

Teachers for a New Era Newsletters

Teachers for a New Era Quarterly Newsletter

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Induction: Rethinking How We Launch the Next Generation of Teachers

by Ellen Moir, Executive Director, New Teacher Center at University of California, Santa Cruz

The Teachers for a New Era (TNE) initiative aims to rethink teaching as an academically taught clinical practice profession. A key implementation strategy is a two-year induction or residency period for new teachers. Historically, colleges and universities engaged in teacher preparation haven't seen induction as their purview and haven't had the resources to follow their graduates. The TNE initiative encourages 11 higher education institutions to do so. They will be breaking new ground and their efforts will make a substantial contribution to developing new induction models. The New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz is very pleased to assist the institutions undertaking this important effort.

New teachers have historically faced the challenging early years in the profession with only informal support from busy colleagues and infrequent evaluations by administrators. Neglect of new teacher development contributes to rapid teacher turnover in our lowest-performing schools and to teacher attrition rates of 40-50% during the first five years. Several studies show that student achievement is lower for students taught by inexperienced teachers, who tend to work disproportionately with low-performing students.

Induction, in the broadest sense, includes the district level hiring and orientation process, the assignment of teachers to schools and grade levels, school-site orientation, site administrator programs for orienting and integrating new staff, and support from other members of the school staff. Formal induction programs almost always refer to

programs that include mentoring from veteran teachers as a key element. The New Teacher Center research team has completed two student achievement studies showing that beginning teachers get results similar to veteran teachers when they participate in an intensive induction program.

The challenge for each TNE site is to develop a university-led program appropriate for its unique context. One size will not fit all. Each of the institutions is in a different political context with respect to state mandates for teacher induction and whether these mandates are funded. Teacher preparation programs themselves differ across TNE institutions. Some are four years, others five with credentialing, and still others at the Master's degree level. Graduates of these different programs have differing needs for and interest in induction support. Finally, while some program graduates teach in districts local to the institution they graduated from, others work in distant places.

Effectively meeting these differing needs may require a menu-driven strategy, from interfacing with existing local induction programs and determining how the university can add value to providing leadership in constructing a new program if one doesn't exist. As most school districts are unwilling to create "haves and have nots" in terms of new teacher support, some TNE institutions might opt to work with all of the new teachers in their partner districts. A technology-based strategy for follow up may be useful for graduates leaving the area. Substantial differences between first and second-year teachers will need to be reflected in a two-year residency program.

Excellent teacher preparation programs with strong philosophies and committed faculty will prove extremely valuable to new teachers, who spend their first two years both teaching and learning to teach. Program faculty, arts and science faculty, and administrators will need to determine their appropriate niche, asking how they can best help graduates. Faculty develop very strong relationships with teacher candidates during their preparation. Both teachers and pupils will benefit from structured ways to sustain these crucial bonds during the first years of teaching.

A university-led induction program is an exciting prospect because graduates who teach locally become the next generation of master teachers and educational leaders. What we find out from interviewing and observing our graduates in their first years of teaching can be of great benefit in improving teacher preparation programs. Learning what graduates are struggling to teach or report they never learned can be fed back into the structure and content of courses and clinical experiences.

Induction also allows us the opportunity to examine how we can improve K-12 systems for both teachers and students. An induction program can build a compact with local school districts that extends beyond mentoring to emphasize working conditions for new teachers who traditionally receive the most difficult assignments. We want our graduates to succeed and we can give them the opportunity to do so by helping districts think through hiring and placement and ensuring that new teachers have the best possible launch.

Induction is an interesting and important nexus between teachers' pre-service experience and the realities of K-12 education. It provides a crucial access point that allows us to affect both simultaneously in the process of building a seamless continuum. By taking advantage of this point of leverage, TNE has a vast potential not only to rethink teacher education but also to rethink how novices begin their careers. My hope is that these pilot efforts will be the first step toward a national framework for induction.

