teachers as much as their classroom teaching” (p 106).

The focus groups confirmed Kelchtermans and Ballet's observation that a significant part of what new teachers need to learn has to do with understanding the politics and social organization of the school and school district. Several participants described how they had come to understand the “unwritten rules” concerning what their school had to offer beginning teachers. One teacher, for example, described the culture of her school as follows: “When it comes down to it, each person has to navigate his or her own development.” Another participant described her school in quite different terms: “Everybody is there

Teaching is not the hardest part of this job. It's all the other stuff—and that's the stuff you don't get help with.

to help everybody and everyone has something to offer in terms of past and present resources.” Still another participant described a school in which the attitude to new teachers might be characterized as one of ambivalence: although they are regarded as “a strain on the staff” and as “extra work,” they are supported because staff believe that, in the long run, they will reduce the overall workload.

Unwritten rules determine who can be counted on, and in what circumstances, to offer support, friendship, knowledge and resources that support professional learning. The focus group discussions suggest that new teachers need to learn to negotiate at least three areas of potential conflict with their colleagues: (1) asking for help, (2) sharing resources and (3) taking on difficult assignments and extracurricular activities.

Asking for Help

A frequent topic of discussion throughout the study has been when and where a new teacher can safely ask

13 For more documentation on the increasing workload of teachers, see reports on studies that the ATA undertook recently in Rocky View Local No 35 (ATA 2011) and Calgary Public Teachers' Local No 38 (ATA 2012).

for help. From the focus groups it became clear that asking for help is an act that places a new teacher in the situation of being either a “giver” or a “taker” with respect to the school’s most valued currencies: time and resources. Beginning teachers will go to great lengths to avoid being a “burden.” As one teacher put it, “the more I can handle things myself and the more I can stay out of the way, the more valuable I am.”

New teachers vary in how confident they are in interacting with colleagues. Participants noted that new teachers can be hesitant in seeking support and need to learn “how to advocate for themselves” and “to ask for what they need.” However, participants also observed that new teachers are quick to pick up on cues—subtle and not so subtle—when they reach out for help. Here’s how one participant described her relationship with her mentor: “My first experience was not positive. He did provide me with resources, but I felt guilty getting them. I was a burden and I knew it. It wasn’t his choice to do it.”

Some new teachers find themselves in what was defined earlier as a “passive” culture of support. In such a culture, help may be available, but the new teacher is expected to discover, through trial and error, which offers of support are genuine and which are perfunctory:

I find it depends on the people. I can think of one individual who would probably give me that “attitude.” My relationship with that person is a certain way, and that’s the way it is, right? But I know other teachers who have just as much experience as this other person. I can talk to them about some stuff because my relationship is different.

Another participant attributed the support he had received from his colleagues as his “good luck to be where he was.” “Unless someone really has their heart in helping you,” another participant said, “it can be a big waste of time.”

In contrast, some focus group participants entered schools that had active, structured forms of collaboration. These highly collaborative cultures spared new teachers the guesswork and awkwardness of figuring out who could be approached for help, and under what circumstances:

By having something scheduled, it’s not

considered extra. And it gives you that time. Because it’s not extra, there isn’t that “I’ve got things to do so can we just get through this” attitude. Sometimes I think an experienced teacher can feel that way. Or you think, “Man, I forgot that I have to do these field trip forms, and then I’ve got to get this ready for tomorrow.”

Structured time for collaboration and mentoring helps prevent new teachers from feeling guilty about asking for help and ensures that other teachers set aside time for helping their less-experienced colleagues.

Sharing Resources

New teachers must also learn the politics associated with sharing resources and lesson plans. As one participant noted, “teachers in general are willing to share stuff as long as they know that you are willing to do the work as well.” This observation implies that some experienced teachers believe that new teachers are *not* willing to work. Another participant related that he had asked a colleague for a test and had met

with this rebuff: “Why are you asking *me* for a test when you should be making it on your own?”

These comments suggested that some teachers believe that acquiring resources and making

lesson plans are part of paying one’s dues as a new teacher. One participant observed that because she had invested so much time, money and energy in planning, she felt that she owned her resources:

Everybody’s scrambling to keep on top, and there’s a little bit of a competitive atmosphere. You feel, “Well I busted my butt working all year and nobody helped me. I earned this unit. I’m not just giving it away.”

Other participants worked in schools in which open sharing was the norm. One participant related that her school had an online system that enabled teachers at her grade level to share plans and resources. Another teacher described the culture at her school as follows: “At our school, we’re trying to create a culture of professional learners so we support each other. There’s a big push for collaboration. We try to share everything.”

In general, participants viewed the acts of asking for,

offering and receiving resources and plans as instances of support and reciprocity. Asked how they supported newer colleagues, participants frequently said that they “offered resources.” They also emphasized that they had felt supported when colleagues had shared materials with them. School cultures and subcultures clearly determine the norms around which resources, lesson plans and information are created, exchanged and viewed as commodities. In some schools, resources are freely shared; in others, they serve to reinforce a teacher’s status in the staff hierarchy.

