

# New Teacher Induction: Investing in What Matters Most for Teachers and Students in Portland Public Schools

Barnett Berry and Scott Emerick, *Center for Teaching Quality*

## CONTEXT FOR ACTION

As is the case elsewhere, teaching in Portland Public Schools (PPS) is difficult, intricate work requiring knowledge of complex content that rapidly changes. Furthermore, educators must be able to teach that subject matter to increasingly diverse students. More students whose first language is not English are entering schools across the country, including PPS schools, where approximately 25 percent of students speak a language other than English at home.

The complexity of teaching continues to increase and the stakes for student success continue to rise, but the support for beginning teachers remains minimal in most school districts. Conversely, relative to teaching, other professions invest much more deeply in their novices. Before they practice independently, newly minted doctors must complete a highly supervised internship to earn an initial license, and then prove themselves during two five-year residencies under the watchful eye of attending physicians. Likewise, aspiring architects work under the tutelage of an approved, expert practitioner for three years before earning a license. Yet in teaching, very experienced professionals and novices have strikingly similar responsibilities and virtually the same level of autonomy and support.

Developing an effective teacher requires a phased growth into the profession that should begin with comprehensive, high quality induction. Not even the most effective teacher preparation programs can completely prepare new teachers for everything they will need to know when they enter their first classrooms. This quote from the Project on the New Generation of Teachers<sup>1</sup> accurately describes the experience of many novice teachers in most American schools.

Many new teachers ... go through their first months of school believing that they should already know how their schools work, what their students need, and how to teach well. When they had questions about their schools and their students, they eavesdropped on lunchroom conversations and peered through classroom doors seeking clues to expert practice. Having no access to clear answers or alternative models compromised the quality of their teaching, challenged their sense of professional competence, and ultimately caused them to question their choice of teaching as a career.

Under the current education model in most school districts, including PPS, new teachers are often isolated from more experienced teachers, hired late and lack opportunities to reflect on their teaching practice with colleagues. Attempts to provide some degree of new teacher support are fairly common, but most districts across the country have implemented piecemeal induction efforts. Despite increased recent attention on exemplary induction efforts as one of

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the most effective strategies for improving new teacher retention rates and skills, comprehensive and high quality induction programs remain the exception rather than the norm.

A 2004 study by Tom Smith and Richard Ingersoll shows that teachers who participate in an induction program are *twice as likely* to remain in teaching.<sup>2</sup> The critical elements of high quality new teacher induction programs include:

- Pairing new teachers with trained mentors in similar grades and subject areas;
- Reducing novices' work loads and structuring teaching schedules to provide common planning time and frequent face-to-face interaction among mentors and novices;
- Providing release time for both the mentor and novice for observations and analysis;
- Offering ongoing professional development relevant to the needs of novice teachers and giving them access to an external network of beginning teachers; and
- Developing a standards-based formal assessment of beginning teachers and the induction program itself.<sup>3</sup>

### **Defining the Issue**

**Mentoring** is a formal coaching relationship in which an experienced teacher gives guidance, support and feedback to a new teacher on a regular basis. High quality mentor programs fully train mentors, pair first and second year teachers with mentors in similar grade and subject areas, and provide release time and common planning time for mentors and novice teachers.

**Induction** goes beyond mentoring to provide an extensive package of supports, professional development, and standards-based assessments and evaluations. Comprehensive induction programs vary in their particular design, but essential elements include a high quality mentor program, ongoing professional development, access to an external network of other novices, and a standards-based evaluation of beginning teachers and the program itself.

### **WHAT HOLDS US BACK**

Despite our knowledge of what constitutes a successful induction program and its potential impact on teacher retention, the majority of states and districts do not offer these supports to their novices. According to a 2005 *Education Week* survey, only 16 states require and finance mentoring programs for their new teachers.<sup>4</sup> Oregon is not one of the states providing funding. And even when programs have been implemented, they often include only certain elements of a successful induction program. Smith and Ingersoll found that only one percent of beginning teachers nationally are receiving the comprehensive induction supports described above.

In most school districts across the country, the necessary investments to support new teachers well have simply not been made. The initial costs of providing such high quality induction programs are not insignificant. The New Teacher Center induction efforts, described in detail for exemplary districts later in this piece, can cost up to \$6,000 per teacher. However, these costs are mitigated if one considers the long-term cost savings created when effective induction efforts significantly reduce teacher turnover. Nationally, about 50 percent quit within the first five years. This turnover rate keeps schools staffed with untried novices lacking the skills needed to help students reach higher academic standards.<sup>5</sup> Even by conservative estimates, it costs a minimum of \$12,000 to replace a teacher who leaves a classroom, with other estimates reaching upwards of \$56,000.<sup>6</sup> When a teacher quits a school, districts lose money that has been spent on teacher education, recruitment, and training already provided. But most importantly, students lose because new teachers, with less than five years of experience, are generally much less effective in raising student achievement. Students, especially those in high poverty and high minority schools, are most often subjected to a revolving door of inexperienced teachers, who often leave before developing the collective teaching expertise necessary for long-term school improvement.

Despite the preponderance of evidence that effective new teacher induction stems teacher turnover, saves districts money and ultimately helps students learn at higher levels, America has never invested heavily in new teacher induction or the profession more broadly. One reason is that many people—including the policymakers and administrators who control education budgets—think teaching looks easy. They imagine teachers routinely implementing lock-step lessons, maintaining discipline, and simply grading papers for right or wrong answers. As sociologist Dan Lortie noted some 30 years ago, many people develop these views of teaching in their 12 years of “apprenticeship” as public school students.<sup>7</sup> They believe teachers’ only work is what they could remember from their days as students. Consequently, many people believe that *anyone* can teach. For many people, good teaching hinges simply on a teacher’s personality, energy, and effort; not on well-cultivated knowledge and skill, honed over time. Others believe that teachers just need to know their content—primarily because they believe that the purpose of schooling is for students to learn (or remember) the lectures that their teachers deliver. For them teaching is telling and learning is listening.

On the contrary, the reality of teaching today is quite different. It is not enough for teachers to simply know their subject matter. They must be able to translate that subject matter into standards-based curriculum which is developmentally appropriate for each student in their classroom. To make matters more complicated, beginning teachers must know how to do all of this while learning school and district policies, figuring out the basics of classroom management, and fitting into the school organization in which they find themselves. In order to successfully meet the challenges of their first years of teaching, novices need structured support from expert colleagues and mentors.

