Evaluation of Attrition Rates for Novice Teachers in the School District and Development of Strategies for Improvement

by
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Approval Page

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Abstract


The purpose of the study was to evaluate the attrition rates of novice teachers in the school district and to develop improvement strategies for the induction program that would decrease the teacher retention problem. The program improvement strategies addressed the development, implementation, and evaluation of the current program.

Ten research questions were proposed to assist in the completion of this study. These research questions were addressed: (a) What are the school district historical attrition rates for novice teachers, (b) what activities has the school district conducted to address the novice teacher attrition, (c) what reasons do novice teachers give as for a decision to leave the school district, (d) what are the concerns and attitudes of current novice teachers within the school district, (e) what factors do teachers with more than 5 years experience cite as reasons for their success within the school district, (f) what have other Florida school districts implemented to address the teacher retention problem, (g) what are the characteristics of successful teacher retention programs, (h) what programs or strategies should be recommended to the school district to address its novice-teacher retention problem, (i) how should the development strategies to improve the novice-teacher program be implemented, and (j) how should the strategies for improvement be evaluated?

Development and evaluation problem-solving methodologies were used to develop the evaluation instrument and were used with the instrument to gather and assess the data. Formative and summative committee members assisted with procedures for both methodologies. The survey and questionnaire were designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher-preparation program as it pertained to novice and experienced teachers.

After the evaluation, it was recommended that the school district extend the current induction program to 3 years. In addition, the teacher orientation program required modifications that provided novice teachers with 2 weeks of intensive instructional and discipline strategies. Finally, a product was developed that provided a systematic approach and for enrichment training program to achieve multilevels of support and commitment from school-based staff.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Good teachers are the heart of human capital of every school district and the single most important factor in predicting student success (Ganser, 2002). School policy makers need to focus, not on how novice teachers are prepared, but on how well they are prepared and supported (Feldman, 2003). Sadly, the classroom is like a battlefield where novice teachers are marched out in defeat and fresh troops are marched onto the field.

The target school district is one of the 67 public school districts of the Florida Department of Education. It serves the entire county covering approximately 1,425 square miles. The school district has grown with the county’s population and has become one of the nation’s largest school districts. It is regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and is one of the nation’s largest fully accredited school districts. The school district serves the educational needs of more than 325,500 urban and suburban students, and it is in a period of unprecedented growth, with approximately 6,000 to 10,000 new prekindergarten through 12th-grade students enrolling annually. Meeting the increasing educational needs of the student population, the school district has become the county’s largest employer with an estimated 43,550 clerical, support, and instructional staff.

Annually, the target school district seeks to maintain an adequate supply of instructional staff to educate the consistently growing student population. To this end, the district hires approximately 800 to 900 new teachers annually to fill vacant teaching slots. Although the duty of the administrators of the school district is to fill the teacher vacancies with qualified individuals, its duty also is to provide ongoing training and support that facilitates the transition of the novice teachers into the classroom.
Nature of the Problem

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2003) recommended that school districts reinvent teacher preparation and professional development to ensure that every teacher hired and placed in a classroom is well qualified for the position. Furthermore, the commission indicated that weak links appear each time shortcuts to teacher preparation are taken, thus, causing school districts to compromise their ability to retain quality teachers. To screen and hire qualified teachers and to reduce compromises, district educators evaluated the teacher development recommendations and implemented them in the teacher-preparation program to meet the needs of novice teachers.

As a result of continued growth, the school district has hired new teachers annually and has measured their ability to achieve success through a well-designed teacher-preparation program. One such program in the target school district is the New Educator Support System (NESS) that is a state-approved, research-based methodology and application method of regulating the success or failure rate of 1st-year teaching candidates. The NESS program was designed to facilitate the process of lifelong professional growth and development of novice teachers within the school district and the teaching profession. Additionally, NESS has served as a model and measuring tool to assess competency of subject matter and classroom manageability of novice teachers. Although the NESS program measures their competency and manageability during the 1st year, it does not guarantee that those who complete the program will actually remain with the district as educators.