New TNE Website Goes Live

The Teachers for a New Era website, at www.teachersforanewera.org, went live on April 27. At the new site, visitors can find a description of the initiative, including the prospectus; links to information on TNE at each of the institutions; the TNE virtual library; a calendar of TNE-related events; and recent editions of the TNE newsletter.

In addition, there are private discussion boards for TNE site team members to ask one another questions and share thoughts about the challenges and successes they experience.

The virtual library is a growing resource of up-to-date research and writing on reforming teacher education. It is also envisioned as a dynamic mechanism for sharing documents and readings among participating TNE institutions as they formulate concrete plans for implementation of initiative activities. The AED technical assistance team will expand and update the virtual library with new materials, including those recommended by TNE sites.

Teaching to the Test

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching publishes a monthly commentary on teaching and learning entitled "Carnegie Perspectives." In April, Lloyd Bond, a senior scholar and testing specialist at Carnegie, tackled the thorny issue of high-stakes testing and the pressures on teachers in "Teaching to the Test." Bond considers taking advantage of a testing-centered culture in ways that don't distort student learning. Excerpts are included below and the entire article is available at <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/perspectives/>.

"A recurring criticism of tests used in high-stakes decision making is that they distort instruction and force teachers to 'teach to the test.' The criticism is not without merit. . . Although many view teaching to the test as an all or none issue, in practice it is actually a continuum. At one extreme, some teachers examine the achievement objectives as described in their state's curriculum and then design instructional activities around those objectives. This is done without regard to a particular test. At the other extreme is the unsavory and simply dishonest practice of drilling students on the actual items that will

appear on the tests.

"In addition to offending our moral sense, teaching the actual items on a test (what James Popham calls "item teaching") is counter-productive for the very practical reason that it makes valid inferences about student achievement almost impossible. . . But is teaching to the test all bad? Emphatically not. Consider the coach who drills young athletes on the very skills they will perform in competition, or the typing instructor who teaches students precisely the finger arrangements and keystrokes that will be used in typing. These practices are not seen as unethical or unsavory for the simple reason that in these two domains instruction and assessment merge into a single activity. Indeed, instructing students on anything other than the actual test itself seems illogical.

"The above two examples are so obvious as to be trivial. But more significant illustrations of the issues are easy to find. In the ambitious New Standards Project, a national initiative that regularly brought teachers together from around the country to learn techniques for integrating instruction and assessment, participating teachers learned to literally merge these two activities in such a way that they were indistinguishable. Lauren Resnick of the University of Pittsburgh, one of the visionaries behind the project, noted that rather than bemoan the inclination to teach to the test, we should take advantage of it. We should make exercises so compelling, and so powerful as exemplars of a domain, that honing one's ability to solve them represents generalizable learning and achievement. Viewed in this light, teaching to the test is no longer vaguely disreputable because the skills and knowledge are themselves general and are the very things we wish students to acquire. . .

"There is a lesson here for teachers and assessment specialists alike. The tension between the instructional and assessment communities, as well the pejorative connotations that "teaching to the test" entails, will continue unabated so long as testing and assessment are seen as something quite apart from instruction and learning, rather than an integrated reflection of what was intentionally taught. To paraphrase A. G. Rud of Purdue University, what is needed is a deliberate attempt on the part of all parties to link curriculum, instruction, assessment, and standards in a more generative and even transparent way."

Experts Provide Technical Assistance to TNE Sites

Through funds provided to AED for technical assistance to the participating institutions, the original TNE sites have brought in consultants to assist them in the planning and implementation of their initiative work. This technical expertise brokering is in addition to the assistance provided to the sites by the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz, which contributes expertise in developing induction programs for teachers. The New Teacher Center receives Carnegie funds to provide technical

assistance directly to TNE sites.