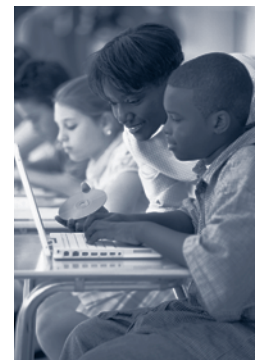
The good news is that a 2005 poll released by The Teaching Commission revealed that the majority of Americans want to improve teaching quality by investing heavily in teachers—in training, mentoring, and salaries—even if these investments result in higher taxes.<sup>8</sup> However, when it comes to building support for the new teacher induction programs necessary to produce skillful teaching, policymakers and the public seldom hear from new teachers themselves—or from the expert teachers who struggle to find the time and resources to mentor novices effectively.

Portland does, however, benefit from resources not available in all communities, including a superintendent focused on finding innovative strategies to improve teaching and learning. Dr. Vicki Phillips is committed to improving teaching quality and holding all educators to high standards, making the need for high-quality induction even more crucial. Along with district leadership, support from the Portland Public School District, the Portland Association of Teachers, the Portland Schools Foundation (PSF), and the community at large has created an environment receptive to the potential investments and reforms that must be made to better support new teachers. It is against this backdrop that CTQ has undertaken an effort to review current new teacher support in Portland, consider best practices in mentoring and induction across the country, and present a series of recommendations for moving toward action to dramatically improve the experience of novice teachers in the profession that matters most.

## STRATEGIES AND METHODS

In 2005, CTQ worked with the leadership of the PPS and the PSF to analyze a range of documents and data reports, as well as conduct a series of focus groups and interviews with a variety of educators to inform an overview of teaching quality in the district. This teaching quality framework defined what “smart” districts do to improve teaching quality and how Portland measures up. The framework included matters such as how effective teachers are identified and utilized,

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how school administrators develop teacher leadership, the kind of time that teachers have to learn new practices, and how new teachers are hired, placed, and inducted.

After a group of Portland educators and community leaders reviewed the framework, new teacher support emerged as the most important issue to address for a number of reasons. As of the 2004-2005 school year, 258 of Portland's 2,783 teachers had less than three years of teaching experience. These new teachers are spread across the entire district, but are more likely to teach in schools serving low income students, and most likely to teach in schools with the fewest potential veteran mentor teachers.

These schools serving the highest proportion of minority students were also most likely to have another type of "new" teacher. Because of recent downsizing and the district/union internal transfer rules, many veteran teachers, with seniority, have been reassigned to classes in which they have little experience or limited subject matter knowledge. CTQ research focused on new teacher support for educators during their first three years in the profession and also those reassigned to dramatically different subjects and grade levels.

From Feb. 15, 2005 to Aug. 31, 2006, CTQ conducted a series of tasks to guide improvements in new teacher induction policies and practices. Initially, CTQ completed focus group interviews from spring 2005-2006 with new teachers, mentees, veteran educators, mentors, mentor coordinators, union representatives and district personnel to inform recommendations for creating a comprehensive district plan for effective mentoring and induction. In total, CTQ spoke with more than 60 educators representing more than one dozen Portland Public Schools—including elementary, middle and high schools. The first series of focus groups in spring 2005 were broadly focused on teaching quality measures, including mentoring/induction, but also recruitment and hiring, teacher education, professional development and how the district could encourage its most effective teachers to teach in hard-to-staff schools. The series of 2006 focus group were more narrowly focused on mentoring, induction and supports for new teachers. In order to collect accurate and useful data, CTQ promised anonymity for all teachers participating in the focus groups. Consequently, educators quoted in this report are not identified.

## FINDINGS

More than anything else, we learned that the Portland school district is fortunate to benefit from a cadre of highly dedicated and competent novice teachers. In schools across the district, we consistently met with articulate new teachers deeply committed to helping students learn at high levels. In every interview, these novices discussed their students, their needs, and what more they needed to know in order to help them reach high academic levels. Many education pundits often suggest teachers are cynical about their work and have low expectations for their students; however, in two years of work in PPS, we encountered incredibly few Portland teachers who would fit this description.

Given how these novices described their preparation and the subjects they teach, the Portland school community should not be concerned about their lack of content knowledge. According to virtually all administrators interviewed, they are better prepared than ever before. Administrators consistently praised teacher education programs for getting their graduates *ready* to begin teaching, especially in terms of knowing the importance of and how to create more adaptive learning environments for the growing numbers of diverse students they teach.

While most of Portland's new teachers interviewed were positive about their preparation, they also quickly note a strong need for additional support—especially in terms of curriculum develop-

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ment; use of materials; and teaching diverse learners. Principals, veteran educators and novice teachers all expressed serious concerns about the level of support new teachers receive once placed in the district. While novice teachers reported a wide range of informal support and various unstructured mentor relationships with veteran educators, the vast majority of those interactions and supports were serendipitous and impossible to fully document or replicate. While many educators point to some form of informal mentoring available to most novices, one veteran teacher responded, “district support for new teachers is nonexistent and laughable.” A first year high school teacher agreed, “in reality, we have commiserates, but not mentors.”

Much of the district’s mentoring and induction problems are embedded within a larger set of challenges. For example, there appears to be relatively limited understanding of effective mentoring and induction models within the districts. Consequently, some teachers said they had an excellent mentoring experience solely because they were allowed to look through old files and materials of more experienced teachers. Perhaps, PPS teachers suffer from relative deprivation in terms of understanding what high quality induction models could provide for teachers. One novice teacher reported having a tremendous mentoring experience because a veteran teacher had left a cabinet unlocked for him to “rifle through to find materials.” Another teacher said she had a great mentor experience because, “she allowed me to use her curriculum binder ... the binder included all her curriculum materials she collected over her years of teaching.”

In the rare occasions when new teachers had been exposed to high quality induction, they seemed more negative about their support in PPS. A third year teacher who previously participated in the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program in a California district described the differences he perceived, “There was minimal support to me as a new teacher in Portland. The BTSA program provided a mentor and homework to do and meetings to attend during the year. I think it was pretty good and they had an orientation for new teachers in the summer with decent activities. It made you feel like you were joining something professional and were thought highly of by the higher ups.”

