

Introduction

Teacher retention and recruitment is not new and will continue to be a national issue. About a quarter of entering public school teachers leave teaching within the first three years (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). In schools with low academic achievement, the rates are higher, suggesting that programs to reduce teacher attrition may be needed to improve teaching and learning. In a blog post entitled “The Teacher Dropout Crisis,” Aly Seidel (2014) discussed a report from the Alliance for Excellent Education that indicated that “roughly half a million U.S. teachers either move or leave the profession each year.” And, the study said, at-risk students suffer the most from the loss of these teachers. High turnover creates instability in schools, making it more difficult to have a coherent school community. With an influx of new teachers each year, repeat training and support promotes inconsistency rather than a continual improvement process. In addition, the attrition rate of first-year teachers has increased by about one third in the past two decades. This means that there are far more beginning educators, but they are less likely to stay in teaching.

I often ask principals whether it is better to recruit or retain teachers. Overall, the response is to retain them and have them want to come back for another year. In 1988, there were about 65,000 first-year teachers, and the most common teacher was a veteran with 15 years of teaching experience. By 2008, the number of first-year teachers has increased to more than 200,000. In 2013, there were more than 3 million full-time teachers according to the Department of Education. Nearly 20% of teachers at high-poverty schools leave each year, which is a rate 50% higher than at more affluent schools. That equates to one of every five teachers leaving by the next year. In high-turnover schools, students may be more likely to have inexperienced teachers who we know are less effective on average than experienced teachers (Rockoff, 2004).

Teachers are more educated than ever before, with the proportion of those holding master’s degrees increasing to 50% from 23% since the early 1960s. Only 6% of teachers are African American; 5% are Hispanic or Asian or come from other ethnic groups. Men represent barely a quarter of teachers; this is the lowest level in four decades.

We also know that comprehensive induction and new teacher support programs have made a difference for many new educators. States spend millions of dollars each year to replace teachers who have left the

profession rather than investing in implementing a process that supports teachers' learning. In both small and large districts around the country, a study by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007) found that the costs of recruiting, hiring, and training a replacement teacher can be substantial. In Granville County, North Carolina, the cost of replacing each teacher who left the district was just under \$10,000. In Jemez Valley, New Mexico, a small rural district, the cost per teacher leaving is \$4,366. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the average cost per teacher leaver was \$15,325. In a very large district like that in Chicago, the average cost was \$17,872 per leaver. The total cost of turnover in the Chicago Public Schools is estimated to be more than \$86 million per year.

Over the last 20 years, the importance of teacher induction has gained support within the 50 states. The proportion of new teachers receiving induction support rose from 41% in 1990 to almost 75% in 2008 (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2010).

WHY TEACHERS QUIT

Surveys completed by first-year teachers identify a variety of factors that contribute to their leaving or their willingness to stay and continue. One of the most common reasons teachers leave is lack of support from the administration, specifically the principal. Principals who make a concerted effort to create conditions that support and nurture new staff have greater teacher retention. Many teachers remark that although tangible items are very useful in the classroom, it is personal interaction and communication with the principal that make the ultimate difference in their decision to return to or leave a particular school.

New teachers usually find that they are unprepared for the reality of the classroom. In addition to not having building principal support, surveys found the following as factors for teachers leaving:

- Not feeling valued
- Feeling isolated and alone with their problems and without access to someone to help them
- Too much paperwork, lack of planning time, and not enough time in general
- Student behavior
- Lack of knowledge about the required duties and assignments within their grade level and school
- Inadequate salary and benefits
- Relocation and family commitment

While teacher retention is addressed, the goal may not be to achieve zero turnover rates. There are many factors involved in teachers leaving,

including personal reasons, such as relocation or retirement, that are not controlled by the district or school. Some new teachers may also find that teaching is just not for them and that they are better off making the choice to leave. The need to have a well-managed system of support, including entrance and exit surveys, is paramount in staffing schools.

NEW TEACHER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Districts around the country refer to new teachers with a variety of terms: *beginning*, *lateral entry*, *inexperienced*, *rookie*, and *novice*. This book uses many of these terms interchangeably, and how you describe your new educators will depend on the vocabulary of your area. For our purposes, a *new* or *beginning* teacher may be one who

- has no prior background or experience.
- may have certification and college coursework but has just been hired.
- has experience but is moving into a new district or school.

