

Introduction

Remember your first teaching experience? Your feelings probably vacillated between exhilaration and sheer terror. After years of study and anticipation, you were finally a teacher. You were on the other side of the desk, in charge of the learning experiences of many students. The students were counting on you. Their parents and the principal had great expectations of you. You were filled with questions and self-doubt, however. What does the principal expect of me? How are things done in this school? How will I know if I am doing a good job? Will I fit in?

The answers to these questions are critical. If you remember your first year with pleasure, you probably had all or most of your questions answered for you. If your first year was miserable, you probably had to figure out the answers for yourself.

Our intent is to stimulate your interest in the vulnerability of the novice teacher and in the role that a principal can play in guiding a beginner toward becoming a first-rate teacher. Our premise is that principals hold the key to the professional development of beginning teachers.

Since the second edition of *From First-Year to First-Rate* was published in 2001, the teaching force and teacher induction have undergone dramatic changes. An aging population of teachers is retiring at accelerating rates, and a new population of teachers is entering the profession. Although many new teachers graduate from traditional preparation programs, a growing number of new teachers enter teaching from other careers (Feistritz, 2005) and multiple pathways.

Research on the needs of beginning teachers and the importance of teacher induction programs has proliferated. The growing concern about new-teacher attrition and the public demand for quality teaching have prompted many schools to create induction programs. The

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passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), requiring quality teachers in every school, and research documenting improved retention of teachers who participate in induction programs (Goodwin, 1999; Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., 1999; Weiss & Weiss, 1999) have stimulated the development of state and local induction programs. However, the nature and funding of these programs vary considerably. During the 2003–2004 school year, only 15 states required and funded mentoring or induction programs (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Most schools are required to initiate and maintain their own programs. This results in financial hardship, particularly for schools in poverty areas, and often leads to the elimination of programs.

Beginning teachers continue to leave teaching at record rates. Researchers suggest that beginning teachers leave at a rate of 20% to 30% (DePaul, 2000), or roughly one third within the first three years (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Schwalbe, 2001; Tye & O'Brien, 2002), and 50% by the end of five years (Anderson, 2000; Ingersoll, 2001). According to Weiss and Weiss (1999), 9.3% do not make it through the first year.

Problems contributing to teacher attrition include the lack of quality induction, unfavorable school working conditions (Brock, 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003), and inadequate compensation (Recruiting New Teachers, 2000). In some cases, induction into the teaching profession exists in name only, consisting of but a brief orientation to school policies. In other cases, induction programs lack local input and administrative support, are irrelevant to the culture of the school, have inadequate funding, or exist in schools with unfavorable working conditions. Even the best induction program cannot compensate for an unsatisfactory work environment and inadequate compensation.

A successful beginning is critical to a teacher's career as well as to the education of students. When beginning teachers do not succeed, everyone loses. The effects of new-teacher attrition are disruptive to school programs and costly to new teachers as well as students, parents, administrators, policymakers, and taxpayers. Clearly, the success of first-year teachers needs to be a concern for everyone.

Several factors combine to make the first year difficult. For many first-year teachers, the career transition is paralleled by personal transitions. After 17+ years as students, the new graduates enter the world of adult responsibilities. They often undergo a

lifestyle transformation, change places of residence, and become financially independent. The difficulty of the transition is often underscored by the loss of supportive college peers and professors.

Adults who enter teaching through intensive alternative certification pathways may be required to transition into the pressures of full-time teaching while still acquiring pedagogical, curricular, and classroom-management skills. Without adequate support, new teachers can find the pressure overwhelming.

The expectations at the new schools are challenging. New teachers join faculties in which friendships and social groups are already formed. They often receive the toughest assignments, the most difficult classes, and the fewest resources. The cultural norms and shared history of the school are unknown to them. The general teaching methods that they learned in college need to be adapted to the specific needs of the school setting. Meanwhile, the administration and the parents expect the expertise of a seasoned veteran. The requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act have increased the pressure for quality performance by new teachers, and many schools are linking new-teacher assessment to their induction programs.

Lifestyle and career transitions combined with changes in interpersonal relationships produce stress and loneliness. First-year teachers report feeling overwhelmed and isolated. They feel inadequate as teachers and are unaware that others experience similar problems. Without support and guidance, beginners often grasp the first strategies that work and cling to them throughout their careers. Little professional growth occurs. Other beginners become disillusioned and quit teaching after the first year.

Principals can play a key role in a new teacher's critical first year by providing support and assistance. Clearly, principals want beginning teachers to succeed. Most principals begin the year with an orientation and intend to provide ongoing support. Unfortunately, as the year's momentum builds, good intentions are overshadowed by more immediate administrative concerns. The beginning teachers and their students become victims of benign neglect.

From First-Year to First-Rate is written as a handbook for administrators who want to develop an effective induction plan for first-year teachers. The book provides a profile of the beginning teacher's needs, expectations, common problems, and transition issues. It includes a framework for structuring yearlong assistance and strategies for problem solving. We draw from our experiences as school principals,

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college professors, and researchers on the topic of first-year teachers. We enhance our writing with a review of the literature on teacher induction and information shared by our students.

We begin with a look at a profile of a beginning teacher. Some new teachers have just graduated from college and are dealing with multiple issues. Others are older, entering or returning to teaching after pursuing parenthood or other careers. Some new teachers enter through alternative certification programs and have a unique set of induction needs. The veterans who are transferring into a new school after several years elsewhere are often overlooked. We identify the problems of beginning teachers as well as the challenges that principals face in assisting novice teachers. We examine the varied social cultures of schools and the difficulty that beginners encounter in adapting their generic college preparations to specific school contexts. We outline positive steps that a principal can take to design a comprehensive induction program. We share ideas for the initial orientation, methods for selecting and training mentors, guidelines for helping beginning teachers, and strategies for measuring program success, and we conclude with a plan for integrating induction and career-long development. We also include examples of successful induction program practices and teachers' reports of positive orientation experiences and things they wish had been done in their early years.

The changes that are reflected in the third edition include greater attention to changes in the teaching force, the dissimilar challenges and needs of beginning teachers, and the need for induction programs that offer practical applications that improve classroom teaching and student learning. To that end, increased attention is paid to the role of the principal in providing direct assistance to new teachers, particularly in the areas of classroom management, working effectively with parents, and differentiated teaching and assessment strategies for an increasingly diverse student population.

The third edition also includes more voices of first-year teachers as well as updated references.

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