Promoting Self-Efficacy in Early Career Teachers: A Principal's Guide for Differentiated Mentoring and Supervision

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The challenges in meeting the demand for highly qualified teachers are great. This is evident both at the individual school level and in national retention and turnover statistics. The need for individually targeted teacher induction activities based on teacher preparation routes -traditional and alternative certification - are needed to help ameliorate the early career teacher turnover and retention statistics. This study reinterprets data from a previous study of teacher confidence and self-efficacy in terms of mentoring and supervision needs (induction activities). The results suggest that mentoring and supervision activities at the school level can be implemented to improve retention in perception of key competency areas. As frontline supervisors, principals are in a unique position to meet the differential needs of early career teachers.

Key Words: Teacher development, retention, mentoring, supervision, self-efficacy, early career

Shortages at some schools are not entirely a result of teachers leaving the profession, but are also related to the characteristics of those particular schools. Nationally, approximately 30% of new teachers leave within the first three years; nearly 50% leave within five years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Darling-Hammond (2002) concluded that alternative certification programs tend to produce poor quality teachers and that these teachers were most likely to leave the profession within their first three years. Further, the author found that traditionally prepared teachers were four to five times more likely to remain in their positions. Darling-Hammond, Chung and Frelow (2002) also noted that traditionally prepared teachers felt significantly better prepared than did those prepared through alternative programs or those without preparation. Principals and other building level administrators (i.e. assistant principals or deans) are in a position to address the need for additional supervision and professional development (induction) activities that encourage, support, and retain early career teachers in the first three to five years of service. This study will addresses those issues and provides suggested activities for retention of early career teachers.

Background

In an analysis of the teacher shortage and teacher turnover, Ingersoll (2001) suggested that efforts to curtail the shortage should focus not only on increasing the supply of teachers through recruitment, but also on retaining teachers currently in the system. When examining characteristics of teachers who leave and stay in the field of teaching, Luekens, Lyter, and Chandler (2004) found that the highest percentages of teachers who leave do so within the first three years of teaching. In an effort to retain teachers and promote student achievement, many states have adapted national generic teaching practices, such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards, to represent teacher proficiency. In Florida, state teaching standards are called Educator Accomplished Practices (EAP's). EAP's are based on a continuous quality improvement model that begins with preservice teacher preparation and continues through the educator's professional career, with the intention of promoting student achievement. Districts often design their evaluation tools, new teacher induction programs and professional development plans based on the EAP's. Similar practices are followed nationally.

Howe (2006) conducted an analysis of the most outstanding teacher induction programs in the United States, Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Japan and New Zealand. He notes that while induction programs and practice did differ by country, exemplary programs emphasized skillful and specially trained mentors, comprehensive inservice training, extended internship programs, reduced teaching assignments and include "opportunities for experts and neophytes to learn together in a supportive environment promoting time for collaboration, reflection, and gradual acculturation into the profession of teaching" (p. 295). Howe further suggests that a key element in successful teacher induction is the provision of time for reflection and opportunities for continued professional development. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) studied the effects of induction activities on teacher turnover in a national sample of first year teachers and found that while many common individual induction activities did not seem to have a statistically significant impact on turnover, receiving an increased number of induction activities or supports was associated with a decrease in rate of turnover. Moreover, the authors note that having a mentor in one's own field, time to collaborate with other teachers, and membership in an outside

network of teachers were found to be most effective of the activities studied. They conclude, "teachers participating in combinations or packages of mentoring and group induction activities were less likely to migrate to other schools or to leave teaching at the end of their first year" (p. 706).

A number of studies that specifically focuses on teacher induction have identified that many early career teachers, regardless of route to certification, report an absence of effective induction and mentoring programs or complete absence of any induction or mentoring program (Chesley, Wood, & Zepeda, 1997; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Salyer, 2003). This is incongruent with conventional wisdom which suggests that support and mentoring are critical aspects of the early career teacher experience. Typical induction programs are district-wide and relieve principals of immediate responsibility. However, Darling-Hammond's (2002) study indicates that many first year teachers do not actually receive these generic supports. The lack of quality supports are exacerbated by the number of teachers fast-tracked into the classroom. Finally, a number of reports, including the 1996 report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, have pointed to the close relationship between student achievement and teachers' skills, knowledge, and practices. Thus, what teachers know and can do is crucial to what students learn.