Although the leaders of the school district attempted to ensure that novice teachers receive the necessary support and achieve success as educators, the resignation
rate of novice teachers has increased from an average of 8% in prior years to approximately 11% at the time of this applied dissertation study. According to a training coordinator of the district, the problem of teacher attrition demonstrated that gaps existed between the completion rate of novice teachers and their actual desire to remain with the district or in the teaching profession. It was perceived that the programs practiced were not adequately preparing the novice teachers for long-term career commitments. If the rate of attrition continued to grow, by 2006-2007, the resignation rate for novice teachers could increase by 12% to 15%, thereby jeopardizing the number of classroom teachers available to meet the ever-growing teacher shortages.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this applied dissertation was to evaluate the attrition rate of novice teachers in the school district. The intent of the study was that its results would reveal alternative strategies for teacher preparation that the district’s schools could utilize to decrease the growing attrition rate. These alternatives might ensure that specific improvement strategies would be established to assist novice teachers in making effective, career-lasting transitions with the school district.

Background and Significance of the Problem

Lucksinger (2000) predicted that, within 10 years, America’s schools will require more than 2 million new teachers due to projected student enrollment increases, teacher attrition, class-size reduction, and large numbers of retiring teachers. The challenge of supporting novice teachers effectively has become a critical issue (Halford, 1998). Of significance to this study was the awareness that new teachers are essential players in the teaching profession. Moreover, according to Halford, the retention of well-trained and motivated new teachers ensures that appropriate instructional staff are available to fill the
projected teacher shortages.

Faced with the reality of significant numbers of teachers leaving the profession in the early phase of their careers and the likelihood of an impending teacher shortage, leaders of school districts find it increasingly difficult to hire and retain personnel for their classrooms (Hope, 1999). Ingersoll (2001) indicated that the rate of novice teachers leaving the profession is beginning to exceed by 20% the number of newly hired teachers. In other words, some school districts are losing novice teachers faster than they can replace them. The teacher retention problem manifests itself to greater or lesser extent in every state and region. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2003) conducted a study on teacher retention rates for large school districts. The report revealed that Texas' school districts' annual rate of teacher turnover was 15.5%, which percentage included a 21% turnover rate for novice teachers in their first 3 years of teaching. Similarly, the California's school districts' turnover rate was 13.2%, which percentage included a 23% turnover rate of novice teachers within the first 3 years. In addition, Tennessee's school districts reported that 25% of novice teachers stopped teaching within the first 5 years in the profession.

Ingersoll (2001) indicated that, overall, teacher turnover is somewhat higher than that for all employees: 13.2% annually for teachers versus 11% for all other jobs. Within the public schools, teachers exit urban schools at a rate of 14% and suburban schools at 13%. Bracey (2002) reported that, for all schools, only 6% of teachers leave the profession, whereas 7.2% move to a different school or district. Of those who leave, (a) 27% retire, (b) 45% report personal reasons for leaving, (c) 12% leave because of a school staffing action, and (d) 24% leave to find another occupation.

Across America, 9.3% of public school teachers leave before they complete their 1st year in the classroom, and over 20% of U.S. public school teachers leave within their
first 3 years of teaching (National Center for Education Statistics, 1992). The study highlighted that nearly 30% of America’s teachers leave teaching within 5 years of entry, and even higher rates of attrition exist in more disadvantaged urban and rural schools. Teacher attrition patterns, reported by international and U.S. studies, indicated that attrition is highest among novice teachers. Specifically, 1st-year teachers are 2.5 times more likely to leave the profession than their more experienced counterparts. An additional 15% of novice teachers leave after their 2nd year of teaching, and still another 10% leave after the 3rd year (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 2000). Inman and Marlow (2004) found that most teachers who leave have fewer than 10 years of teaching experience. Other reports indicated that 25% to 50% of novice teachers resign during their first 3 years of teaching (Voke, 2002).

