Report Card on the Unfunded Mentoring Program in Indiana: New Teachers' Voices Are Finally Heard

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Abstract

The need to support and retain beginning teachers is vital. This study sought to determine if the mentoring programs in Indiana are effectively supporting and retaining new teachers. The study has national ramifications in that it also seeks to determine if withdrawing an annual stipend for mentors to work with new teachers negatively impacts the effectiveness of statewide mentor programs and teacher longevity in education. Can teachers receive the support they so desperately need from mentors whose financial support from the state has been eliminated? This study examined surveys from 1,539 new teachers to assess the effectiveness of their mentor experiences. The data was also compared to similar data from new teachers whose mentors did receive financial support from the state. The study found that new teachers were meeting significantly less often with their mentors than they did before 2005. The research also concluded that lack of financial support for mentors adversely impacted perceived teacher longevity in education and new teacher effectiveness.

How often mentors met with teachers positively correlated to (a) how new teachers responded to the question, *did having a mentor impact how long you would stay in education*, (b) how new teachers responded to *did having a mentor make you a better teacher*, and (c) how new teachers responded to *did having a mentor affect your students' learning*. According to the 1,539 new teachers with valid surveys, effective mentoring had a significant impact on their teaching and their perceived longevity in education. Therefore, the decision to cease financial support for mentors has adversely impacted the effectiveness of Indiana's new teacher.

Indiana's Unfunded Mentor Program

When RCA electronics was confronted with a serious dilemma to either continue to invest time and effort into perfecting cathode-ray tubes in their color televisions sets or investing money into new technology such as liquid crystal displays (LCD), they choose the safe way that promised more immediate short-term rewards. The results were long-term problems resulting in their demise. State legislators in Indiana presented a similar scenario to state school administrators when they decided to discontinue providing annual financial support to mentor teachers who support hundreds of new teachers.

The Problem

The state legislature decided to withdraw financial support for mentors and mentor training in 2005. The legislature maintained the state requirement that all new teachers be assigned a mentor. The legislators opted to allow local schools to decide for themselves the value of paying mentors to assist new teachers in their first year of teaching. This study provides a report card on that decision. While administrators remained committed to mentor support for new teachers, unfortunately they moved funds and emotional support elsewhere often in an effort to impact student learning scores. This research validates the negative impact of those decisions on the long-term health of public education in Indiana. If in politics the critical message is *it's the economy, stupid,* then in education the message is *it's the teachers, stupid*.

The immediate concern for local school administrators is to raise test scores. Their job security rests on making a difference in the short-term. According to recent research by a nationally known educational researcher, Robert Marzano, (2004) the greatest factor in student success is not the school the student attends, nor the socio-

economic status of the child parents, nor the curriculum the school uses; it is the teachers in the classroom. This is supported by other researchers. In a research study involving more than 100,000 students in Tennessee, Sanders and Horn (1998) concluded that the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher. While administrators in Indiana hire consultants to present new curriculum approaches such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and Curriculum Mapping focused on raising test scores, we are losing the best and brightest of our new teachers who hold the best hope for long-term school improvement.

Review of the Literature

The need to support and retain beginning teachers is vital. According to recent research by Coley (2009), school administrators are facing the perfect storm: more and more baby boomers retiring, an absence of experienced teachers to replace them, and high turnover among young teachers. The need to hire and retain a new generation of teachers is one of the greatest challenges facing school administrators today. Studies confirm that new teachers lack the requisite knowledge required to avoid significant difficulties that lead to a low retention rate (Melnick & Meister, 2008). School systems are finding that beginning teachers who have access to effective mentoring are less likely to leave teaching (Trubowitz, 2004).

According to Martin (2008) effective mentoring programs lead to improved student achievement, improved retention, and increased effectiveness of teachers. In his research Martin (2008) quoted Villar and Strong who estimated that the return on $1 invested in mentoring programs returns $1.34 to $1.66 after five years. The price tag associated with acquiring new teachers, through recruiting, hiring and orientation is

estimated from $5,000 to $50,000 (Villani, 2002). The price tag associated with acquiring new teachers throughout recruiting, hiring, and orientation is estimated from $5,000 to $50,000 (Villani, 2002). Therefore, it can be argued that it is more financially astute to pour resources into new teachers in order to retain them and invest in their success in the classroom rather than to create a revolving door system where new teachers leave the teaching profession after a few short years. Long-term educational health has suffered in Indiana due to a short-term, near-sighted perspective on school improvement.

