



## Retaining Personnel

# INDUCTION AND MENTORING

## Description

Induction is a system of coordinated and aligned supports designed to support new educators with a systematic pathway into the profession (GTL Center, 2018). Mentoring refers to one-on-one support and feedback provided by an experienced veteran professional to novice personnel (GTL Center, 2018; Schmidt, Young, Cassidy, Wang, & Laguarda, 2017).

## Overview

Novice personnel are at highest risk for attrition during their first 3 years in the field. Induction and mentoring address this challenge by providing strong in-service supports as personnel become acclimated to their new role (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). This assistance typically includes the following: (a) **professional development systems** established by administrators to provide targeted learning; and (b) **mentoring partnerships** in subject areas or disciplines (e.g., early intervention, special education, related services) in which novice personnel are working.

Additionally, novice personnel who are not adequately prepared are at higher risk for attrition. Induction and mentoring programs are structured to combat this by offering **targeted feedback and support** to address gaps in preparation (GTL Center, 2018; Koetje, 2019).

When establishing a system for induction and mentoring in educational settings, stakeholders must plan for a **systematic and organized approach** to ensuring new personnel have **adequate resources** to be effective in their role (Potemski & Matlach, 2014). While formal mentoring is recognized as a critical support, participants of a 2020 OSEP focus group also recognized the benefit of informal mentorship for special education and related service personnel. Because these personnel collaborate frequently, additional informal mentorship from general educators or other school personnel (e.g., department chairs, grade-level teams) may help ensure **these personnel are integrated into school or organizational structures**. Informal mentoring opportunities should not replace formal mentorship systems that exist to provide feedback and support related to instruction and intervention that ensure personnel are effectively meeting student needs.

In a 2019 OSEP survey of more than 1,500 practitioners, hundreds of respondents cited strong mentorship and induction in early career **as the most effective method of improving teacher retention** they have observed or experienced themselves.

## Research Findings

Research on induction and mentoring shows the following:

- Strong induction programs of the sort that promote retention and effective teaching rely on **well-trained mentors**, offer **ongoing professional learning**, and encourage **collaboration** (Billingsley, Griffin, Smith, Kamman, & Israel, 2009).
- It is particularly important that beginning teachers have access to **special education mentors** who understand the needs of teachers serving students with disabilities (GTL Center, 2018).
- Novice special educators benefit from programs that are centered on supports **specific to working with students with disabilities** and that involve **collaboration between a variety of stakeholders** (GTL Center, 2018).
- These programs effectively **offset** the increased likelihood of attrition caused by **poor preservice preparation** (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Mason-Williams et al., 2020).

There is a wide range of evidence that the **quality** of induction for novice special educators is a powerful predictor of their intention to stay in their schools and the profession overall (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Jones, Youngs, & Frank, 2013).

## Exemplars

- [eMentoring for Student Success](#). This Kansas-based induction and mentoring program aims to reduce attrition in special education by giving novice teachers one-on-one or small-group virtual mentoring and targeted induction supports. Data collected through this program are presented in Kansas's annual math, science, and special education attrition reports.
- [Minnesota Mentor Program for Special Educators](#). This program pairs special education candidates with a mentor who is certified in the same licensure area and delivers ongoing mentoring and induction support beginning in preservice and continuing through early career teaching.
- [Oklahoma Teacher Induction Program](#). This induction program, which provides ongoing professional learning for both novice teachers and school-based mentors, focuses on using evidence-based practices, elevating student learning, and navigating the challenges of starting in the profession or a new role.

(Additional exemplars can be found on the [Attract, Prepare, Retain resource page](#).)

## Resource Spotlight

- [Center on Great Teachers and Leaders Mentoring & Induction Toolkit 2.0](#). This toolkit is a ready-to-use resource for States working closely with districts to build strong mentoring and induction programs. The toolkit provides tools, resources, and supports to design and implement effective, high-quality mentoring and induction programs. It also summarizes research and best practices, highlights relevant examples, and provides streamlined processes for action planning.
- [National Association of Elementary School Principals Archived Webinars](#). NAESP has numerous free professional development webinars publicly available for download on its website. Induction and mentoring are recurring webinar topics. Some of the webinars present specific examples of how elementary school principals can support mentoring and induction of special education teachers and related service personnel.

# KEY IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

## Critical Components for Success

*(Lists are not sequential)*

### Setting the Stage

- Examine data on the novice teacher workforce as well as professional development effectiveness.
- If a mentoring and induction program already exists, reflect on data gathered from past mentors and mentees (e.g., surveys, interviews).
- Survey current local education agency (LEA) personnel about supports they needed when entering the field and the types of mentoring and induction they found most relevant and impactful.
- Establish selection criteria and training systems for individuals to serve as effective mentors for novice personnel.
- Determine how to incentivize veteran and effective personnel to serve as mentors (e.g., compensation, recognition, credits toward licensure renewal, stipend).
- Begin a dialogue between relevant leaders (e.g., State education agency (SEA), LEA, or school leaders) to select a focus area for induction and mentoring models to address identified areas of need.
- Locate funding sources (e.g., ESSA, Title II, IDEA Part B or C) to fund induction and mentoring programs.
- Identify a framework for mentors to observe and deliver feedback to novice teachers as well as a framework for school leaders to observe and give feedback to mentors.

