Sixteen Years of Implementation of a Comprehensive Field-Based Teacher Induction Program for Beginning Career and Technical Teachers

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Introduction

Lack of highly qualified teachers (Berry, 2002), lack of adequate support (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) and an undefined criterion of a qualified educator (Thompson, Greer, & Greer, 2004) are issues that have influenced teacher attrition rates. Ruhland (2001 cited in Dainty, Sandford, Su & Behler, 2011), Osgood and Self (2003), DePaul (2000) have documented that nearly twenty-two percent of all teachers have left the profession within the first three years. From those retained over five years into the profession, many teachers leave prior to retiring (Ingersoll &Perda, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Teacher retention rates nationally approximated forty to fifty percent (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo, 2009; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ingersoll, 2003) resulting in high turnover rates. Ingersoll (2003) has termed the current levels of teacher retention and attrition rates "a revolving door" (p. 11).

The door has also revolved for the discipline of career and technical education. Heath-Camp and Camp (1990) found that over fifteen percent of educators in the field of career and technical education exit the profession within the first year and over fifty percent leave the profession within six years of the hiring date. Ruhland and Bremer (2002) found that only twenty nine percent stated they would continue to teach for three to seven years whereas eight percent were actively seeking to leave teaching profession. Among many reasons why new teachers in the career and technical training field decided to leave the profession, Crawford-Self (2001) and Joerger and Bremen (2001) revealed dissatisfaction with the teaching profession. More specifically, lack of recognition and inadequate support by the administration were among the most cited reasons for leaving.

The purpose of the induction program was to retain teachers with the ultimate goal of preserving student learning and improving classroom teaching and practices. If new beginning teachers would be appropriately inducted into the profession this would ensure their success and retention (Joerger& Bremer, 2001). Further it would afford all the necessary administrative and mentorship support required to succeed in the new profession by providing useful and relevant mentorship assistant in preparation to becoming educators (Briggs & Zirkle, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

New beginning teachers are often asked to navigate through on-going changes (Joerger & Bremer, 2001) while the first year of teaching is exceptionally challenging (Huling-Austin & Murphy, 1987; Veenman, 1984). Hence, adequately preparing and supporting beginning educators in career and technical education remains crucial (Osgood, 2001).

Induction and mentorship programs are created and instituted to provide adequate support by facilitating the complex work of new educators by preparing and equipping beginning teachers with the necessary skills to succeed in the teaching profession (Joerger & Bremer, 2001).

Induction support programs aim to provide support for continual and on-going improvement with the intention to improve classroom teaching practices and retain new educators. The adapted framework from Ingersoll and Strong (2011) is depicted in Figure 1. **Program Description**

Beginning in 1996 with the first conversations about the need for better induction systems, by 2000, a basic induction support program has been developed and implemented. From its inception, the program's goal was to provide continuous individual and organizational improvement (Osgood & Self, 2003). The program support system consists of three individuals: a local on-site mentor, a university-based instructional coach and a local administrator. The intent of the program and of the school districts administrators for registering their educators to participate is to instill educator commitment to the teaching profession and increase retention rates for the career and technical education field in general.

Responsibilities of Individual Team Members

The on-site mentor plays a very important role as they are with the new teacher on a more consistent basis over time and are more readily accessible. The mentor teacher is chosen by the participating school district. A mentor teacher is defined as:

Any teacher holding a teaching certificate who is employed in a comprehensive school or technology center district and who has been appointed to provide guidance and assistance to a resident teacher employed by the school district. A mentor teacher shall be a classroom teacher and have a minimum of five years of CTE classroom teaching experience. It is strongly recommended that no teacher serve as a mentor teacher for more than one mentee at a time (Oklahoma CareerTech, 2015, "On-Site Mentor Responsibilites," para. 9).

The basic role of the mentor is to be an active participant in the process and ensure the new teacher's success in the classroom. This is done by communicating with other team members, and providing resources, support and instruction. Often the new teacher needs to be able to freely talk about personal and professional concerns and challenges they are facing with full assurance that the conversation will be kept in confidence. The importance of confidentiality has been established and recognized. The onsite mentor is required to spend a minimum of 72 hours with the new teacher but many times, the minimum is far exceeded.

The university based instructional coach is hired by the higher education institution and must be an individual who has a record of highly effective CT teaching and the flexibility of a schedule to be able to visit the new teacher during school hours. The instructional coaches' ability to be effective with the new teachers and be perceived as an expert is critical to the success of the program. These instructional coaches are trained in the same manner as the onsite mentors and in fact, attend the mentoring training each year and frequently communicate with each other via email, text and phone. Each instructional coach will spend at least six full days with each new teacher over the course of the school year which includes three team meetings and observations.

The local administrator works day to day with the new teacher and provides support to the process. They attend the team meetings and generally work to ensure the instructional coach and local mentor have access and availability as they need on campus. One of the major and most significant roles of the administrator affecting new teachers is the overall performance evaluation which is also a criterion for continued employment. This role is not a part of the induction process. Those two roles are very distinct and the distinction must be maintained for the program to remain as a supportive not evaluative program.