Teaching Assignments and Extracurricular Activities

Another matter that affects a new teacher’s relationship with his or her colleagues concerns the allocation of teaching assignments and extracurricular activities. Because new teachers generally have temporary or probationary contracts, they often feel pressured to “prove themselves”:

I think there’s still too much expectation for extracurricular. Beginning teachers are still the ones coaching everything. The older staff won’t step up, and the younger staff want the contracts, so they do it. Sad but true.

This imbalance of power results in at least two dysfunctional induction practices. First, new teachers tend to do whatever is asked of them in terms of teaching assignments and extracurricular activities, even if the expectation is unreasonable:

An administrator knows that a new teacher is always going to say “yes.” When the administrator asks you to coach volleyball, you say yes. You want to keep your job next year. You’re a temp. You want to be back.

Participants described systems of seniority in which veteran staff held choice teaching assignments and had no qualms about saying no to extras. New teachers were expected to take on the more difficult assignments and the bulk of extracurricular work. Although not particularly happy about this state of affairs, participants had come to accept it as normal and inevitable. As

one teacher put it, “that’s what your first year is all about.” At the same time, participants noted that heavy extracurricular loads and difficult teaching assignments distract new teachers from what should be their primary task in their first year: learning to teach well.

A second negative consequence of being in a tenuous job situation is that beginning teachers are discouraged from asking for help when they need it or from speaking out if they face unreasonable expectations. Although some participants reported that they had contacted the ATA to report unfair practices, most said that they did not feel safe until they had obtained a continuing contract. Even when districts and schools claim to be supportive, the job market is such that new teachers are often considered expendable: “There’s a distinct feeling that there’s this mass surplus of young teachers, and if you don’t like it, there’s 600 more who are begging for your job. Don’t talk too loud.”

Learning the Rules

Although the topic of micropolitics seldom surfaced in the telephone interviews, focus group participants spent considerable time talking about staff hierarchies and the fact that, in most schools, beginning teachers are viewed as being at the “bottom of the food chain” until they have “paid their dues.” In a seminal article on micropolitics and institutional change, Burns (1961, 261) observes that members of an organization are “at one and the same time co-operators

and rivals for the material and intangible rewards of successful competition with each other.” Because they see themselves as caring and cooperative people, teachers may resist the idea that they compete for resources and rewards. However, as Bartholomew (2006) notes with reference to nurses, working in a profession that identifies itself as caring can inhibit the profession from recognizing and redressing its own pathologies. Bartholomew argues that unhealthy, dysfunctional cultures can emerge when professionals face work intensification and, at the same time, feel that they lack decision-making power. Teachers who work under chronic pressure in schools where time is a precious commodity may, understandably, come to feel that, through seniority, they have “earned” the right to say

no to difficult assignments and extracurricular activities.¹⁴

At the same time, many participants reported working with positive and supportive administrators and colleagues in schools where micropolitics facilitated a sense of belonging and enhanced teachers' sense of efficacy. Many participants who considered their school to be relatively unsupportive reported that they had, nevertheless, attempted to reach out to newer colleagues and to offer them the kinds of support that they themselves felt they had lacked. Clearly, politics and power in any organization can be used for both positive and negative ends.

Evolving Professional Development Needs

Focus group participants were asked to identify specific ways in which their professional development needs had evolved since their first years of teaching. Their responses reinforce a notion, first articulated in the year-three report, that beginning teachers have foundational professional development needs that are distinct from those of more experienced teachers.¹⁵

As Figure 6 illustrates, participants reported that, in their first year of practice, they tended to place the most value on professional development that focused on such basics as curriculum mastery, classroom management, unit and yearly planning, working with parents, and understanding school and district routines.

They also preferred hands-on professional development to lectures, which tended either to repeat what they had already learned in university or contain information that they could not use at this early stage of their career.

Focus group participants talked not only about the content of early career professional development but also about the processes by which they acquired knowledge. Some participants admitted, for example, that they had over-planned. Fearing that they would miss important material and make mistakes, they planned out every minute of each lesson, thereby creating work that, in retrospect, they realize was unnecessary. As one participant explained, “You don’t want to mess things up, you don’t want to make mistakes for those kids in their learning. I think that’s why, in your first year, you’re so stressed.” These same participants also acknowledged that, even if they had been counselled to relax, they would probably have continued to over-plan: “You need to experience the hell that [over-planning] is and where you go with it. Then you learn.”

According to participants, over-planning may be a necessary phase in learning to calibrate the appropriate amount of time that should be devoted to planning. Over-planning, in other words, constitutes a reference point against which teachers can measure their subsequent efforts.

