

INTC Data Brief #2

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This Data Brief, the second report from FY 2011, reports on the winter 2011 survey of unfunded districts in Illinois. All 536 districts which have never received ISBE induction grant funding, and which have never been part of an ISBE-funded consortium, received emails with a link to the online survey. 290 districts returned completed surveys for a response rate of 54.1%. A description of methodology and tables of raw data are provided in the Appendix, which is a separate document.

OVERVIEW OF DATA AND ORGANIZATION OF DATA BRIEF

This report is organized into the following sections:

- Section 1: Demographic characteristics
- Section 2: Unfunded district program information
- Section 3: Unfunded district budget information
- Section 4: Comparison with funded programs
- Section 5: Discussion

Section 1 contains publicly-available FY11 Illinois school report card data. Data in sections 2 and 3 were provided on the winter 2011 survey for districts which have never received ISBE induction grant funding. Section 4 compares unfunded districts survey data with preliminary data from the spring 2011 CDE for funded programs.

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

This section compares demographic characteristics of four sometimes-overlapping groups of districts:

- the survey respondents (“responding districts”);
- the entire population of unfunded districts which received the survey (“unfunded districts”);
- all funded districts, including districts which are part of a funded consortium (“funded districts”); and
- all districts in Illinois (“all districts”).

These districts were compared on the following measures:

- size (per the ISBE classifications of small, medium, or large)
- median numbers of students
- district type (elementary, high school, or unit)
- district locale (city, suburb, town, or rural)
- average teacher salary
- instructional and operational expenses per pupil
- average teacher experience in years
- district percent of White teachers
- district percent of male teachers
- percent of low-income students
- percent of LEP (Limited English Proficient) students
- percent of White, Black, or Hispanic students

The responding districts, unfunded districts, and funded programs are all similar to the state as a whole, with only slight differences. (Tables 1.1 – 1.6)

SECTION 2: UNFUNDED DISTRICT PROGRAM INFORMATION

This section only reports on data from the unfunded district survey respondents.

Number of new teachers and participation rates. The average district does not have many first-year teachers in 2010-11. Just over 20% of districts have no first-year teachers, and only 25% of districts have more than 5. Larger districts tend to have more new teachers than smaller districts. 50% of small districts, but only 1% of large districts, have zero new teachers; and only 2% of small and medium districts but 40% of large districts have more than 10 new teachers. Rural districts are likely to have fewer new teachers while city and suburban districts are likely to have more. (Tables 2.1 & 2.2)

Induction components. Different types of districts reported providing different ranges of induction supports for their new teachers. Small and rural districts—and districts with fewer new teachers—provide fewer supports than do larger and city/suburban districts. Districts with more low-income students and lower average instructional expenses also tend to provide fewer supports. These differences are often quite severe. Only 65% of small districts but 97% of large districts require new teachers to be paired with a mentor or buddy. Similar differences occur for requirements that mentors observe new teachers in their classrooms (31% vs. 79%), new teachers attend summer orientations (63% vs. 99%), new teachers attend workshops during the academic year (31% vs. 88%), and new teachers create professional growth plans (21% vs. 73%). Induction supports for second-year teachers follow similar patterns.

Other induction supports surveyed—with similar disparities between different groups of districts—include the following:

- first-year teachers observe mentors or other veterans
- first-year teachers have formally scheduled time to network with other new teachers or with teachers outside of their schools.

However, for the following supports, differences only appear between small, medium, and large districts; little or no difference can be attributed to the percent of low-income students, the average instructional expense, and the district locale. One reason could be that these supports are relatively unusual, with less than 15% of districts overall providing each of these to their first-year teachers.

- First-year teachers have a reduced number of course preparations.
- First-year teachers are prohibited or discouraged from teaching the most demanding courses.
- First-year teachers are prohibited or discouraged from leading extra-curricular activities.
- First-year teachers are videotaped.
- First-year teachers engage in e-mentoring. (Tables 2.3 – 2.9)

Induction program organization. Although 61% of districts reported having ISBE-approved induction programs, these numbers vary widely between small and large districts (21% vs. 90%), rural areas and suburbs (32% vs. 76%), districts with more or fewer low-income students (49% vs. 67%), and districts with lower or higher average instructional expenses (53% vs. 73%). (Table 2.10)

Three-quarters of districts reported that their induction activities are coordinated by an administrator, and a further 13% are coordinated by a team. In only 7% of districts (including 13% of small districts) is a teacher in charge, and only 2% are run by a full-time program coordinator. The differences among district types are smaller than for other measures on the survey. (Table 2.11)

