



# **Support From The Start**

*A 50-State Review of Policies  
on New Educator Induction  
and Mentoring*

**Executive Summary**

*March 2016*



## *Executive Summary*

### Introduction

New teachers really matter. When they struggle, their students suffer. When mentors don't have the time or training to help new teachers, those beginning educators don't have the support they need. School leaders new to the job also need assistance. With quality standards, dedicated funding, protected time and mentor training, states can help school districts to provide the induction and mentoring support that new educators, and their students, deserve.

New Teacher Center's monitoring of state policies around support for new teachers and school principals began with our first report in 2012, using data primarily from the 2010-2011 school year. Our latest report—updated for the 2015-2016 school year—takes stock of policy changes over the last five years and summarizes what actions states have taken to strengthen on-the-job support for beginning educators.

Unfortunately, states have made only limited progress over the past several years. A small handful of states have taken clear steps forward in improving multiple areas of state policy that can lead to greater support for new teachers and principals. Several states have made progress in specific areas of new educator induction.

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Why is support for new teachers and the mentors who work with them so critical for every state and school system? Without strong support and continued growth, many new educators do not stay on the job—and fewer who do can be effective in helping students reach higher academic standards. No matter the quality of their preparation, new teachers encounter many distinct challenges as they navigate their first months and years in the classroom. Their job is too important in children's lives and futures to let them to simply "sink-or-swim" without continued guidance and support. NTC has designed and implemented research-based induction programs to help schools support new teachers since our founding in 1998.

Beginning teachers are, on average, less effective than more experienced ones.<sup>1</sup> High-quality induction programs can accelerate new teachers' professional growth, making them more effective faster. Research demonstrates that comprehensive, multi-year induction programs accelerate the professional growth of new teachers, reduce the rate of new teacher attrition, provide a stronger return on states' and school districts' investment, and improve student learning.<sup>2</sup>

When NTC published our first comprehensive analysis of state policies on teacher induction in 2012, data suggested that beginning teachers were more common in schools today than at any time in the prior 20 years. In 1987-1988 the typical teacher had 15 years of

experience; by 2007-2008 the typical teacher was in her first year.<sup>3</sup> Current data indicate the presence of early-career educators is no less common.<sup>4</sup> The most recent data show roughly one in five U.S. classroom teachers are in their first three years on the job. But there are signals that more new educators are staying on the job longer.<sup>5</sup> This is a promising possibility, and it could show that states' and school districts' attention to teacher induction could be starting to address this national challenge. The battle isn't won, however.

Beginning teachers are inequitably found in schools in high-poverty neighborhoods and communities.<sup>6</sup> But this reality can hinder many schools from effectively addressing the needs of many students of color and those from low-income families. Too many beginning educators in one place can impact student achievement and unfairly put students in these schools at a disadvantage compared to their more advantaged peers. Failure to address this issue will only plague states and school districts further—and burden our society—if we don't make more progress in educating all students to higher levels.

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While all schools and students can benefit from more effective teachers, the power of high-quality induction has special significance for schools that serve a disproportionate number of low-income and minority students. In such schools, teacher turnover is generally higher—and sometimes rampant. High-quality induction programs can help to provide the specialized support that new teachers need and transform these schools into strong professional communities where educators want to stay and work—and be more successful in working with students.

Simply put, high-quality induction programs are needed more than ever. State policy must create a supportive context and establish a strong expectation that comprehensive support will be provided to every beginning educator. Policy matters because it heavily influences the provision, design and scope of induction and mentoring for new educators.

We advocate for state policy that prioritizes new educators to help them thrive—and for the first time, we're examining how states can provide supportive teaching and learning conditions that help new teachers serve their students better. More than a decade of research suggests that positive teaching conditions are an important component of successful schools.<sup>7</sup> Positive working conditions—including trust, collaboration, supportive school leadership and professional learning opportunities—afford educators the chance to continue to learn and grow on the job and to provide instructional excellence to their students. Assessing these conditions through educator perception surveys—such as NTC's Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Survey—may be used by states and districts to monitor schools' progress under the Every Student Succeeds Act, the sweeping federal education law signed by President Obama in December 2015. After all, effective teaching is not just built on a foundation of individual knowledge, skills and abilities—but also upon a culture of support, trust and instructional improvement.



Still, policy isn't enough. The right laws and regulations won't solve the problems by themselves. That's why NTC urges states to make support for new educators a major priority in both policy *and* practice. Also, we work directly with states and school systems across the country to build stronger support systems for new educators. Our work is evolving and growing as we discover new challenges, review the latest research, and adjust to the changing federal and state education policy landscape.