Report Card on Indiana's Decision to Withdraw Mentor Financial Support

In response to this challenge, the Indiana Department of Education requires that all first-year teachers be assigned a mentor to assist in teacher training in accord with the state law as stipulated in Rules 2002 licensure requirements. However, state-funded financial support for these mentors was repealed in 2005, while the demand for schools to supply a mentor to every new teacher remains in effect. The most financially challenged districts, both urban and rural, are simply not able to compensate their mentors and their teachers have too many demands on them to ask for one more uncompensated responsibility. Some teachers are not the best candidates for quality, effective mentoring. This research explored the impact of the legislative decision to discontinue the financial support of mentors in assisting the transition of new teachers to the field of P-12 education while keeping intact the requirement to provide a mentor for new teachers.

This study involved far more than a random sampling of new teachers. All new teachers who sought to renew their teaching license after their second year of teaching in 2008 (n= 1,700) participated in the survey. Of the 1,700 new teachers 1,539 submitted

surveys that had answers for every question. Incomplete surveys were not used in the calculations. Teachers who left teaching or who left education would not have completed the survey. The new teachers themselves reported that they are not receiving the support they need. The statistics verify that new teachers perceive that they will not remain in education as long as the new teachers who completed similar surveys in the years prior to the 2005 decision to discontinue mentor training support for new teachers. Statistical analyses indicate that new teacher perceived longevity, perceived instructional effectiveness, and perceived student learning have suffered as a result.

Objective of the Research

The educational community has responded to the crisis of high attrition rates and improperly prepared new teachers by developing mentor programs to support and further train first-year teachers. These programs provide new teachers with technical and emotional support to overcome the frustration and discouragement that frequently accompany the initial year of teaching (Danielson, 2002; Gordon & Maxey, 2000). Although the promise of mentoring has led to the adoption of many mentoring programs, there has been insufficient critiquing of the effectiveness of mentoring programs on the retention of new teachers. "By not critiquing the models of mentoring that are already in place, … school districts that typically experience high new teacher turn-over each year will continue to experience the loss of many teachers…" (Cuddapah, 2002, p. 3).

This study sought to evaluate Indiana's mentoring programs by asking the question, "How effective are mentoring programs that lack financial remuneration for mentors in increasing the likelihood of new teachers remaining in education?" This study

has ramifications in states around the country that are looking for ways to cut educational expenses after a down turn in the economy. Is financial support of mentors necessary? Is selection and training of mentors impacted by lack of financial support? Are our mentoring programs really working? Do new teachers who have an effective mentor remain in education longer?

New teachers need regular support from the mentor. Few would argue that meeting once a month with the mentor would have much impact on helping a new teacher. Martin (2008) noted that 1.5 to 2.5 hours per week was necessary to have a significant impact on new teachers. Parker, Nydole, & Imig (2009) concluded in a study involving 8,838 new teachers in North Carolina that frequency of interaction was an important component of effective mentoring leading to increased new teacher longevity in education.

This paper and roundtable session will seek to assess and report on the responses of 1,539 second-year teachers from all across the state of Indiana who completed the state-required survey designed to obtain their assessments of their respective mentoring experiences. The research includes surveys from every second-year teacher in the state during the 2007-2008 school year who sought to renew their initial license. In addition to inferential statistical analysis comparing the impact of the level of support from the mentor and its relation to the new teacher's perceived longevity in education, the research will compare responses from the new teachers who completed the survey in 2008 after financial support was removed with those new teachers who completed the same questions but whose mentors were given financial support in 2003/2004, and 2004/2005

when the $600 annual mentor stipend was in effect. The Indiana Department of Education provided the data for analysis.

Theoretical Framework of the Research

Vonk's (1995) three dimensions provided the conceptual framework for studying the key issues of first-year teachers. Vonk's (1995) personal dimension, knowledge and skills dimension, and ecological dimension examine and describe the several elements relative to the emotional, intellectual, and social development of teachers within a specific school context. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium's (INTASC) ten key tenets of effective teaching reflect Vonk's framework. The INTASC (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1995) tenets undergirded the mentoring activities of the programs evaluated in this study.

