State Policy Review: New Educator Induction

Pennsylvania

New Teacher Center’s 2016 Review of State Policies on New Educator Induction provides comprehensive summaries for all 50 states. For each state, NTC reviews the presence or absence of policies related to nine 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.

1. Educators Served

State policy should require that all beginning teachers, principals, and administrators receive induction support during their first two years in the profession.

The state requires all first-year teachers and education specialists, including long-term substitutes hired for 45 days or more, to participate in an induction program. A school entity’s induction program must be conducted in accordance with an induction plan approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). [22 Pennsylvania Code §§ 49.16, 49.83]. Substitute teachers and newly-employed teachers with prior school experience may be required to participate at the option of the employing school entity. [PDE Educator Induction Plan Guidelines – September 2013].

All first-time principals and assistant or vice principals must complete a Principal’s Induction Program, offered or approved by the PDE, within their first five years of employment. The induction program is offered at no cost through the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program.

2. Mentor Quality

State policy should require a rigorous mentor selection process and foundational training and ongoing professional development for mentors. State policy should also establish criteria for how and when mentors are assigned to beginning educators and allow for a manageable caseload of beginning educators and the use of full-time teacher mentors.

State regulations require that school entity induction plans reflect a mentor relationship between the inductee and the induction team. [22 Pa. Code § 49.16]. State guidelines require that local induction committees determine their mentor selection criteria. Recommended criteria are: (1) similar certification and assignment; (2) outstanding work performance; (3) modeling continuous learning and reflection; (4) knowledge of district/school policies, procedures and resources; (5) ability to work with students and other adults; (6) willingness to accept additional responsibility; (7) mentor training or previous experience; (8) compatible schedules so the mentor and inductee can meet regularly; (9) training in the use and application of the Standards Aligned System; (10) understand the levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge; (11) understanding the concept of promoting further inquiry by asking open-ended questions and utilizing open-ended tasks; (12) differentiated learning that supports higher order thinking skills and the development of metacognitive skills; (13) developing good assessments that are based on standards and eligible content; (14) data analysis training, including Pennsylvania’s Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS); and (15) the ability to write Student Learning Objectives in accordance with 22 Pa. Code § 19.1. One of the induction coordinator’s responsibilities is to provide training for new mentors. [PDE Education Educator Induction Plan Guidelines – September 2013].

While the state guidelines do not address mentor assignment and caseload, they do articulate specific mentor responsibilities, including: (1) instructional support such as classroom management, standards-based instructional planning and implementation, standards-aligned teaching strategies, differentiated instructional support for struggling students, observations and conferencing with the beginning teacher, instruction for diverse learners in inclusive settings, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with IEPs, and data-informed decision making; (2) professional support such as information about school policies and procedures, student formative and summative assessments and evaluation, Pennsylvania’s educator evaluation system, and information about quality professional development opportunities; and (3) personal support such as introductions to other faculty and administrators, personal encouragement within the context of a confidential relationship, and acting as a liaison to refer inductees to other key people and resources.

3. Time

State policy should encourage programs to provide release time for teacher mentor and dedicated mentor-new teacher contact time.

The PDE’s September 2013 Educator Induction Plan Guidelines state that school principals are to provide support to new teachers, such as: designing appropriate schedules as they develop professional skills; acquiring and providing appropriate resources such as time, scheduling, and space to support induction activities; and facilitating activities to enhance the relationship between mentors and beginning teachers.

4. Program Quality

State policy should address the overall quality of induction programs by requiring regular observation of new teachers by mentors, the provision of instructional feedback based on those observations, and opportunities for new teachers to observe experienced teachers’ classrooms; encouraging a reduced teaching load for beginning teachers; and encouraging participation of beginning educators in a learning community or peer network.

Although neither state law nor regulations require specific induction program elements, the PDE’s September 2013 Educator Induction Plan Guidelines state that observation of new teachers is a specific mentor responsibility.
State regulations require school entities to submit an induction plan to the PDE for approval. The plan must reflect “a mentor relationship between the first-year teacher, long-term substitute or educational specialist, teacher educator and the induction committee,” and must follow guidelines developed by the PDE. [22 Pa. Code §§ 49.16]

All Pennsylvania public school entities are required to have an induction program that includes the selection of an educator induction committee, which is responsible for the development and operation of the induction program. Induction committees must include teacher and/or educational specialist representatives selected by their peers, and administrative representatives. The induction committee is responsible for: (1) ensuring proper representation on the committee; (2) conducting meaningful needs-assessment activities; (3) developing an appropriate educator induction program; and (4) conducting an annual evaluation of the educator induction program [PDE Education Educator Induction Plan Guidelines – September 2013]. Teacher preparation programs at higher education institutions approved by PDE may provide support to novice educators in partnership with local education agencies during their induction period. [22 Pa. Code § 49.14(4)(ix)].