### Initial Start-Up

- Use data to develop and pilot an induction program centered on ongoing professional learning and one-on-one mentoring.
- Use selection criteria to choose teacher leaders and veteran related service providers in a school or district setting to serve as mentors for novice teachers.
- Establish and communicate clear expectations for individuals serving as mentors.
- Determine criteria and methods for matching mentors with novice educators.
- Train mentors in the use of the selected observation and feedback framework.
- Work with mentors and novice teachers to identify a schedule for modeling, practice, observation, and feedback.

## Related Services

While teacher induction and mentoring commonly establish mentoring pairs in the same building, this is not always a possibility for related service personnel. Many related service professionals provide supports to students **across schools within the same LEA or community**. LEAs may identify veteran related service providers working at different locations to mentor novice providers. These formal mentoring relationships may be connected to broader LEA mentoring and induction initiatives. In some States, related service providers receive induction through the SEA. Delaware offers a 4-year [Mentoring and Induction Program](#) to school nurses, counselors, and psychologists.

For personnel serving rural communities or working alone across an LEA or region, mentoring and induction pose additional challenges. In response, an SEA may offer mentoring and induction supports. An example is [the Colorado Department of Education's School Nurse Mentor Program](#), which is available to any school nurse employed as the only nurse in a district, region, or charter school.

Many related service providers' professional standards of practice include interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g., [National Association of Social Workers](#)). LEAs may consider structuring mentoring and induction differently, through **cross-discipline mentoring teams**, to allow related service personnel from different disciplines to more effectively collaborate. This strategy may require LEA and school leadership to allocate additional time to collaborative mentoring opportunities.

### Critical Components for Success (Continued)

- Ensure that mentors and professional development providers model and offer coaching or feedback on evidence-based practices.
- Convene administrators, instructional coaches, LEA personnel, and teacher leaders to collaboratively align schoolwide professional development with ongoing professional learning.
- Consider the focus of emphasized practices, their duration, and their alignment with the needs of the population of students being served by the novice teachers.

### Continuous Improvement

- Collect data on novice teacher practices as well as the effectiveness of the induction and mentoring system.
- Begin identifying areas in which the mentoring and induction program did not noticeably improve teacher effectiveness.
- Convene appropriate stakeholders to address these indicators and restructure the induction and mentoring system as needed.
- Collect regular and structured feedback from participants in the induction and mentoring program on the program's usefulness and its impact on the novice teachers' satisfaction.
- Engage former teachers to identify gaps in preparation that can be addressed through increased use of simulation.
- Collaborate with other schools and localities that have established successful induction and mentoring programs to share lessons learned and areas for improvement.

### Leveraging Successes

- Convene school-level, LEA, and possibly SEA leaders to determine the feasibility of sustaining and/or scaling up the induction and mentoring program.
- Identify new partnerships within the district and the State.
- Share success stories.
- Develop guidance, resources, and tools.

## Early Childhood

Mentoring and induction in early childhood education, early childhood special education, and early intervention programs face challenges similar to those described for related service providers, as personnel may work across settings. This is especially true for early interventionists, who can deliver services across home, childcare, and community settings (Langdon et al., 2016).

OSEP funds the Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC) and the Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center. These centers collaborated to develop the Personnel/Workforce component of their [System Framework](#), which provides guidance to States when planning, developing, and implementing a comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD). The system framework and CSPD are intended for use across early childhood systems and are delivered collaboratively. **Job-embedded, supportive mentoring** is recognized as an indicator of quality within the system framework.

## Stakeholder Spotlight

**Researchers and Policy Makers.** Induction and mentoring, while different, still take on many of the characteristics of ongoing professional learning. Induction, mentoring, and ongoing professional learning (including coaching) commonly are evaluated in isolation. Researchers are in a unique position to examine the impact of each strategy on personnel effectiveness, including isolating the factors that result in more effective practice and improve student outcomes. Additionally, researchers can help the field differentiate mentoring from instructional coaching by formally investigating the roles of mentors and coaches and determining any differential impacts on outcomes (e.g., well-being versus instructional competence). Mentoring, in particular, is an area that policy makers can easily influence by establishing policies that--

- ensure personnel serving as mentors are compensated (e.g., salary increases, stipends) or otherwise incentivized (e.g., relicensure credits, negotiated contract hours);
- build time in existing schedules for planning, observation, and mentoring meetings; and
- partner mentors and mentees on the basis of characteristics that are known to influence personnel retention (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, age, area of specialization).

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