Division of responsibilities. Districts were asked to indicate which entity—individual schools, the district, or an ROE/ISC/other entity—is responsible for nine common induction-related tasks. One key finding is the relative lack of involvement by ROEs and ISCs in induction. The ROE/ISC provides administrator training for 18% of districts and provides new teacher training for 13% of districts. For all other categories, fewer than 10% of districts reported ROE/ISC responsibility. Individual schools are most likely to select mentors and assign novice/mentor pairs (in 60% of districts) and provide new teacher training (in 42% of districts). Districts reported being responsible for the following:

- paying for resources and training supplies (82% of districts),
- paying for substitutes and other release time (82%),
- providing new teacher training (72%),
- evaluating the induction program (70%),
- providing mentor training (61% of districts), and
- paying mentor salaries (53%).

ROEs are more likely to be involved in providing mentor, new teacher, and administrator training for small districts. For example, ROEs or ISCs provide new teacher training for 6% of large districts, 11% of medium districts, and 31% of small districts. (Table 2.12)

New teacher and mentor compensation. Only 18% of districts reported paying new teachers stipends for participating in induction activities, with major differences observed between small and large districts (8% vs. 29%) and rural areas and suburbs (10% vs. 23%). Forty-one percent of districts reported providing no compensation for their new teachers, with the usual disparities (51% of small districts vs. 18% of large districts; 54% of rural districts vs. 33% of suburbs). Additionally, 48% provide CPDUs, 17% provide classroom supplies or professional resources, and 6% provide other incentives. (Table 2.13)

Mentors receive somewhat more compensation. Only 29% of districts provide no compensation, with the usual differences noted between types of districts (64% of small districts vs. 6% of large districts; 53% of rural districts vs. 15% of suburban districts). Fifty-three percent are paid stipends (16% small vs. 81% large; 28% rural vs. 71% suburbs). Additionally, 36% of districts provide CPDUs, and 7% provide classroom supplies or professional resources. (Table 2.20).

Mentor job description and selection requirements. In 91% of districts, mentors are full-time teachers, and an additional 5% (including 16% of small districts) use full-time administrators. None of the districts reported having any full-time or full-release mentors. (Table 2.14)

The mentor selection requirements vary by type of district. Large districts and city/suburban districts had far more requirements, perhaps indicating a more organized or formal program with higher standards for mentor selection, or perhaps a large enough pool of available teachers to allow for selectivity. Major requirements include:

- successfully completing a minimum number of years of teaching (55% of districts: 44% small vs. 74% large; 43% rural vs. 67% suburban),
- completing a mentor training program (41% of districts: 13% small vs. 71% large; 18% rural vs. 58% suburban), and
- formally applying (30% of districts: 13% small vs. 49% large; 14% rural vs. 44% suburban).

Other requirements, with fewer variations between types of districts, include:

- being interviewed (24% of districts),
- having his/her classroom observed (23% of districts), and
- submitting a recommendation (10% of districts). (Table 2.15)

Mentor training. Districts, on average, provide one day or less of initial mentor training (45% of districts), although 30% of districts report providing no training for their mentors, with the usual variations (58% of small districts vs. 8% large; 49% rural vs. 20% suburban). About a quarter of districts provide their mentors with more than a day of training. (Table 2.16)

Mentors also receive different levels of ongoing support. One-third of districts provide no support (45% small vs. 22% large; 44% rural vs. 28% suburban; 40% low average instructional expense vs. 24% high). Nearly half provide support once or a few times each year, and 21% provide monthly support. (Table 2.17)

Mentor activities. Districts were asked how often mentors were expected to engage in five common induction activities. Small districts—and, to a somewhat lesser extent, rural districts—often have no specified expectations for these activities, and large districts and city/suburban districts are more likely to require these activities on a more frequent basis. For example, 40% of small districts but only 15% of large districts have no specified expectations for how often mentors should meet with mentees, while 55% suburban districts but only 27% of rural districts require meetings on a weekly basis. Frequencies for all districts are listed below.