The most recent studies reported by the Florida Department of Education, Office of Policy Research and Improvement (2003) indicated that approximately 10% of Florida’s teachers resign each year. Some of the teachers merely move from one district to another, but others leave the classroom for a variety of reasons, often not to return. Additional exploration of the literature revealed that the teachers' retirement rate represented only 1.3% of the statewide average, whereas the novice teachers' resignations represented the remaining 8.7%. In fact, the novice teachers' resignations have steadily increased by 1.09% annually since July 1998.

According to the Florida Department of Education (2003), the target school district received $33,776,158 in allocated funds for the development, training, recruitment, and retention of quality teachers. The district dispersed an estimated 12.9% of these funds for training and support of novice teachers. During the 2002-2003 school year, the school district hired 754 new teachers including 268 experienced (from other
districts or states), and 486 inexperienced teachers (recent graduates or change of career profession). Eventually, 170 of the 486 inexperienced teachers, or 35%, chose not to return to the district. Every new teacher who resigns after 1 year costs the district an estimated $32,686 per teacher. These costs are monetarily measurable; however, the figures do not reflect the invisible cost of the loss in student achievement.

High attrition means that school districts must take funds urgently needed for school improvements and spend them instead in a manner that produces little long-term payoff for student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Kain and Singleton (1998) shared that high teacher attrition reduce productivity and create a drain on school districts' financial and human resources. Ingersoll (2001) stressed that high rates of teacher turnover are of concern because they may indicate underlying problems in how well school districts function in that particular area.

The leaders of the target school district have been highly committed to attracting new teachers and have been funded not only to attract but also to hire them. The school district has partnered with a community college to establish a program conducive to teacher development and enhancement. The Teaching Leadership Center is a collaborative effort between the college and the school district to motivate students to pursue the field of education. Additionally, the school district offers the future teachers semipractical experiences in classrooms at various schools within the district. Finally, the school district seeks to attract possible teaching candidates through recruitment fairs, current teachers' referrals, and Internet recruiting.

Wong and Asquith (2002) reported that each year thousands of qualified teachers are recruited happily into the profession, only to quit in frustration 1 year to 2 years later. They cautioned that, despite the tremendous monetary and human cost, the leaders of
school districts continue to discard teachers at alarming rates, only to rehire a new round and lose them, too.

Research Questions

The following research questions formed the foundation of the applied dissertation study:

1. What are the school district’s historical attrition rates for novice teachers?

2. What activities has the school district conducted to address the novice-teacher attrition?

3. What reasons do novice teachers give for a decision to leave the school district?

4. What are the concerns and attitudes of current novice teachers within the school district?

5. What factors do teachers with more than 5 years of experience cite as reasons for their success within the school district?

6. What have other Florida school districts implemented to address the teacher retention problem?

7. What are the characteristics of successful teacher retention programs?

8. What programs or strategies should be recommended to the school district to address its novice-teacher retention problem?

9. How should the development strategies to improve the novice-teacher program be implemented?

10. How should the strategies for improvement be evaluated?

Definition of Terms

The following educational terms were defined to clarify their use in this research project:
Mentor. This term refers to a school based experienced teacher who assumes primary responsibility for mentoring the novice teacher.

Novice teacher. This term refers to an individual who has completed the prerequisite requirements of the teacher-education program and has begun the 1st year of teaching.

Professional development. This term refers to the process of planning, implementing, attending, recording, and reviewing progress toward competency in a particular field.

Teacher attrition. This term refers to the number of teachers a school district loses in a year due to retirements, deaths, resignations, and terminations. Teacher attrition most commonly is attributed to (a) student-related factors such as discipline problems, lack of motivation, and poor attitudes; (b) emotional aspects such as lack of fulfillment, boredom, stress, and frustration; (c) working conditions such as class size, workload, nonteaching duties, paperwork, and lack of supplies; and (d) lack of respect.

Teacher induction. This term refers to programs related to helping novice teachers' transition into the classroom and to acculturating them to the specific school and district setting in which they will work.