NTC believes it's important to gauge states' progress and bring attention to research-based practices that will strengthen the field. Certain states have significantly strengthened or overhauled their educator induction policies over the past five years, and we highlight some of those exemplary efforts in this report and in the state policy summaries that accompany it.<sup>8</sup> Our intention is for this report to be a useful guide for state policymakers and education leaders in improving support for new teachers. We're all in this together.

### How the States Are Faring

We slightly adjusted the criteria we use to measure states' policy progress since our first report in 2012. This new report examines how states' policies address nine important criteria in providing high-quality support programs for new teachers, school principals and school administrators and for the mentors who work with them.

Only three states meet NTC's most important criteria for a high-quality system of new teacher support. Connecticut, Delaware and Iowa are the only states that require schools and districts to provide multi-year support for new teachers, require teachers to complete an induction program for a professional license, and provide dedicated funding for new teacher induction and mentoring. These same states also were the only ones to meet these important criteria in the 2012 report. Today, Hawaii also requires and funds a multi-year induction program for teachers and school principals, but not specifically for purposes of educator licensure. But while these four states are pacesetters in several areas of support for new educators, even they do not meet all nine of our main policy quality criteria.

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Just as in 2012, NTC finds that few states have comprehensive policies to require high-quality induction for beginning teachers. Many states still lack adequate support for new school principals, quality standards for educator induction, and ongoing professional development and support for mentors, and many states have only limited mentoring for new teachers. Further, too many states' policies that do exist are implemented poorly or sporadically. A sizable percentage of beginning teachers regularly report in NTC's TELL Surveys that they were not assigned a formal mentor—even in states with a mentoring requirement.<sup>9</sup>

## Other Key Findings

### **Requirements—**

- Of the 29 states that now require some type of support for new teachers, barely half (15 states) require support in teachers' first *and* second years. In 2012, 27 states required some type of new teacher support. Most states emphasize support only in teachers' first year on the job—or require no support at all.
- Over the last five years, Indiana eliminated its teacher-mentoring program, and the states of Hawaii, Oklahoma and Vermont enacted new teacher induction or mentoring requirements.
- Nine states require support for new teachers beyond their first two years (usually for three years): Delaware, Hawaii, Louisiana<sup>10</sup>, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio (for four years), and Utah.
- Only 20 states require some type of support for first-time school principals. Only six states—California, Delaware, Hawaii, Missouri, New Jersey, and Vermont—require induction or mentoring for first- *and* second-year school principals.

### **Funding—**

- Only 16 states provide some dedicated funding for teacher induction, one fewer than in 2012.
- Since our 2012 report, Hawaii and Washington, began providing induction funding. Three states—Alabama, Kansas, New Jersey—stopped.
- Only nine states provide induction funding to all school districts, and among them only six states (Hawaii, Iowa, North Dakota, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia) provide funding for local induction program costs. The other three states provide funds exclusively for mentor stipends.
- Two states fund statewide teacher induction programs—the Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project and the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program.
- Not included among the 17 states with “dedicated” induction funding,
  - California has appropriated \$490 million in Educator Effectiveness funding for use during the 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years that may be used for beginning teacher and administrator induction and mentoring.
  - Maryland provides resources for educator induction through its school funding formula.
  - Minnesota requires school districts to “set aside” 2 percent of their basic state education revenues for staff development, of which induction and mentoring is an allowable activity.
  - Ohio school districts may use state professional development funds to support resident educator programs.

***Quality Mentoring—***

- Nearly 30 states articulate which educators are eligible to serve as mentors, and a majority of states have policies in place to structure or guide teacher-mentor selection.
- More than 30 states provide or require initial mentor training, but only 18 also require ongoing professional development for mentors.
- Alaska, Hawaii, Maryland and Washington actively provide or require full-time teacher mentors. A few other states—Idaho, New Hampshire, Ohio—encourage it.
- Twenty-three states require or encourage release time for mentor teachers to conduct classroom observations and provide support during the school day.
- Twelve states establish a minimum amount of weekly or annual mentor contact time for beginning teachers. A half-dozen other states explicitly require regular mentor/mentee interactions in policies and program standards.