In addition, Portland Public Schools also have very few mechanisms currently available for identifying good teachers and spreading their expertise to novice or any other teachers. The district simply lacks models for effective teaching practice in many schools. Most administrators seem to believe that there are a sufficient number of good teachers in the district, but it proves difficult to identify and replicate their effective teaching practices. When asked to identify the most outstanding teachers in a building, the vast majority of PPS teachers (novice and experienced alike) struggled to provide an actual name. Although the district’s new “anchor assignments,” required in core subject areas at middle and high schools, have potential to someday help teachers spread their expertise through teaching and grading common lessons, our recent interviews suggested that most teachers still consider this initiative more of a burden than a help right now in its formative stages.

What follows are more details regarding the pitfalls and promise of PPS mentoring and induction, organized around the following themes:

- Universities Support New Teachers, But Could Do Much More
- Meeting the Most Pressing Needs of New Teachers
- Mentor Training and Compensation
- Logistics Continue to Constrain
- Working Conditions as Precursors for Effective Induction
- Missed Opportunities

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- Effective Mentoring Models
- Policy Context
- Recommendations for Action

*“Student teaching is like driver’s education ... you are in a classroom and an expert can always put on the brakes ... in your first year of teaching, you are driving the van with 27 kids in the back and you still have your learner’s permit.”*

## UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

In our investigations we found some instances of local colleges, like Lewis and Clark and Portland State University, supporting their teacher education graduates in their first years of teaching. For example, Lewis and Clark offers a much-needed and much-appreciated, grant-funded new teacher seminar, which includes a number of PPS novices. One novice reported that it has been “amazing to come back and talk candidly and openly to fellow graduates,” while another asserted that it was “important to check in with people we have already known in our journey to become teachers.” The seminar, which was supported by a federal teacher quality grant, convened six times (for two hours each meeting) last year to “reconnect recent graduates with colleagues and faculty in support of their work in classrooms.” But these efforts, without any substantial funding or coordination behind them, appear to be ephemeral at best. And there are a host of obstacles keeping higher education institutions from better supporting new teachers, including the following.

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First, Portland Public Schools’ late hiring practices make it unlikely that the best prepared new teachers will be hired by the district, offering little incentives for the universities to follow and support their graduates in the first few years of teaching. While many of the local teacher education graduates want to stay and teach in Portland, they often do not get hired by PPS, making it very difficult for local colleges to develop and sustain a new teacher support program for the district.

Second, although the universities offer a wide range of graduate level courses to PPS teachers (and the district pays for them to take those courses), too few offerings appear to be aligned with district goals, and in particular, the mentor training and teacher leadership skill development needed for a comprehensive induction program. None of the local universities offer any advanced teacher leadership degree with a focus on mentoring and supporting new teachers.

Third, a number of college faculty have an interest in offering induction supports and working with new teachers in the district, but there is no funding stream that makes this possible. For example, although Lewis and Clark has federal funding to support new teachers in the area and offers the aforementioned series of general support seminars, currently no mechanism exists for continuing the service after the grant expires.

Fourth, while most of the university’s graduate students in their education administration programs are teachers, there is no mechanism to link good teachers and principals as instructional leaders and purveyors of solid mentoring programs. University faculty lamented the lack of understanding among principals for “solid induction” programs, yet they also admit to not having “a place in their education administration curriculum to help them embrace and implement such programs.”

Finally, university faculty also lamented the lack of support for their student teaching placements in PPS, consequently weakening the links between how they prepare future teachers and what the district needs in its new hires. The universities struggle to find an adequate number of cooperating teachers who can mentor their interns. District administrators rarely look to universities to assist with new teacher support (although university and district officials are

beginning to map out where student teachers and interns are placed). University faculty members “negotiate placements of their interns individually” with school principals, and as a result, little coherence exists for linking teacher education and induction. We heard that the district’s current professional development and induction models are like “two ships passing in the night,” and if you added teacher education internships then it would be like *three ships passing in the night*.

## MEETING THE MOST PRESSING NEEDS OF NEW TEACHERS

The growing diversity of students challenges all teachers—but especially new ones. Despite the belief that novices are entering PPS better prepared, new teachers commonly struggle to work with second language learners and other special need students, use test data and other information to make instructional decisions, and perhaps most significantly, find and use materials suitable and engaging for the students they are teaching. Although new teachers are more likely to understand the concept of teaching differently to different students (“differentiation”), they still need to know a lot more about how to do so in their particular subject area and grade and with their particular group of students.

One second-year teacher expressed a commonly held belief, “I feel like my preparation program was particularly strong in theory and principles of teaching and I felt good about my preparation around classroom management, but I feel like I was short on materials in general—especially relevant curriculum materials.” A first-year, part-time teacher (recently minted by a local university and deemed well prepared by his principal) seemed to survive only by beginning his work day three hours earlier than required so he can find materials and seek advice from more experienced teachers. He commented, “The only way I can survive is working a full-day, even though I am a part-time employee. I need to work from 8:00-12:00 every morning for no pay to catch up and prepare for my classes.” Another second-year teacher commented, “I had some minimal access to materials and curricular supports, but I had no help on scope or sequence. I could have used at least some basic model for what could be done – it does not need to be overly prescriptive, but it needs to provide a bit of guidance.”

Many new teachers also reported feeling under prepared to deal with parents. This happens in many schools where educators feel parents are severely under-engaged and some schools where parents are more engaged than they would like. One teacher explained her experience, “as a new teacher, people seem to assume that you know things and how to deal with parents, but I have never dealt with a parent population anything like this one.” Another teacher said he was struggling to deal with parents and had no formal guidance, training or support on how to work with them. “I basically took the initiative to take a very informal poll of other teachers in my school about how they work with parents; this is a pretty typical way for me to learn here.”

## MENTOR TRAINING AND COMPENSATION

The 2005-2006 PPS mentoring program included 14 new teacher/mentor matches. The program includes monthly meetings focused on what mentors and mentees report as areas of primary concern where they need help. Previous topics have included parent conferences, assessment, lesson planning, model lessons, dealing with stress, and working with substitute teachers.

The current mentor training program is not pervasive throughout the district, and for the most part, novice and experienced teachers alike agreed that support and training for mentors is lacking. A third-year teacher expressed a common belief of new teachers that limited the

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effectiveness of new teacher support: “I felt like I was putting an extra burden on my mentor because there was no additional time or help provided for him as a mentor ... so I asked less of him.”