- Meet with mentees: no specified expectations, 26%; weekly, 43%; monthly or quarterly, 31%.
- Observe mentee teach: no specified expectations, 39%; monthly or quarterly, 33%; once or twice a year, 24%.
- Attend mentor workshops: no specified expectations, 50%; monthly or quarterly, 19%; once or twice a year, 28%.
- Submit a record of mentoring activities: no specified expectations, 41%; monthly or quarterly, 22%; once or twice a year, 33%.
- Participate in an evaluation of mentoring skills: no specified expectations, 67%; monthly or quarterly, 5%; once or twice a year, 26%. (Table 2.18)

Most districts (87%) reported that mentor/mentee pairs primarily meet before or after school, during planning periods, or during lunch. Smaller percentages of districts reported providing common planning periods to mentor/mentee pairs (25% of districts: 16% small, 32% large; 15% rural, 34% suburban; 20% lower average instructional expense, 35% higher) and providing release time for these meetings (21% of districts: 8% small, 35% large; 10% rural, 29% suburban). (Table 2.19)

Building administrator involvement. Building-level administrators are involved in new teacher induction in several key ways: selecting and assigning mentors to the new teachers in their buildings (in 70% of districts); meeting regularly with new teachers for purposes other than evaluation (56%); overseeing and monitoring induction activities in their buildings (54%). Further, in 23% of districts, administrators attended training about the specific needs of new teachers and the administrator's role in induction. Only 4% of districts reported no building-level administrator involvement. Building-level administrators in large districts were involved in more induction activities than were their counterparts in small districts, but there were few differences across the other demographic categories. (Table 2.21)

SECTION 3: UNFUNDED DISTRICT BUDGET INFORMATION

Funding sources. Most survey respondents pay for nearly all of their induction activities with district funds. For respondents who reported using district funding, it accounts for 96% of all induction expenses in small districts, but only 81% in large districts. Also, 23% of districts reported using Title II funds, which amounts to 74% of their budgets, on average. Few districts use each of the following alternative forms of funding: Title I funds (10 districts); state grants (7); other funding (5); IDEA funds (2); federal grants (1); and university funds (1). No district reported using corporation or foundation grants. (Table 3.1)

Desired improvements. Programs were asked how they would improve their program if they had more funding. The top choices include: offering more or improved mentor trainings (79%); offering more or

improved new teacher trainings (71%); offering more or improved administrator trainings (60%); and improving the mentor/mentee relationship (e.g. more release time or more structure) (53%). More than a third of programs also want to improve data-driven decision making, create a specific program for second-year teachers, make the program more structured with clarified expectations, improve program evaluation, improve formative assessment or document of new teacher progress, and provide more differentiation in program components.

Small districts were unlikely to want to provide more differentiation—perhaps because of their small number of new teachers. Large districts were around twice as likely as small ones to want full-release mentors, technological improvements, and better formative assessment. (Table 3.2)

Reasons for being unfunded. More than half of programs did not apply for ISBE Induction and Mentoring Grant Funding because they were not aware of these grants. Programs also reported that they did not have the resources or staffing to apply for the funds and manage the grant (23%) and that they did not have enough new teachers to make the effort worth their time (29% of all districts; 51% of small districts). (Table 3.3)

SECTION 4: COMPARISON WITH FUNDED PROGRAMS

This section compares the unfunded districts with the ISBE grant-funded induction programs. Tables in the appendix also provide data for the subgroup of large unfunded districts because this group provides the most complete induction supports for its new teachers. Thus, comparisons can be made between unfunded districts as a whole, the unfunded districts which provide the most induction supports, and the funded programs.

Common induction supports. For the most basic induction-program elements—new teachers receive a mentor who observes in their classrooms; new teachers attend summer and academic-year workshops—the funded programs provide significantly more than the average unfunded district but about the same as the large unfunded districts. Beyond these basic elements, the funded programs provide much more than even the large unfunded districts. Their new teachers are more likely to:

- be videotaped while teaching for later reflection/discussion with others,
- engage in online mentoring and support,
- have formally scheduled time to network with other new teachers,
- have a reduced number of course preparations, and
- be discouraged or prohibited from teaching the most demanding or undesirable courses. (Tables 4.1 & 4.2)

Program organization and design. Induction programs in more than two-thirds of unfunded districts, including the large unfunded districts, are coordinated and managed by a single administrator. By contrast, less than a quarter of funded programs are coordinated by a single administrator. More than half are managed by either a full-time program coordinator or by a team.

