State Policy Review: Teacher Induction

California

The New Teacher Center’s 2011 Review of State Policies on Teacher Induction provides comprehensive summaries for all 50 states. For each state, the NTC reviews the presence or absence of policies related to 10 key criteria that are most critical to the provision of universal, high-quality induction and mentoring support for beginning educators. The state summaries capture all relevant policies, statutes, regulations, induction program standards, and other guidance on new teacher induction and mentoring.

1. Teachers Served:
State policy should require that all teachers receive induction support during their first two years in the profession.

The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) System is co-administered by the California Department of Education and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. All first- and second-year teachers are required to participate in an induction program; however, if the employing school district verifies that induction support is not available, the new teacher must complete an approved university Clear Credential program (very similar to BTSA induction). In addition, there is an early completion option for “experienced and exceptional” candidates. [California Education Code § 44279.25]

Teachers eligible to participate in a BTSA induction program are beginners who hold a California preliminary (or single subject) teaching credential or those who were trained out of state and who have less than two years of teaching experience. [California Education Code §§ 44279.1, 44279.4]

2. Administrators Served:
State policy should require that all school administrators receive induction support during their first two years in the profession.

The state does not require all new school administrators to receive induction or mentoring support during their initial years on the job.

3. Program Standards:
The state should have formal program standards that govern the design and operation of local teacher induction programs.

California’s six Induction Program Standards focus on two primary concerns: (1) Programs exhibit effective design principles and (2) Programs provide opportunities for participants to demonstrate effective teaching. Specifically, standards one-through-four address program rationale and design, communication and collaboration, support and professional development providers, and the formative assessment system. Standards five and six address pedagogy and universal access (equity for all students).

4. Mentor Selection:
State policy should require a rigorous mentor selection process.

California Education Code § 44279 requires teacher mentors to hold “a valid California teaching credential, or have equivalent professional background and experience.” California Induction Program Standard 3 requires the induction program to select, prepare, and assign support providers “using well-defined criteria consistent with the provider’s assigned responsibilities in the program.”

5. Mentor Training:
State policy should require foundational training and ongoing professional development for mentors.

California Induction Program Standard 3 requires the BTSA induction program to select, prepare, and assign
mentors “using well-defined criteria consistent with the provider’s assigned responsibilities in the program.” They must receive “initial and ongoing professional development to ensure that they are knowledgeable about the program and skilled in their roles.” Mentor training must include the development of knowledge and skills of mentoring, the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, California Induction Program Standards, and the appropriate use of the instruments and processes of formative assessment systems.

6. Mentor Assignment and Caseload:
State policy should address how mentors are assigned to beginning teachers, allow for manageable mentor caseloads, and encourage programs to provide release time for mentors.

California Education Code § 44279 requires each BTSA induction program to ensure that mentors are assigned to each beginning teacher “within the first 30 days of initial teacher participation in the induction program.” California Induction Program Standard 3 requires the induction program to select, prepare, and assign support providers “using well-defined criteria consistent with the provider’s assigned responsibilities in the program.” In addition, the program must have “clear procedures … for reassignments when either the participating teacher or support provider is dissatisfied with the pairing.”

7. Program Delivery:
State policy should identify key induction program elements, including a minimum amount of mentor-new teacher contact time, formative assessment of teaching practice, and classroom observation.

California Induction Program Standards focus the work of BTSA induction programs in six principal areas. Programs should help participating teachers: (1) Apply California Standards for the Teaching Profession and specific teaching skills for subject-matter instruction; (2) Use and interpret student assessment data to inform instruction; (3) Plan and differentiate instruction for individual students; (4) Engage in effective classroom management strategies; (5) Use technology in instruction; and (6) Design and implement inclusive learning environments and maximize academic achievement for all students, including English language learners and special populations.

Program standards require BTSA programs to provide “systematic opportunities” for new teachers to demonstrate teaching knowledge and skills through “individualized support and assistance,” “collaborative experience with colleagues,” and “an inquiry-based formative assessment system” connected to state teaching standards. Programs must align themselves with teacher preparation programs “to facilitate the transition” into teaching. They also must collaborate with school administrators and offer professional development to site administrators in order to establish “a professional, educational community” and ensure structures and working conditions that “support the activities of induction” and “optimize participating teachers’ success.”