Teacher preparation. This term refers to programs that assist prospective teachers in preparing for teaching careers and that include college courses in education, student teaching, and internships.
Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Research demonstrates that high quality teacher preparation, no matter how or where acquired, is a strong predictor of both teacher retention and good teaching practice. Quality teacher preparation provides novice teachers with the skills, confidence, and competence necessary to begin their teaching careers (National Commission on Teaching America’s Future, 2003). In order to answer the research questions, the researcher conducted a literature review. This review focused on the reasons for the attrition of novice teachers, the need for support of novice teachers, the importance of psychological support, the importance of professional-growth support, the role of school-wide structure and culture, mentor support, and collegial interactions or peer support groups.

**Teacher Attrition**

In terms of teacher supply, data from the National Center for Education Statistics (1992) showed that teachers who complete teacher-education programs filled less than half of the teaching positions across the United States, whereas individuals who filled the remaining positions held undergraduate degrees in fields other than education (Croasmun et al., 2000). An analysis determined that alternative certification programs are intended to provide a different pathway to the field of teaching from the traditional one that includes a degree in education, supervised internship, and acceptable test scores on basic skills and knowledge of pedagogy. Furthermore, alternative certification programs address the perceived shortage of teachers (Legler, 2004). The certification programs offer individuals who desire to change careers (including those who have left the military) participation in a shortened training and on-the-job learning experience that leads to full certification.

The Texas Center for Educational Research (1999) found that school leaders have
difficulty competing with private industry, when they try to recruit individuals who have recently completed an undergraduate degree program with an emphasis in high-demand fields. In addition, school districts have difficulty retaining teachers for these same reasons. These implications lead to high turnover that diminish the sense of community, continuity, and coherence that are the hallmarks of strong schools. This erosion seriously undermines the ability to build and sustain professional teaching communities in America’s schools (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003).

MacDonald (1999) contended that there is a strong sense that conditions within schools and those shaping schools have deteriorated and, consequently, are causing increasing levels of teacher dissatisfaction and stress, if not attrition. As a result, one reason so many new teachers resign is that teaching as a profession has been slow to develop a systematic way to induct beginners gradually into the complexities of a job that demands hundreds of management decisions every day (Croasmun et al., 2000). Additional studies reported that many teachers find that they are unprepared for the reality of the classroom. Croasmun et al. found that novice teachers leave the teaching field because of an inability to cope with teaching problems. The National Center for Education Statistics (1992) reported that dissatisfied teachers leave teaching for the following reasons: (a) student discipline problems, (b) poor student motivation to learn, (c) inadequate support from administration, (d) poor salary, and (e) lack of influence over school policies and practices.

Harrell, Leavell, and McKee (2004) reported that new teachers resign for the following reasons: (a) inadequate salary and benefits, (b) indiscipline students, (c) low collegial support, and (d) poor workplace conditions. Ingersoll (2001) asserted that better salaries or benefits would make teaching a more attractive career to more professionals
and that teachers receiving low salaries tend to leave first. Abel and Sewell (1999) illustrated that many teachers are emotionally unprepared to deal with issues such as a lack of parental involvement, parent drug or alcohol abuse, racial tension, and students who are unprepared to learn. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2003) indicated that new teachers, in particular, often cite reasons for leaving the teaching profession that include little or no administrative support and isolation from peers. Darling-Hammond (2001) reported that poor workplace conditions made teaching difficult, and the neediest students often have access to the fewest resources.

Watzke (2003) researched teacher development and identified the initial years of teaching as particularly problematic as teachers enter the initial stages of development. For example, teachers in the 1st year of teaching lack confidence and are concerned about a number of challenges. The American Association of Retired Persons and Harris Interactive (2003) noted the following challenges: (a) motivating students to learn, (b) maintaining classroom discipline, (c) dealing with parents, (d) managing lesson plans in short class periods, (e) keeping lesson plans interesting, and (f) dealing with school politics and bureaucracy.

Regressions for Attrition of Novice Teachers

Certainly, some teacher turnover is unavoidable. Teachers move when their spouses change jobs. Some novice teachers realize after 1 or 2 years that they are not designed for the teaching profession, an inevitable loss to the school district. However, other departures may be preventable (Hardy, 1999).