The Indiana Professional Standards Board (IPSB) Mentor Standards provided the conceptual framework for studying the key issues related to mentor training (IPSB, 2003). These Mentor Standards guided the mentor training programs evaluated in this study. The Indiana mentor training standards include (a) a focus on INTASC Principles and Indiana Standards for teachers, (b) content specific standards, (c) classroom assessment of teacher's lessons and other classroom episodes, (d) teacher reflection, (e) problem-solving strategies for classroom management issues, (f) variety of teaching strategies, and (g) training mentors to be active listeners, coaching, and guiding new teachers rather than providing information.

Methods

New Teacher Surveys were developed to identify participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentoring programs in which they participated (Freemyer, 1999).

In this study, New Teacher Surveys were developed to identify participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentoring program in which they participated (Freemyer, 1999). Every second-year teacher (n = 1,700 with 1,539 valid surveys) who submitted an application to renew licensure during the 2007-2008 school year completed a short survey designed to assess the mentor experience and perceived longevity in education. This study reports the findings from that mentor survey. Additional analyses were conducted comparing survey results from before and after mentors were provided financial remuneration for their support. The data were analyzed to determine if there was a correlation between participants' positive or negative responses regarding their mentors, the perceptions of the likelihood that the new teacher will remain in education, and their perceptions of whether having a mentor has made them better teachers who can more positively impacting student learning.

Research Questions

1. Is there a positive correlation between respondents reporting a positive mentoring experience and projected longevity in education?

2. Is there a positive correlation between respondents reporting a positive mentoring experience and perceived instructional effectiveness impacting student learning?

3. Is there a difference in how new teachers report their mentor experiences as it related to the mentors' effectiveness as well as teacher longevity and instructional effectiveness for those whose mentors were provided a $600 annual stipend to

support new teachers compared with those whose mentors did not receive the stipend?

The dependent variables were questions 5 - 8 of the Mentor Survey: Question five was" Based on this year's experience, how many years do you predict you will stay in education?" Possible responses were (a) more than ten years, (b) six to ten years, (c) four to five years, (d) two to three years, (e) just this year. Question six was "Has having a mentor increased the likelihood that you will remain in education?" Possible responses were yes and no. Question seven was "Has having a mentor helped you develop into a better teacher?" Possible responses were yes and no. Question eight was "Has having a mentor had an impact on your students' learning?" Possible responses were yes and no. The independent variable was question one; "How often do you meet (formally or informally) with your mentor?" Possible responses were (a) daily, (b) weekly, (c) monthly, (d) inconsistently, and (e) not at all. It was assumed that the response to this question was a measure of the mentor's assessment of the overall success of the mentoring process.

Null & Alternative Hypotheses

H_{01}= There is no statistical correlation between how often mentors met with new teachers and new teachers projected longevity in education.

H_{A1}= There is a positive correlation between how often mentors met and new teachers perceived longevity in education.

H_{02}= There is no statistical correlation between how often mentors met with new teachers and new teacher responses that having a mentor increased their likelihood of remaining in education.

H_{A2}= There is a positive correlation between how often mentors met and new teachers teacher responses that having a mentor increased their likelihood of remaining in education.

H_{03}= There is no statistical correlation between how often mentors met with new teachers and new teacher responses that having a mentor helped them develop into a better teacher.

H_{A3}= There is a positive correlation between how often mentors met and new teacher responses relating that a mentor helped them develop into a better teacher.

H_{04} = There is no statistical correlation between how often mentors met with new teachers and new teacher responses relating if having a mentor had an impact on your students' learning?

H_{A4} = There is a positive correlation between how often mentors met and new teacher responses that having a mentor had an impact on your students' learning.

H_{05}= There is no statistical difference between how often mentors met with their new teachers in the 2008 survey and the surveys completed before 2005.

H_{A5}= There is a statistical difference between how often mentors met with their new teachers in the 2008 survey and the surveys completed before 2005.

