Teacher Induction in Special Education: Using What We Know to Inform Practice

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Purposes of Presentation

- Framework for induction review
- Overview & critique of special education induction research base
- Major findings
- Conclusions & questions
Multiple meanings of induction (Feiman-Nemser et al. 1999)

- Phase in Development
- Teacher Socialization
- Formal Induction Programs
Published literature 1992-2007

– 30 published studies (included 5 dissertations)
– Most conducted *prior* to 2000
– One-half of the studies are “one-time” studies

Nature of the studies

– Most are descriptive, small studies
– Several recent large scale surveys

One prior literature review on induction programs (Griffin et al. 2003)
Major Limitations of Induction Research

- Piecemeal & fragmented
- Lacking a conceptual base
- Little research about effects of induction
- 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
Major Findings in Three Areas

- Induction as a phase
- Induction research
- Induction programs
What is known about new special educators’ experiences in schools?

Literature base
- 14 qualitative & 4 survey studies
- Studies focused on teachers’ concerns
- Three major themes
- Special educators not feeling part of school
- School not supportive of inclusion
  – Lack of school-wide philosophy and structures
- Majority of new teachers reported problems in collaboration (e.g., resistance, proximity, schedules)
- Inadequate support in addressing concerns

“Working at the edge”
Curriculum
- Struggled to teach & modify several content areas across multiple grades
- Inadequate preparation in content subjects
- Inadequate preparation to teach reading

Lack of materials

Managing student behavior
Managing & organizing work

- Paperwork, IEPs & meetings
- Caseloads
- Time/Scheduling
- Role ambiguity
The best induction programs cannot compensate for constraining conditions such as problematic school cultures, inadequate resources, and unsupportive administrators (Feiman-Nemser, 2001)
Questions

- What does the research tell us about induction and mentoring for beginning special educators?

Database

- 20 research studies since 1990
  - 12 peer-reviewed journal articles
  - 8 dissertations

Research focus

- Emphasizes mentoring vs. other components
Focus of Studies

- Characteristics of special education mentors
- Other providers of support
- Formal and informal sources of support
- Frequency and proximity of support
- Content of support
- Assessment and evaluation
Characteristics of special education mentors

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

- Professional
  - Special education mentors
  - Mentors who teach same students and grade level(s)
Other providers of support

- Findings mixed
  - Administrators
    - Open-door policy
    - Willingness to support beginning special educators
  - General educators
    - Knowledge about supplies, schedules, routines, unwritten rules in the school, and effective teaching strategies
    - GEs not completely confident in their support role
    - Importance of supportive school community
Formal and informal sources of support

- **Formal supports**
  - Formal induction programs appear less helpful despite increases in participation
  - Formally scheduled meetings with mentors preferred
  - Formal classroom observations not standard practice

- **Informal supports**
  - Informal assistance (impromptu meetings, unannounced classroom visits) helpful

- Little evidence that teachers’ intent to stay in special education is impacted by these supports
Selected Findings

Frequency and proximity of support

- Frequency
  - Frequency with which various supports were provided was highly correlated with beginning special educators’ perceived 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
Selected Findings

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
Selected Findings

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
An induction program far beyond the minimum state requirements.

SSD serves 28,000 students with special needs.

In the 2008-2009 school year, SSD employs 2,778 teachers and 1,738 paraprofessionals in five special education schools and 23 partner districts.

The primary goal of the SSD induction program is to retain efficacious teachers and increase student achievement.
Academy I is the most intensive with three years of activities aimed at supporting the development of fundamental skills for all beginning special education teachers.

- Supports: orientation, professional development courses, school based mentor, district based instructional facilitator

- Themes:
  - Year 1: *classroom supports for instruction*
  - Year 2: *effective teaching*
  - Year 3: *thoughtful teaching.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom Supports for Instruction, 1st year</th>
<th>Effective Teaching, 2nd year</th>
<th>Thoughtful Teaching, 3rd year</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Days throughout year</strong></td>
<td>2 1/2 days</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>3 days</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Skills Sets Focus Areas</strong></td>
<td>-Student behavior</td>
<td>-Quality instruction</td>
<td>-Quality instruction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Quality instruction</td>
<td>-Student performance</td>
<td>-Student performance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Literacy and mathematics</td>
<td>-Literacy and mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Focus</strong></td>
<td>-Positive classroom environment</td>
<td>-Process of quality</td>
<td>-Process of quality</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Universal classroom supports</td>
<td>instruction</td>
<td>instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Functional assessment components</td>
<td>-Assessment, planning</td>
<td>-Assessment, planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>delivery</td>
<td>delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Reflection, evaluation</td>
<td>-Reflection, evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring Job-embedded support</strong></td>
<td>School-level mentors</td>
<td>Instructional facilitator</td>
<td>Instructional facilitator</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Peer-coaching</strong></td>
<td>Minimum 7 hours of mentoring 1st semester,</td>
<td>-Coaching</td>
<td>-Coaching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5 second semester</td>
<td>-Peer coaching</td>
<td>-Peer coaching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional Facilitator</td>
<td>Minimum 25 hours throughout year</td>
<td>Minimum 25 hours throughout year</td>
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Mentors are the primary vehicle of beginning teacher support. Ashley is a first year teacher employed by SSD and placed at a large elementary school. She teaches a self-contained classroom for students diagnosed with autism.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ashley’s School Based Mentor Support</th>
<th>Ashley’s Instructional Facilitator Support</th>
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<tr>
<td>IEP procedures and paperwork (e.g., goal writing, parent meetings)</td>
<td>Specific instructional strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special School District paperwork</td>
<td>Linking instruction to student growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home school procedures and policies</td>
<td>Dealing with continuous classroom problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily instructional problems and reflection</td>
<td>Portfolio and skill set evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
</tr>
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Academy II
- fourth and fifth year of teaching
- improving the special educators’ use of data to increase student achievement.

Research and Collaborative Phase
- sixth year and beyond
- working collaboratively with their peers, supervisors, and partner districts
- analyze student data and implement research strategies to meet student needs
Outcome Data

- Majority of first year (91%) demonstrated evidence of using data to make instructional decisions.

- Impact of the mentoring component
  - establishing trust and rapport (94%)
  - opportunity for growth and learning (92%)
  - overall usefulness (92%)
  - improving instructional goals (80%)

- Reported retention rates, lowest rate of 74% was during the program’s first year of implementation, 96% for 2007-2008.
Induction Goals

- Preparation & match
- Supportive school communities
- “Sheltered” assignments
- Responsive mentoring & professional development
- Technology?

Broad View of Induction

Relationship between general & special education induction?
References

