

Professional Beginnings

A Plan for Supporting and Retaining the
Next Generation of Teachers in BC

Teacher Induction and Mentoring

Joining Hands Conference

Networking for Building Collaborative
Cultures and Practices

School Leadership Centre-UBC

October 26-27, 2007

Mike Lombardi, Director

BCTF Professional and Social Issues
Division

mlombardi@bctf.ca

Background

- Graduating paper
- M.Ed degree
- UBC Department of Educational Studies
- Adult and Higher Education
- July 2006

Overview

- Purpose of study.
- The story of Mark Halder.
- Factors affecting new teacher decisions.
- The promise of induction and mentoring programs.
- A plan for supporting new teachers in B.C.
- A legacy for the next generation of teachers.
- Questions/discussion

Purpose of the Study

- Identify the reasons new teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching.
- Identify the most important factors that will enable the next generation of teachers to enter, grow in, and remain in the teaching profession.

New Teachers Call out for Support

- The story of Mark Halder.

Entry to Teaching

- “the profession that eats its young” (Halford, 1998)
- “the profession that cannibalizes its young” (Ingersoll, 2004)
- “the boot-camp experience” (Ingersoll, 2004)
- “the sink-or-swim profession” (Halford, 1998)
- “trial-by-fire” (Lipton, 2001)

Some Factors Affecting New Teacher Career Decisions

- 1-Teacher retention and attrition.
- 2-Nature of school culture.
- 3-Lack of induction and mentoring programs.
- 4-Teaching and working conditions.

1-Teacher Attrition and Retention

- 20-40% of all teachers in BC are in the 50-54 age range.
- 40% are in the 50+ age category.
- A significant number of teachers will retire over the next decade.

Source: BC Ministry of Education, 2005

Teacher Attrition and Retention

- In Canada-15-20 % of new teachers leave profession during first five years (National Graduates Survey, Statistics Canada, 2000).
- In the USA-up to 40% of new teachers leave profession during first five years. (*Berg, Donaldson, & Johnson, 2005*).

2- Nature of School Culture

- Since early 70's, literature has described work of teachers as "isolated" and "individualistic."
(Lortie, 1975; Goodlad, 1984; Hargreaves, 1999).
- Common descriptors: "Sink or swim" "Profession that eats its young."

School Culture

- Teaching is too important to do alone.
- New teachers express a preference for collegial interaction and collaboration (Kardos, 2004).
- Time to stop the “war stories” of veterans.

Transforming School Culture

- Challenge and opportunity.
- Transform the culture of teaching profession from one that is individualistic to one that has collaboration and collegiality as the norm.

Transforming School Culture

- When teachers are interacting and communicating in a collaborative and collegial manner on a regular basis, reflection, learning, and professional growth becomes the norm of professional behaviour (Kardos, 2002; Schon, 1987).

3-Lack of Support

- Lack of practical support systems such as induction and mentoring.

4-Teaching and Learning Conditions

- Inadequate curriculum resources.
- Unreasonable working conditions.
- Inappropriate teaching assignments
- Classroom management issues.
- Inadequate facilities and equipment.
- Too much paperwork/administrivia.
- Lack of support from colleagues.
- Lack of support from parents and the public.
- Lack of professional autonomy.

Promising Strategies for Supporting New Teachers

- Induction programs
- Mentoring programs
- Additional strategies

Induction Programs

- Sustained support at the district and school level to prepare teachers for entry to the profession.
- Facilitate the transition from student to professional.
- Pre-orientation and orientation phases.

Induction Programs

Pre-orientation

- Provide new teachers with relevant information shortly after they are hired.
- Information about teaching assignment, curriculum materials, school district information, contract information, etc.

Induction Programs Orientation

- Builds on pre-orientation program.
- Joint district-union initiative with a focus on:
 - -School and classroom
 - -School board and district
 - -Role of the teacher union
 - -Community

Mentoring

- Pairing of a new teacher and an experienced teacher in a non-evaluative and voluntary relationship built on trust and flexibility for the purpose of providing support (Jackson & McPhie, 1994; ETFO, 2002).

The Promise of Mentoring

- Powerful means for promoting, building, and sustaining a strong culture of collaboration.
- Mentoring is an effective way for transmitting to the next generation of teachers the collective wisdom of experienced teachers (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005).

The Promise of Mentoring

- Potential to shift the norm of the teaching profession from “isolation” to “collaboration.”

Why Mentoring?

- Successful mentoring programs:
 - ✓ Improve teaching quality (NFIE, 1999).
 - ✓ Reduce new teacher attrition (Johnson, 2005).
 - ✓ Promote collaborative practice (Kardos, 2002).
 - ✓ Improve job satisfaction (Hirsch, 2001).

Benefits of Mentoring

- Guidance and moral support for new teachers.
- Positive way to begin career.
- Specific assistance with difficulties.
- Opportunities for feedback and reflection.
- Focus on growth and learning.
- Increase in knowledge and skills.
- Expansion of teaching strategies.
- Enhanced communications skills.
- New friendships.