An experienced teacher said, “the formal mentor program is very limited ... and mentoring new teachers can prove difficult because there are sometimes strains between master and new teachers.” Although most experienced teachers who mentor understand how their school operates, some were at a loss for working with new teachers. “People react differently to suggestions or constructive criticism; it’s really hard to know how to work with new teachers sometimes.” In their defense, mentors have had very little formal training for working constructively with new teachers. A district employee with considerable experience working with the PPS mentor program commented, “Ideally we could provide a cadre of mentors with training over the course of many days previous to them starting as mentors. But right now it’s maybe 1.5 days of training tops.”

These strains were sometimes apparent from the new teacher perspective as well. “Having a mentor teacher is not always a positive experience. There are a few mentors who view their relationship with their mentee as a hierarchy. Why would we expect new teachers to be OK with feeling belittled by more experienced teachers? If new teachers do not feel empowered, then many will not have a positive mentoring experience.”

These strains and shortcomings in program offerings should also be considered from the historical perspective of the district. Training, compensation, and support for mentors have long plagued PPS educators. One veteran district official spoke to inconsistencies in the prominence of mentoring and induction, “The mentoring program has changed scope with new HR personnel over time and sometimes moves from the forefront to the background.” The historical backdrop for mentoring and induction also includes the overlap of the Portland Association of Teachers (PAT) and PPS mentoring efforts. While some educators, novice and veteran alike, expressed some admitted confusion over which elements of induction were initiatives of PPS versus PAT, all seemed to believe that support for mentors within any and all of the previous or current mentoring programs has been extremely limited.

As described later in this document, there are existing mentor and induction program models (including the New Teacher Center) that specifically prepare mentors to work more effectively with mentees through research-based trainings and assessments. It should also be noted that many effective induction programs not only invest in training expert teachers as mentors but also find ways to compensate them for their time. There are exemplary programs, like those described later in this document, that compensate teachers commensurate with their classroom salary to work as full time release mentors. In Florida, National Board Certified Teachers® are paid an additional 10 percent of their annual salary if they mentor new teachers. In Connecticut, mentor teachers not only receive an additional salary of up to \$3,000, but they can also earn advanced certification credits. In every state and district example of rewarding mentors with additional professional compensation, educators receive a strong message that this type of teacher leadership as effective mentors is deeply valued.

Conversely, in many districts across the country, PPS included, mentors are minimally compensated with small bonuses irrespective of their performance with, and commitment to, mentees. Under these circumstances, serving as a mentor often becomes viewed less as an important skill and service, and considered merely another extra duty.

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## LOGISTICS CONTINUE TO CONSTRAIN

The most pressing and persistent obstacles for achieving effective induction in PPS oftentimes relate to logistical problems in program delivery, especially around the following issues:

- making relevant program information available to novice teachers;
- pairing new teachers with trained mentors in similar grades and subject areas;
- reducing novices' work loads and structuring teaching schedules to provide common planning time for mentoring efforts;
- providing release time for both the mentor and novice for observations and analysis; and
- making mentor and mentee matches sufficiently early during the school year.

Many teachers new to PPS expressed confusion about available formal mentoring structures, and who was eligible, whether it was provided by the district, the union, or the school. One new teacher explained, "There is no information readily available regarding the mentoring program. I had to work incredibly hard to get any information about mentoring opportunities." Another beginning teacher described her struggles: "I called to ask about mentoring opportunities and was told that there was no mentor available for me. I eventually screamed for help because I felt like I had to have a mentor. My principal tried to help me but could not make a connection for me to the mentor program."

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Finding available mentors willing and capable of providing useful guidance to new teachers proves difficult in some schools and especially in some subject areas. This is especially true for novice special education teachers who reported coming into their position with limited special education training, and also finding very few other educators with experience to help support them in their efforts. A second-year special education teacher at a high school described a common problem. "My mentor experience consisted of a teacher at my school who was not in my discipline talking to me once and never again. He was actually a nice enough guy, but he had no time and absolutely no special education experience." Some science teachers expressed the same concern with finding mentor teachers within the same discipline of their science specialty. The district's increased focus on early childhood did make some kindergarten teachers feel better supported than other grade levels and subject areas. One second-year kindergarten teacher commented, "I actually had very good training for kindergarten training that came through the district's increased focus on early childhood. I could have used it sooner, but it was very helpful."

Another logistical concern is the timing for making matches between mentors and mentees. According to district personnel involved in mentor efforts, changes in the district office in the program made it impossible for the first formal mentor-mentee matches made through the PPS program to be made until December 2005 for the 05-06 school year. District contacts said this is later than usual and formal matches are usually made by the end of September, but new teachers still feel like the timing for the program is a concern. One new teacher explained, "When mentors are assigned it's usually a few months after school has started and that is really too late to start the program when the first couple months of school is when you need the most support."

Current mentoring programs also fail to distinguish between the needs of teachers new to the profession versus those who are new to the district but not teaching. Many experienced teachers new to the district or the school reported not needing a formal mentor to help learn instructional, classroom management and curriculum development strategies. But they still reported not having their needs met in terms of basic orientation for school forms, documentation,



processes and logistical insights that they needed to function comfortably during their first months at a new school. Differentiating to meet the support needs of experienced teachers moving to a new grade level and/or subject matter was another area of concern expressed by many educators across the district. Meeting the needs of teachers reassigned to new schools with new student populations, and/or new grades and subject levels seemed a particular area of interest for PAT leadership.

### WORKING CONDITIONS AS PRECURSORS FOR EFFECTIVE INDUCTION

Any effective mentoring and induction effort is largely dependent on teacher working conditions. For example, the *time* teachers and mentors have available to them to fully participate in induction activities, the *opportunity* for novices to observe expert teachers teach, and the *leadership* from school administrators who know how to support structured new teacher support efforts all determine the effectiveness of a new teacher induction program. CTQ research results revealed how current teacher working conditions severely limit the potential for PPS to provide the kind of mentoring and induction its new teachers need.