Norton (1999) reported that teachers are concerned about job security. They want to participate in the decision-making process, view positive working conditions of utmost importance, need autonomy that fosters personal creativity, and seek an understanding of
their role and its contributions in the scheme of things in the school. Moreover, they are motivated by being a part of doing the right things to accomplish worthwhile results. Connolly (2000) added that (a) poor administration and little administrative support, (b) negative colleagues and incompetent coworkers, and (c) ineffective mentoring of novice teachers that leads to job dissatisfaction. Marlow, Inman, and Betancourt-Smith (1998) shared that novice teachers need (a) opportunities to interact with colleagues who have similar ideas about teaching and working cooperatively, (b) administrators who encourage and promote teacher ideas, and (c) a community that feels positively about the educational system and the people in it. Moreover, Cochran-Smith (2004) believed that teachers need school conditions where they (a) are successful and supported, (b) have opportunities to work with other educators in professional learning communities rather than in isolation, (c) work under differentiated leadership, and (d) have advancement prospects during the course of their careers.

Croasmun et al. (2000) revealed that, in the initial years of teaching, only the strongest and most determined individuals survive. It is most important for school leaders to know that the teachers’ ability to address and resolve personal challenges goes a long way toward determining personal happiness and professional success (Hoerr, 2005). Although determined to succeed, a majority of 1st-year teachers have reported feeling overwhelmed and isolated as they struggle to achieve success (Brock & Grady, 1998).

Support of Novice Teachers

Davis and Resta (2001) indicated that newly licensed teachers are prepared to begin teaching but have not fully developed the skills and strategies to be thoroughly proficient. The researchers added that it is difficult for the teachers to bolster their confidence without assistance and support. The difficulties and limited support available
to many 1st-year teachers frustrate them because of a lack of opportunities that would be helpful in their developing a full range of skills and knowledge necessary to address the complexities of the classroom. According to Scherer (1999), providing support to novice teachers is better than letting them sink or swim on their own. Studies of teacher attrition demonstrated that without support, novice teachers are likely to leave teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Additionally, Keller (2004) asserted that teachers who learn how to be effective and get support for their work are much more likely to remain with their current school.

In a study on induction of novice teachers, Gold (1998) identified two broad categories of support: (a) professional growth that includes assisting the novice teacher with the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to be successful in the classroom and school and (b) psychological support aimed at building the protégé’s sense of self and ability to handle stress. Moreover, according to Wong (2002), the best way to support, develop, and cultivate an attitude of lifelong learning in novice teachers is through a induction program focused on teacher training, support, and retention. Yopp and Young (1999) argued that school policy makers need to create a credentialing type of induction program that reflects a developmental perspective of how teaching is learned. Thus, programs should be designed to facilitate the transition of novices into a profession whose members are effective, collaborative, and reflective about their practice. Likewise, Hope (1999) stressed that orienting a new teacher to the school involves systematic contact with the intention of assisting in the new teachers’ professional growth and development and of engaging all in collegial conversation about the work of teaching. More importantly, new teachers need to be exposed to a variety of teaching techniques and learning processes.
Darling-Hammond (2001) attested that leaders of states and school districts need to reevaluate the approach utilized to prepare teachers and the level of support that new teachers receive during those first decisive years. In addition, leaders of states and districts that want a stable, competent teaching force need to determine how to invest their training resources in more effective teacher-preparation programs. Likewise, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2002) indicated that leaders of districts and schools must provide well-designed induction programs for all new teachers. Most importantly, these programs should seek to develop qualified new teachers, regardless of whether they are trained in a traditional teacher program or in an alternative program of teacher preparation.