Induction and new teacher support programs are the activities and strategies used to grow a novice teacher into the status of proficient educator. These programs include orientation, professional development, mentoring, and peer support groups. Over the past 20 years, the number and type of induction programs have increased steadily. In 1990, 50% of new teachers stated that they participated in some kind of induction program, while in 2008, 91% had been involved in some kind of support program during their first year of teaching. Twenty-seven states require some kind of induction program for new teachers (Goldrick, Osta, Barlin, & Burn, 2012).

While the number of induction programs has increased, the kind of support that states, districts, and schools provide varies. The most common is regular supportive communication from the principal or other administrators. Some say that they receive ongoing support from a mentor teacher. Collaboration and planning with other teachers was also high on the list.

However, it is the level and quality of implementation that makes all of this work. Numbers and data speak loudly to retention and attrition rates for new teachers, but it is what happens within the school walls that will truly make a difference.

In the 2012–13 MetLife “Survey of the American Teacher” (MetLife, 2013), new teachers reported being greatly stressed by administrative duties, classroom management, and testing responsibilities as well as by their relationships (or lack thereof) with their students’ parents. Although some of the reasons are beyond our control, we should ask ourselves what we can control and how we can resolve the issues. Recognizing and understanding the barriers should be the integral focus of a strong induction program. Analyzing and implementing an action plan is an obligation and an opportunity to make a difference in new teacher support.

4 SUPPORTING NEW TEACHERS

Teachers with fewer than five years of experience provided me a list of items that they felt would have been beneficial in their retention. They suggested the following:

- Daily time to interact with their mentor or other highly qualified educators in their building and on their grade level.
- A mentor who was nonjudgmental, provided constructive feedback, and cared about them professionally and personally.
- Someone who checked on them every day and asked what they needed both tangibly and emotionally.
- Detailed information about the expectations at their school, specifically from the administrative staff. This included goals, behavior policies, standards and lesson planning, and community relationships.
- A monthly (or more frequent) support group where they could meet with other first-year teachers and their mentors to discuss like issues and concerns. This was specifically a time to vent and learn how to deal with the daily issues of teaching.

Before beginning or supplementing a new teacher support process, take time to review the following guiding questions and reflect on current practices.

- What are you doing well?
- Do you have a new teacher support program in place at your school?
- Who is conducting new teacher professional development in your school?
- Where can you make improvements?
- Do teachers want to stay at or leave your school?
- How have you implemented your own personal action growth plan?

RATIONALE FOR SUPPORTING NEW TEACHERS

Teachers make a difference in the lives of students every day. The impact that one teacher has on a student is immeasurable in relationship building, student achievement, and lifelong skills for learning. If we recognize that teacher quality is the greatest predictor of student success, we see that the need to develop and implement a well-designed support program could not be more critical.

All of us should have a goal of retaining effective teachers and having them want to return to education year after year. The ownership of teacher retention should be a concerted effort at the school level through a continuous, well-designed flow of professional development

and support targeted at the skill and knowledge development of new teachers. Our new staff must have close access to support from the building principal, mentors, and colleagues who can provide their expertise in curriculum design, classroom management, and instructional delivery. Schools should develop a plan that will

- provide sustained professional development that is relevant and aligned with teachers' needs.
- model, apply, and allow for implementation of classroom management and instructional strategies.
- allow for administrative support, specifically from the building principal.
- improve the level of teacher satisfaction.
- raise student achievement through teacher capacity building.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

I wrote this book to help with new teacher support. It is designed for all administrators, including principals, assistant principals, coaches, mentors, lead teachers, and other school leaders who want to make a difference. With public education in the national news, it is imperative that we take ownership of how we change the way we support and develop our teachers so that our students are the winners. New teachers are our link to improving teaching and learning, and with so many coming into the profession, we cannot ignore the fact that we are clearly in charge of their success. The question is, what are you doing to retain and build capacity with your new staff members?