Opportunities for teachers to learn from “master” teachers seemed more serendipitous than strategic. Most secondary teachers had little time in the school day to learn from others, and most principals had little idea of how to create more time and structures to provide these opportunities. Many principals said they needed more professional development in order to help teachers analyze data to inform and change the way they teach students. Principals recognized that drawing on the experience of accomplished teachers would require “a school design and culture that supports joint teaching and learning activities.” However, few principals could articulate how they could create such a culture. A veteran high school teacher said the problem with opportunities for working together is less one of desire and more a problem with capacity and access. “The overall school culture is supportive of collaboration in some ways; it’s very rare that teachers are not interested in collaboration; you meet very few closed doors in this school. But there is also very little time available for collaboration and interaction. The desire to work together is here, but the opportunity is not.”

A new teacher said she believes “there needs to be vastly more opportunities to observe and to be observed—they can be equally important, and both rarely happen.” Another novice teacher lamented, “People say that there are opportunities to observe other teachers, but no one shows or tells you how this could happen.” On the rare occasions when teachers were able to observe other teachers, they appreciated it. “I did get to watch a veteran teacher teach and it was like going to the candy store, you could pick what you like and decide what could use for your classroom.” Another said, “Observing other teachers is great; it just does not happen nearly enough. I think some young teachers take the initiative to observe other teachers, but there is no structured time for it. It would be nice if the budget provided release time for this.” Another new teacher said her request to observe another teacher was granted only after an administrator saw how upset she was with her lack of opportunity to watch others teach, “I was able to go watch another teacher teach a lesson, only in response to tears.”

Access to support personnel was another key working condition that teachers struggled with and influenced their ability to benefit from induction. One teacher described her struggles: “As a new teacher, some support personnel are absolutely essential, if we cut our only counselor left in the building, where do I go with students who badly need their help?”

Other teachers worried that the parents and broader community did not have a true sense of how large class sizes and having fewer support personnel had an impact on working conditions

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and the plight of classroom teachers. “The only time I’ve ever requested money for a classroom purchase was for a piece of carpet, and after a long period of no reply I was told I could not order it because there was no money. But I feel like I can’t tell parents about what it’s really like in this school.” Teachers worried that the district is putting funding cuts and the working conditions within schools in a positive context to deflect criticism. But while the public relations benefit might be necessary, some said it also shortchanged the difficulties PPS teachers face in their classrooms.

The cumulative effect of these less than ideal working conditions creates a culture where teachers are oftentimes struggling to keep their heads above water and survive, rather than working toward perfecting their craft and learning from other educators. One second-year teacher explained, “It’s my goal to limit my work to 10 hours a day, but I usually work more—between 60-80 hours per week. There is a culture here of being in the building every Sunday and there is almost no getting around it.” Teachers in some schools report having so much work to do, with such limited time and support to complete it, that many novice and experienced teachers alike feel overwhelmed. During one particularly forthright focus group session with seven first-third year teachers at an elementary school, four teachers discussed their need to seek psychological help during their first year of teaching because of the extreme strain of their work load.

District personnel and educators both made the point that in the hierarchy of needs for novice teachers, the dire situation of some schools places the focus on trying to meet the most basic of needs for beginning and experienced teachers alike. Until the time available for teachers, the access to support personnel, the support of leadership, and other essential working conditions are improved and eventually met, many more complex professional growth and induction needs of teachers will continue to go unaddressed.

## MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Our work in Portland revealed several other missed opportunities in forging an effective mentoring and induction program. First, many educators in PPS recognized the potential of Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) to assist new teachers in improving their instruction. However, many teachers felt that the TOSAs represented a potentially useful but still underutilized resource. One third-year teacher said, “There are TOSAs in the district that should be able to help new teachers with subject matter knowledge, but many teachers cannot access these TOSAs.” The availability of TOSAs throughout the district seems inconsistent, and access seems to be driven more by happenstance than any intentional effort to ensure appropriate help for teachers who need it most.

The TOSA access issue is highly representative of a larger issue with consistency of support across the district and even within schools. Many of the challenges and obstacles described in the body of this report were heard with disproportionate frequency and vigor from some schools. One teacher commented, “The mentor experience in this district is very different across schools, and the experience in this school is very different across classrooms.” Some new teachers get much more support than others, and when those with limited help learn of the inequities, their responses range from dismay to disbelief and occasional anger.

Second, mentoring and induction in PPS must be considered within the context of the influence and involvement of the PAT. The union has sought to be supportive of its new teachers, but unfortunately its efforts have been considered as at odds with the districts and vice versa. The good news is the PAT wants to help its new teachers become better teachers, and this is not the case for unions in all school districts. The more difficult obstacles relate to the union and

*Teachers in some schools report having so much work to do, with such limited time and support to complete it, that many novice and experienced teachers alike feel overwhelmed.*



district reaching agreement over who has ownership over which elements of mentoring and induction programs.

The discord has been confounded by the union's lack of the capacity to solely deliver a high quality program. While there are plenty of excellent teachers who can mentor novices in Portland, union officials have not been able to independently implement an effective mentoring program. PAT seems to lack sufficient capacity, time and possibly expertise to run a comprehensive program for all Portland educators. In the past, the PAT mentoring programs suffered a similar fate as the one currently run by the district. Very few teachers were able to participate; some had a mentor in their subject area, but most do not. Not surprisingly, our interviews revealed considerable confusion among new teachers about who delivers mentoring support and what the program is supposed to entail.

One new teacher summed up the appreciation for PAT efforts but desire for more quite well. "The Union has tried to make an effort to support new teachers with mentors. It seems that some of this effort has been more trouble than it was ultimately worth. But I am glad they tried and hopefully got the wheels in motion for something else to develop."

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Finally, some educators point toward retired teachers as a potentially tremendous but currently underutilized resource to support new teachers. One district administrator familiar with formal mentoring efforts in the district said, "Retired teachers, especially those with a history of working with student teachers, have proven to be among some of the most effective mentors the district has had." And while we heard from two different schools working with retired teachers to provide mentoring support for new teachers, once again the practice is not consistent across the district or even within schools that offer the service. There are at least two schools using minimal retired teacher support. One teacher reported, "We do have two retired teachers who are available to model lessons and help plan lessons, as part of a grant from an enrichment program. A second teacher acknowledged this support as well. "I also work with a retired teacher serving new teachers in this school. We mostly discuss curriculum and where I'm headed with my lessons; it's a very useful process." Unfortunately, a third new teacher was completely unaware of the resource.