New teachers must also go through the curriculum in “real time” before they understand which areas to emphasize, how to order presentations, how to assess

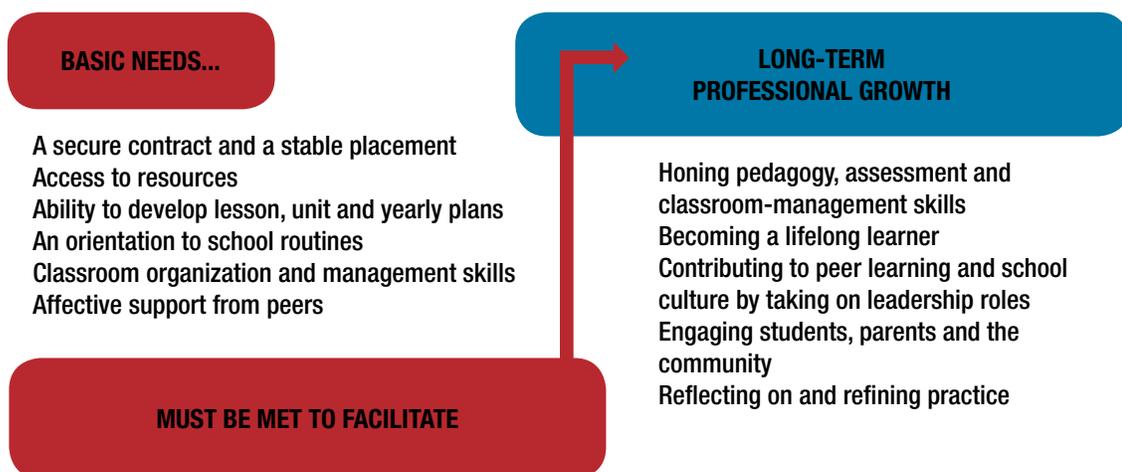


Figure 6: Meeting Teachers' Needs

15 Feiman-Nemser (2001) also argues that beginning teachers have professional development needs that are distinct from, but nevertheless consistent with, the needs of more experienced teachers.

what they have taught and how to link assessments to future lessons. In describing this process, participants used such terms as “sequencing” and “flow” and talked about mastering the “mechanics,” “nuts and bolts” and “technical aspects” of teaching.

Participants emphasized that the skill set they developed in their first year was transferrable. As one participant put it, “the first year I was overwhelmed, but I’ve kind of gotten to the point where I feel comfortable that, even if I had the basic materials, I would be fine. I understand how I would approach it.”

Through experience, beginning teachers acquired basic skills as well as an understanding of how to make the most of their time and resources. Participants reported that they learned most effectively when they had opportunities to discuss their progress with colleagues, either in professional learning communities or in one-on-one meetings with a mentor.¹⁶ As relatively experienced teachers, year-four participants emphasized that the best form of professional development is classroom observation: the opportunity to observe and be observed by colleagues and to share feedback about the finer points of practice.

Guidance from an experienced teacher can help a beginning teacher to focus his or her efforts on “doing two or three things well [with the reassurance] that the rest will come with time.” Another participant put it this way: “When you’re a beginning teacher, there’s so much to focus on. You have to prioritize.” Still another participant had this to say: “The first year is always going to be overwhelming. But I think if you have someone there who is more realistic telling you how to approach things, you can focus on what’s important.”

Feedback and Recognition

A theme that emerged spontaneously from all three focus groups was the notion that new teachers need feedback and recognition. The loneliness and isolation that beginning teachers experience occurs, in large measure, because they receive little feedback on work about which they are very uncertain. Because they have not yet acquired an understanding of the norms of the teaching profession, they tend to feel psychologically “exposed.” Feedback from trusted

colleagues and school leaders can help beginning teachers to assess their feelings, experiences and practices and to develop a sense of security and self-confidence:

In my first few years, my principal would say, “You’re doing a really good job. You have a tough class. There’s a lot to learn. I think you’re doing a good job.” You can talk to them knowing that they’re not just walking by thinking that you’re not doing your job correctly. They understand that there are struggles.

Although participants, as new teachers, appreciated feedback from colleagues, they especially valued recognition and support from their administrators, whom they look to as leaders and role models. Participants spoke highly of administrators who modelled collegiality and expressed disappointment in those who did not.

New teachers relied upon their administrators to evaluate their progress and to recommend them for future placement and permanent certification. New teachers also valued formative evaluations because they wanted to learn and improve. Participants emphasized that they wanted not only encouragement but also constructive feedback that would help them improve their practice. One participant, for example, said that she appreciated an administrator who would say, “Here, I saw that you did this thing. You know, you could try doing this.” Judging from participants’ comments, the quality and continuity of administrator evaluations vary greatly. One participant compared the evaluations that she had received with those reported by a colleague:

I had four different administrators who didn’t even know who I was. I wasn’t accountable to anybody. I did whatever I wanted in my classroom. [My colleague] had a principal coming in every week reviewing her yearly plans and looking at her lesson plans.

Another participant observed that she did not receive feedback from her administrator until her formal evaluation was required: “My administrator came in when he got the form saying he was to come and observe me. So he came in with his form and

16 Feiman-Nemser (2001, 18) describes this process of inquiry and reflection as “educative mentoring,” the goal of which is to “cultivate skills and habits that enable novices to learn in and from their practice.”

sat and observed and that’s all I ever saw or heard.” Still others had established regular contact with their administrators through open-door policies and classroom visits:

I feel that my administrator believes in me. I can go and talk to him any time. And he’s been encouraging to me and comes into the class regularly. If he comes in now, I don’t even think twice about it. I just carry on.

The experiences of participants suggest that evaluations can range from being a cursory formality to part of a trusting, ongoing relationship that genuinely helps new teachers develop confidence and improve their practice.

You threw me in the deep end—sink or swim—and I swam!