H_{06}= There is no statistical difference between how respondents answered that a mentor increased their likelihood of remaining in education on the 2008 surveys as opposed to the surveys completed before 2005.

H_{A6}= There is a statistical difference between how respondents answered if having a mentor increased their likelihood of remaining in education in the 2008 survey as opposed to the surveys completed before 2005.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 15 to test the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. The statistical analysis included Spearman *Rho* Correlations, and a Mann-Whitney *U* Test. Results from new teacher responses in 2003 – 2005 related to perceived longevity in education will be compared with results from 2008 on the same question. An independent sample *t*-test will be used to determine if there is any statistical difference between perceived longevity in education in 2003 – 2005 when mentors were financially supported and 2008 after support had been withdrawn.

Results

One purpose of this study was to determine if the state-mandated mentoring programs increased the likelihood of new teachers remaining in education and improved their teaching performance while impacting student learning. Another purpose of the study was to determine if the policy change of not providing a $600 stipend for mentors adversely impacted new teachers' initial teaching experience. The study sought to determine if states that financially support mentors to work with new teachers produce more competent and effective educators.

Parker, Nydole, & Imag (2009) cited numerous mentor programs that require weekly meetings with mentors. Meeting with a mentor daily or weekly would have a

greater impact on new teachers than meeting monthly. Comparing new teachers support before the $600 stipend was removed (before December 2005) with new teacher support after the stipend was removed shows stunning results: the mentors simply did not meet as regularly as they did when the stipend was provided. In fact the percentage dropped from 62.7% to 45.5% of mentors that met at least weekly after the financial support changed in 2005. Mentors did not meet as often with new teachers after the financial support was removed from the state. This research indicates that meeting daily or weekly has a more significant impact on perceived teacher longevity and instructional effectiveness.

Table 1

Frequency of mentor meetings with new teacher before 2005

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	daily	92	28.6	28.6	28.6
	weekly	110	34.2	34.2	**62.7**
	Semi monthly	89	27.6	27.6	90.4
	inconsistently	2	.6	.6	94.7
	not at all	29	5.2	5.2	100.0
	Total	322	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

Frequency of mentor meetings with new teacher after 2005

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	daily	224	14.6	14.6	14.6
	weekly	477	31.0	31.0	**45.5**
	monthly	337	21.9	21.9	67.4
	inconsistently	420	27.3	27.3	94.7
	not at all	80	5.2	5.2	99.9
	Total	1539	100.0	100.0	

Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that mentors met substantially less often with new teachers after the financial stipend was eliminated. Was the difference statistically significant?

The difference between how often mentors met with new teachers appeared to be significantly less often after the mentor stipend was removed. A Mann-Whitney *U* Test was performed on the two sets of data to determine if the difference was statistically different. A nonparametric independent sample *t*-test was used due to the use of ordinal data in the likert-scale survey. How often mentors met with new teachers in the 2007/2008 school year was significantly less (*m* place = 925.58) then previously when the stipend was provided by the state (*m* place 547.24; $U = 101182.000$, $p<.01$).

Table 3

Comparison of how often mentors met with new teachers before and after 2005

	After 2005 and Before 2005	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
How often mentors met with new teachers?	After 2005	1512	925.58	1399478.00
	Before 2005	236	547.24	129148.00
	Total	1748		

Table 4

Statistical results of the Mann-Whitney U

	often meet
Mann-Whitney U	101182.000
Wilcoxon W	129148.000
Z	-11.028
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Mentors met statistically less often with new teachers after 2005. Mentors continue to meet with new teacher significantly less often since the mentor stipend has been eliminated with $p<.01$.

Next, statistical analysis was performed to determine if there was a correlation between how often mentors met with new teachers and (a) new teacher perceived longevity in education, (b) if having a mentor increased their perceived longevity in

education, (c) if having a mentor helped them become better teachers, and (d) if having a mentor impacted perceived student learning. A nonparametric Spearman Correlation was performed with SPSS since the likert-scaled survey represented ordinal data. A positive correlation was found between how often mentors met with new teachers and each of the measures of new teacher longevity and new teacher effectiveness listed above.