Teacher induction is a process of comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development organized by educators of school districts to train, support, and retain new teachers and to allow them to progress to lifelong learning programs (Wong, 2004). Wong (2002) maintained that induction includes all the activities that train and support new teachers and that acculturate them to the mission and philosophy of their school and district. He indicated that to keep good teachers, school leaders need to realize that people crave connection. Wong added that new teachers want more than a job: They want to experience success; they want to contribute to a group. Moreover, they want to make a difference in the work place and build professional relationships that provide acceptance (Wong, 2003).

Psychological Support

Donaldson and Poon (1999) interviewed former principals concerning their professional relationships with novice teachers. The research found that most school leaders believe a positive relationship with novice teachers is important. Providing novice
teachers with undivided attention whenever possible does much to reaffirm novice teachers’ sense of self-worth and encourages them to do the same with their students. Brock and Grady (2001) stressed that the relationship between the teacher and principal is of major importance in a teacher’s work life.

Hope (1999) shared that principals need to seek out 1st-year teachers and initiate conversation about instructional matters until the novice develops a level of comfort to initiate contact on his or her own. Hope noted that principals could end the isolation of novice teachers, if they make regular trips to the classroom. Furthermore, it is important that the principal provide constructive feedback on the teaching and learning processes unfolding in the teachers' classrooms. Brock and Grady asserted that the climate created by the principal is a factor in a novice teacher’s success or failure. The principal has the power to create a workplace that is pleasant or unbearable. Novice teachers want interaction with and affirmation from their principals. Most beginners have a sense of appreciation and loyalty to the principal who was instrumental in hiring them.

Support of Professional Growth

Professional growth occurs gradually over an extended period. Kaplan (2004) stressed that learning to teach is a developmental process that takes several years. New teachers can rarely (a) integrate the curriculum, (b) align it with high-stakes assessments, (c) locate and secure the available resources, (d) implement effective practices for classroom management, and (e) know their students' learning or social needs and how best to meet them. Given the developmental nature of professional growth, a successful induction program delivered in increments that are determined by the teacher's readiness to move to the next stage of development is imperative (Brock & Grady, 2001).

A survey of induction programs indicated that this is a unique phase of teacher
development as well as a period of enculturation and socialization. As a result, it is critical that educational leaders who design quality induction programs articulate new professional norms and expectations (Moir & Gless, 2001). Support of novice teachers should be a continuum, starting with personal and emotional support, expanding to include specific task- or problem-related support, and, ideally, expanding further to help the newcomer develop a capacity for critical self-reflection on teaching practice (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

Brock and Grady (2001) stressed that novice teachers’ confidence about teaching depends greatly on the support that they receive from their schools. Without adequate guidance and support from fellow teachers, school principals, and administrators, many teachers believe that they are left to succeed or fail on their own during the early years of their careers. Brock and Grady stated that school leaders who assume that the novice teacher has all of the competencies of a veteran are destined for disappointment and problems. Preservice education and induction into the profession need to be viewed as a progression of development. Wong (2003) indicated that induction is the process of preparing, supporting, and retaining novice teachers. Furthermore, induction includes the materials and strategies to support novice teachers and to acculturate them to teaching. Wong stressed that strong induction programs are necessary (a) to introduce novice teachers to the responsibilities, missions, and philosophies of their schools and (b) to treat teachers as lifelong learners from the very 1st day of teaching.

School-Wide Structure and Culture

Novice teachers who enter a school culture in which the teachers share common goals and work collegially will likely enjoy a successful 1st year. In contrast, beginners who enter a dysfunctional and fragmented school culture are exposed to isolation and
negativity (Brock & Grady, 2001). Wong (2002) stressed that induction includes the activities that train and support novice teachers and acculturate them to the mission and philosophy of their school and district. Furthermore, teachers stay where they feel successful, supported, and are part of a team working toward the achievement of common goals. According to Brock and Grady, new teachers need to know the history of the school, its traditions, its heroes, and its myths. They need to understand the beliefs and assumptions of the teachers, the understandings that they share concerning school structure, what constitutes good teaching, and the relationship that teachers and students should have to become part of the school's developing culture.