The (Hidden) Curricula of Teacher Induction

The year-four focus groups shed light on a dimension of new teachers’ learning that is seldom addressed in policy: the cultural and power dynamics—or micropolitics—of a school. Participants’ comments suggest that schools vary dramatically in how they manage the induction of novice teachers. Attitudes range from a “sink or swim” mentality in which new teachers are left to fend for themselves to a collegial approach in which the learning of new teachers is considered a natural extension of the learning that all teachers engage in.

Sink or Swim

For most participants, learning about school culture has been a safe and generally rewarding experience. For others, however, sorting out the school’s micropolitics has been daunting, unpredictable and even lonely. New teachers most at risk for isolation appear to be those in small rural schools, those teaching a specialty (such as art or career and technology studies) and those working in what Kardos et al (2001) call “veteran-oriented” school cultures in which new teachers are unlikely to be viewed as having learning needs. One participant, who was one of only two novices in a small school dominated by

teachers nearing retirement, described her experience as follows: “There’s a clear divide between us. The older group just wants to be an island. So that’s kind of difficult.” Although she managed to forge collaborative relationships through district-level professional learning communities, she summed up her experience this way: “I wish I had this group when I was a new teacher because it was difficult, in my case, to mix with the veteran teachers.” Veteran

teachers such as these may think that they are being supportive when, in fact, they are not.

The approach to induction in the school described by this participant would best be described as passive (new teachers are expected to ask for help) and individualized (the new teacher gets one-on-one assistance from the person he or she asked).¹⁷ Another participant described her school as having a “sink or swim” mentality with respect to supporting new teachers:

I tracked down the teacher who is replacing me in the fall, and the school had failed to give her any information about how our school works, how the split classes work or anything. It’s definitely a “sink-or-swim” school. That’s the attitude of the staff. They are not going to rescue you because that’s part of paying your dues. You get a lot of stories about “this is how I did it when I was a new teacher.”

Another participant described teaching in a similar environment in which experienced teachers appeared to have no sense of responsibility for how their novice colleagues fared:

If partner teachers want to make you successful, they will. If they want to make you sink, they will make you sink—hard. They feel it is the responsibility of the school or the institution to support new teachers. It is not their full responsibility because they already have their job, which is to teach.

This participant also noted that experienced teachers in the school seldom shared lesson plans and resources because they felt that that new teachers, as part of their

17 See Table 7 for a detailed description of the various approaches to induction.

early career learning, should start from scratch.

Interestingly, many of the focus group participants observed that, when they received resources from experienced teachers, they used those resources not—as some veteran teachers apparently believe—to avoid learning on their own but to supplement their own ideas. They used the time they would otherwise have spent scrambling for resources to evaluate the effectiveness of the lessons they had tried and to figure out how to modify the resources to fit their own teaching styles and classroom needs.

Induction as Learning in Collaboration

Although some participants encountered a “sink or swim” environment in their first years of teaching, many others reported receiving significant support. Participants who had enjoyed a supportive environment reported that their administrators or department heads encouraged them to ask for help and that their colleagues readily offered them resources, emotional support and advice. Such a team-oriented culture made it easier for new teacher to ask for help. Here’s how one participant described her school:

The school was really good because it was so small and everybody was there to help everybody. All the teachers teach all the grades. When you come together in a group, everyone has something to offer in terms of past and present resources. My administrator was always very involved in checking up on new teachers and supporting them. A very involved group of people. I’ve had a great experience.

Teachers from both large urban schools and small rural schools had experienced learning-rich environments. Although establishing collaborative learning with grade level/subject area partners is easier in large schools, some small schools were nevertheless able to create positive environments for new teachers.

Reproducing Induction Practices

Do teachers who had difficult induction experiences tend to reproduce these conditions later on when new teachers come to them for help? Likewise, are teachers who had positive experiences inclined to be more helpful to new teachers who come after

them? Participants’ accounts of their own induction experiences and those of newer colleagues suggest that new teachers do in fact tend to reproduce the conditions that they themselves experienced. One participant, for example, who had a very positive experience collaborating with former colleagues, stated that this experience prompted her to “reach out” to a teacher who had arrived after being transferred from another school. Another participant from a school in which strong collegiality was the norm considered it a “given” that she would help a new teacher:

| Professional Culture of the School | Characteristics |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Veteran-Oriented | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers work on their own. • There is little or no collaboration among staff members. • Teachers may be friendly or distant. • Staff do not recognize the learning needs of beginning teachers. • Staff may be resistant to change. |
| Novice-Oriented | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are enthusiastic and idealistic. • Teachers interact with one another. • Staff have little expertise and tend to “reinvent the wheel.” • The staff turnover rate may be high. • Teachers may burn out. |
| Integrated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a balance between novice and veteran staff. • Learning and collaboration are both structured and unstructured. • There is a balance between expertise and innovation. • The learning needs of novice teachers are recognized and supported. |

Table 8: Characteristics of Professional Learning Cultures¹⁸

18 This depiction of school cultures is adapted from Kardos et al (2001).

The principal has asked me to support the new teacher. That's just the way staff behave. When I was new to the school, people would be helpful; they'd volunteer information. In my school, teachers swap stuff back and forth.