Bank Street College of Education brought Pamala Carter of the Public Education Fund in Chattanooga to New York to help connect value-added assessment with the sources of evidence of pupil learning that the college is collecting. Judith Sallee of Harper College conducted a training workshop for faculty on the Newmann rubric for scoring student work this month, and the college plans to bring in Tracy Smith from Appalachian State University in July for a workshop on the SOLO (Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes) taxonomy. Both of these evaluation methods are designed to look at the level of intellectual complexity of the actual demands (tasks assigned) in the classroom and the level of complexity of the students' response. The two presentations will assist the college in determining how best to evaluate embedded student work.

California State University, Northridge (CSUN) invited Ray Pecheone of Stanford University to campus to consult on teaching assessment methodologies in February. Dr. Martin Kaufmann of the University of Oregon also provided assistance on the design of CSUN's TNE research program, helping to incorporate case studies and other qualitative methodologies with quantitative assessments to examine teacher performance and student gains.

The University of Virginia (UVA) hosted Mark Reckase, involved in TNE assessment at Michigan State University, in May to address the provost's seminar on research on teaching and pupil learning, speak to teacher education faculty on assessing the influence of individual teachers, and consult with the UVA assessment team. The university plans to bring in additional expertise in the coming year on measuring pedagogical content knowledge, assessment, and the university role in teacher induction.

AED has also set aside funds for specialized workshops and seminars bringing in outside expertise and engaging representatives from multiple TNE sites in peer-to-peer learning. These are to be hosted at the organizing institution and would gather interested parties. Michigan State University plans to organize the first of these events on English-language learners in the fall.

TNE Grantees Attend Institute on Engagement with Arts and Sciences

On March 3rd through the 5th, teams from all eleven participating TNE institutions gathered in Washington, DC. Pre-sessions for project directors and the seven newest TNE institutions answered general questions about the initiative and allowed sharing on project roll-out and implementation. The two-day institute itself, with about 100 participants, focused on one of the project's design principles—engaging arts and sciences faculty in teacher preparation. Discussion focused on incentives and strategies for increasing and sustaining such participation.

During facilitated team sessions, the new TNE institutions developed their workplans for

the first year of project implementation and the four original sites refined Year Two plans and held crucial discussions on TNE issues on their campus. While the teams found this focused work time to be valuable, the highlight of the institute was the opportunity to share in cross-site discussions. There were several mixed institution sessions, one of which focused on bringing together people in similar roles (education or arts and sciences faculty, administrators, project leadership, K-12, etc.) for sharing. The four original sites played a valuable role in providing lessons learned to the second round grantees.

TNE Symposium on Induction Held at AERA Annual Meeting

A panel of TNE participants presented a symposium, "New Directions in Teacher Induction: Emerging Strategies from the Teachers for a New Era Initiative," at the American Educational Research Association meeting in San Diego on April 16. Ivan Charner of AED was the session chair and organizer. Presenters from each of the four original TNE institutions Virginia Roach from Bank Street College of Education, Arlinda Eaton of California State University, Northridge, Amy Alvarado from the University of Virginia, and Gail Burrill of Michigan State University presented papers examining the development and early implementation of new models of teacher induction that are based on the design principles of TNE. Papers explored a number of critical issues that have emerged related to teacher induction, including the role of teacher education and arts and science faculty in the design of the induction model as well as their respective roles in the induction process itself. How new teachers link back to their teacher preparation programs and faculty was an important element in the discussion. Discussants were Ellen Moir of the University of California, Santa Cruz and Sharon Feiman-Nemser of Brandeis University.

One of the critical elements of TNE is a two-year residency requirement for licensed beginning teachers. Quality induction programs result in greater teacher retention, breaking the cycle of attrition. Research shows that well-designed teacher induction programs also increase teacher effectiveness during the early teaching career. TNE sites consider the teacher candidate's first two years of full-time regular service in the teaching profession as a residency period requiring mentorship and supervision. One of the unique features of the TNE induction model is the requirement that faculty from the higher education institution, inclusive of arts and sciences faculty, will confer with the teacher on a regular basis, arrange for observation of the teacher's clinical practice, and provide guidance to improve practice.