## EFFECTIVE NEW TEACHER INDUCTION

There is an emerging literature base and increasingly more examples of best practices in new teacher induction and mentoring. The research proves that such efforts are effective in promoting higher rates of both teacher retention and student achievement. A new report from Mathematica<sup>9</sup> will detail efforts to determine the impact of new teacher induction on student learning.

In recommending how best for PPS to proceed in developing an effective mentoring and induction model, we present four examples of other effective new teacher induction programs from across the country in various stages of development.

### 1. *Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment in San Mateo County, California*

One longstanding induction effort proven effective over the course of eight years is The Peninsula Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Project. When the effort was established in 1998, it served 50 total teachers in four San Mateo County districts. It has since expanded to serve more than 550 new teachers in 23 San Mateo school districts.

The Peninsula BTSA Project is built off the same beliefs that characterize induction efforts of The New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Peninsula BTSA is dedicated to providing support which is responsive to the unique professional needs of each teacher and creating collaborative relationships necessary for all teachers to succeed in their profession. The Peninsula BTSA Project reports designing support strategies intended to establish the professional norms of collaboration, reflection, self-assessment, and ongoing inquiry into classroom practice.

The key to the success of the Peninsula BTSA Project remains the strength of partnerships between beginning teachers and Advisor teachers. The Advisor teachers are veteran educators, recognized for success in the classroom, who are released full-time from classroom duties. Each Advisor typically supports between 12 to 20 new teachers each year and meets weekly with each beginning teacher at their schools to observe and coach the new teachers, offer emotional support, assist with short and long term planning, design classroom management strategies, teach demonstration lessons, provide curriculum resources, and facilitate communication with the principals. The type of support provided and the type of Advisors participating in the program are well represented by the experience of one participating beginning teacher: “My Support Provider teaches similar curriculum, has many years of teaching experience and has an in-depth knowledge of our subject matter and our community. She is always available for support in stress management, curriculum ideas and instructional advice.”

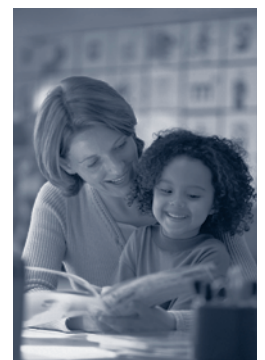
Another important element of the program is the alignment of the effort with professional development activities, professional goals, assessment processes and related district activities and priorities. There is an established Professional Development Seminar Series which complements and reinforces the work of the Advisor and new teacher. Furthermore, the support provided for new teachers is driven by an ongoing cycle of formative assessment, which revolves around the teacher’s District Goals/Individual Learning Plan. This plan is developed by the new teacher in collaboration with the Advisor and is based on the teacher’s regular self-assessment using the Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities. The Continuum is aligned with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.

The success of the program over the years has been staggering. New teachers report that the Peninsula BTSA Project has made a significant contribution to their teaching quality and success. State surveys completed by all Project constituents consistently indicate a high level of satisfaction with the Project and a belief that the work of the Project contributes significantly to the improvement of instruction. Specific outcomes cited by principals include improved new teacher morale, increased willingness to take risks, more effective problem-solving strategies, improved classroom management and organization, and more effective instructional strategies. Principals also indicate that the intensive, on-site support offered by the Peninsula BTSA Project model increases their ability to provide effective and specific assistance to new staff members.

Ultimately, the program is helping improve teaching practices, making new teachers feel more welcome and appreciated and making it more likely for the district to keep more beginning teachers. One teacher summed up their experience with BTSA by commenting, “BTSA helped provide a warm, caring environment so that I did not feel isolated and did not have to struggle alone. Engaging with other beginning teachers at my school was very helpful. BTSA also really helped me feel that the district cares about beginning teachers!”

It should be noted that the effort is made possible through a collaborative funding model. The Peninsula BTSA Project is supported by both district funds and state BTSA funds—in large part due to the success of the California New Teacher Project’s efforts to convince policymakers

*The key to the success of the Peninsula BTSA Project remains the strength of partnerships between beginning teachers and Advisor teachers.*



to enact Senate Bill 1422 in 1992, which provided for the gradual implementation of Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) programs throughout the state. The legislation also led to development of the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) which were enacted in 1997. California requires that BTSA Induction Programs ensure new teachers are mentored for two years and receive additional professional development. California continues to be fortunate, in that there is an ongoing legislative mandate and funding for new teacher induction and this does not appear to be in jeopardy. The Peninsula BTSA Project is one of the most successful examples of induction efforts in place across the state.

## **2. Beginning Educator Support and Training in Connecticut**

Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program has served as an example of how one state can create an effective mentoring and induction program within a comprehensive teacher development system. Although a number of political and financial exigencies have shortchanged BEST of late, for almost a decade the program has provided new teachers with mentoring during their first few years of teaching while also assessing them by using a process similar to the one used by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards®.

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Each new teacher has a mentor to support them in their first year of teaching. Mentors receive 24 hours of professional development related to new teacher development, the state's teaching standards, and the BEST portfolio assessment process. Each new teacher also has a support team, with one member having teaching experience in the novice's subject matter field. In addition to mentoring, the state offers content-specific seminars to novices that are designed to familiarize them with the state's teaching standards, deepen their teaching knowledge, and prepare them to meet subject-specific portfolio requirements by the end of the second year of teaching. In particular, like the National Board process, the portfolio is designed around units of instruction where the novice is expected to analyze her teaching and student learning by using lesson logs, videotapes, and student work. Two trained assessors—certified to teach in the candidate's area—evaluate the portfolios.

In 2004, teachers-in-residence at the Connecticut Department of Education assessed more than 2,000 portfolios. The components of the portfolio require teachers to demonstrate their ability to plan and implement instruction, evaluate student learning and analyze their own teaching, know their students, and adapt instruction for individual students. Approximately 85 percent received passing grades. Those who do not pass have another chance to submit a portfolio in their third year.

Several years ago it was estimated that by the year 2010, 80 percent of the state's elementary teachers—and nearly as many secondary teachers—will have participated in the new subject matter-specific portfolio assessment system for licensing, mentors, or assessors.

Unfortunately, due to changes in both political and administrative leadership, not all of the state's new teachers now receive the full support of the initially designed program. Some novices receive support for just the first year while others may have a support team but no individual mentor. Some mentors are paid a professional salary supplement of \$3,000 or more, while others may not be paid nearly as much.