Research examining factors related to successful teacher preparation programs has demonstrated that programs focusing on classroom work during the first year, oversight of student teaching, studying curricula, and opportunities to engage in the actual activities of teaching (i.e. assessing a student's ability and planning a guided lesson) produce teachers whose students show greater gains than teachers from preparation programs lacking in such features (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2009). An additional area warranting consideration in successful teacher preparation programs is pedagogy (teaching student teachers how to teach). Hamman, Olivarez, Lesley, Button, Chan, Griffith, and Elliot (2006) studied the interaction between cooperating and student teachers in relation to student teacher self-efficacy. These authors found that amount of guidance received from a cooperating teacher was related to the level of student teachers' self-efficacy, with elementary student teachers reportedly receiving a significantly higher level of guidance. They additionally observed that student teachers who received more guidance also spent more time imitating their cooperative teachers, although this behavior was found to be less beneficial than actual instructional guidance. Kerns (1996) surveyed graduates of a specific teacher preparation program and found that while graduates felt prepared to teach overall, they identified several areas of perceived weakness including consultation, organization and supervision of aides, affecting change, and knowledge of outside services and resources. Kerns notes that the program has responded to the study's results by adding consultation to required coursework, bringing effective teams of teachers and aides into seminars, requiring students to join a professional organization, encouraging submission of journal articles and/or presentations, and the addition of a class project in which the student develops a personal resource bank. The necessity for such changes within teacher preparation programs are a result of the evolving expectations placed on today's teachers and the changes within the student body itself.

Given the technological prowess of today's students, several authors suggest the use of technology for a variety of purposes to enhance teacher preparation programs. Golas (2010) notes the importance of including technology in teacher preparation programs with the ultimate goal of preparing today's students to enter a workforce that is highly dependent on technology. The

author further asserts that preparation programs in which technology is emphasized are more likely to produce teachers with a high level of self-efficacy for the utilization of technology. Israel, Knowlton, Griswold and Rowland (2009) assert that video-conferencing technology can be a highly useful and powerful instructional tool within teacher preparation programs which facilitates observation of live classroom events within a lecture-style course as well as provision of remote coaching, supervision, and evaluation to preservice teachers. However, the power of technology and other teaching tools that can be employed to create effective new teachers in traditional teacher preparation programs may be lost when considering the various alternative and sometimes accelerated paths to teacher certification. Often early career teachers must try to catch up while already running as fast as they can from behind as their supervisors already possess the skills of teacher, trainer, coach, assessor, and evaluator.

Alternative Certification Programs

Alternative certification programs differ significantly from more traditional methods of teacher training. A common theme among alternative models is that they offer a fast-track preparation program leading to expeditious entry into the classroom (Hawley, 1990). Although these programs produce new teachers quickly, many lack appropriate supervision and mentoring which may be necessary to compensate for the lack of prior classroom experience that the more traditional teacher training programs afford. In fact, many of the fast-track programs expect the teacher to learn as they teach. Yarger and Kasten (2001) noted that guided pedagogical development and supervised clinical practice have often been eliminated, removing new teachers from the intellectual underpinnings of professional teaching. It is possible that the lack of classroom experience and supervised practice available to students in alternative certification programs is a contributing factor in the high rate of early career teachers who leave the profession.

In an analysis of the reasons why teachers in Florida leave the profession, Feng (2005) suggested that attrition occurred most frequently in early career teachers. It was also found that teacher's attrition was related to the achievement and behavior of their own students. Since student behavior and achievement may be directly related to the teacher's experience and degree of efficacy in classroom management and instructional strategies, this is a significant finding in that it coincides with previous findings that links directly to efficacy (Isaacs et al., 2007). Early career teachers who do not have a sense of self-efficacy for teaching, due to lack of prior experience, preparation, or other factors, may be more likely to leave the profession within the first few years.