***Program Quality—***

- Eleven states' policies (California, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina) address three key induction program elements: (1) classroom observations of and by beginning teachers; (2) formative assessment of or feedback on teaching from mentors; and (3) participation in a professional learning community or beginning educator peer network. The Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project formatively assesses teachers, conducts monthly classroom observation and uses online forums for new teachers—but these elements are not included in state policy.
- Two states (Maryland and Massachusetts) encourage a reduced teaching load for beginning teachers.

***Certification/Licensure—***

- Twenty-four states require new teachers to complete or participate in an induction or mentoring program for professional teaching certification—only two more states than we reported in 2012.
- Fourteen states require new school principals and administrators to receive induction or mentoring support on their path to a professional certificate or license.

***Program Accountability/Oversight—***

- Fifteen states' policies, practices and standards establish the clearest focus on ensuring induction program quality and informing program improvement.
- Oregon state law reserves 2.5 percent of induction funding for program evaluation.

***Teaching and Learning Conditions—***

- Only two states (Kentucky and North Carolina) have adopted standards for teaching and learning conditions.
- Fourteen states have conducted or provided educator surveys of teaching and learning conditions in recent years, and at least 11 have applied the survey data to school improvement efforts.
- At least nine states have articulated strategies for improving teaching conditions in their teacher-equity plans approved by the U.S. Department of Education in 2015.

## More on the Specific Challenges for States

**The foundation for beginning educators:** Twenty-one states still have no requirement for support for all new teachers. This is down from 23 states five years ago. Using current data, 11 states require only one year of support for new teachers and three states require mentoring or induction of indeterminate length. In the 2015-2016 school year, then, just 15 states require a research-based, multi-year course of support for all beginning teachers.

NTC recommends that states institute multi-year induction programs, or at least a comprehensive grant program for school districts or consortia to develop comprehensive, high-quality local induction programs. New teachers also should be required to complete a high-quality, multi-year induction experience to receive a professional teaching license or certificate. Yet, in 2015-2016, only 24 states connect induction to the teacher credentialing process, up from 22 states in 2010-2011.

**Twenty-one states still have no requirement for support for all new teachers. This fact has changed little since our 2012 report when 23 states had none.**

**Support for school leaders:** School administrators play a key role in new teachers' success and growth. When new teachers find supportive, skilled school leaders who can help them grow professionally and improve classroom instruction, they are much more likely to stay at their school and become better instructors themselves. But just as most states lack adequate support for new teachers, few states support school administrators in their first years on the job. Only 20 states require such support in 2015-2016, an increase from 16 states in 2010-2011. But only six states require support extended beyond a school leader's first year on the job. Only 14 states connect induction requirements to their school principal and administrator certification and licensure processes.

How can states improve in this area? By setting policy that all school administrators will receive induction support for their first two years on the job. This policy should include all principals, superintendents, and district administrators. Short of this, states should at least establish a grant program for districts and consortia of districts to support comprehensive, high-quality induction and coaching programs for new administrators.

**Setting high expectations, making the right investments:** States have made the most progress in setting high standards for teacher-induction programs. Twenty states met this criterion in 2015-2016, compared with 15 states in 2010-2011. The strongest versions of such state induction program standards articulate a vision of instructional mentoring and require school districts to design and implement standards-based programs. After all, the goal of such programs must be not only to help new teachers survive, but to thrive as professionals, delivering high-quality instruction and meeting the social and emotional needs of their students.



## Support From The Start

Support for new teachers benefits from dedicated funding. And funding should not be restricted to mentor stipends alone. Local districts can share the investment in this endeavor. States can start with targeted grant programs that build support for new teachers over time, but should scale up to a statewide program.

Dedicated state funding is needed to establish new educator support as a state interest and priority. Sixteen states provide funding for induction or mentoring in 2015-2016, one fewer state than in the 2010-2011 school year. But only 11 of these states provide resources statewide or operate state-level programs; the other five operate competitive or otherwise limited grant programs. And some states still reserve all such funding for mentor stipends. In 2015-2016, three states that provide induction funding restrict it to mentor stipends, compared to six in 2010-2011. Up from eight states five years ago, 10 states now have authorized dedicated induction funding in state law, but have not appropriated the money for it.

**The need for great mentors:** A critical factor in assisting new teachers is the quality of the mentor. Our criteria pose key several questions for states: Are mentors selected based on specific guidelines aligned with research and knowledge? Are mentors provided their own support in beginning their role, and do they have good professional learning as they move along? And are mentors' caseloads of new teachers manageable, and do they include time for mentors and teachers to collaborate?

States should set explicit criteria for the selection of mentors, including evidence of teaching excellence and an ability to serve effectively as a mentor. States also need to ensure mentors get the initial and continuing training they need for their specific role.