Some participants who had spent their first years in a culture of scarcity and self-interest appeared to have taken on some of these qualities themselves. Early efforts to challenge the status quo had given way to a sense of resentment:

As beginning teachers, we tend to be "yes" people. "Yes. I'll do that. Yes, I'll be on that committee. Yes, yes, yes." Especially at the beginning when you're scrambling for a contract and a job, it feels like a perpetual job interview so you're willing, you're willing, you're willing. "I want to do it, I want to do it, I want to do it." But eventually, you get kind of tired. And you get resentful of the people who aren't.

This comment and others like it suggest that some teachers believe that their willingness to carry a heavier load in their early years while they were getting established entitles them, as they gain seniority, to take on fewer extracurricular activities:

In terms of extracurricular activities, there's no official expectation, but in a few years I will have paid my dues and I won't feel so bad about stepping back. As a newer teacher, if you're not willing to go that extra mile, they may not keep you, and you want to make yourself look as good as possible.

Another participant who had experienced isolation in her first years had apparently come to believe that isolation is the norm for all new teachers:

I think it's just a learning curve you have to go through. If you go running for help all the time, you don't look very competent, and if they're partnering you up with someone it costs them money. It would be nice to have team teaching, but there's probably not enough money. I think you just have to figure it out as you go.

These comments suggest that teachers who experienced the negative consequences of poor

induction practices will likely be the very ones to perpetuate them.

In a few cases, participants who had had difficult early experiences subsequently rescripted these early experiences as positives. One participant, for example, who felt alone and overwhelmed when she was assigned a difficult split class in her first year, had come to see the situation as "an awesome learning experience. ... I am a better teacher because of that school year."

Although difficult experiences can undoubtedly be a catalyst for learning, participants were ambivalent when asked whether teachers needed to experience hardship to become good at their profession. "I wonder if [difficult experiences] create a bad teacher because maybe they're so negative, they get jaded," mused one participant. "They become bitter," suggested another.

Breaking the Cycle

Although some participants appeared to be reproducing the unsupportive school cultures that they had encountered, many of them empathized with their junior colleagues and were willing to

offer them better support than they themselves had received. One participant, for example, reported that he "took a little extra time" to explain the resources he

was sharing with a novice. "I didn't want to just give her a copy and say, 'Deal with it.' I know what it's like to be on the other end and just be given a pile [of resources]."

After sharing a number of stories about her efforts to help colleagues, another participant observed that she wanted to "be that that teacher who people can check in with. 'Hey, I'm new at the school. Can you help me with this?' 'Oh yes, of course.'" This participant and many others in the focus group took great pleasure in approaching newer colleagues with offers of help, support and resources. Perhaps these overtures are acts of healing and compensation for the injuries that they received as novice teachers.

Stories of early career teachers' efforts to "give better than they got" are encouraging. However, unless school administrators recognize and encourage teachers who go out of their way to help beginning teachers, a sink-or-swim mentality is likely to remain the norm. Here's how one participant described her

administrator's efforts to ensure that new teachers would have a less stressful teaching load:

Our administrator rearranged a lot of us who have been in our comfort zones to accommodate the new teachers. She's said, "Well, we don't want to put the new teachers in that situation, it's not fair to them, it's not fair to the kids." She's thinking, "Let's not screw over the new teacher from day one; you guys are used to this, you change."

Asked how she felt about this arrangement, this participant hearkened back to her own difficult early start:

I get it. She has good reasons for it. I could be fussy and say, "No, I really want to do that." But what's my reason? Just because I really want to? That's not a good reason. If that first-year teacher is going to be in a better situation, and I'm going to be in a slightly worse one. Come on.

In this case, the administrator persuaded her staff to do things differently than they had been done in the past, thereby breaking the all-too-typical cycle that sees new teachers assigned the heaviest workloads.

Because the school leader deliberately became involved, her intervention is likely to have a more lasting and systemic impact on the school's norms and practices than would the efforts of a teacher working on his or her own for change. Although efforts by individual teachers or small groups of teachers to help new teachers may create small pockets of reciprocity, they are unlikely to result in schoolwide changes.

To sum up, new teachers tend to reproduce the induction practices that they experienced for three reasons:

1. They are reluctant to ask questions because (a) they want to be viewed as competent and (b) they are concerned that their colleagues are too busy to answer questions.
2. Their tenure is insecure. As a result, they tend to say "yes" to unreasonable expectations, avoid asking questions and refrain from doing anything that might be perceived as "rocking the boat."

3. They (along with veteran teachers) do not get ongoing feedback and evaluation and, as a result, seldom challenge existing practices.¹⁹

Future Directions and Policy Implications

Largely in response to reports of high attrition among beginning teachers, much has been written during the last decade or so on new teacher induction. In addition to documenting the problem of attrition, this literature has offered solutions in the form of effective induction practices. Effective induction appears not only to reduce early-career attrition but also to lay the foundations for excellent teaching practice, lifelong learning and collaboration. As many researchers have noted, new teacher induction helps to create a positive professional-learning climate for all teachers at all stages of practice.

