

## Induction for special educators

### Upcoming Dates

**2/26 - 2/27/2013**  
8th Annual Induction & Mentoring Conference (Springfield, IL)

**6/25 - 6/26/2013**  
4th Annual Beginning Teacher Conference (Champaign, IL)

If you would like to help plan one of these conferences, please contact: [intc@illinois.edu](mailto:intc@illinois.edu)

The Cooperative Association for Special Education (C.A.S.E.) is a special education joint agreement comprised of seven school districts located in DuPage County. Because many of the new staff members and their mentors are specialists (e.g., physical or speech therapists; vision and hearing itinerants) rather than classroom teachers, INTC differentiated the typical mentor training for C.A.S.E.

Special education staff have special needs. Special education staff—especially younger and inexperienced ones—have particularly high turnover rates, so focus on them is critical. More than general education teachers, those in special education complain about lack of

administrative/colleague support and about role problems (e.g. paperwork; class size; role ambiguity)—all of which lead to increased turnover. It is best when a special education professional has a same-role mentor (e.g. another speech pathologist) in the same school, but this may be impractical in many districts.

Lessons learned at C.A.S.E. have implications for other districts throughout Illinois:

- Consider assigning each special educator two mentors: first, a same-building buddy who is available for logistics and personal support, and, second, a same-role mentor in another building (or district) who could provide periodic observations plus email/phone support.
- Use terms such as "new staff" instead of "new teacher" since many of these people are not in teaching positions.

• Suggest venues for observations (e.g., IEP meetings, parent conferences) that would not violate issues of confidentiality. This is necessary because many of these staff are not in classrooms.

• Work closely with the site administrator to plan for workshops and trainings. The administrator will identify specific needs and emphases so the presentations will be most relevant to participants.

• Learn about the various specialist positions from the mentors themselves. Let them assist in identifying their roles, responsibilities, and tasks so these topics can be addressed most effectively.

INTC can help **your** district differentiate trainings and implement individualized induction solutions. Contact us at: [intc.education.illinois.edu](http://intc.education.illinois.edu)

## National research validation on the importance of induction

In a recent article, leading induction scholar Richard Ingersoll provides data-based confirmation of the importance of induction programs and their impact on reducing turnover.

Over the past few decades, the percentage of beginning teachers to veteran teachers in the United States has skyrocketed. The most common teacher in the United States is a beginner in the first year of teaching.

Between 40% and 50% of teachers leave within their first five years—and this rate has been climbing, not decreasing, for the past two decades.

Teacher shortages in certain areas—such as math and science—and shortages of minority teachers are due primarily to turnover, not insufficient production of new teachers in these areas.

Lack of support from school administrators is a main factor in beginning teacher turnover.

Research shows that—after controlling for background

characteristics of teachers and schools—induction programs do increase retention.

The induction program components with the largest effect were being assigned a same-subject mentor and having common planning/collaboration time with same-subject colleagues.

Induction programs with more components (e.g. mentors; seminars for beginning teachers; reduced course load; facetime with administrators) produced a stronger impact.

There is no shortage of data demonstrating that induction programs can help retain teachers and improve their instruction, thus improving student learning. Yet there continue to be calls for the reduction or elimination of programs—so the data in this article can be used to advocate for their importance.

Ingersoll, R. (2012). Beginning teacher induction: What the data tell us. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93 (8), 47-51.

## INTC research on new teachers' needs and successes

Recent INTC survey and focus-group research examined first-year teachers' needs, struggles, and successes. Key findings include the following.

81% of respondents were "very satisfied" with their decision to become teachers.

When asked where they hoped to be in five years, 46% hoped they would remain in the same position. 42% hoped they would be in a similar position in a similar school district, and 7% saw themselves still in education but in a new role (e.g. administrator, professor, counselor).

The majority of new teachers rated their colleagues as "personally supportive and friendly" and marked their administrators as "approachable

and supportive." Nevertheless, they still reported feeling isolated in their classrooms.

First-year teachers reported needing the most help in the following areas: using data to plan instruction; classroom management and creating a positive learning environment; working with students with IEPs; and using differentiated instruction strategies.

New teachers particularly valued observing their mentors teach, co-planning, and co-teaching. However, these experiences were often limited.

The full research report, "INTC Data Brief: Beginning Teacher Conference" can be downloaded from the "Resources" tab on [intc.education.illinois.edu](http://intc.education.illinois.edu)

