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Coaching New Teachers through a Job-Embedded Process

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May 2014

This white paper provides a brief summary of the ERG New Teacher Induction service.

The Problem:

Beginning teachers are leaving the classroom at alarming rates. Almost half of all teachers will leave the profession within their first 5 years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Lesnick, Jiang, Spote, Sartain, & Hart, 2010). These high attrition rates place financial and personnel hardships on school districts, but more importantly have a negative impact on student learning and achievement.

First-year teachers often experience a reality shock as they transition from a student of teaching to a teacher of students (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Beginning teachers are expected to perform the same duties as their veteran counterparts which often results in a sink or swim situation. High attrition rates are typically attributed to poor working conditions. Teachers report leaving the profession due to the amount of administrative tasks required of teachers, limited resources, time management, and classroom management issues (Robinson, 1998). Other reasons for high attrition rates are a lack of administrative support and isolation (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Veenman, de Laat, & Staring, 1998). Interestingly, retirements account for only about 20% of teacher turnover (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001).

When teachers leave the classroom, schools are placed in a financial hardship. The cost for losing an employee is about 30% of that employee's salary (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). In schools, the approximate cost for losing a teacher is about \$12,546 (Wong, 2003). While these are indirect expenses, the cost for recruitment, hiring, and training can quickly place a financial burden on school districts. It is fiscally irresponsible for school districts to ignore

the high levels of beginning teacher attrition (Reeder, 2013; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

More importantly than financial hardships is the impact of teacher turnover rates on student learning. High attrition rates result in unstable learning environments and place additional demands on other teachers. In addition, school culture and climate, organizational stability, morale, long-range planning, and reform initiatives are weakened (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

The Solution:

Just keeping teachers in the profession is not equivalent to helping them become effective teachers (Feiman–Nemser, 2003). If the quality of the teacher is a strong indicator of student success, schools must put into place a program that will develop beginning teachers into competent and effective professionals. Feiman–Nemser (2003) argues that new teachers need 3 to 4 years to become competent in their field and even more to reach proficiency. In order to become an effective teacher, teachers must collaborate with colleagues and personally reflect on their own teaching (Howe, 2006). To achieve this, beginning teachers need a professional culture that supports and encourages teacher learning and development (Feiman–Nemser, 2003).

Wong (2003) suggests that the difference between school systems with low attrition rates compared to those with higher attrition rates is an organized, comprehensive program that trains and supports new teachers. Producing more qualified teachers is not the problem, it is retaining the quality teachers we have (Darling–Hammond, 2003).

An induction program that is comprehensive in nature builds a community of learners and increases teacher efficacy (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). It keeps quality teachers in the classroom and gets rid of the ineffective ones. The professional development aspect of a comprehensive induction program is designed to teach both clinical and practical skills necessary to develop effective teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). It also facilitates professional learning and collaboration among colleagues. Most importantly, induction should be regarded as a process, not just a program (Wong, 2004).

Introduction:

Recognizing that student learning, performance, and achievement are impacted the most by the quality of the teacher, Education Resource Group, LLC (ERG) has developed a New Teacher Induction service that strives to provide quality professional development to beginning teachers through a job-embedded process. The Winston-Salem based company was started in 2004 by two former K-12 educators with a passion and vision for instructional excellence. Job-embedded professional development occurs during the school day in classrooms of practicing teachers. The process fosters inquiry, collaboration, and reflection.

Context: Supporting and Retaining New Teachers

ERG's New Teacher Induction service is focused on building teacher capacity with the ultimate goals of supporting and retaining new teachers. This service includes classroom observations, verbal and written feedback, model lessons, collaborative lesson planning sessions, and a book study.

The observations are conducted by a highly-qualified, trained coach using a professionally-developed inventory based on Marzano's Art and Science of Teaching

Framework (Marzano, 2007). The inventory consists of 5 sections: Classroom Instruction, Classroom Management, Planning & Preparation, Reflecting on Teaching & Learning, and Collegiality & Professionalism.

Beginning teachers receive both verbal and written feedback that is specific and individualized. Model lessons and collaborative lesson planning sessions are provided based on the individual needs of each teacher.

The book study provides beginning teachers with opportunities to collaborate and network with other beginning teachers. The book study also fosters a learning environment in which new teachers are introduced to effective, research-based instructional strategies and methods that are designed to improve teaching and learning.

The primary areas of support of ERG's New Teacher Induction service are classroom management, time management, content knowledge, pedagogy, and instructional delivery and effectiveness.

At the beginning of the project, a self-questionnaire is given to each beginning teacher to identify strengths and weaknesses as self-perceived by that teacher. This self-questionnaire is revisited multiple times during the project to identify growth and progress. Teachers use the self-questionnaire for goal-setting purposes, which are often reflected in the teacher's Professional Development Plan. This instrument also fosters a learning environment that encourages teachers to become reflective practitioners.

Model: How it Works

During a typical day, the coach observes 3–4 beginning teachers and debriefs with each of them individually. Observations of new teachers are designed to last for

at least an hour so that the coach can observe transitions and multiple segments of one class period. During the contracted day, the coach makes every attempt to touch base with all of the new teachers that are part of the service, even if they are not scheduled for an observation. The book study occurs after school in a central location that is convenient for all teachers and usually lasts about 45 minutes.

The coach focuses on specific learning goals for each teacher. Together, the coach and the beginning teacher identify small steps that the teacher can take to meet the designated learning goals.

Results:

Teachers who have participated in ERG's New Teacher Induction service have identified the one-on-one conferences and debriefs as the most helpful part of the observation process. New teachers appreciate that the coaching process is not evaluative in nature and that the coach is not a representative of their school or district. This allows them to develop a trusting relationship with the coach for the purpose of bettering themselves as educators.

New teachers have also indicated that the coaching process does not add additional work on top of their current job requirements and duties. In addition, beginning teachers identified that they enjoyed receiving new strategies and resources as well as having networking opportunities with other new teachers in their building.

The following quotes are from first-year teachers who have participated in ERG's New Teacher Induction service:

"I enjoy having the New Teacher Induction service as a resource. It has helped me immensely! Receiving feedback on my performance from more experienced and knowledgeable teachers allows me to improve and hone my own skills. Additionally,

the book Teach like a Champion has been extremely illuminating and has offered many helpful suggestions. My experience with the New Teacher Induction service has been nothing but positive!”

“I've really enjoyed meeting with the other new teachers to discuss ways that the Teach like a Champion strategies can/could work in the classroom. It's also been nice to have another set of eyes in the classroom, just for extra feedback, without the worry of being graded on our job performance.”

“It is nice having [the coach] share [their] knowledge and teaching strategies with us. If it wasn't for the program I would never see the other new teachers in my building. [The coach] always offer[s] feedback on how to do things better. It's nice having suggestions and not just someone pointing out what's wrong.”

Closing:

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) compares a new teacher's experience in the classroom to that of placing an inexperienced teenage driver in a NASCAR race. Having basic skills does not necessarily mean they are ready to be turned loose without proper training or support. Do you feel like your beginning teachers have been turned loose? If so, call us today and we will provide them with the support they need to become effective teachers.

For more information about ERG's New Teacher Induction Service, please contact Hope Reagan or Alice Oakley at (866) 725-8121.

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