

STRENGTHENING EARLY-CAREER TEACHERS: EFFECTIVE COMPONENTS OF TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAMS

Andrew Kwok | Texas A&M University
Kathy Ogden Macfarlane | Texas A&M University

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**Overview
Brief**



The **EdResearch for Action Overview Series** summarizes the research on key topics to provide K-12 education decision makers and advocates with an evidence base to ground discussions about how to best serve students. Authors – leading experts from across the field of education research – are charged with highlighting key findings from research that provide concrete, strategic insight on persistent challenges sourced from district and state leaders.

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KEY INSIGHTS

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

1. Coaching: Regular, targeted instructional coaching is the most effective and most researched component of successful induction programs. The most effective programs provide teachers with at least 90 minutes of coaching weekly or biweekly throughout their first year.

- Coaching that focuses on classroom management and content-specific instructional strategies is most helpful to new teachers.
- Effective coaching involves giving targeted, actionable feedback through regular observations and structured feedback sessions.
- The most effective coaches are experienced teachers who demonstrate strong instructional skills and professional commitment. Coaches from within the same school or district are more successful because they are familiar with the new teacher’s context.
- Coaches who are trained in guiding evidence-based reflections and feedback have a stronger impact on the teaching practices and classroom management of novice teachers than untrained coaches.
- Pairing coaches and teachers based on similar content areas and grade levels allows coaches to provide support that is directly aligned with instructional content and classroom context.
- Stipends, reduced teaching loads, or full-time coaching roles allow coaches to dedicate more focused and consistent support to novice teachers.

2. Professional Development: Effective professional development in induction prioritizes core teaching competencies, especially lesson planning, content delivery, and classroom management.

3. Peer Collaboration: Regularly scheduled collaboration, where teachers can work with peers, share instructional strategies, and discuss classroom challenges, aids skill-building and also improves retention by fostering a supportive community among new teachers.

4. Administrative Support: Regular and supportive communication between novice teachers and school or district leadership, focused on providing feedback, setting goals, and fostering a positive working environment, is associated with improved teacher satisfaction and retention.

5. Workload Adjustments: Adjusting workloads, when possible, creates more time for new teachers to focus on learning and improving their teaching practices.

CENTRAL QUESTION: What are evidence-based strategies to design and implement teacher induction programs that most effectively support teacher development and retention?

BREAKING DOWN THE ISSUE

The number of [beginning teachers entering classrooms](#) has reached its highest point in decades. Beginning teachers, while often passionate and eager to make a difference, are less effective than their more experienced counterparts, on average. This gap stems from the steep learning curve that new educators face as they transition from preparation programs to the realities of the classroom. Challenges such as managing diverse student needs, delivering high-quality instruction, and navigating school systems can hinder their ability to improve student outcomes. Without adequate support, these early struggles can perpetuate inequities in student learning, especially in high-need schools where novice teachers are [disproportionately](#) placed. Further, early-career educators face high turnover rates, leaving schools with persistent staffing challenges. Between [20% and 40% of teachers leave](#) within their first five years, with [11% exiting after just one year](#).

Induction programs are designed to ease this transition by offering vital support, such as coaching and professional development, during a teacher's first 1-3 years in the classroom. As staffing shortages grow and schools face increasing pressure to improve student outcomes, effective induction programs are more important than ever.

While participation in induction programs has grown significantly—doubling since 1990 and exceeding [90% of all new teachers](#) by 2008—the quality and duration of these programs [vary widely](#). [Only three states require multi-year induction programs](#) supported by state funding, underscoring the urgent need for more consistent and comprehensive support for beginning teachers nationwide.

Teacher induction is a structured support program provided to novice teachers, typically led by districts. Quality induction programs offer support for at least one year. The following components are the most commonly implemented and have the most research to support their effectiveness:

- 1. Individualized Coaching:** Definitions of coaching vary, but we define it as [individualized, intensive, sustained, context-specific, and focused](#) work between an expert coach and a novice teacher that is [collaborative rather than hierarchical](#) in nature. Induction coaches are most often experienced teachers who either continue to teach—occasionally with a reduced course load— or who are employed full-time as coaches.
- 2. Professional Development:** Access to targeted training sessions that address classroom management, pedagogy, and specific challenges faced by new teachers.
- 3. Peer Collaboration:** Opportunities for beginning teachers to collaborate with peers in the same subject area, fostering shared instructional strategies and professional learning.

Additional components support novice teachers but are less available throughout induction programs and have fewer studies supporting their effectiveness. These are:

- 3. Administrative Support:** Regular and supportive communication with school or district leadership to provide feedback, set goals, and create a positive working environment.
- 4. Workload Adjustments:** Reduced teaching schedules or extra classroom assistance to allow new teachers time to focus on learning and refining their practice.

The majority of high-quality studies show that induction improves teacher retention, instructional quality, and student learning outcomes.

Increased Teacher Retention

- Induction has been identified as the [most effective practice to increase retention](#), outperforming salary increases and other professional development.
- Programs that provide consistent support help teachers feel more satisfied with their jobs and less likely to leave the profession within the [first five years](#).
- Teachers who receive more extensive induction services are [significantly less likely](#) to migrate schools or leave the profession. Specifically, having an induction coach reduces the odds of leaving by 35% to 50%.
- Teachers in comprehensive induction are [twice as likely](#) to stay compared to teachers who have no induction services.