**A critical factor in assisting new teachers is the quality of the mentor.**

Merely assigning new teachers a mentor—the age-old “buddy system”—does not meet the needs of new educators. Schools have done this for a long time with little apparent impact. More research and best practices now exist for teacher-mentors, enabling states and districts to provide them more effective guidance and training.

Mentors should be assigned to new teachers at the start of the school year. In selecting mentors, schools should attend to the subject and grade level of new teachers—but not be overly restrictive with such requirements. The best mentor for a particular teacher may be down the hall—or working in another school. Mentors, whether they're full-time instructional coaches or classroom teachers who perform this role atop a full teaching load, need appropriate time to meet with and observe teachers during the school day. State policy should support regular interaction between mentors and beginning teachers. Mentors' caseloads should also be flexible, depending on their role and the needs of new teachers.

Making the entire system of support for new teachers work requires more from states than simply monitoring local school systems' compliance with program rules. Program success should be measured at both the state and local levels, and evaluations should

guide improvements in new educator support. These program assessments should include an annual survey of all new teachers and perhaps mentors and principals about their support and how it might be improved.

### Good Policy to Support Good Practice

Policy is only as good as what it accomplishes. The real test of states' prioritization of support for new educators comes from the programs and resources they devote to this area of education—and their attention to the provision of comprehensive, quality induction support. While other areas of state policy related to teachers—their preparation, evaluations and professional development—are important, they at times have overshadowed the need for states and schools to help the rising number of new educators succeed. Without greater attention to beginning teachers and school leaders, many schools cannot meet the higher standards most states have enacted, nor prepare more of their students for college and good careers.

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States can help to put good policy on new teachers into practice through communication and outreach, helping school districts or consortia of districts to build their own capacity, developing technological tools and effective program design, and providing for the professional learning needed for mentors and new educators. States also need to monitor the success of their own efforts and make improvements continually, and require schools to provide support for new educators as part of state accountability and oversight. Research and surveys of educators have shown consistently that states with more detailed policies around support for new teachers provide the greatest level of assistance for these beginning educators.<sup>11</sup> They deserve our best, so that they can bring their best knowledge and skills to our nation's students.



**State Induction Policy Criteria**

- 1. *Educators Served.*** State policy should:
  - a. Require that all beginning teachers receive induction support during their first two years in the profession; and
  - b. Require that all beginning school principals and administrators receive induction support during their first two years in the profession.
  
- 2. *Mentor Quality.*** State policy should:
  - a. Require a rigorous mentor selection process;
  - b. Require foundational training and ongoing professional development for mentors;
  - c. Establish criteria for how and when mentors are assigned to beginning educators; and
  - d. Allow for a manageable caseload of beginning educators and the use of full-time teacher mentors.
  
- 3. *Time.*** State policy should encourage programs to:
  - a. Provide release time for teacher mentors; and
  - b. Provide dedicated mentor-new teacher contact time.
  
- 4. *Program Quality.*** State policy should address the overall quality of induction programs by:
  - a. 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;
  - b. Encouraging a reduced teaching load for beginning teachers; and
  - c. Encouraging beginning educators' participation in a learning community or peer network.
  
- 5. *Program Standards.*** The state should adopt formal program standards that govern the design and operation of local educator induction programs.
  
- 6. *Funding.*** The state should:
  - a. Authorize and appropriate dedicated funding for local educator induction programs; and/or
  - b. Establish competitive innovation funding to support high-quality, standards-based programs.
  
- 7. *Educator Certification/Licensure.*** The state should require beginning educators to complete an induction program to move from an initial license.
  
- 8. *Program Accountability.*** The state should assess and monitor induction programs through strategies such as program evaluation, program surveys, and peer review.
  
- 9. *Teaching Conditions.*** The state should:
  - a. Adopt formal standards for teaching and learning conditions;
  - b. Conduct a regular assessment of such conditions; and
  - c. Incorporate the improvement of such conditions into school improvement plans.

## Notes

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8. Available on the New Teacher Center (NTC) website at <http://newteachercenter.org>
9. NTC, Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Initiative, <http://newteachercenter.org/approach/>
10. While Louisiana state law requires school districts to provide beginning teachers with "professional development opportunities and assistance," it is unclear whether this requirement is enforced and supported by the state. We note that the National Council on Teacher Quality's 2015 State Policy Yearbook has indicated that Louisiana "does not" require teacher induction, despite this state law.
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