



The Talent for Turnaround Leadership Academy recognizes that teachers need a coherent professional learning system to assist them in becoming experts. Educators from Kokomo, Indiana, formed one of nine state teams participating in the academy. The Kokomo team includes, from left: Stacy Rush, Frank DeRosa, Maggie Rowlands, Scott Syverson, Kelly Wright, Shari Switzer, Tenicia Helmberger, and Tom Hughes.

# LEARNER-READY TO EXPERT PRACTITIONER

ACADEMY SUPPORTS TEACHERS' TRANSITIONS WHILE ADDRESSING EQUITY

BY LYNN HOLDHEIDE AND LISA LACHLAN-HACHÉ

In fall 2016, more than 50% of teachers in Kokomo, Indiana, were leaving the profession within their first three years. Within the district, low-performing schools in particular struggled to retain teachers.

Kokomo was far from alone in this trend, which is common across the country where high-poverty, high-minority, urban, and rural public schools have among the highest rates of turnover (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stucky, 2014).

The costs of teacher attrition are high for districts. According to a report from the Learning Policy Institute, each teacher who leaves the profession costs her district between \$17,000 and \$22,000. And this does not take

into consideration the impact of the revolving door on students and school improvement efforts (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

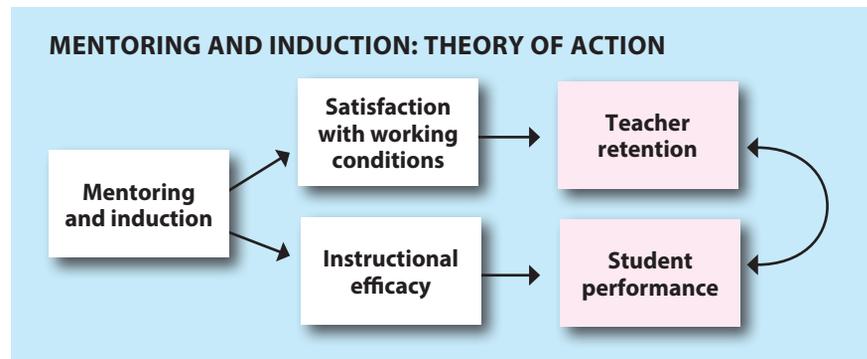
Study after study shows that there is more teacher attrition in Title I schools and those that serve high percentages of children of color and those from low-income families (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2011; Ingersoll & May, 2012).

These schools tend to have the fewest resources, toughest working conditions, and largest teacher shortages (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

Empty teaching positions have forced some schools to place less than fully prepared teachers in classrooms and rely on fast-track certification. All of this adds up to the most disadvantaged students having the least access to experienced, effective teachers.

This situation could be addressed by systems of talent management across the career continuum as teachers prepare, transition into the profession, and later assume teacher leadership roles. However, most districts have not yet established strong talent management systems and therefore missed opportunities to cultivate a pipeline of effective educators (Konoske-Graf, Partelow, & Benner, 2016), casting doubt on whether struggling schools — and, most importantly, the students in them — will improve.

But Kokomo has a chance to reverse these trends because the district is participating in an initiative called



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the Talent for Turnaround Leadership Academy. This academy supports teams from nine state education agencies and 15 local education agencies in establishing a coherent and aligned talent management system to attract, support, and retain excellent educators in low-performing, high-need schools and districts. It is a joint project of the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, West Comprehensive Center, Center on School Turnaround, and Northeast Comprehensive Center.

The Talent for Turnaround Leadership Academy recognizes that teachers — no matter how well-prepared — enter the profession as novices and need a coherent

professional learning system to assist them in becoming experts.

Moving new teachers from learner-ready — prepared to model and develop student knowledge and skills on their first day in the classroom — to expert requires a coordinated and aligned system of professional learning for beginning teachers (Benedict, Holdheide, Brownell, & Foley, 2016). The academy has a particular focus on new teacher mentoring and induction because Kokomo and the majority of the other districts identified new teacher attrition as a major problem.

### **INTENSIVE EARLY SUPPORT**

Research suggests that professional learning supports are best when most intensive in the first three years of teaching and that new teachers benefit when there is coherence among the various sources of information regarding what constitutes effective instruction and their roles in schools (Wilson, Rozelle, & Mikeska, 2011; Youngs, Jones, & Low, 2011).

For new teachers, professional learning in the form of comprehensive

mentoring and induction can have important impacts. For example, the New Teacher Center reports that high-quality, intensive induction for new teachers can result in a return on investment of \$1.66 for every dollar invested after five years (Villar & Strong, 2007).

As the academy's mentoring and induction theory of action on p. 27 shows, mentoring and induction can increase teachers' satisfaction with working conditions, which can lead to improved rates of teacher retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Recent studies also indicate that mentoring and induction supports can help teachers improve their instructional practice (increasing the use of engaging practices and formative assessment), thereby increasing student achievement (Schmidt, Young, Cassidy, Wang, & Laguarda, 2017; Stanulis & Floden, 2009; SRI Education, 2018).

Teacher retention and student achievement are closely linked because teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they feel successful. In turn, schools with high rates of teacher retention tend to have more experienced and effective teachers who can positively impact student learning (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders and Center on School Turnaround launched a mentoring and induction cross-state affinity group designed to support the academy states and partner districts that prioritized support to their new teachers. This group consisted of nine states and six districts, out of the total group of 15 districts from nine states.