A Spearman *rho* correlation was calculated for the relationship between how often mentors met with new teachers and their perceived years in education. A strong positive correlation was found (*rho* (1537) = .073, p< .01), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. How often mentors met with new teachers increased new teacher perceived longevity in education.

Table 5

Spearman rho correlation for how often mentors met with new teachers and their perceived longevity in education

			often_meet	yrs_in_ed
Spearman's rho	How often mentor met with new teacher	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.073(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.004
		N	1539	1539
	Years in education	Correlation Coefficient	.073(**)	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.
		N	1539	1539

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

How often mentors met with new teachers was positively correlated to perceived longevity in education with p<.01.

A Spearman *rho* correlation was calculated for the relationship between how often mentors met with new teachers and if having a mentor increased their likelihood of remaining in education. A strong positive correlation was found (*rho* (1537) = .-.279, p< .01), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. How often mentors met with new teachers increased new teacher responses that having a mentor impacted their expected longevity in education.

Table 6

Spearman rho correlation between how often mentors met with new teachers and how they responded to if having a mentor increased their perceived longevity in education.

			How often meet	Mentor increase yrs
Spearman's rho	How often mentor met with new teachers	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.279(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	1539	1539
	Having a mentor increased longevity in education	Correlation Coefficient	-.279(**)	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	1539	1539

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Similar results were found when performing the same test with data before 2005. How often a mentor meets with a new teachers has a positive impact on their response that having mentor increased their likelihood of remaining in education.

A Spearman *rho* correlation was calculated for the relationship between how often mentors met with new teachers and if having a mentor helped make them a better teacher. A strong positive correlation was found (*rho* (1537) = .389, p< .01), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. How often mentors met with new teachers affected their response that having a mentor made them a better teacher was statistically significant.

Table 7

Spearman rho correlation for how often mentors met with new teachers and if the mentor relationship helped them be a better teacher

			How often they meet	Better teachers
Spearman's rho	How often mentor met with new teachers	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.389(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	1539	1538
	Having a mentor made me a better teacher	Correlation Coefficient	-.389(**)	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	1538	1538

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Having a mentor had a perceived impact of making the new teacher a better teacher.

A Spearman *rho* correlation was calculated for the relationship between how often mentors met with new teachers and if having a mentor impacted their students' learning. A strong positive correlation was found (*rho* (1537) = .-321, p< .01), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. How often mentors met with a mentor had an impact on student learning that was statistically significant.

Table 8

Spearman rho correlation for how often mentors met with new teachers and if having a mentor impacted the new teachers student learnin.

			Impacts student learning	How often meet
Spearman's rho	Having a mentor impacted my students learning.	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.321(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	1539	1539
	How often mentor met with new teachers	Correlation Coefficient	-.321(**)	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	1539	1539

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

New teachers determined that having a mentor positively impacted their perceived learning by their students.

How did new teachers respond to the question, did having a mentor increase your likelihood or remaining in education different after the mentor stipend was removed in

2005? A Mann-Whitney *U* Test was performed on the two sets of data to determine if the difference was statistically different for those who responded that having a mentor increased their likelihood of remaining in education. A nonparametric independent sample *t*-test was used due to the use of ordinal data in the likert-scale survey. How often mentors met with new teachers in the 2007/2008 school year was significantly less (*m* place = 1333326.00) then before when the stipend was provided by the state (*m* place 190059.00; $U = 162798.000$, $p<.01$)

Table 9

Comparison of responses before and after 2005 to the question did having a mentor increase your likelihood of remaining in education

	Before and After 2005	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Having a mentor increased likelihood of remaining in education	After 2005	1512	881.83	1333326.00
	Before 2005	233	815.70	190059.00
	Total	1745		

Table 10

Statistical results of the Mann-Whitney U

	Having a mentor increase years in education
Mann-Whitney U	162798.000
Wilcoxon W	190059.000

Z	-2.154
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.031

a Grouping Variable: Before and after 2005

Significantly fewer new teachers after the 2005 date feel that having a mentor increased their likelihood of remaining in education.