This book presents the actions and strategies needed for administrative leaders to take charge of what happens with new teacher induction and support. There are both *what to do* and *how to do it* ideas and suggestions based on real-world school scenarios. Everything in the book is based on best practices from leadership and teaching and years of experience as a teacher, instructional leader, mentor, and professional developer. It is also based on stories and anecdotes from hundreds of conversations with educators around the country.

It does not contain every possible strategy, method, or suggestion for new teachers' success, but it presents ideas that administrators can use and implement. It does not guarantee 100% retention, but it does provide strategies for improving new teacher support.

I will hope that everyone reading the book has some remembrance of being a first-year teacher and how hard it was to overcome all of the obstacles. If you reflect back on your first year and think of all the things you wished you had known prior to the first day, you will be able to empathize with the need for support and guidance that your new staff deserves.

I hope that you will find something that you can use in your school to help with building capacity for teaching and learning. If it just takes some small tweaks in what you already have, then have fun with some new strategies and ideas. Whatever the case, just do something that you can be proud of and call your own. After all, you are the instructional leader for all around you.

It is my intention to have this book validate some of the things you are already doing in your building and also to provide you with some additional ideas and suggestions. You must decide where your most urgent needs are with your new staff, challenge your current practices, and create an action plan that is personal to you as an instructional leader.

It will take some effort and time on your part to focus on what is needed in your building. Your job as an administrator is not easy, and balancing the day-to-day routines will be difficult, but the final decision of building a school culture that improves teaching and learning is up to you.

HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

This book is simple to use. Each chapter includes five common points. These will help you organize your thoughts and actions as you begin to develop a plan for new teacher support. The purpose is to provide you with simple and easy-to-use strategies, suggestions, and reflections that will improve teacher effectiveness in your school. Logistical ideas and strategies that administrators can implement are included in each chapter. Personal stories from the field, related to the needs of new teachers, are included to reinforce the strategies presented in each section. Please feel free to reflect on each and relate it to your own experiences. You may find that you won't read the book in order, but rather pick out a strategy related to your need.

Quotes That Support the Work

When I was in college, I took a course in literature and found that the professor began each day with a quote related to the topic of the morning. At first, I really did not understand the purpose of this, especially since I was a math and science major, but I came to realize the importance that each quote had for my learning. The quotes are designed for you to use to reflect and share your experiences with others. Many of my instructional leaders use these on staff and parent newsletters, as an opening discussion starter at meetings, and as a reflective part of professional learning team time.

Stories From the Field

My work in education has taken me to many school districts, schools, and individual classrooms. From the moment you walk into a school building to the time you walk out, there are always stories of educators doing the right, and sometimes wrong, things in teaching. The stories are intended

to support your thoughts about new teachers. All of them are true and reflect the learning experiences that made new teachers into great educators. As the instructional leader, please use these stories or some of your own to share your background and personal anecdotes with your new teachers. This will help you build positive relationships.

The Administrator's Role

This section provides background and information that support the suggested strategies found in the book along with current trends and research-based practices. The book presents ideas for implementing a new teacher support process or improving an existing school-based program.

If we recognize that teacher quality is the greatest predictor of student success, we understand the need to develop, implement, and monitor a well-designed series of support processes within our building.

What Else Can I Do?

This section provides specific ideas and suggestions that leaders can use within their own building to help new teachers be successful. These are content-generic, are appropriate for all grade levels, require little time for preparation, and are based on research into best practices. In some cases, checklists and implementation worksheets are provided to help guide your action planning. Multiple templates are included to help in your discussions and support processes.

Self-Reflection Questions

John Hattie, in *Visible Learning* (2009), wrote that he found that students who reflect on their work and anticipate their scores have greater achievement levels. While his findings were related to students, it is important to note that adults can also effectively estimate their own performance and level of achievement. There is power in setting goals, enhancing learning, and gaining confidence in trying new opportunities. I encourage not only you but also your new teachers to reflect and assess each day on the successes and challenges. The self-reflection section has questions related to the specific topic and will allow you to think about the impact you are making as you move through the year. You should be able to chart your journey as the instructional leader for your new teachers and identify your strengths and areas for improvement.