New teachers are just as likely to receive compensation for participating in induction activities in large unfunded districts as in the funded programs. However, per administrative requirements, 100% of funded programs, but only 81% of large unfunded districts (and 53% of all unfunded districts) pay their mentors a stipend. (Tables 2.22, 4.3, & 4.4)

Mentor selection, training, and requirements. The mentor selection process in funded programs is much more formal and rigorous than in the large unfunded districts: Mentors are more likely to be required to formally apply, be interviewed, and submit recommendations. In an exception to the trend, only 3% of

prospective mentors in funded programs have their classrooms observed, compared with 18% in large unfunded districts and 23% in all unfunded districts.

In funded programs, 100% of mentors receive training, and 81% receive several days or more. These numbers are 70% and 24% for all unfunded districts, and 92% and 45% for large unfunded districts.

Mentors in funded programs must have 60 contact hours per year with their mentees, which averages to roughly 1.5 hours per week. By contrast, just over half of mentors in large unfunded districts are required to meet with their mentees every week. For most other mentoring components—attending ongoing training, submitting records of mentoring activities, and participating in evaluations of mentoring skills—the funded programs require more frequency than the unfunded districts. The only exception is that mentors in large unfunded districts are required to observe their mentee teach more often than funded-program mentors, perhaps because there are fewer formal requirements attached to these observations.

Mentors in funded programs are more likely than those in unfunded districts, including the large districts, to have common planning periods to meet with their mentees, or to be provided with release or special meeting times. (Tables 4.5 – 4.8)

Building administrator involvement. Building-level administrators in funded programs are twice as likely as those in large unfunded districts to attend training on the specific needs of new teachers and the administrator’s role in induction. However, administrators in large unfunded districts are more likely than those in funded programs to meet regularly with new teachers and to oversee their building’s induction activities. (Table 4.9)

SECTION 5: DISCUSSION

The data presented above allow us to make two main arguments. 1) There is a vast discrepancy between what beginning teachers receive in certain districts (small, rural, high-poverty) compared with others (large, urban or suburban, well-resourced). 2) The unfunded districts which offer the most new teacher supports still provide less than the average grant-funded induction program—even though the funded programs include small and rural districts in proportion with the state average.

1) Inequities among unfunded districts. A first-year teacher teaching in a small or rural district, or one teaching in a high-poverty or under-resourced district, is likely to encounter many challenges inherent in the job description. New teachers in small and rural districts are more likely to be isolated, with fewer colleagues in the same grade or content area to provide advice. Novices in high-poverty areas must deal with a range of student challenges, and those in districts with low per-student instructional expenses have fewer resources at their disposal (as well as lower salaries).

This survey shows that new teachers in these districts—the ones who need the most support—are the ones least likely to receive it. Beginning teachers receive less mentoring and professional development. Their mentors are less likely to go through a rigorous selection process, more likely to be untrained, and less likely to receive a stipend. Mentoring programs are more likely to be haphazard enterprises with few specified district expectations.

Two brand-new teachers who graduated from the same teacher education institution, who have the same skills and needs, could receive dramatically different support services from their districts. These different levels of support can impact teacher recruitment, teacher retention, teaching quality, and job satisfaction—in the very districts that most need to recruit and retain the best teachers.

2) Top unfunded districts provide less than the average funded program. One could easily assume that the new teachers in large, well-resourced, and/or suburban districts are receiving top-notch induction services without any state funding or intervention and that Illinois should only be concerned with the small percentage of teachers in the other districts. However, the large unfunded districts only compare with funded programs in the most basic induction supports: providing new teachers with a mentor and giving them some training. In nearly every other measure, the funded programs' additional money allows them to offer more services—even during FY11, a particularly tough fiscal year, in which funding cuts led to decreased services.

Funded programs have stronger leadership; instead of being run by a single administrator, who often has other responsibilities, they are more likely to have a full-time coordinator or a team in charge. This leadership is able to plan and enact more induction activities for new teachers and mentors; provide more mentoring training and support, so mentors become instructional coaches rather than “buddies;” have a more rigorous mentor selection process to ensure that the best teachers are chosen; and require more time and accountability from mentors. In return, mentors and new teachers in funded programs are more likely to be paid stipends to ensure their commitment to the program's many requirements.

All of this means that funded programs provide a more intensive mentoring experience. Studies (e.g. Wechsler, Caspary, Humphrey, & Matsko, 2010; Glazerman et al., 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) report that long term, intensive induction programs have greater impacts—on teaching quality, teacher retention, and student achievement—than those which provide only some basic elements.

The unfunded districts found it easy to identify how they would improve their induction services if they had more funding, and their selected improvements show that they understand what a quality induction program looks like. They possess the will but not the funding which would allow such a transformation to take place.

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