Finally did the removal of the mentor stipend adversely impact the new teachers' perceived longevity in education? A Mann-Whitney *U* Test was performed on the two sets of data to determine if the difference was statistically difference between those who indicated how long they expected to remain in education when the state provided a stipend and when the state removed that stipend. A nonparametric independent sample *t*-test was used due to the use of ordinal data in the likert-scale survey. How often mentors met with new teachers in the 2007/2008 school year was significantly less (*m* place = 1394139.50) then before when the stipend was provided by the state (*m* place 327300.50; $U = 250311.500$, $p<.01$)

Table 11

Comparison of responses before and after 2005 to the new teacher perceived longevity.

	Before and After 2005	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Years projected staying in education	After 2005	1512	922.05	1394139.50
	Before 2005	343	954.23	327300.50
	Total	1855		

Table 12

Statistical results of the Mann-Whitney U

	Years in education
Mann-Whitney U	250311.500
Wilcoxon W	1394139.500
Z	-1.489
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.136

a Grouping Variable: new / old

New teacher perceived longevity in education has significantly declined since removing the mentor stipend for mentors in 2005.

All of the null hypotheses should be rejected. The alternative hypotheses should be accepted. Effective mentoring has a positive impact on new teachers which impacts perceived student learning. The quality of mentoring has deteriorated since mentor funding for support of new teachers was eliminated in 2005. A financial investment in the training of new teachers holds the single most promising approach to improved student learning in Indiana.

Condensed Results of the Indiana Study

This research compared the survey results from new teachers in the 2007/2008 school year for 1,700 new teachers (1,539 fully completed surveys) to similar surveys

collected from new teachers surveyed during the 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 school years when mentors were paid a stipend by the state. The 2008 research represents virtually all new teachers in Indiana while the research from new teachers whose mentors received the $600 state funded stipend represented a convenience sample of school districts that were surveyed in an optional state-wide research study involving more than 300 new teachers.

The 2008 study determined that there has been a sudden and statistically significant decline in mentor effectiveness. The study found that new teachers were meeting significantly less often with their mentors than they did before 2005. There was a positive correlation between how often the new teacher met with the mentor and how long they perceived themselves remaining in education. In other words the more frequently that mentors met with new teachers, the greater impact on teacher longevity. Mentors who met with their new teachers daily or weekly dropped from 62.7% to 45.5% after the change in support in 2005. An independent sample *t*-test was performed to determine that the drop in frequency of meetings with new teachers was statistically significant in 2008 surveys as opposed to the 2003 and 2004 surveys.

How often mentors met with teachers **positively correlated** to (a) how new teachers responded to the question, *did having a mentor impact how long you would stay in education*, (b) how new teachers responded to *did having a mentor make you a better teacher*, and (c) how new teachers responded to *did having a mentor affect your students' learning*. According to the 1,539 new teachers with valid surveys, effective mentoring had a significant impact on their teaching and their perceived longevity in education. How did the 2008 data compare to the data before 2005?

New teacher effectiveness and longevity was significantly less since 2005. The decision to no longer fund mentors to work with new teachers has had an adverse impact on teaching in Indiana which is the most important component of student learning. The implications for the 25 states that do not provide mentor support for new teachers are significant, so are the rewards for the 25 states that do support mentors. The results of this study have long-term significance to the state budget for education despite seeming short-term advantages.

Scholarly or Scientific Significance

New teachers are a valuable and indispensable national resource. It is imperative to the future of our children and our nation that educators and policy makers not squander the gift that new teachers offer: a desire to make a difference in the lives of children. This study asked two important questions: a) Is there a correlation between respondents reporting a positive mentoring experience and predicted length of time expected in education? and b) Is there a difference in how new teachers report their mentor experiences before and after the mentors were provided a $600 annual stipend to support new teachers? The surveys provided new teachers with a voice to express their assessments of the effectiveness of mentor support when devoid of financial and psychological support from the entity charged by the constitution with their welfare: the state legislature. Survey results finally provided new teachers with a voice in which they clearly document that mentor impact on new teachers has deteriorated since mentor support was discontinued by the state.

Harry Wong (2002) has stated that teachers, new and experienced, stay where they feel successful, supported, and part of a team working toward the achievement of common goals. States that develop and implement effective mentoring programs invest in the future and send a message to the present: education is our highest priority and our teachers are our greatest educational resource. States that push for educational reform without providing support for new teachers significantly limit the potential of any educational reform initiative.

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