Increased Instructional Quality

- [One mixed method study](#) indicates positive effects on instructional practices such as teachers' use of materials, technology, and monitoring of student progress.
- Induction has been shown to support other related areas, such as teachers' [confidence, readiness, self-efficacy, and evaluated proficiency](#), as well as [reports](#) of improved professional learning, pedagogical success, and [instructional practice](#).
- Induction services, particularly coaching, can improve teacher practices related to [instruction, engagement, and classroom atmosphere](#) and [motivate](#) teachers toward professional growth.

Increased Student Achievement

- A federally funded randomized controlled trial revealed that new teachers who participated in two years of comprehensive induction support achieved [greater student learning gains in mathematics and reading](#) compared to those receiving less intensive, standard induction support. This suggests that prolonged induction supports are most beneficial.
- Similarly, in a [randomized control trial](#) of one induction model implemented in two states, two years of induction support for teachers resulted in positive impacts in both ELA and math achievement for 4th-8th grade students. Compared to control teachers, those with induction services had increased scores representing an equivalent of 2-4 additional months of learning, depending on the student's grade level.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

The effectiveness of induction programs depends not only on the inclusion of key components but also on how those components are structured, delivered, and implemented. Research consistently shows that the more induction support a beginning teacher has access to—and the more actively these supports are used—the greater the [improvements in teaching quality](#) and [teacher retention](#). These components are primarily identified in general education studies, and there is [comparable evidence from special education settings](#) as well.

The following components are the most commonly implemented and have the most research to support their effectiveness:

1. Coaching: Regular, targeted instructional coaching is the most [effective](#) and most researched [component](#) of successful induction programs. The most effective programs provide teachers with at least 90 minutes of coaching [weekly](#) or [biweekly](#) throughout their first year.

- Programs that exhibit [high induction intensity](#) through consistent coaching interactions are associated with a higher likelihood of novice teachers returning to low-performing schools, improvement of teacher skills, and positive impacts on [student achievement](#).
- Programs that establish clear selection criteria for coaches, provide training and ongoing support, and [implement accountability systems](#) are more likely to promote positive outcomes for teachers.

Coaching content and activities:

Coaching that focuses on classroom management and content-specific instructional strategies is most helpful to new teachers.

- [Specific guidance in curriculum development and lesson planning](#) helps new teachers feel more prepared and confident in delivering quality instruction. One study found that each hour spent on instructional techniques or content knowledge increased the chances of [teacher retention in the district by 2-3%](#).
- When coaches [model effective instructional practices](#) in real or simulated classroom settings, this can help novice teachers feel more confident in trying new methods and refining their own instructional approaches.
- Coaching focused on [classroom management is most effective when coaches conduct regular classroom visits](#) and use these observations to tailor feedback to each teacher's specific needs. Coaches can also help first-year teachers understand the unique behavioral norms and expectations of their students and communities, which helps reduce discipline disproportionality.

Effective coaching involves giving [targeted, actionable feedback](#) through regular observations and structured feedback sessions.

- When coaches refer to [observable behaviors or instructional outcomes](#) when giving feedback, novice teachers can directly reflect on their actions.

- Effective feedback sessions [often include reflective prompts that help teachers analyze their own teaching practices](#) and develop a reflective mindset. This approach allows novice teachers to internalize feedback and apply it to various contexts.
- Weekly or bi-weekly feedback helps ensure that novice teachers [receive timely support and can make incremental adjustments](#).
- When coaches [balance constructive feedback with recognition of a teacher's strengths](#), this helps teachers improve their practice while also enhancing their sense of efficacy and job satisfaction, making them more likely to embrace and sustain changes in their instruction.
- Teachers are more likely to adopt coaching strategies when coaches provide [scaffolded, actionable advice](#) rather than overwhelming new teachers with too much guidance.

Coach selection, training, and pairing:

The most effective coaches are experienced teachers with [strong instructional skills and professional commitment](#). Coaches from within the same district are more successful because they are familiar with the new teacher's context.

- Research and focus groups with teachers and coaches show that coaches with [content expertise, classroom experience](#), technological proficiency, and strong interpersonal skills are seen as more credible and are more effective in supporting teacher development.

Coaches who are trained in guiding evidence-based reflections and feedback [have a stronger impact on the teaching practices and classroom management of novice teachers than untrained coaches](#).

- Coaches benefit from clear [frameworks that include specific instructional visions](#), focus areas, and skills that align with the teaching expectations outlined in induction programs. These resources help coaches deliver structured support and feedback that is both actionable and directly relevant to the instructional practices that beginning teachers are expected to master.
- Coaches trained to guide novice teachers through [data analysis, student work evaluation, and reflective conversations](#) about classroom experiences are better able to foster a culture of continuous improvement.

Pairing coaches and teachers based on [similar content areas and grade levels](#) allows coaches to provide support that is directly aligned with instructional content and classroom context.