Although alternative certification programs are not new to teacher education, they are unique as professional teacher preparation programs. The proliferation of these programs began in the 1980's and has been accelerating at a rapid pace (Legler, 2002; *Alternative teacher certification: A state-by-state analysis*, 2006). Alternative programs are based on the assumption that if one possesses content knowledge in an area, that individual can quickly become an expert teacher in the classroom. The underlying message is that knowledge of content is the most critical factor in becoming a teacher. Many assumptions have been made about alternative teacher education programs. However, when tested in the limited body of empirical research the results are mixed (Humphrey & Wechsler, 2006; Legler, 2002). Assumptions about alternatively

certified teachers include a tendency to be content specific teachers (core knowledge in the content area), lack of preparation to work with diverse populations, lack of preparation for the nuances of the teaching profession, and lack of training in methods that are critical to successful student outcomes. Despite research on various models of alternative certification, researchers understand little about teachers' beliefs regarding their own competence as teachers. However, it is this sense of efficacy or perceived competency in teaching, derived in part from successful classroom experiences, that ultimately brings content expertise to students. More research is needed to determine the role of self-efficacy in the attrition rates of alternatively certified teachers.

Principals are the individuals who are most challenged by the day-to-day realities of teacher turnover. The principal and/or other building level administrators are typically responsible for the hiring, evaluation, continuing professional development, and integration of teachers into the life of the school. Early career teachers, whose relative lack of experience can make them highly vulnerable, may require special attention during the evaluation, professional development, and school integration processes. Although there is a notion that alternatively certified teachers have less classroom experiences and thus may be more vulnerable, the increasing need for teachers has often led to more broad based hypotheses regarding the kind of preparation that renders a teacher highly qualified. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) defines highly qualified teachers as having a bachelor's degree, state teaching certification or licensure, and possessing the ability to demonstrate subject competency. In the State of Florida, teachers are required to demonstrate subject competency by passing a test. Thus, NCLB attempts to address the issues of teacher shortages and the need for better retention rates of qualified teachers by broadening the definition of "highly qualified". However, teachers who are highly qualified often develop professional skills and abilities throughout the course of their careers. The development of such skills, which are crucial to successful student outcomes, must be continually honed after formal teacher education has been completed.

Once teachers complete their formal preparation, building administrators are responsible for fostering growth and successful integration into the staff and profession. This idea of continued support, supervision, and professional development beyond formal training and certification is what ultimately results in teacher quality. Another critically important element related to quality may be the perceived confidence and competence (self-efficacy) of early career teachers. Due to the lack of classroom experiences that some alternative certification programs provide, these teachers may have less self-efficacy for teaching. This deficit in classroom confidence may be linked to lower quality teaching practices. However, methods aimed at increasing early career teacher self-efficacy, regardless of certification program, have the potential to assist schools in promoting high quality teachers who are invested in the profession.

The Intersection of Self-Efficacy and Teacher Induction

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) posits that individuals possess a self-evaluation system that allows them to exercise some control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. These self-evaluations help determine how much effort individuals will expend on any activity, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles, and how resilient they will be in adverse situations. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy beliefs may be strong predictors of related

performance. In other words, the confidence people bring to specific tasks plays an important role in their success or failure to complete those tasks. One trend in teacher preparation that may assist increasing self-efficacy beliefs among students is the learner-centered personal learning plan (PLP). Malone (2008) evaluated the use of PLP's with undergraduate early childhood education majors and found that a majority of students believed that the PLP helped them better understand their own educational needs, allowed them to learn more independently and better understand course content, and increased their critical thinking skills. Malone notes that students reported a high level of comfort with the PLP method and this, combined with the perceived value of the method lends support to the notion that PLP's may be a valuable tool for helping students feel comfortable and capable in the classroom thus allowing them to devote more attention to learning. McDonnough and Matkins (2010) found that elementary preservice teachers often have difficulty with science content. However, the observed that self-efficacy beliefs were increased when a field experience was embedded in a science methods course as compared with a group of students who did not complete a field experience as part of their science methods instruction. These authors suggest that increased efficacy beliefs may be due to the increased opportunities to practice specific techniques, receive feedback from supervisors, and the development of a sense of accomplishment via having real world performance experience.

As one projects these self-efficacy beliefs into the first three years of teaching, there is a natural intersection with teacher induction research. The concepts of teacher induction activities and individual teacher self-efficacy are critical at the individual school level, especially in schools that need highly qualified teachers the most. These schools typically have bigger classrooms, lower achievement levels, fewer resources, and more diverse student populations. However, new teachers are most often assigned to the lowest achieving schools, which have the greatest need for highly qualified and experienced teachers. Principals and other school administrators can attempt to balance the lack of classroom experience and time in the teaching profession via supervision and professional development activities targeted at individual teacher needs during the induction phase, the first three years.