Using the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders' Mentoring and Induction Toolkit ([www.gtlcenter.org/products-resources/mentoring-and-induction-toolkit](http://www.gtlcenter.org/products-resources/mentoring-and-induction-toolkit)), a free resource developed for all states and districts, teams worked to develop and strengthen mentoring

and induction efforts with specific consideration for the unique context of turnaround schools.

Kokomo was one of these districts. As part of the Mentoring and Induction Affinity Group, the district participated in a series of six in-person and virtual workshops that supported the development of resources and processes to develop and implement a comprehensive teacher induction program.

Outside the workshops, the team met regularly and used knowledge-building activities and resources from the Mentoring and Induction Toolkit to facilitate a data dive, root cause analysis, induction program inventory, and other activities. The team consisted of members from the Great Lakes Comprehensive Center, the Indiana Department of Education, and Kokomo School Corporation leadership teams.

These activities led to:

- The discussion and development of program goals;
- Concrete mentor selection criteria;
- Targeted professional learning materials for new teachers and mentors;
- Mentor and new teacher assessment plans based on teacher and mentor standards; and
- A monitoring plan that includes surveys of mentors, teachers, and administrators to assess the quality and fidelity of the program.

The team piloted the new mentoring program during the 2017-18 school year at four high-needs, high-poverty schools in Kokomo. At the end of the year, all pilot schools retained all their new staff. Before implementing the mentoring program, these same four schools had some of the highest attrition rates of new teachers.

As a result, the new mentoring program expanded to all 13 instructional sites, including one Head Start location, seven elementary schools, three middle schools, the high school, and one alternative school in Kokomo in the 2018-19 school year. To assess its progress, the team is conducting an implementation study and will determine what tweaks should be considered for next year.

Beyond Kokomo, the state team at the Indiana Department of Education developed a comprehensive online Moodle platform course that draws on the Mentoring and Induction Toolkit and aims to support the scale-up of comprehensive mentoring and induction programs across the state.

The department of education is piloting this course with four new districts committed to addressing teacher attrition in high-needs schools, with the goal that each district will be prepared to implement a comprehensive induction program in 2019-20. Once these four districts gain traction, the state team anticipates supporting additional districts through the course for statewide scale-up.

## HIGH-LEVERAGE PRACTICES

Improvements in teacher retention, like those seen in Indiana, are important benchmarks for gaining traction in teacher retention, but the most important metric of success, especially in low-performing schools, is improved teacher practice.

Research suggests that professional learning is more likely to effect changes in teacher practice when it is sustained over time, targeted to meet specific needs, and provides consistent expectations of and guidance on instructional practices shown to have a positive influence on students' learning (Billingsley, Bettini, & Jones, in press; Benedict, Holdheide, Brownell, & Foley, 2016). Mentoring and induction

efforts should follow these guidelines.

One valuable tool for meeting this expectation is high-leverage practices, which research has shown to be foundational to effective teaching. High-leverage practices cut across instructional content, apply to many age levels and different types of learners, and are confirmed practices that positively affect student outcomes (McCleskey & Brownell, 2015).

Adopting high-leverage practices and explicitly integrating them into mentoring and induction programs may reduce uncertainty and inconsistency in instruction by providing a common language and understanding of evidence-based instructional practices (Billingsley et al., in press).

Using high-leverage practices can also focus the coaching and support and prevent relying on mentors' particular expertise or a scattered approach dependent on random needs identified by teachers (Billingsley et al., in press). High-leverage practice videos are available for free through several federally funded centers at [www.highleveragepractices.org/videos](http://www.highleveragepractices.org/videos).

A new module being added to the Mentoring and Induction toolkit will strengthen integration of high-leverage practices and reinforce the content and skills that teachers need to be effective teachers.

These modules will help teachers support all learners but will pay specific attention to students with disabilities. The new resources will draw on high-leverage practices identified by TeachingWorks; the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform Center; and the Council for Exceptional Children.

## INTEGRATED STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE EQUITY

Mentoring and induction functions at its best when fully integrated into other programs and initiatives at all

levels. No single policy can establish a high-quality educator workforce or eliminate equity gaps. However, a comprehensive set of mentoring and induction strategies at the federal, state, and local levels can lead to better systems that attract, prepare, support, and retain effective teachers in high-need schools.

This work requires moving beyond the current system of loosely coupled levels operating under different guidelines and priorities, often resulting in a piecemeal approach that treats each stage of the career continuum as distinct and often fails to establish a consistent, streamlined set of expectations.

For example, mentoring and induction can, and we would argue should, be integrated with larger equity initiatives because addressing new teachers' needs to improve recruitment and retention, particularly in the lowest-performing schools, can remove barriers to school success for traditionally underserved students.

Blending funding streams is a promising mechanism for integration. The flexibility offered by the Every Student Succeeds Act presents an opportunity to create comprehensive induction programs using funding from both school improvement and professional development.

By braiding funding from Title I and Title II, states and districts can re-envision professional learning for new teachers and their mentors, thereby reversing high teacher turnover trends and increasing the attraction of challenging schools while increasing teacher effectiveness for students in greatest need.

But this work requires the diligent attention of equity advocates to look closely at trends and gaps and focus energy and resources in schools where there are gaps in educator experience and effectiveness. With such attention,

high-quality mentoring and induction programs can better address these gaps, bringing effective instruction to all schools and students.

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*Continued on p. 35*

Continued from p. 29

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