Induction for Beginning Special Education Teachers: Lessons Learned from the Research

NCIPP Webinar Series

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NCIPP  National Center to Inform Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development

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NCIPP Trajectory

1. Literature Syntheses & Policy Analysis
2. Identify Promising Practices/Induction Programs
3. Models of Quality Induction and Mentoring Practice

Technical Assistance/Dissemination
Dissemination and Technical Assistance

Intensive
- IHE, LEA, SEA Teams

Targeted
- 325Ts
- Webinar Series
- Professional Conferences
- District Manual and Mentor Handbook

Universal
- Induction Insights
- Archived Podcasts and Webinars
- Technical Reports
- Program Descriptions
NCIPP National Center to Inform Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development

- To improve teacher quality and increase commitment to teaching students with disabilities by
  - informing special education policy and practice on induction and mentoring
  - identifying and recommending induction and mentoring implementation strategies
Induction in General Education

• High quality induction has been widely touted as a potential solution to...

• Support new teachers
• Improve teacher quality
• Increase retention
• Decrease teacher shortages
Research has suggested that high quality induction support during the critical early years may:

- Have a career-long impact on effectiveness and attitudes (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Gold, 1996; Rosenholtz, 1989; Strong, 2005)

- Have a positive effect on student achievement and teacher retention (Fletcher, Strong, & Villar, 2008; Guarino et al., 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004)

- Prove especially beneficial for beginning teachers who lack full certification (Boe, Shin, & Cook, 2007)
Why Induction Matters in Special Education

• Beginning teachers have to meet increasingly high expectations and they do not always have the expertise or sufficient supports to meet them.
  • They are more isolated from colleagues and less likely to seek help (Billingsley, 2005; Griffin et al., 2003)
  • They usually have insufficient access to curricular materials, insufficient learning supports in the school context, and are unprepared to teach in curricular area (Bishop et al., 2010; Griffin et al., 2008; Kamman, 2008; Leko & Brownell, 2011; Otis-Wilborn et al., 2005)
  • They experience role confusion, role ambiguity, and overwhelming workloads (Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Griffin et al., in press; Otis-Wilborn, 2005)
Why Induction Matters in Special Education

- Other barriers to the beginner’s ability to implement effective instruction and engage in collaboration include...
  - With regard to preparation, there are enormous differences among beginning special education teachers.
    - Beginners in high poverty school have fewer credentials and less preparation (Fall & Billingsley, 2008)
  - They struggle to situate knowledge acquired in teacher education programs (Leko & Brownell, 2011).
  - They are also are less sophisticated in interacting with other professionals (Busch et al., 2001; Gehrke & Murri, 2006)
Why Induction Matters in Special Education

- It is also important to remember that SETs must
  - Have knowledge of both special education intervention and the content they teach (NCLB, 2001)
  - Have all the skills and knowledge expected of a veteran teacher (Feimen-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko, 1999)
  - Help students with disabilities access the general education curriculum (Brownell, Leko, Kamman, & Streeper-King, 2008)
  - Help students with academic and behavioral struggles make adequate yearly progress (IDEA, 2004)
Overview of Induction Research

- NCIIPP conducted three literature reviews and one policy analysis. [http://ncipp.education.ufl.edu/reports.php](http://ncipp.education.ufl.edu/reports.php)

- The information for today’s webinar comes primarily from
  - Special Issues, Journal of Special Education Leadership, March 2010 and March 2011
Lessons Learned from the Research

- Experiences of Beginning Special Educators
- Induction
- E-mentoring
- Policy
- Partnerships
Induction in Special Education

• Question
  • What does the research tell us about induction and mentoring for beginning special education teachers?

• Research focused on
  • Mentoring as primary vehicle of support for beginners
Characteristics of Special Education Mentors

- Personal
  - Strong communication skills
  - Approachable
  - Available
  - Patient

- Professional
  - Special education background and experience
  - Mentors who teach same students and grade level(s)
Administrators

• Willingness to support beginning special educators

• Administrators can help increase teacher satisfaction by helping to create a culture of collaboration by
  • Being available to talk- open door policy
  • Encourage collaboration whenever possible to avoid feelings of isolation
General Educators

- Provide knowledge about supplies, schedules, routines, unwritten rules in the school, and effective teaching strategies
- General educators are not completely confident in their support role
- Poor relationships with general education colleagues can increase the chance of burnout among beginning special educators
- General education teachers who are invested in the success of students with disabilities are more likely to help beginning special education teachers
- Importance of supportive school community
Formal and Informal Sources of Support

• Formal supports
  • Formally scheduled meetings with mentors preferred
  • Formal classroom observations not standard practice

• Informal supports
  • Informal assistance (impromptu meetings, unannounced classroom visits) can increase commitment for beginning special educators

• Little evidence that teachers’ intent to stay in special education is impacted by these supports
Frequency and Proximity of Support

- Frequency
  - Beginning special educators commonly associate the frequency with which supports are provided to the effectiveness of the supports
  - Frequency of assistance received is inadequate for addressing all professional and emotional needs
- Proximity
  - Findings mixed
  - Preference for special education mentors over mentors in the same school
Content of Support

• Content of Support
  • Emotional support
  • School and district information
  • Special education paperwork and procedures
    • IEP, IFSP, IDEA
  • Materials and other instructional resources
• Content needs
  • Content addressing beginning teachers’ special education classroom assignments
  • Multi-cultural and diversity issues, supporting families, integrating IEP goals into the general education curriculum
Assessment and Evaluation

- Few studies examined the purpose, characteristics, and implementation procedures associated with assessment and evaluation

  - Mentors serve in non-evaluative roles

  - Standards-based assessment and evaluation
E-mentoring

- Emerging use of technology-based communication formats in which mentors and mentees interact
  - Possible solution to the challenge of finding suitable building-based mentors who can provide instructional coaching in the new teacher's specialization area
- E-mentoring is not a substitute for school-based mentors who provide socialization support
Partnerships with IHEs (Rosenberg et al., 2009)

- Initial preparation is the first point at which beginning teachers are inducted into the profession

- Data on partnerships suggest they can be successful in fostering teacher quality and improving retention but require intense collaboration and resources

- Leadership and collaboration are essential for supporting partnership work
Policy (Hirsch et al, 2009)

- 48 states have a policy, rule, or program for induction.
  - The specifics of program implementation are left to districts to decide
  - State policy must work in concert with federal and local policy if new teachers’ needs are to be met
  - In state policy, new teachers are considered an undifferentiated group with common needs
  - Mentoring policy can’t be expected to overcome poor school practice
  - A coherent and comprehensive policy framework for teacher development will have substantial impact on the retention of SETs and their development as professionals
Major Limitations the Research

- Piecemeal & fragmented
- Lacking a conceptual base
- Little research about effects of induction for beginning special educators
- Little differentiation among teacher groups:
  - Working in different service delivery models
  - Assigned to different exceptionality areas
  - With extensive vs. less extensive preparation
- Minimal discussion of the relationship of special and general education teacher induction
Providing Information to Your Colleagues and Constituents

Induction Insights

• From the reports, 29 briefs were developed for various audiences: administrators, policymakers, teacher educators, beginning teachers, and parents
  • http://ncipp.education.ufl.edu/briefs.php
# Upcoming Webinars

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- There are links to watch, register for, and evaluate webinars on the website [www.ncipp.org](http://www.ncipp.org)
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