- Additionally, [studies](#) have shown that pairing coaches and new teachers according to professional disposition, comfort level, and motivation can be impactful.

Stipends, reduced teaching loads, or full-time coaching roles allow coaches to dedicate more focused and consistent support to novice teachers.

- Programs with full-time coaches tend to offer more intensive mentoring through frequent feedback, which leads to [stronger instructional outcomes for new teachers](#).
- Additionally, [financial stipends](#) help to recognize the value of coaching responsibilities, which can increase the motivation of coaches and the quality of support they provide.

2. Professional Development: Effective professional development in induction prioritizes core teaching competencies, especially [lesson planning](#), content delivery, and [classroom management](#).

- Professional development workshops and beginning teacher seminars can [improve daily teaching](#) and [reduce turnover](#). These workshops can be based on topics such as classroom management, reading instruction, English proficiency, technology, student development, and the daily responsibilities of new teachers.
- Several related studies suggest prioritizing [classroom management skills](#) and basic instructional areas (e.g., [lesson planning and delivery](#)) before providing information about other instructional or professional areas. Both of these areas have been linked to lower novice teacher evaluation scores.
- Induction should coordinate learning and experiences across various environments for novice teachers, who [need to feel like induction is connected](#) to what is happening in their classroom, what is offered by the district, and what they learned from their preparation program to avoid repetition and wasting their limited available time.

3. Peer Collaboration: Regularly scheduled collaboration, where teachers can work with peers, share instructional strategies, and discuss classroom challenges, aids skill-building and also [improves retention](#) by fostering a supportive community among new teachers.

- Having regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers or being part of an external network of teachers had a [positive effect on student achievement](#) and reduced the [likelihood of teachers leaving by 43% at the end of the first year](#).
- Peer collaboration can provide access to professional needs related to student issues around academics or management, guidance on daily local duties (e.g., school expectations and policies), and empathy or emotional support.
- Collaboration occurs through common planning time, peer observations, and consistent meetings to discuss ideas such as shared instructional strategies, problem-solving skills, and support on classroom challenges. Such activities, alongside collegiality in general, can create a professional learning community for beginning teachers, which [builds a better workplace environment](#) and can [reduce attrition](#).

The following additional components support novice teachers but are less available throughout induction programs and have fewer studies supporting their effectiveness:

4. Administrative Support: Regular and supportive communication between novice teachers and school or district leadership, focused on providing feedback, setting goals, and fostering a positive working environment, is associated with improved teacher satisfaction and retention.

- Dedicated time with district or campus leadership, [principals, in particular](#), can offer beginning teachers a different perspective toward their development.
- Principals can also earn teachers' respect by encouraging participation in induction activities, supporting their efforts with parents or student misbehavior, and reminding coaches of their responsibilities.

5. **Workload Adjustments: Adjusting workloads, when possible, creates more time for new teachers to focus on learning and improving their teaching practices.**

- Providing teacher aides or additional adults offers physical support for new teachers. Evidence on its impact is mixed: one study found it [reduces turnover](#), while another showed no effect on [retention](#).
- A [reduced teaching load](#) can free up time for other professional activities, such as observing colleagues to understand how students engage in other settings or finding ways to enhance their pedagogy.

PRACTICES TO AVOID

[Rigid or generic requirements](#) that are not relevant to the immediate needs or professional growth of novice teachers decrease the effectiveness of induction programs.

- New teachers express frustration when required assignments are overly prescriptive, and especially when they duplicate content already mastered in their credential programs or fail to build on their prior training.

Coaching that focuses on an [expert-driven approach](#), where novice teachers passively receive knowledge, is ineffective because it lacks collaborative learning, reflection, and independent problem-solving, which are essential for improving teacher efficacy, enthusiasm, and resilience.

- Coaching activities where coaches prescribe and direct teaching practices have shown limited effects on teachers' development compared to coaching activities that engage new teachers in reflective conversations about practice, encouraging [self-assessment and critical thinking](#).

Programs that are inconsistent or poorly implemented can erode teacher confidence and increase frustration, ultimately doing more harm than good.

- Teachers in [poorly planned or implemented programs](#) reported frustration, a lack of meaningful guidance, and reduced confidence in their teaching abilities. Examples include coaches being assigned late, [infrequent or superficial](#) coach-teacher interactions, and activities perceived as irrelevant or purely procedural.

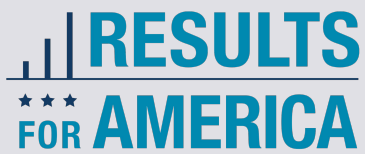
Effective induction and teacher support systems depend heavily on policy frameworks that establish clear guidelines and ensure equitable access to resources. Ignoring the importance of supportive policies can lead to inadequate structures and resources.

- Induction policy [shapes](#) coaching practices and beginning teacher instructional development because it can mandate which services are [readily available as well as inform coaches' knowledge](#) of how to guide teacher learning. Districts that prioritize beginning teacher support mandate induction programs instead of making them an option.
- Specific [policy criteria recommendations](#) provide parameters, from who should be served to how the program could be effectively implemented.

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