A formative assessment system is at the heart of California’s BTSA System. Induction Program Standard 4 articulates the purpose of formative assessment as supporting and informing participating teachers “about their professional growth as they reflect and improve upon their teaching as part of a continuous improvement cycle. Formative assessment guides the work of support providers and professional development providers as well as promotes and develops professional norms of inquiry, collaboration, data-driven dialogue, and reflection to improve student learning.” The formative assessment system has three core elements: (1) state teaching standards; (2) evidence of practice (multiple measures including self-assessment, observation, analyzing student work, and instructional planning and delivery); and (3) an assessment tool identifying multiple levels of teaching practice. Participating teachers and mentors collaboratively develop an individual induction plan that guides the activities to support the professional growth of the new teacher.

8. Funding:
The state should provide dedicated funding to support local educator induction programs.

California Education Code § 44279.2(c) allows local education agencies (LEAs) to apply for and receive state funding to support induction programs through the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program. Beginning in fiscal year 2005-06, BTSA Induction was funded from the Teacher Credentialing Block Grant.

In the 2008–2009 school year, state funding for local BTSA induction programs totaled $128.6 million — $4,069 per first- and second-year teacher. Due to current budgetary constraints, the 2009 Budget Act and related legislation (Education Code § 42605) devolved numerous categorical programs — including BTSA — to ‘Flexibility Tier III,’ allowing school districts to redirect the funds toward “any educational purpose” for a five-year period ending June 30, 2013. The 2009 law also allocates funding during this period based on 2008–09 LEA funding levels rather than previous factors used in the funding formulas, such as the number of new teachers. In addition, the $2,000 local contribution per participating teacher is no longer required by the state.
The BTSA Induction Task Force and State Leadership Team provide support and technical assistance to local BTSA Induction Program leaders. There are currently over 169 approved BTSA Induction Programs across California, organized into six regions or “Clusters.” Local programs are supported by Cluster Region Directors who also assist districts and other entities wishing to initiate or improve a BTSA program. The statewide system supports local programs through an induction program network and regular statewide meetings for program directors.

9. Educator Accountability:
The state should require participation in and/or completion of an induction program to advance from an initial to a professional teaching license.

Induction programs are required by California Education Code §§ 44259, 44274.2 “to determine, prior to the recommending of a candidate” for a professional teaching credential, “that the candidate has completed the approved induction program.”

A 1998 law (SB 2042) created a new two-tier credentialing system for California teachers, under which they earn the first “level” through their initial preparation programs and the second “level” only after participation in an approved induction program. Specifically, the legislation included the mandate that teachers successfully complete an induction program of support and assessment in order to earn a California Professional Clear Credential.

A 2004 law (SB 2210) codified induction as the preferred method for earning a professional teaching credential.

10. Program Accountability:
The state should assess or monitor program quality through accreditation, program evaluation, surveys, site visits, self-reports, and other relevant tools and strategies.

During the 2009–2010 school year, California added BTSA induction programs to its statewide accreditation system (which also covers teacher preparation programs). The system features ongoing data collection and a seven-year cycle of activities, including at least one site visit. Additional requirements of BTSA programs include biennial reports and a program assessment. Prior to that, the state had conducted regular induction program site visits—a three-day-long program review evaluating adherence to state program standards—conducted by a team of state-trained reviewers.

Pursuant to California Education Code § 44227(a), each teacher induction program—sponsored by either an institution of higher education, a school district, or a county office of education (California Education Code § 44259(c))—must meet six preconditions to be granted initial or continuing approval by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC):

Approval and Academic Credit: The program is proposed and operated by an institution of higher education that is fully accredited and grants postbaccalaureate academic credit; or operated by a school district that has submitted verification of the school board’s or superintendent’s sponsorship;

Responsibility and Authority: The proposal must identify the organizational position that is responsible for ongoing oversight of all educator preparation programs offered by the institution/district/LEA (including the induction program), and a description of the reporting relationship between the position and the induction program coordinators.

Personnel Decisions: The institution proposing the induction program must make all personnel decisions without considering differences due to gender and other legally prohibited considerations.

Demonstration of Need: The proposal must include a demonstration of the need.

Commission Assurances: The teacher induction program sponsor must demonstrate that: (a) the program will fulfill all of the applicable induction program standards; (b) include an assurance that the program will cooperate with evaluation by an external team or program monitoring by the CTC; and (c) include an assurance that the program will participate in focused reviews of one or more of its components.

Requests for Data: The proposal identifies a qualified individual responsible for reporting and responding to all requests from the CTC for the electronic submission of data.
Links:

Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA): [http://www.btsa.ca.gov](http://www.btsa.ca.gov)


_The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing has reviewed this state summary._

_This information is accurate as of February 2011._