

Kentucky Department of Education  
Division of Exceptional Children Services  
Personnel Development Taskforce

Teacher Retention Literature Review

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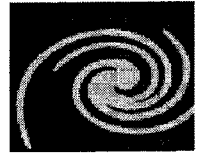
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# Supporting Beginning Teachers with Heart and Mind: A Decade of Lessons Learned from the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project

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*Nothing is more important for student learning than the quality of the classroom teacher. A teacher induction program that focuses on new teacher support and classroom practice while sustaining the idealism and passion of beginning teachers offers hope for our students and our schools.*

Beginning teachers enter our nation's classrooms filled with passion, idealism, and the commitment to make a difference for their students. Too often, however, they find themselves embarking on a journey isolated from their colleagues and faced with difficult working conditions, a lack of materials and resources, and the most challenging classroom assignments. They are shocked by these harsh realities and by a passionless system that has forgotten its most valuable resource - its teachers.

The quality of the teacher is the single most important ingredient in improving student achievement. An investment in teacher quality needs to start at the earliest stages of a teacher's career and continue throughout a professional lifetime. The work is not just about beginning teachers and induction programs. As our nation hires more than two million new teachers this next decade, we have the chance to transform the teaching profession by creating induction programs that nurture new teachers while promoting the highest standards of classroom teaching.



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To do this we need to break loose of the traditions that have divided us and build comprehensive models of teacher development. Universities and schools, administrators, teachers, bargaining units, and teacher educators must come together to create systems grounded in principles of effective teacher education and professional development. It's about establishing system-wide norms and practices of professionalism, career-long learning, and inquiry into practice. It's about making a commitment to improving education for America's culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students and the professional lives of the teachers who serve them.

### **THE SANTA CRUZ NEW TEACHER PROJECT: An Integrated Model of Support and Assessment**

For the past eleven years our Santa Cruz New Teacher Project [SCNTP] has, with remarkable success, supported over 1,400 K-12 teachers make the difficult transition into the teaching profession. The SCNTP is led by the Teacher Education Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in collaboration with the Santa Cruz County Office of Education and sixteen school districts in the greater Silicon Valley and Santa Cruz area. Together, across institutional boundaries, stakeholders in the consortium have built and sustained a program that nurtures both the heart and mind of every first- and second-year teacher --- working to ensure a highly qualified, committed and inspired teacher for every student.

Currently serving over 320 beginning teachers, our SCNTP is part of California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program, a state-wide initiative jointly administered by the California Department of Education and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Implementation is funded by state monies [\$3,000 per beginning teacher] which are then augmented by our local school districts according to the number of beginning teachers participating in the our program at a rate of \$2,100 per teacher. This investment in teacher induction is seen by both the state and participating districts as a cost-effective way to promote teacher quality and increase teacher retention.

Our project's philosophy is that teaching is complex and that the process of becoming a teacher involves career-long learning. We recognize that new teachers enter the profession at different developmental stages and with individual needs. We believe that support should be non-evaluative, embedded in classroom practice, and suffused with the language of hope, caring, and equity. Furthermore, we have learned that changes in instruction are most likely to occur when teachers are given the opportunity to assess their practice against recognized professional standards and to construct solutions to their own classroom-specific challenges.

### **Partnerships Between New and Veteran Teachers**

At the center of our work are the partnerships that form between the beginning teacher and the new teacher advisor, an exemplary veteran teacher on loan full-time from our participating districts for a period of two to three

years. Matched with beginning teachers according to grade-level and subject matter expertise, our advisors mentor fourteen first- and second-year teachers.

Building a strong, trusting relationship with each new teacher is the crucial first step for advisors and fundamental to the success of their work.

Our advisors meet weekly with each new teacher for approximately two hours before, during, or after school. While in the classroom, advisors teach demonstration lessons, observe, coach, co-teach, videotape lessons, respond to interactive journals, or assist with problems as they arise. This familiarity with the students in the class, the overall curriculum plan, and the organizational environment, helps an advisor provide mentees with context-specific support. Time outside the classroom is spent planning, gathering resources, providing emotional support and safe structures for feedback, and facilitating communication with principals.

In addition, new teachers receive release days for observation of other teachers, curriculum planning, reflection, and self-assessment. A monthly seminar series serves as a network for new teachers to share their accomplishments and challenges in a learning community of peers. Special attention is paid throughout to literacy, language development, strategies for working with diverse student populations, and the needs of English Language Learners.