Understanding the connection between self-efficacy beliefs and teacher retention might provide information to enhance retention rates or retain qualified teachers in the schools that need them the most. Further research exploring the effects of mentoring and frequent targeted feedback as they relate to improved performance and increased self-efficacy for teaching has the potential to assist principals in developing building level induction, mentoring, and supervision programs that work to retain teachers. The principal is in a unique position to provide a strong link between self-efficacy beliefs and the skills they are based upon because they have had diverse experiences within the teaching profession. Wood (2005) highlights the importance of principals in teacher induction and notes that they may play several integral roles including culture builder, instructional leader, coordinator/facilitator of mentors, recruiter, and novice teacher advocate/retainer. Jacob and Lefgren (2008) suggested that principals evaluate individual teachers based on informal observations, parental input, and student achievement scores. Principals often use their wisdom and professional experience to provide development activities that directly relate to the needs of each individual teacher. Conversely, teachers may have a false sense of self-efficacy through lack of sufficient and appropriate feedback and support at the school and classroom level. Thus, the principal plays a vital role in the growth and professional development of early career teachers.

Methodology

Isaacs and colleagues (2007) conducted a mixed method – qualitative/quantitative study that examined the experience, attitudes, and projected career plans of early career teachers who had less than three years total experience as teachers from three Southwest Florida school districts. The data from that study were reexamined to provide a guide for principals outlining the mentoring and supervision activities that can be implemented at the building level to retain early career teachers.

A total of 194 responses were received from the 1800 invitations issued to teachers within the first three years of teaching in three school districts in Southwest Florida. The participants provided their responses to a survey with open-ended questions concerning 12 key competencies known as the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAP), similar to competency standards in most other states, as well as national standards. They also provided information about how they were hired and their short-term intentions within education. Of the respondents, 114 were fully certified with 5 year professional certificates, one was a licensed therapist, and 79 were certified though one of several alternative routes.

The sample was divided based on self-report of whether the teacher was working under a state issued professional certificate (traditional route to certification) or one of state or district issued temporary or alternative certifications. The majority of respondents (177) indicated they were White. Most teachers had obtained their jobs by applying directly to the district or through a particular school. A few (11) obtained their jobs at statewide career fairs or via out of state recruiting activities. No differences in obtaining their position, based on certification route, appeared to exist. Many respondents identified substitute teaching or interning at a school as a frequent method of "getting known" for the purpose of influencing the hiring process.

The results of the earlier study (2007) were analyzed to determine if there were any difference in confidence related to the identified competencies between teachers who had completed traditional university teacher preparation and certification as one group and those who had achieved certification through one of several available "alternative" routes (using Levene's F-test and Two tailed *t*-tests). Qualitative responses were coded and categorized into three areas – traditional or nontraditional certification, area of specialty, and elementary, middle or high school grade level. Only the quantitative responses are used for this paper.

Results

Significant differences ($p < .01$) appeared for several of the EAP competencies in lesson planning and long-term lesson planning, teaching to a variety of learning styles, teaching students with learning disabilities, teaching students who speak English as a second language, maintaining a safe learning environment, promoting and developing literacy, and developing classroom assessments. As well, degrees of confidence were identified by assessing the percentage of respondents overall who felt prepared or very prepared in each group in a stated task area.

When queried about future career and employment intentions, a large majority (90%) of those surveyed thought it was likely or very likely that they would remain in teaching and in their district. However, fewer of the respondents (76%) thought they would remain in their current school. Almost two-thirds (62%) of the respondents indicated that they would add another

teaching specialty to their certification, with a larger percentage of those who had been alternatively certified seeking to add a specialty than those traditionally certified.