A Systems Perspective on New Teacher Induction Programs

Although induction occurs at the school level, its effectiveness is ultimately the product of such external factors as budget constraints, population density, the composition of the student population, district and government policies, the quality of preservice programs and the availability of ongoing professional learning opportunities. Advocates of a systemic perspective argue that all these factors should be considered when planning new-teacher induction programs.

The fact that induction involves the entire system means that no one group is willing to accept full responsibility for assisting first-year teachers. Labour agreements do not ensure that new teachers will receive training and support. Districts, which are not directly involved in the daily life of schools, seldom

¹⁹ In a classic text on organizational learning, Argyris and Schön(1978) distinguish between single-loop and double-loop learning. Whereas single-loop learning reproduces existing practices, values and assumptions, double-loop learning subjects existing organizational norms to critical inquiry. These authors and others have followed up and expanded on this early work.

have mechanisms to monitor working conditions that either contribute to or detract from teacher learning. Principals, who clearly play a vital role in new teacher induction, may lack the resources, skills, time or awareness needed to structure their schools for effective learning. Furthermore, principals are not accountable for the quality of their instructional leadership and, as a result, may not make it a priority (Pajak and Arrington 2004).

Here's how one participant describes the implementation of induction in her district:

[The district] cares about induction on an umbrella level. The division talks about [induction] a lot and puts policies into place. But then something happens as these policies work their way down and they get diluted. What ends up at the ground level is, "Here's your mentor; you're going to talk to them for five minutes in November." And that's it. It started as this big policy: "You're going to have a school mentor; you're going to have a curricular mentor; you're going to do all these good things." The reality is just not that at all.

Avoiding implementation gaps of this kind requires coherence and accountability throughout the system. Schools tend to lack the following resources, all of which are required to ease new teachers into the profession:

- Basic materials such as classroom supplies, textbooks and curriculum guides. Without these resources, lesson planning becomes more difficult and time-consuming for new teachers.
- Time. Because everyone is so busy, new teachers are hesitant to ask their more experienced colleagues for help. Furthermore, because of the complex demands placed on them, veteran teachers may be reluctant to take on extracurricular activities and the more difficult teaching assignments. As a result, new teachers, who have low seniority, often receive the most onerous and difficult workloads.
- Specialists and in-class supports for students with special needs.
- Embedded time for professional learning. New teachers need time during the day to consult with their mentors and to work alongside experienced

colleagues in professional learning communities.²⁰

Ultimately, the labour of teachers is a finite resource. Intensifying teachers' work by asking them to do more and more in the same amount of time is false economy. The study suggests that what could be effective induction practices are often undermined because teachers and administrators simply lack the time needed to implement them.

How to Improve Induction Practices

The year-four data reinforces two findings that emerged during the year two interviews: (1) what's good for new teachers is good for school improvement and (2) what's good for school improvement is good for new teachers. In other words, new teacher induction, although a unique phase of professional development, is most effective when it takes place in a larger system that supports continuous, collaborative learning for all teachers in the school. Based on participants' observations during the last four years, here are some ways in which the government, the ATA, school districts and schools can improve new teacher inductions.

Disrupt Perceived Hierarchies and Status Systems

Because new teachers lack tenure and are eager to obtain permanent contracts, they are easily manipulated into accepting the most difficult teaching assignments and undertaking more than their fair share of extracurricular activities. Stopping this cycle may require intervention on the part of administrators willing to ask experienced staff to take on additional assignments so that new teachers' assignments are more manageable. School boards can help by adopting policy that limits the number of extracurricular activities and other tasks that can be assigned to new teachers, thereby enabling them to focus on learning to teach well.

Increase Stability of Practice for New Teachers

Participants who have been at the same school for most of the last four years were more adept than

20 Many participants have access to some collaborative time each week. Schools and districts are making positive strides in this area.

those who changed schools frequently at establishing relationships and participating in their school community. They have also been more confident in assuming leadership roles. Being recognized as a community member helps boost the morale and self-confidence of a beginning teacher.

Participants also reported that they benefited from having stable and consistent teaching assignments. Although some participants noted that adapting to change had helped them become more flexible, most stated that they learned best when they had a chance to repeat lessons and units, introduce changes and evaluate the effectiveness of their innovations. Frequent changes in assignment, in other words, tend to slow down the process by which teachers acquire and refine their pedagogical skills. New teachers who are constantly mastering new curriculum and developing new resources may become trapped in meeting their basic needs (see Figure 6) and have little time or energy to undertake activities associated with long-term professional growth.

Some beginning teachers may work for years without securing permanent contracts. Factors contributing to this situation are lack of transparent hiring practices, an oversupply of teachers and the need to replace tenured staff on maternity leaves. As the Association noted in its study of substitute teachers (ATA 2010b), school boards could improve the stability of new teachers by taking these measures:

- Improve the supports and protections available to temporary teachers.
- Implement fair and transparent hiring practices.
- Ensure that early career teachers receive frequent feedback and evaluations that help them progress toward securing a continuous contract or at least understand why they have been unable to obtain one.
- Provide schools with incentives for investing in and supporting the early career learning of temporary teachers.
- Coordinate the assignments of beginning teachers so that, even if they are placed in different schools within the district, they teach the same grades and subjects in consecutive years.

