

Stakeholders in the induction process

Principals

Like a conductor who brings the musicians together to perform a symphony, or a basketball coach who encourages the team from the sideline throughout a game, a principal's role is to identify, maximize and coordinate all the available resources to run a school.

(Mike Heffner, Vice President, Leadership Development, NTC)

Successful school-based induction processes are a key aspect of running a school. Too often in the past, because of the demands on the principal's time, the responsibility for school-based induction processes is delegated to other team members and the principal's role ends after the initial welcome meeting and tour of the school.

However, the principal's role in successful school-based induction processes is pivotal.

Traditionally, discussions of teacher induction have not considered the role of the school principal (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Researchers and experts typically limit their recommendations for principal support of induction to program advocacy and beginning-of-the-year orientations (Brock & Grady, 2001).

Watkins (2011) also comments on the role of principals in induction processes.

The positive impact of a leader who creates a caring learning community focused on student success is evident to all, including beginning teachers.

Research reveals that inadequate support from school administration is one of the three most often reported causes of a new teacher's decision to leave the profession. ...

... Principals who are knowledgeable about the issues affecting new teachers, proactive in supporting them, and committed to professional growth do make a significant difference.

Watkins identifies possible ways that the principal can support teacher induction.

Principals can:

- be aware of the challenges beginning teachers face. By knowing when disillusionment, frustration and feelings of inadequacy might be amplified such as around assessments, reporting time, parent conferences, etc. a principal can be prepared to better meet the needs of their beginning teachers
- remind the staff that the new teacher is still learning. In the past, there has been a perception that teachers graduate from pre-service programs as fully-formed teachers, prepared for all the responsibilities they will face. Today we have begun to embrace the norm of life-long learning for all educators. Principals can reinforce this by articulating it explicitly to all staff, especially new teachers. Principals can provide a school where beginning teachers feel safe to take risks and embrace learning throughout their professional lives
- value and articulate the vitality that new teachers bring to their school. Building a community where every person is valued, including the newest members of the staff—their understanding of current innovations in teaching strategies and thinking, competence with new technology, and their energy and optimism—goes a long way to make a new teacher feel appreciated and respected

- understand the components of an effective induction program and integrate it into the overall school goals and professional development plans. Truly effective and sustained induction programs need to be integral to overall school operation. A principal's ability to explain the components of induction to staff, parents, and the school community and see induction as part of the infrastructure of the school strengthens support for beginning teachers
- know the role of the mentor. While emotional support is important in building trust, to accelerate beginning teacher growth, mentors must do much more. Instructional mentors focus their support on teaching and learning. The principal who knows the strategies and tools that comprise mentor and beginning teacher work—classroom observations, analysing student work, accessing school and community resources, planning lessons—avoids misunderstandings and aligns support.

More specifically principals support beginning teachers when they:

- maintain a supportive, nurturing, collaborative school environment that encourages and appreciates critical enquiry and reflection
- demonstrate their care and concern and personally observe beginning teachers in the classroom and offer counseling and advice
- ensure that beginning teachers are assigned to subject areas and year/stage levels for which they are qualified to teach and limit the number of challenging students in their classes to maximise their chances of success
- set and clearly articulate high expectations for teaching and learning and provide positive, honest feedback
- ensure an open-door policy, maintain regular communication and acknowledge the achievements of beginning teachers
- facilitate participation in standards-based professional development opportunities, professional collaboration and dialogue and encourage teachers to work together.

References

Brock, BL & Grady, ML 2001, *From first-year to first-rate: Principals guiding beginning teachers* (2nd edn), Thousand Oaks, Corwin, CA.

Watkins, A 2011 'Role of the Principal In Beginning Teacher Induction' viewed 30 January 2013 at [New Teacher Centre \(www.newteachercenter.org/sites/default/files/ntc/main/resources/BRF-RoleOfThePrincipallnBeginningTeacherInduction.pdf\)](http://www.newteachercenter.org/sites/default/files/ntc/main/resources/BRF-RoleOfThePrincipallnBeginningTeacherInduction.pdf).

Zeichner, Kenneth M & Gore, Jennifer M 1990 'Teacher socialization' in Houston, W Robert (ed), *Handbook of research on teacher education*, Macmillan, New York.