Table 1

Comparison of Teaching Competencies by Certification

Competency:	Very Prepared	Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Unprepared
Lesson Planning (overall)	71 (37%)	70 (36%)	40 (21%)	12 (6%)
Traditional	53 (47%)	43 (38%)	13 (11%)	5 (4%)
Alternative	18 (23%)	27 (34%)	27 (34%)	7 (9%)
Long-term Lesson Planning	47 (24%)	75 (39%)	46 (24%)	25 (13%)
Traditional	35 (31%)	49 (43%)	24 (21%)	6 (5%)
Alternative	12 (15%)	26 (33%)	22 (28%)	19 (24%)
Behavior Management	40 (21%)	73 (38%)	48 (25%)	22 (11%)
Traditional	28 (25%)	41 (36%)	36 (32%)	9 (8%)
Alternative	12 (15%)	32 (41%)	22 (28%)	13 (16%)
Organize Learning	49 (25%)	83 (43%)	51 (26%)	10 (5%)
Traditional	36 (32%)	45 (40%)	29 (25%)	4 (4%)
Alternative	13 (16%)	38 (48%)	22 (28%)	6 (8%)
Teach to a Variety of Learning Styles	57 (30%)	64 (33%)	56 (29%)	16 (8%)
Traditional	41 (36%)	41 (33%)	27 (24%)	5 (4%)
Alternative	16 (20%)	23 (29%)	29 (37%)	11 (14%)
Teach Learning Disabled Students	28 (15%)	53 (27%)	72 (37%)	40 (21%)
Traditional	21 (18%)	35 (31%)	40 (35%)	18 (16%)
Alternative	7 (9%)	18 (23%)	32 (41%)	22 (28%)
Teach Students who are ESOL	22 (11%)	41 (21%)	53 (27%)	67 (35%)
Traditional	17 (15%)	27 (24%)	38 (33%)	32 (28%)
Alternative	5 (6%)	14 (18%)	26 (33%)	34 (43%)
Maintain a Safe Learning Environment	75 (39%)	86 (44%)	26 (21%)	6 (7%)
Traditional	51 (45%)	50 (44%)	10 (9%)	3 (2%)
Alternative	24 (30%)	36 (46%)	16 (20%)	3 (4%)
Promote and Develop Literacy	61 (32%)	70 (36%)	45 (23%)	17 (9%)

Competency:	Very Prepared	Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Unprepared
Traditional	47 (41%)	39 (34%)	24 (21%)	4 (4%)
Alternative	14 (18%)	31 (39%)	21 (27%)	13 (16%)
Manage Time	48 (25%)	77 (40%)	47 (24%)	21 (11%)
Traditional	31 (27%)	49 (43%)	25 (22%)	9 (8%)
Alternative	17 (22%)	28 (35%)	22 (28%)	12 (15%)
Use Technology to Enhance Teaching	40 (21%)	67 (35%)	60 (31%)	26 (13%)
Traditional	22 (19%)	38 (33%)	34 (30%)	20 (18%)
Alternative	18 (23%)	29 (37%)	26 (33%)	6 (8%)
Incorporate Critical Thinking	45 (23%)	96 (50%)	45 (23%)	7 (4%)
Traditional	30 (26%)	60 (52%)	22 (19%)	2 (2%)
Alternative	15 (20%)	37 (47%)	22 (28%)	5 (6%)
Develop Classroom Assessments	43 (22%)	89 (46%)	51 (26%)	10 (5%)
Traditional	34 (30%)	51 (45%)	26 (23%)	3 (3%)
Alternative	9 (11%)	38 (48%)	25 (32%)	7 (9%)
Communicate Effectively with all Stakeholders	71 (37%)	86 (45%)	30 (16%)	6 (3%)
Traditional	45 (40%)	54 (47%)	13 (11%)	2 (2%)
Alternative	26 (33%)	32 (41%)	17 (22%)	4 (5%)
Maintain Standards for Ethical and Professional Behavior	114 (59%)	66 (34%)	11 (6%)	1 (1%)
Traditional	69 (61%)	39 (34%)	6 (5%)	0 (0%)
Alternative	45 (58%)	27 (35%)	5 (6%)	1 (1%)
Match Classroom Curriculum to Standards (FCAT)	28 (27%)	42 (40%)	20 (19%)	15 (14%)
Traditional	22 (33%)	26 (39%)	10 (15%)	8 (12%)
Alternative	6 (15%)	16 (41%)	10 (26%)	7 (18%)
Administer FCAT	34 (30%)	41 (37%)	18 (16%)	19 (17%)
Traditional	23 (34%)	21 (31%)	10 (15%)	13 (19%)
Alternative	11 (24%)	20 (44%)	8 (18%)	6 (13%)
Use FCAT Results to Modify Teaching	20 (19%)	38 (36%)	22 (21%)	27 (25%)
Traditional	15 (23%)	23 (36%)	11 (17%)	15 (23%)
Alternative	5 (12%)	15 (35%)	11 (26%)	12 (28%)

Table 1 presents results concerning degree of confidence overall and by certification route for each of the twelve FEAP teaching practices as well as identified competencies related to the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Most respondents with traditional certification felt very prepared or prepared in every area. However, less than half of the alternatively certified teachers felt prepared overall in the majority of the categories. For a full explanation of the original study methodology and data, see Isaacs, Elliott, McConney, Wachholz, Greene, and Green, (2007).