Maximize Collaborative and Experiential Learning

This study confirms what the considerable literature on teacher learning has been saying for years: that

collaboration and experiential learning are the most effective strategies for fostering the ongoing professional growth of teachers. Inexplicably, many schools and school districts continue to spend money on didactic, decontextualized workshops and conferences that offer little in the way of meaningful learning and do nothing to foster a positive school culture. On a more encouraging note, many participants noted that their schools *do* engage in collaborative planning and *do* set aside time for teacher learning.

However, teachers in small rural schools are much less likely to benefit from site-based collaboration because they lack grade-level/subject-area partners. Some schools have addressed this concern, at least in part, by partnering teachers who share an interest in a topic such as assessment practices or technology learning. Some rural districts have compensated for the absence of site-based learning by organizing districtwide collaboration days. Several participants stated that they had benefited from participating in networks outside of their schools and from meeting colleagues from elsewhere in the district who share their interests and passions. Based on participants' comments, district-level induction appears to be most effective when it simply creates the time and space for teachers to meet and work together.

Although enormously valuable to new teachers who are mastering the curriculum, collaborative planning is not an effective substitute for working with a mentor, observing other teachers' classrooms and having one's classroom practice evaluated by peers or an administrator. These latter activities—which many participants noted were lacking in their ongoing professional development—help new teachers to practise and learn pedagogical and classroom management skills.

Conclusion

In their recent policy documents, Alberta Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association agree that significant systemic changes—or “transformations”—in education are needed to ensure that students in Alberta will find meaningful work and be capable of functioning as productive citizens in their adult lives (Alberta Education 2010b; ATA 2010a). Feedback from many participants in this study further supports this vision of education. The findings of the study also reinforce

a substantial body of academic research on the kinds of professional development that are most effective in supporting teachers not only in their first years of practice but also throughout their professional lives.

The study suggests that more schools and districts are finding ways to create collegial professional learning opportunities for teachers during the school day. Well planned and executed mentorship programs are one important way of supporting beginning teachers. Such programs are characterized by embedded time, a supportive school and district administration, and the involvement of key education partners, including the Alberta Teachers' Association. Teachers themselves are asking for opportunities to collaborate. A broad-based movement toward curriculum reform suggests that

learning will become more flexible, student-centred and responsive to local cultures and learning needs (Alberta Education 2011b).

In the fifth and final year of this beginning teachers study, researchers will continue to explore the themes that have emerged during the first four years and to examine new teacher induction and early career learning from a variety of perspectives. At the end of the fifth year, researchers will, as in the past, conduct telephone interviews with all remaining participants. In addition, approximately 25 per cent of the participants will be interviewed in person. The researchers hope that the results of this study will be of value to the many organizations and individuals who seek to improve teacher learning.

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Appendix A

The 2011 Phone Survey

This year, as in the past, we will not share your data with the ATA or your school district. When reporting data, we will remove any information that might identify you. Remember that you don't have to answer any questions with which you feel uncomfortable.

A. Contact and Demographic Information

1. Name and ID

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| First | |
| Last | |
| ID | |
| Convention Area | |
| School District | |

2. During 2010/11, were you teaching in the same district as in the year before?

- Yes (include maternity leave with permanent contract)
- No
- NA/Other
- Maternity Leave (no contract or not sure if returning)

If you answered *No* or *Other*, why did you change districts?

3. Did you teach at a new school during 2010/11 and, if so, was this change voluntary or involuntary?

- Yes (voluntary change)
- Yes (involuntary change)
- No
- Other/Did Not Teach/On Maternity Leave

40 • Teaching in the Early Years of Practice

If you answered *Yes* or *Other*, why did you make this change?

4. How would you describe the school or majority of schools at which you have taught?

- Urban
- Smaller, Semi-rural Town, Commuter City
- Rural
- NA
- Other

Describe your school in terms of its population, location and grades offered.

5. What was your teaching assignment in 2010/11?

- ECS/Kindergarten
- Grades 1–6
- Grades 7–9
- Grades 10–12
- NA (on maternity leave)
- NA (other)
- Substitute Teaching
- Combination

6. On balance, how has changing schools, experiencing a different administration and/or receiving a different term assignment influenced your teaching practice, either positively or negatively?

7. What was your employment goal when you first began teaching?

- Permanent Full-Time Contract
- Other

Comment:

8. When did you expect to achieve your employment goal, and in what year did you actually achieve this goal?

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | Not Yet | Other/NA |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Expected | <input type="radio"/> |
| Actual | <input type="radio"/> |

9. If there were differences between your expected and actual timelines for achieving your employment goal, how have these differences affected your life/career decisions?

10. For each of the four years that you've been teaching, describe your teaching contract. If you subbed and/or had more than one assignment during the year, report what you consider your main assignment for that year.

| | FTE | Contract | Leave? |
|------------|-----|----------|--------|
| Year One | | | |
| Year Two | | | |
| Year Three | | | |
| Year Four | | | |

Comments:

42 • Teaching in the Early Years of Practice

11. Have you taken, or are you planning to take, parental leave? Choose as many responses as apply:

- I have taken parental leave and returned to work.
- I am presently on parental leave.
- I will be on parental leave next year.
- I have never taken a parental leave but may in the future.
- I have not taken a parental leave and likely won't.