Discussion and Significance

Thus far, details of an induction program have been given about the implementation of the induction program designed to change the low retention rates and to increase teaching support for new educators in the field of career and technical education. Overall, the program has delivered its promise in increasing retention rates significantly among CTE teachers at the career tech centers as well improved overall morale among new educators. Data collected throughout program's lifetime has provided valuable insights in terms of retention rates and modifications to improve the program throughout the years. The research team has used various methods of data collection over the last sixteen years including interviews and surveys. In 2012 and again in 2018, each participating tech center received a spreadsheet per cohort year of their teachers and reported to the best of their knowledge the status of each teacher. This data has been compiled and studied at length. Figure 2 gives the latest retention data available. Reasons given for departure from the profession did include areas which the program did not or could not address such as a decision of a teacher to move based on a job for a spouse, failure of the teacher to pass occupational competency tests or normal retirements.

Factors for leaving are often divided into those which are contextual, personal or systemic. It is impossible for any program such as this to address every contextual or personal issue that might arise with an individual teacher. A study examining 87 participants who participated in this particular induction program, conducted by Self, Murrell, Vucaj and Omar (in press), revealed that reasons given by educators who left the teaching profession sometimes were outside the scope of the program aims. Often though many did stay within the education profession and reported increased duties and responsibilities. These individuals indicate that the program's original mission of new teachers who "not only survive, but thrive" has been fulfilled.

As new teachers are inducted into the profession, challenges abound. In fact, when new teachers are hired, they are often given the most difficult assignments to cope with (Osgood & Self, 2003). Providing support to teachers remains essential. The support component of this program is very important because lack of adequate support has been extensively identified as the main factor for teacher to leave the profession (River, 2014; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Induction support programs offer the opportunity to bridge the practical experience new educators brings to the profession with the pedagogical context required to be successful in delivering content to students. According to Phelps (1998) new educators must understand the importance and the role of academics in programs they teach as aligning the needs of the workplace and the content programs is prominent.

Most educators can recall someone during their careers who took the time and made the effort to develop a relationship with them and in turn, impacting the career of another teacher. The mentors and instructional coaches who are involved in the program have the power to impact the next generation of teachers. Palmer (as cited in Sennett, 2004) stated this power in these terms,

> The power of our mentors is not necessarily in the models of good teaching they gave us, models that may turn out to have little do with who we are as teachers. Their power is in their capacity to awaken a truth within us,
>
> a truth we can reclaim years later by recalling their impact on our lives. If we discovered a teacher's heart in ourselves by meeting a great teacher, recalling that meeting may help us take heart in teaching once more (Palmer, 1998).

This induction program for career and technical educators entering the teaching profession has provided a solid structure to allow these relationships to develop. The hope is that future generations of teachers will have experienced and better understand the importance of mentoring others.

Figure 1

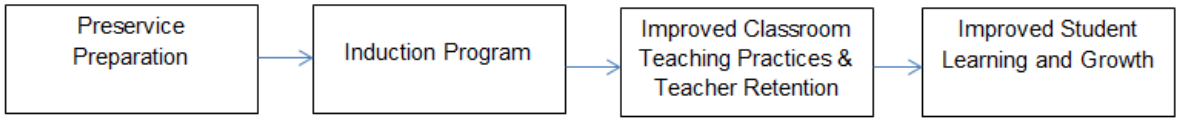

Figure 1: Theory of Teacher Development (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011)

Figure 2-Retention Rates of Career and Technical Education Teachers in Teacher Induction per Cohort

Cohort	#Of participants	Still teaching	Still in education	Numbers of retention	Total retention
1 2000-2001	12	3 (25.00%)	0	3	
2 2001-2002	45	14 (31.11%)	10 (22.22%)	24	53.33%
3 2002-2003	55	25 (45.45%)	3 (5.45%)	28	50.90%
4 2003-2004	58	20(34.48%)	3(5.17%)	23	39.65%
5 2004-2005	67	35(52.24%)	5(7.46%)	40	59.70%
6 2005-2006	58	23(39.66%)	5(8.62%)	28	48.28%
7 2006-2007	38	18(47.37%)	2(5.26%)	20	52.63%
8 2007-2008	66	48(72.72%)	3(4.55%)	51	77.28%
9	69	43(62.32%)	2(2.90%)	45	65.22%

2008-2009					
10 2009-2010	48	33(68.75%)	0	33	68.75%
11 2010-2011	47	30(63.83%)	3(6.38%)	33	70.21%
12 2011-2012	19	x	x	x	x
13 2012-2013	19	x	x	x	x
14 2013-2014	26	x	x	x	x
15 2014-2015	15	x	x	x	x
16 2015-2016	28	x	x	x	x
Total					

Note: X indicates data is still being analyzed and will be completed in time to submit a final revised paper by the March 2022 deadline (pending acceptance).

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