Discussion

While the size of the sample restricted the generalizability of the findings, this sample along with high level of attrition typically found among early career teachers may be reflective of early career teachers in Southwest Florida. The responding sample may not represent what some research suggests, which is that the population of early career teachers that has a high proportion of teachers who leave the profession within the first five years. Nonetheless, research examining the connection between self-efficacy beliefs and teacher retention provides information about the kinds of supports needed to positively influence the rates of teacher retention and increase quality teaching practices. This, coupled with the respondents' projections about leaving current schools while remaining in the district, makes this data especially important to principals and other building level administrators. The results of this study suggest several areas that may require increased attention by principals for continuing training/mentoring. Five specific areas warranting further consideration and research include:

- Teaching ESOL students (only one-third feeling prepared or very prepared)
- Teaching students who are learning disabled (less than one-half feeling prepared or very prepared)
- Modifying teaching based on FCAT (standardized testing) results (just over half feeling prepared or very prepared)
- Using technology to enhance teaching (just over half feeling prepared or very prepared)
- Behavior management (just under two-thirds feeling prepared or very prepared)

Schools with the highest turnover rates and greatest needs for highly qualified teachers are often characterized by students with needs which require skill in competence areas that early career teachers feel least able to perform (i.e. behavior management, working with students who are learning disabled, and using standardized testing results to modify teaching). Thus, the promotion of more individualized and targeted induction, mentoring and supervision at the school level may have benefits in continuity, competence, and investment in those schools that require confident and competent teachers the most. Such individualized activities have the potential to make the most of the resources and strengths of teachers with differing preparation routes to the classroom.

In this study the teachers trained through a traditional route who participated were more positive about feeling prepared or very prepared than their alternatively trained counterparts. On many of these items the difference was statistically significant (i.e. lesson planning, long term lesson planning, organizing learning activities, teaching to a variety of learning styles, teaching students who are learning disabled, teaching English language learners, maintaining a safe learning environment, promoting and developing literacy, incorporating critical thinking,

developing classroom assessments, communicating effectively with all stakeholders and matching classroom curriculum to state standards). This study provides preliminary results which suggest that alternatively certified teachers may require differential and perhaps more individually targeted continuing training and/or mentoring. Although more research is needed to determine possible nationwide trends in self-efficacy for teaching among early career teachers, we hypothesize that principals who make efforts to identify problematic areas and provide support are more likely to:

1. Assist early career teachers in improving self-efficacy for teaching, which can lead to an increase in teacher quality.
2. Increase retention rates among early career teachers.
3. Promote a supportive and instructive environment in which early career teachers can continue to develop professionally.

Strategies to Meet the Needs of Early Career Teachers

Social learning theory provides an amenable framework to identify new strategies that accomplish training and mentoring in ways that complement individual early career teacher needs. Formal training programs, whether traditionally or alternatively modeled, must provide young teachers with some of the foundational elements critical to educators (i.e. management of student behavior, knowledge of subject matter, and assessment of student learning). However, the development and progression of early career teachers into truly skilled professionals requires continued support and supervision. One such national model for new teachers is the nationally recognized *New Teacher Center (NTC),* www.newteachercenter.org. The NTC asserts mentor-based support programs foster retention and transform learning communities. One element that may be lacking within the current system is the attention to young teachers' perceived competence (self-efficacy beliefs) for teaching. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy beliefs are strongly linked to successful outcomes for a given task. Principals and other building level administrators should consider several factors when devising methods to support early career teachers including but not limited to individual teachers' needs, method of training, and self-efficacy for standard competencies (state and school identified) in teaching. Finally, we suggest the consideration of some new strategies focused on improving self-efficacy, quality of teaching, and retention rates for early career teachers:

- **Do not make the first year of teaching a game of "education survivor".** Early career teachers need support and supervision. Those who do not feel improvement in confidence levels throughout their experiences may be more likely to leave the profession.
- **Set a good example by providing individualized attention.** The expectation for teachers with classes of 20-30 students is that they are to know each child, understand their learning style and needs, and provide individualized instruction to maximize each child's learning. Principals and building administrators should do the same with new teachers.
- **Assess early career teacher self-efficacy and learning needs**. This is especially important with regard to key competence areas. Individual needs can be assessed as they relate to established competencies (e.g. teaching ESOL students, students who have learning disabilities, and using standardized test results to modify instruction and behavior

management). Assessment should be conducted with a combination of self-report and observation methods. Alternatively certified teachers may have more or different areas of concern, although their content expertise may be very strong.

- **Have "quick strategies" available.** The provision of specific plans or methods to address teacher concerns in key areas can quickly address issues, limiting the amount of time during which the teacher experiences low levels of confidence. This sends the message that such concerns may be normal for early career teachers and breaks problems down into smaller, more manageable pieces (which can increase confidence/self-efficacy). Methods available to quickly address specific concerns may include DVD/video, written step-by-step processes, and/or research.
- **Match mentor's strengths with new teachers needs.** Deliberately match early career teachers with mentors who are skilled in addressing the specific individual's area of need. Avoid assigning mentors based solely on number of years in the field and/or willingness to serve.
- **Conduct targeted observation and provide timely feedback.** Observe for targeted skills only and provide quick feedback; schedule additional observation to ensure progress. Break down necessary priorities, knowledge, and/or skills into manageable pieces and/or realistic timelines to promote effective and efficient problem solving.
- **Develop building level mentoring programs and/or join with a partner school to provide mentor exchanges.** Develop an on-site mentoring program (including creative use of technology) that closely monitors new teachers via on-site mentors or create a partnership with another school to introduce more targeted strengths where needed.
- **Get other teachers in the building invested in the success of new teachers.** Develop a set of incentives such as professional development, travel, and/or training opportunities for those who work with new teachers. Additional possibilities may include provision of materials or an extra sub day with the monies not spent on recruiting and hiring, setting targets for retaining teachers, involving existing teachers in the hiring process, or partnering with another local school to use technology or other formats where teacher strengths for training and mentoring can be exchanged.
- **Adapt a quick questionnaire to target specific competencies.** Principals can develop and use a questionnaire or checklist developed from the state or district's identified key teacher competencies. Such a questionnaire may be used as a preliminary guide for early career teacher professional development and observation activities.
- **Track effective practices within districts.** Encourage districts or schools that have maintained higher retention rates to share their best induction and mentoring practices, especially those used with alternatively certified teachers.

Finally, while the suggestions previously listed may provide some initial strategies and can be utilized to promote early career teacher self-efficacy, quality of teaching, and retention, further action is need to identify differentiated practices that benefit new teachers based on preparation route to the classroom. Researchers and principals should collaborate to engage district personnel with an action plan that identifies national models, such as the *New Teacher Center*, to develop more effective strategies for school level support for both traditionally and alternatively certified early career teachers.

Conclusion

This paper makes specific recommendations to principals and building administrators to develop and retain highly qualified teachers who are early in their careers, based upon the concept of self-efficacy and data showing lack of perceived competency in key teaching components. Promotion of early career teacher self-efficacy is critical to student success, especially in schools that have the greatest need for qualified, competent, and confident educators. Additionally, it focuses on the differential needs for training and mentoring that alternatively certified early career teachers bring to their first assignments. Those teachers who projected remaining in the profession (from this sample) indicated that it is likely that they will leave their initial school assignment and/or district. This likelihood for change will exacerbate the search for highly qualified teachers at the individual school level, especially in schools with critical needs. When coupled with the number of teachers indicating change of assignment and 30% of new teachers leaving the profession entirely within five years, principals can view the focus on supervision, mentoring, and induction as vehicles for saving them the time of constant recruiting and hiring. Thus, principals and other building level administrators are provided with action steps that can be implemented to provide greater stability in the building's teaching staff, with the advantage that teachers who remain will have been nurtured and feel a greater investment in the school as well as the teaching profession.

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