Several years ago the state invested approximately \$3.6 million for 2,800 teachers, or about \$1,300 per new teacher, which includes small stipends to districts (\$200 per new teacher), clinics and seminars, portfolio scoring and training, regional service center support, teachers-

in-residence who lead training sessions, data management, and validity studies. Without deeper investments, only the state's more wealthy school districts can implement a robust model.

### 3. Mentoring and Induction in New York City

In August of 2004, New York City launched the largest and most far-reaching overhaul of teacher induction in the country. The NYC Department of Education (DOE), the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and the New Teacher Center (NTC) joined to implement a \$36 million grant program to transform the isolated teaching experience of educators into “rich opportunities for collaboration and professional reflection.”

Through the program, each mentor works with 17 new teachers, matched by grade level and subject area whenever possible. Mentors are based at the regional level, working in multiple schools within each of the 11 regions in NYC. In its first year, the DOE hired 309 full-time mentors and 30 part-time mentors to support approximately 6,000 new teachers. As was the case in Durham (see example #4 below), mentors are released full time from their teaching duties to focus on supporting new teachers. All mentor salaries are commensurate with the mentor's most recent position held. Each mentor is expected to spend a minimum of 1.5 hours with each of their 17 assigned mentees over the course of every six school days. The 30 part-time mentors were hired to fill in gaps of service.

A primary difference in what NTC provides versus other mentoring models is the quality of their mentor selection and training process. The 339 mentors were selected out of an applicant pool of more than 1,600 NYC educators, based on rigorous criteria, including previous educator performance, ability to identify high quality instruction and understand diverse student populations, and advanced interpersonal skills. After the selection process, all mentors are trained through an extensive professional development program that includes four three-day intensive Mentor Academies and biweekly Mentor Forums. Mentors also learn how to use a Formative Assessment System (FAS), including a series of protocols to ground mentor/mentee conversations in instructional development.

The initiative has made considerable efforts to reach out to principals in the district, many of whom have had negative experiences with ineffective mentoring efforts in the past and many who also expressed concern about recommending their best teachers for mentoring positions for fear of losing a core of their most effective educators. NTC has made pledges to principals to ensure that by providing top level mentors schools will be guaranteed support for their own new teachers. The effort has also included a communications campaign with school administrators to improve their general understanding about the program and its potential to support their schools.

It should be noted that the strong collaboration between the UFT in NYC, the Chancellor of the DOE and the Mayor to implement this initiative occurred across a backdrop of an otherwise contentious relationship. UFT and DOE found common ground on the issue of teacher retention and the pressing need to provide high quality support to teachers. The result was the largest collaboration between DOE and the Union since the Mayor took control of the public schools in 2002. The multilateral coalition made the funding for and execution of the comprehensive plan a reality. The group was also able to help absorb some of the costs across a state grants program and through the Mayor's Executive Budget.

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#### 4. The Beginning Steps of New Teacher Support in Durham Public Schools

Like many other urban school districts across the country, Durham Public Schools (DPS) faces severe staffing challenges, often leaving students in high-poverty schools with the least qualified educators. DPS struggles each year with high rates of teacher attrition. Durham represents an example of a district which has traditionally struggled to provide solid mentoring and induction but has recently taken dramatic action toward improving new teacher support and seems to be reaping early benefits.

In 2004-2005, the district's annual turnover rate was 17 percent, which is higher than the North Carolina average and significantly higher than its neighboring districts. And the turnover has been even more acute for novice teachers. In the years 2000-2004, an astonishing 28 percent of those new teachers left after their first year of teaching and 42 percent left after two years.

In 2001 the Durham community identified Teaching Quality as one of the top five priorities that required engaging the community to influence change within the district. Since June of 2004, the Durham Public Education Network has narrowed its focus on engaging the community to Teaching Quality-Recruitment, Retention and Reciprocal Respect. The Network determined strategies on how to have an impact on practice and policy at the classroom, school, and district levels with regard to teacher induction practices, mentoring, and principal training.

Following conversations with the Network, DPS took bold action to support new teachers by becoming the first district in North Carolina to fully adopt a district wide comprehensive New Teacher Center model (from the University of California-Santa Cruz) that relies on full-time mentors to support new teachers. The research-based model created approximately 35 full-release mentors for the 2005-06 school year to work with the district's roughly 500 new teachers. These DPS veteran teachers can serve in this mentoring capacity for up to three years before returning to their classroom positions. Although this model requires experienced teachers to leave the classroom for several years, many more students than their daily classroom schedule would otherwise serve continue to benefit from their expertise as they pass it on to new teachers.

These mentors serve no more than 15 novice teachers each, and all mentors receive extensive, ongoing training. Initial mentor training covers four core areas: developing an effective mentoring relationship, identifying new teacher needs, mentoring conversations, and formative assessments for new teachers. While mentor teachers have experience working in Durham Public Schools, it may take time for some mentors to become familiar with the specific context and challenges of the school to which they are assigned.

The New Teacher Center Mentors meet with their novices on a weekly basis to provide guidance around engaging students in learning, managing and organizing the classroom, and planning instruction. Mentors also meet weekly with other mentors for planning and professional development, in addition to meeting with the principal every six weeks. The New Teacher Center model sets itself apart from other models in the level of support it provides to the mentors themselves. This support not only gives them the direction and development they need to serve as effective mentors but also enhances their practice in ways that lead to their being even more effective teachers when they return to the classroom.

##### How Durham Public Schools' Teachers View Their Mentoring Experience

Governor Easley's 2006 Teacher Working Conditions Survey, for which DPS had a 51 percent response rate, included a variety of questions about mentoring and induction. All teachers with one to three years experience were asked if they had been formally assigned a mentor in their

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first *and* second year of teaching in North Carolina. Eighty-eight percent of DPS teachers (264) replied that they had been formally assigned a mentor and were asked a series of questions about their mentoring experience.

While it is still early to have longitudinal data on retention rates for participating teachers, it should also be noted that, for the most part, DPS mentee teachers now report more positive experiences and more interaction with mentors than their colleagues across the state.

Mentoring and Induction		
	DPS Educators— Percent Who Say Mentor Helped	N.C. Educators— Percent Who Say Mentor Helped
Providing support for instructional strategies	85	78
Providing support for completing documentation required of new teachers	95	82
Providing social support and general encouragement	93	86

An impressive 55 percent of novice teachers in Durham reported being observed by their mentor at least several times per month, while only 17 percent of novice teachers across the state reported being observed with the same frequency.