Comments:

B. Maternity and Parenting

1. Please list any past, present or planned maternity leaves.

| | Month Left | Year Left | Month Returned | Year Returned | Returned to Contract? |
|--------------|------------|-----------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| First Child | | | | | |
| Second Child | | | | | |
| Third Child | | | | | |

2. How has parenting (or the prospect of parenting) affected your teaching career and your feelings about work–life balance?

3. Have you considered reducing your FTE or amount of substitute teaching or implementing other strategies to improve your work–life balance?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Other (please specify)

C. Working Conditions

1. The following factors influence teaching and learning conditions in the classroom. Using the scale below, assess each influence in terms of its relative impact on your ability to teach during 2010/11. Feel free to comment on any area.

| | A very positive influence | A somewhat positive influence | Not an influence | A somewhat negative influence | A very negative influence | NA Maternity Leave | NA Other |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Size of your classes | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Support for students with special needs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Access to computers and other IT | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Access to traditional print and lesson planning resources | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Access to professional development | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The number of different classes you have to prepare for | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Expectations to participate in extracurricular activities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Overall quality of relationships with students | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Overall quality of relationships with parents and community | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Comments:

D. Professional Commitment and Morale

1. If you were able to start a new career tomorrow with the same salary and benefits, would you do so?

- Yes
- Not Sure
- No
- NA

Comments:

2. Comparing this past year of teaching with previous years, is your quality of life better, worse or about the same?

- Better
- Worse
- About the Same
- Other/Not Sure
- Maternity leave
- NA (Other)

Other (specify):

3. Do you see teaching as a lifelong career? Is it a career you would highly recommend to others?

- Yes
- Not Sure
- No
- NA

Other (specify):

4. The following questions assess your perceptions of your professional practice based on your past year of experience. Please answer using the following scale.

| | Very High | Somewhat High | Moderate | Somewhat Low | Very Low | NA Maternity Leave | NA Other |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Your confidence in your professional abilities | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your level of preparedness to teach this coming school year | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your level of professional satisfaction | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your overall stress level last year | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your belief that you can make a difference | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your enthusiasm | <input type="radio"/> |

Other (specify):

E. Professional Development

1. Thinking ahead to this coming year of teaching, rate the following activities in terms of their importance for your professional development.

| | Very high priority | A moderate priority | A low priority | Not at all a priority | NA Maternity Leave | NA Other |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Refining and implementing my Professional Growth Plan | <input type="radio"/> |
| Taking graduate level courses for university credit | <input type="radio"/> |
| Collaborating in a professional learning community | <input type="radio"/> |
| Online/distance collaboration or PD | <input type="radio"/> |

Other (specify):

46 • Teaching in the Early Years of Practice

2. Thinking about your teaching career to date, please rank each of the following resources in terms of their importance to your overall professional development.

| | Very important | Somewhat important | Not very important | Negative | Not available to me | Other/NA |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| AISI | <input type="radio"/> |
| A Professional Learning Community | <input type="radio"/> |
| A mentor assigned to me | <input type="radio"/> |
| A mentor I chose myself | <input type="radio"/> |
| A formal new teacher induction program | <input type="radio"/> |
| Other PD offered in my school | <input type="radio"/> |
| ATA Beginning Teachers' Conference | <input type="radio"/> |
| Teachers' Conventions | <input type="radio"/> |
| ATA Specialist Council | <input type="radio"/> |
| PD offered by my district | <input type="radio"/> |

If an AISI initiative or Professional Learning Community was important to your professional development, describe how the project operated in the school context.

3. Please rate the importance of the ATA for the following aspects of your career.

| | Very important | Somewhat important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't know | NA |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Supporting you when you have problems or concerns | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your early career professional growth | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your financial security | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your sense of professionalism | <input type="radio"/> |

Do you have any other comments/questions about ATA supports and services?

4. Have you taken on, or do you plan to take on, any leadership roles? A leadership role may be formal or informal and may be connected with a school, a school district or the ATA. Check all that apply.

| | | | | | | |
|------|--------|----------|-----|-----------------------|--|----------|
| None | School | District | ATA | Other Organization | Formal (remunerated/ recognized) | Informal |
|------|--------|----------|-----|-----------------------|--|----------|

Comment

5. What do teachers and administrators in your school do to support beginning teachers? Include formal, school-wide activities as well as informal interactions and supports for beginning teachers.

6. Based on your past experiences as a beginning teacher, are the supports you've just described sufficient? What would you add?

7. Are there any other important issues you'd like to comment on that we haven't addressed so far?

8. This year, we are using focus groups and interviews to explore early career teaching in greater depth. Would you be interested in a follow-up telephone or one-on-one interview?

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Yes, Very | Yes, Somewhat | Maybe | No |
| Interest in follow-up? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

48 • Teaching in the Early Years of Practice

9. Any other comments?



This publication is part of an ongoing series of research updates published by the Alberta Teachers' Association. Further background information about the research studies cited in this publication is available from J-C Couture at the Alberta Teachers' Association, 11010 142 Street, Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1; phone 780 447-9400 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta); e-mail jc.couture@ata.ab.ca.