5. Program Standards

The state should adopt formal program standards that govern the design and operation of local educator induction programs.

State regulations require the PDE to establish guidelines for the approval of local school entity teacher induction plans. [22 Pa. Code §49.16]. The PDE’s September 2013 Educator Induction Plan Guidelines address how to develop a successful induction plan, including the composition and role of induction committees, building induction teams, interactions between mentor and mentee, assessment of induction program needs, evaluation and monitoring of the induction program, Pennsylvania’s research-based Standards Aligned System, and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which serves as the observation/evidence instrument for Pennsylvania’s new educator evaluation system.

6. Funding

The state should authorize and appropriate dedicated funding for local educator induction programs; and/or establish competitive innovation funding to support high-quality, standards-based programs.

The state does not provide dedicated funding to support teacher induction programs.

7. Educator Certification/Licensure

The state should require beginning educators to complete an induction program to move from an initial teaching license.

State regulations require educators to complete a Department-approved induction program in order to advance from Instructional Level I to Instructional Level II, Education Specialist I to Education Specialist II, or Vocational Instructional I to Vocational Instructional II. [22 Pa. Code §§ 49.83(1), 49.103(1), 49.143(4)]

8. Program Accountability

The state should assess or monitor induction programs through strategies such as program evaluation, program surveys, peer review, and accreditation.

State regulations require the PDE to review and approve local school entity induction plans. Specifically, a school district, charter school, Intermediate Unit or Area Vocational Technical School must submit an induction plan to the Department every six years (as part of its Comprehensive Plan). The plan must be prepared by teacher and/or educational specialist representatives and administrative representatives selected by their peers. [22 Pa. Code §§ 49.16]

Local induction programs should be “evaluated annually and revised as needed.” Induction plans are to include information on: (1) teacher induction participants; (2) goals and competencies; (3) needs assessment; (4) professional development activities and topics; (5) evaluation and mentoring; and (6) documentation of participation and completion. [PDE Education Educator Induction Plan Guidelines – September 2013]

The Guidelines state that an educator induction program “should be evaluated annually and revised as needed.” Because achievement of program goals and competencies is directly related to how well the program served inductees, “acquisition and evaluation of participant feedback data is essential and provides the basis for program revisions and continuous improvement.” The Guidelines state that systematic data collection for program assessment may include but are not limited to: (1) survey of participants including new teachers, mentors, principals and other members of the induction committee to determine levels of satisfaction and to understand the strengths and weakness of the program; (2) analysis of activities and resources used in the program; and (3) aligned program evaluation instruments that provide qualitative and quantitative data to determine the impact of participating teachers and their students. According to the Guidelines, “Results of the program evaluation, the implications of new knowledge about teaching and learning, and the identified strengths and needs of new teachers form the basis for adjustments and improvements in program design for future years.”
9. Teaching Conditions

States should adopt formal standards for teaching and learning conditions; conduct regular assessments of such conditions; and incorporate the improvement of such conditions in school improvement plans.

The state has not adopted formal standards for teaching and learning conditions. However, the new Induction Plan Guidelines are aligned with and are intended to support Pennsylvania’s research-based Standards Aligned System (SAS), which address aspects of teaching and learning conditions. SAS is a comprehensive, research-based resource to improved student achievement, based on six elements: Standards, Assessment, Curriculum Framework, Instruction, Materials and Resources, and Safe and Supportive Schools. Under the Safe and Supportive Schools strand of SAS, safety is defined as “the security of the school setting and school-related activities as perceived and experienced by all stakeholders, including families, caregivers, students, school staff, and the community.” School safety accounts for both emotional and physical safety, and is influenced by positive and negative behaviors of students and staff as well as the presence of substances in the school setting and during school-related activities. Also under the Safe and Supportive Schools strand, environment is defined as “the extent to which school settings promote student safety and health, inclusive of academic components, physical and mental health supports and services, physical building and location within a community, and disciplinary procedures.” Schools and educators across Pennsylvania are supported in their efforts to integrate SAS into the classroom through materials, resources, and training available in PDE’s SAS portal.

Links


The Pennsylvania Department of Education has reviewed this state summary.

This information is accurate as of January 2016.

i Pennsylvania’s Educator Induction Plan Guidelines were first formalized in 2002 and were revised in 2013. The Guidelines were revised to align teacher induction programs with Pennsylvania’s comprehensive, research-based Standards Aligned System (SAS), and Educator Effectiveness System under Act 82 of 2012. The September 2013 Educator Induction Plan Guidelines state that, “Effective professional development, beginning with aligned induction activities, will help prepare new teachers to utilize the SAS framework, along with student performance data, to improve student achievement and enhance instructional practices.”

ii Pennsylvania’s research-based Standards Aligned System (SAS) is the recently implemented Educator Effectiveness System under Act 82 of 2012.