Role of Mentors

- Advising on teaching strategies and content.
- Demonstration lessons.
- Observing new teachers.
- Consultations re planning.
- Advising about learning resources.
- Advising about student and parent relations.
- Information about expectations.

Skills and Attributes of Mentors

- Good interpersonal skills
- Exemplary teaching skills
- Coach/mentor
- Open-minded
- Patient and helpful
- Flexible
- Non-judgmental
- Active listener
- Effective observer
- Problem-solver
- Organized

Quality Mentoring Programs

- Sustained support.
- Careful selection of mentors.
- Focus on teaching and learning.
- Institutional support.
- Release time for mentors and new teachers.
- Based on principles of adult learning.
- Serve as catalyst for changing school culture.
- Training opportunities.
- Careful matching of mentors and new teachers.

Additional Strategies for Supporting New Teachers

- Good working and learning conditions.
- Competitive compensation.
- Access to adequate curriculum and learning resources.
- Adequate facilities, equipment, and supplies.

Additional Strategies for Supporting New Teachers

- Opportunities to influence policy.
- Collegial support.
- Career-long PD opportunities.
- Improved teacher preparation programs.

Lessons for B.C.

- Build on successful local mentoring programs.
- Learn from Ontario, New Brunswick, and Northwest Territories mentoring programs.
- Review the New York Induction Initiative and the California New Teacher Project and other successful programs.

Moving Forward to Support New Teachers in B.C.

- “Tipping point” opportunity:
 - ✓ Deal with the challenges and realities of teaching in B.C.
 - ✓ Address new teacher attrition.
 - ✓ Induction and mentoring opportunities.
 - ✓ Transform the culture of schools.

An Opportunity for Collaboration in B.C.

- Unprecedented number of new teachers in the next decade.
- Willingness to support to new teachers.
- Positive history of induction and mentoring programs at the local level.
- Labour peace for 5 years.
- Programs in place for school administrators
- Readiness of educational community.
- *Joining Hands* initiative.

An Opportunity for Collaboration in B.C.

- Successful programs such as the BCTF Peer Support Program.
- Learning Roundtable.
- Positive relationship between BCTF and teacher education institutions.
- Association of BC Deans of Education.

An Opportunity for Collaboration in B.C.

- In 2005, the Ontario Ministry of Education provided \$15 million in funding to establish a province-wide induction and mentoring program to support new teachers.
- Ontario program focus: on-the-job training in classroom management and teaching; mentoring for new teachers, and orientation for all new teachers.

A Framework for Induction and Mentoring in B.C.

- Provincial context.
- Lessons from successful mentoring programs.
- Characteristics of effective programs.
- Collaboration.
- Research

Elements of a Provincial Induction Program

- Pre-orientation
- Orientation
- Formal mentoring program

BC New Teacher Induction Program

- After the *Joining Hands* conference establish a provincial working group (SLC, BCTF, school districts, ministry, and others) to develop a framework proposal for a BC New Teacher Induction Program.
- 1-time start-up funding and stable annual funding provided by provincial government.

BC New Teacher Induction Agency

- BC New Teacher Induction Agency Advisory Board.
- Management team.
- Regional mentor co-ordinators.
- Full time mentors (1 per 15 new teachers).
- Connected to local and regional advisory structures.

Some Final Thoughts

- We have an opportunity to harness and focus our collective energy to develop a collaborative and comprehensive strategy for supporting a new generation of teachers in BC.
- The strategy should attract, recruit, support, and retain new teachers in the profession.

Imagine 2015: A Legacy from this Generation of Teachers

- After completing their teacher education, all new teachers are inducted into the profession through a 1-3 year mentorship program.
- Thousands of new teachers are working in a culture of collaboration in the schools of BC.

Imagine 2015: A Legacy from this Generation of Teachers

- In our schools, the culture of teaching is based on collaboration, inquiry, reflection, and collegiality.
- The attrition rate of new teachers is less than 5%.
- The provincial mentoring program is fully funded by the province and is coordinated by a collaborative effort of the BCTF, school districts, universities, and the ministry.

A Gift from One Generation of Teachers to the Next

- ✓ We came into teaching to make a difference.
- ✓ We made a difference in the lives of our students.
- ✓ We made a difference in the lives of the next generation of teachers.

Further Readings

- Induction and Mentoring: A Lifeline for the Next Generation of Teachers

http://www.slc.educ.ubc.ca/Downloads/JoiningHands/InductionandMentoring_MikeLombardi.pdf

- Supporting New Teachers: A Fundamental Responsibility of the Teaching Profession

<http://www.slc.educ.ubc.ca/eJournal/Issue10/PDFs/SupportingNewTeachers-MLombardi.pdf>

Questions/Discussion

- Comments/observations.
- What challenges/opportunities did the presentation raise for you?
- Have we reached the tipping point in BC?
- Ideas for next steps.....