It should also be noted that the results of the survey suggest a number of improvements in the mentoring experiences of DPS new teachers since the implementation of the New Teacher Center model. Comparing the responses of first-year teachers with second- and third-year teachers reveals more frequent observation, collaborative planning, and discussions of teaching among mentors and mentees:

- 40 percent of first-year teachers report that mentors observed their teaching at least once per week, as opposed to only 19 percent of second- and third-year teachers.
- 37 percent of first-year teachers report planning during the school day with their mentors at least once per week, compared to 22 percent of second- and third-year teachers.
- An impressive 70 percent of first-year teachers had discussions about teaching with their mentors at least once per week, versus 43 percent of second- and third-year teachers.

New teachers’ assessment of the effectiveness of mentoring support suggests improvement as well:

- 21 percent of first-year teachers described mentors’ help on instructional strategies as “critical,” as opposed to 11 percent of second- and third-year teachers.
- 20 percent of first-year teachers reported that mentors’ help on school and/or district policies or procedures as critical, compared to 12 percent of second- and third-year teachers.

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Most importantly, teacher working conditions survey results indicate that mentoring experiences are important to new teachers' decisions to stay in their schools. 60 percent of first-year teachers and 51 percent of second- and third-year teachers in DPS described their mentoring experiences as at least "somewhat important" in their decision to continue teaching at their school. While the new teacher induction model in Durham is still in its relatively nascent stage, with limited data available on the impact of teacher retention rates, the early returns point toward improved experiences for participating novice and experienced teachers.

Besides a smattering of isolated district examples in the U.S., the kind of comprehensive induction we are describing can also be found systematically in many foreign countries, for example:

**Japan.** Induction for new teachers lasts one year and includes weekly training both in and out of school. To lighten new teachers' workloads, accommodate their heavy training schedule, and allow release time for extensive mentoring, the program assigns one part-time experienced teacher to each new teacher or one full-time teacher for two new teachers.

**Germany.** New teacher induction is a three-year process in which new teachers receive a reduced teaching load, participate in professional development, and observe others.

**France.** Beginning teachers are paired with their experienced counterparts for a period of two years, and in the "extra" time they are given to learn, they conduct an action research study on an aspect of their own teaching over the course of the year.

## POLICY CONTEXT

No educational initiative operates in a vacuum. To design and implement a high quality new teacher induction program, district officials need to pay attention to both local and state policies, particularly those related to teacher education, licensing, and recruiting and hiring procedures as well as current induction and mentoring and professional development practices.

Because only 16 states both *require and fund* induction programs, most exemplary efforts have been the product of district policies and implementation efforts, as was the case in the Durham and New York City examples described here.

The NYC mentoring example happened against the backdrop of a state regulation requiring that before receiving their full teaching credential, all new teachers must receive a quality mentoring experience in their first year of teaching. However, there were no new monies allocated to provide the high quality induction experience, so many districts disregarded the (non-mandatory) state guidelines outlining effective induction programs. New York City was able to step up and require quality mentoring experiences as a means toward stemming high turnover rates. Other states and districts might consider the possibility of creating credentialing processes and policies that require all teachers to complete high quality mentoring, but the statute will drive reform only if it is accompanied with additional funding.

Based on the cost projections of many districts, we have seen that policies requiring districts to review costs of teacher attrition rates might push local education agencies toward action. We have seen decision makers become much more likely to invest in better induction models if they can accurately and easily measure the costs of teacher turnover.

Policymakers and district leaders should initially focus efforts on designing, funding and requiring the most essential design elements of mentoring and induction models which prove effective. For example, consider focusing early requirements on the following:

- Ensuring a critical mass of full-time release mentors, supported by a smattering of part-time mentors (retired educators) to fill gaps (The demands on current classroom teachers are oftentimes too large to simultaneously serve as effective formal mentors.);
- Providing more than a single year of mentoring for new teachers;

- Requiring a minimum of 1.5 hours of interaction between mentor/new teacher pairs each week;
- Communicating and work closely with principals to ensure program success; and
- Continually measuring and reporting success levels of the program.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Immediately *move toward creation of a sustainable university/district new teacher support network*. There is considerable support across Portland stakeholder groups for the concept of building a collaborative between local universities and the district to create a new teacher support network that could address many shortcomings in the relationship between higher education, graduates and the school district. Such a network would have the considerable potential to jump-start data collection, program alignment, and efforts to leverage resources necessary to develop and grow new teachers.
2. *Create an infrastructure for engaging retired teachers to support novice teachers* across the school district. Many Portland educators have recognized an opportunity to engage retired and part-time experienced teachers as mentors. Current mentors report that these retirees represent a largely untapped but highly capable resource. The retired teachers would not suffer from the time constraints facing many current full-time classroom teachers but may be more cost effective than paying for the full-time release of currently employed educators. Such an effort must include an infrastructure for identifying and sufficiently training these retired educators for the difficulty of the task at hand.
3. *Conduct a comprehensive assessment of current new teacher supports and working conditions* in PPS to determine what kinds of supports are available in which schools and why and whether school environments are conducive to much needed mentoring and induction efforts ([www.teacherworkingconditions.org](http://www.teacherworkingconditions.org)). Commit to an array of available school organizational reforms that will allow teachers to move from meeting their most basic hierarchy of needs to more complex support that contributes to their professional growth and acclimation.
4. Commit toward a comprehensive *review of related resources that can potentially be leveraged to supplement formal mentoring and induction efforts*. There seems to be scattered knowledge of how TOSAs, coaches, university faculty, retired teachers, etc. have been or are currently supporting new teacher mentoring and induction. The district should commit to collecting and reporting on the overlap and potential of each of these divergent resources to be implemented under an organized umbrella of new teacher support.
5. Bring together a group of relevant stakeholders, including district and union officials to systematically *review and respond to the various exemplary induction models described in this report*. The stakeholder group should jointly decide which elements of which models would fit into a redesigned PPS induction program. The first step of the redesign would be recognizing an ideal induction model for Portland, and the assignment of work and responsibilities should follow from this process. The group should next move toward the creation of an overall strategic plan to implement the agreed upon induction model.

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