

Improve new teacher induction and mentoring

Pennsylvania is experiencing a major demographic shift in the educator labor force. As large numbers of newer teachers enter the profession, the need for strong mentoring and induction programs is evident in order to keep quality educators in the profession and grow the leaders of the future. All new teachers would benefit from these programs. Good professional support improves the likelihood that new teachers will stay in the field, and lack of professional support is associated with higher levels of teacher attrition.¹ Good professional support also allows promising professionals to stay in teaching and fully develop their expertise.

PSEA Recommendations

The Commonwealth should support the creation and expansion of comprehensive induction and mentoring programs for new teachers:

- Develop statewide policies that are based on best practices and require, guide, and finance any kind of new teacher induction; and
- Identify funds to pay mentors, including release time for mentors and those being mentored, and financial incentives for districts to design innovative programs.

Multiple measures

Effective support for new teachers includes comprehensive induction and mentoring, and can cut attrition rates in half.² Research has defined what constitutes effective new teacher induction. It includes:

- more than one year of developmentally appropriate professional support;
- a rigorous program to train and support experienced mentors, who (a) work in the same content area as the new teacher, (b) are compensated for their mentoring work, and (c) have release time to work with a new teacher in the classroom during school time;
- standards-based formative feedback to new teachers, in an environment that is meant to support professional growth rather than evaluate for tenure and/or job-security; and
- professional development opportunities that are job-embedded and targeted specifically to the needs of new teachers.

Retaining teachers makes economic sense for districts. Keeping energetic, promising professionals in our schools is not just wise for our students. It also is wise for district budgets. According to the Alliance for Education, “Induction has shown to create a payoff of \$1.37 for every \$1 invested.”³ Money spent constantly recruiting new teachers could be better spent on long-term investments in teacher retention and quality rather than on replacing large numbers of new teachers who enter and exit districts in a short period of time. Retaining teachers also is an important way to improve student achievement, since research consistently demonstrates that teachers with five or more years of experience achieve better student learning outcomes than newer teachers.⁴

In a report providing best practices for teacher induction, The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future shows that state induction and mentoring policies are fiscally prudent. The Commission says that while many states require teacher induction programs, only a few finance these programs. “Wong and Breaux estimate that each teacher who leaves the profession during the induction years costs taxpayers more than \$50,000. Using other industry model estimates, the Texas Center for Educational Research found that the cost of teacher turnover in Texas is \$329 million per year, if conservative numbers are used. Alternate industry models for these costs yield a far higher price tag: as high as \$2.1 billion each year for teacher turnover in Texas alone.”⁵

PSEA believes these programs are very worthy investments.

(01/10)

¹ See, for example, Singh, K and Billingsley, B.S. (1998). “Professional Support and Its Effects on Teachers’ Commitment,” *The Journal of Educational Research*, 91(4): 229-239; Ingersoll, R.M. (2001). “Teacher Turnover, Teacher Shortages, and the Organization of Schools,” Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

² Alliance for Excellent Education. (2004) “Tapping the Potential: Retaining and Developing High-Quality New Teachers.”

³ Ibid.

⁴ Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). “Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence.” *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 8(1). Available online: <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n1/>.

⁵ Fulton, K., Yoon, I., and Lee, C. (2005). “Induction Into Learning Communities.” Prepared for the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future.