Together with their advisors, beginning teachers develop a portfolio that maps out and documents the teacher's professional growth while encouraging reflection, goal-setting, dialogue, and assessment. This collaborative portfolio process is a central feature of our model of support and assessment, and helps beginning teachers connect teaching, learning, and assessment. One second year teacher and UCSC Teacher Education Program graduate notes:

*"The portfolio process has supported me in many ways. It gave me an understanding of where I was, a vision of where I was going and how to get there. Without some way of focusing during those overwhelming first years of teaching, you can feel as if you are not moving forward. The reflection and documentation helped me see the progress I had actually made."*

Key to this portfolio process is the advisor's guidance and assistance beginning with the collection of information about the new teacher's classroom practice. This data is then used by the new teachers as they self-assess on the SCNTP's Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities. The Continuum is aligned with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (1997) which are organized around broad categories of knowledge, skills, and abilities that characterize effective teaching: organizing and managing the classroom, planning and delivering instruction, demonstrating subject matter knowledge, assessing student learning, and participating as members of a learning community.

The Continuum serves, then, as a tool for formative assessment and a catalyst

for reflection and professional dialogue. With the help of their advisors, new teachers develop an Individual Learning Plan based on information gathered during this assessment and focused on a particular standard area.

Over the course of the year, our portfolio process is carefully supported during the weekly new teacher-advisor interactions and during the monthly seminars where sanctioned time is available for portfolio development. Advisors help new teachers select representative items for their portfolios; these typically include journal entries, documented observations, student work, lesson plans, teacher-created materials and assessments, letters, pictures, video- and audiotapes. Each item is accompanied by a written explanation of how it demonstrates the teacher's professional growth or the growth of his/her students in relation to professional goal(s). The portfolio process also helps advisors identify the most effective form of assistance for their mentees.

### **LOOKING AT RESULTS: The Impact on Teachers and Schools**

New teachers and principals report that participation in our program has made a significant contribution to the quality of their teaching and to their success as a beginning teacher. A pilot research study in the area of literacy development has shown that student achievement in the our new teachers' classrooms matches that of students taught by veteran teachers. Evaluation studies over the years also show that our beginning teachers exhibit increased job satisfaction, are retained at higher rates, work more effectively with diverse students, and are better able to problem-solve around issues of instruction and student achievement. Beginning teachers also report that they welcome the regular observations by their advisors and find them essential for their professional growth.

School officials and administrators also note the positive impact of our program; in a recent principal survey 95% of respondents credited the SCNTP with significantly improving beginning teacher performance. Specific outcomes cited by principals include better new teacher morale, increased willingness to take risks, more effective problem-solving strategies, improved classroom management and organization, and more effective instructional strategies.

We are also finding that this teacher induction program is not just about supporting new teachers; it is about building teacher leaders and ultimately changing school cultures. Our alumni are impacting school cultures as they try to create collaborative opportunities and structures once they are no longer participating in the SCNTP. Principals note that our collaborative model of support is changing relationships among teachers and promoting the establishment of these professional norms for entire staffs.

Our SCNTP alumni have learned to welcome the opportunities to observe and be observed by their colleagues; their doors are always open. They are assuming leadership roles early in their careers as they make presentations to colleagues on site, attend literacy study groups, encourage by example and by

advocacy veteran colleagues to try new strategies, engage in collaborative action research, and request sanctioned time to observe and coach one another. As a result, administrators are beginning to set aside time at staff meetings to allow for reflective conversations and problem-solving on a monthly basis; others are finding ways to support colleagues observing each other's classroom practice.

In addition, our veteran advisors return to their school districts with renewed excitement and passion for teaching, a broader perspective on education, and the communication and leadership skills to make a difference. After working in numerous schools, visiting countless classrooms in the company of their mentees, and sitting at the work tables in those schools, our advisors develop a wonderfully rich picture of education across our region. After fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years and more of teaching, these veterans have stepped out of the unique circumstances of their own classroom practice into a more expansive professional landscape.

They also return to their classrooms with new ideas and fresh approaches. An advisor notes,

*"In working with [my colleagues] in a reflective manner, I am becoming more reflective about my own practice and its effects on students. And through our work to implement various strategies, my own repertoire of teaching methods is ever-increasing. When I return to a classroom of students, I will bring with me an enriched and stronger practice."*

Returning advisors also note that they will never go back to "the way things were before." They return to their schools and classrooms with a renewed commitment to and passion for teaching. They have learned to see themselves [and their new teachers] as change agents who have the skills and capacity to change schools by providing strong educational and instructional leadership. These former advisors serve as school-site and district-wide curriculum leaders, union representatives, professional development school coordinators, as well as, site administrators. One has successfully led the reform of her district's teacher evaluation process, shifting it to a collaborative model of focused professional growth which uses the SCNTP Continuum of Teacher Abilities.

### **LESSONS LEARNED: What Makes the Difference**

As beginning teachers are encouraged to reflect upon, analyze, and share their growth over time, we as a program continually seek to identify the lessons we are learning about new teacher support and assessment. We feel that our success rests in some very important fundamental features of our model and in our project's commitment to nurture the heart as well as the mind of all of our participants --- both the veteran and the new. Sharing these lessons here might serve to help others as they seek to create and maintain effective induction programs.