

# What new teachers need

By **Carla Thomas McClure**

**M**any first-year teachers find themselves “on their own and presumed expert,” according to researchers Susan M. Kardos and Susan Moore Johnson. Their recent examination of how new teachers experience the professional culture of their schools — coupled with findings from other studies — yields useful insights about how schools can better support and retain able and committed teachers.

## What interested the researchers in doing this study?

Researchers Kardos and Johnson had found in a previous study that a school’s professional culture seems to influence whether new teachers stay or leave. In that study, new teachers seemed more likely to stay if the school had what the researchers called an “integrated professional culture.” The current study takes a closer look at this phenomenon.

## What is an integrated professional culture?

Kardos and Johnson define it as a culture that (a) promotes frequent and reciprocal interaction among faculty members across experience levels, (b) recognizes new teachers’ needs as beginners, and (3) develops shared responsibility among teachers for the school.

## How was the study conducted?

The researchers surveyed a representative sample of 486 first- and second-year K-12 teachers in four states: California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Michigan. These states are experiencing teacher shortages and vary in geographic size, average school size, and composi-



tion of student populations. The survey (which included 136 items, including 18 general questions) was based on a review of the research literature and had been pilot tested in an earlier study. Survey responses were received from 65% of the sample. The researchers analyzed the results according to the three main features of integrated professional cultures.

## What were the findings?

Among teachers surveyed in the four states, one half (in California and Michigan) to two thirds (in Florida and Massachusetts) said they plan and teach alone. Less than half reported that extra assistance was available or that all teachers

In integrated professional cultures, veteran and novice teachers learn together, new teachers’ needs are recognized, and all teachers share responsibility for student success.

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**How can schools develop an integrated professional culture?**

The researchers observed that California’s state-funded mentoring program did not guarantee that new teachers got the support they wanted or needed. Adequately supporting new teachers requires leadership at the school level, they say. The researchers suggest that principals and school leaders foster a sense of shared responsibility across the school; engage veteran teachers in the “sustained induction of new teachers and in their own professional growth”; and earmark resources to support collaborative planning, mentoring, and classroom observations.

**Is this approach supported by other studies?**

Yes. In 2007, RAND researcher Cassandra Guarino and associates analyzed recent Schools and Staffing Surveys. They found lower turnover rates among beginning teachers in schools with induction and mentoring programs, especially when the programs emphasized collegial support. Researcher Ken Futernick (2007), after surveying 2,000 current and former teachers in California, concluded that both novice and veteran teachers felt greater personal satisfaction when they believed in their own efficacy, were involved in decision making, and established strong collegial relationships.

Research also underscores the important role of school leaders in helping new teachers succeed. “Teachers often leave high-poverty, low-performing, at-risk schools because they have not been adequately prepared to teach in such challenging environments and lack much-needed support from administrators,” says Sabrina Laine, director of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. Interview data from a 2006 study conducted by Pamela Angelle suggests that principals’ involvement in teacher induction can improve retention, especially when principals provide “professional socialization” in the form of frequent discussion, monitoring, and feedback.

**References**

Angelle, P.S. (2006). Instructional leadership and monitoring: Increasing teacher intent to stay

**Information and resources**

**Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession**

[www.cstp-wa.org](http://www.cstp-wa.org)

**National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality**

[www.ncctq.org](http://www.ncctq.org)

**Teachers Network**

[www.teachnet.org](http://www.teachnet.org)

**The New Teacher Center**

[www.newteachercenter.org](http://www.newteachercenter.org)

through socialization. *NASSP Bulletin*, 90(4), 318-334. <http://bul.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/90/4/318.pdf>

Futernick, K. (2007). *A possible dream: Retaining California teachers so all students learn*. Sacramento: California State University. [www.calstate.edu/teacherquality/documents/possible\\_dream.pdf](http://www.calstate.edu/teacherquality/documents/possible_dream.pdf)

Guarino, C.M., Santibanez, L., & Daley, G.A. (2006). Teacher recruitment and retention: A review of the recent empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(2), 173-208. [www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/Review\\_of\\_Educational\\_Research/7602/04\\_RER\\_Guarino.pdf](http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/Review_of_Educational_Research/7602/04_RER_Guarino.pdf)

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