*Mentor Support*

Mentors are an important component, perhaps the most important component of an induction program, but they must be part of an induction process that is aligned to the district’s vision, mission, and structure (Wong, 2004). One way that principals can help teachers navigate their initial years of teaching is to assign an experienced mentor teacher who can provide information, assistance, and support (Wasley, 1999). The high-stakes nature of mentoring today demands that mentors be effective teachers who can articulate how they conduct their work and guide new teachers in mastering rigorous teaching standards (Ganser, 2002).

Senge (1999) studied different levels of mentoring in various organizations. He indicated that mentoring requires mutual trust and respect and two people who reciprocally choose to help each other, based on affinity and chemistry. Senge added that, at its deepest level, mentoring provides energy and care. It essentially requires helping others to grow professionally. Quality mentoring requires careful selection, training, and ongoing support. Selection criteria include strong interpersonal skills, credibility with
peers and administrators, a demonstrated curiosity, eagerness to learn, and outstanding instructional practices (Moir & Gless, 2001).

Brock and Grady (2001) suggested that quickly establishing a trusting relationship is an essential component of an effective mentorship. The rapport between mentor and protégé is critical. Despite a lack of consensus about the utility and format, researchers identify mentoring as the most critical component of induction programs. If the mentorship is to be effective, a trusting relationship must be established. Mentoring is the process through which new teachers become more proficient in their profession because of structure and planned experience with a veteran teacher (Serpell & Bozeman, 1999). Monsour (2003) believed that successful mentor relationships should be characterized by trust, openness, and confidentiality.

Ganser (2002) shared that mentor programs must aim at enhancing the effectiveness and knowledge of new teachers, not just increasing their comfort level with teaching. He added that school districts should take into account that supporting mentor programs must demonstrate a commitment to the kind of good teaching that leads to student success. The constant distinguishing feature reported in successful mentorship programs is the systematic and ongoing relationship established between a mentor and a protégé.

Schools that are most successful with mentorship programs are those that create a climate that is conducive to faculty sharing and learning with a faculty that is interested in professional growth (Brock & Grady, 1998). Serpell and Bozeman identified the following as essential components for successful preparation programs:

1. A coherent structure with well-designed activities that a trainer uses to teach new teachers curriculum, effective teaching practice, and behavioral management.
2. A formal and structured mentoring component that focuses on improving practice, providing mentors with training, and compensating mentors.

3. Release time or reduced teaching loads for new teachers and mentors that sufficiently provide opportunities for new teachers to observe.

4. A means of formative assessment that emphasizes the assistance of new teachers on a continuum of professional growth.

5. Sufficient and ongoing fiscal resources and political support to sustain the program.

Collegial Interactions or Peer Support Groups

Giving new teachers the opportunity to listen to one another allows them to be taken seriously and to appear adequate and normal at a time in their personal and professional lives when their confidence is shaken by their constantly questioning their own competence (Rogers & Babinski, 1999). Donaldson and Poon (1999) conducted surveys of 1st-year teachers' perceptions of peer and support groups. The results revealed that the interchange about teaching and learning proved crucial to practice. However, the researchers found that teachers want to speak candidly about the pains and joys of 1st-year teaching. A strong majority want to voice their opinions and frustrations and receive compassionate support and advice.

Teaching can be a lonely job. New teachers who are struggling with discipline and who are unsure of the adequacy of their teaching find their lack of adult contact and support frightening and frustrating. Many of them lose confidence in the adequacy of their teaching abilities (Brock & Grady, 2001). Donaldson and Poon (1999) noted that new teachers need professional camaraderie. They need to make connections with other teachers to engage in conversations about each other’s struggles. New teachers want to
discuss curriculum implementation, get ideas about how to address student needs, and gain insight from colleagues who have experiences in similar subject areas (Johnson & Kardos, 2002).

**Proactive Programs for Teacher Retention**

The authors of several studies asserted that induction is the process of systematically training and supporting new teachers before the 1st day of school and continuing throughout the first 2 or 3 years of teaching (Breaux & Wong, 2002). Serpell and Bozeman (1999) found that teacher induction is a helping mechanism for novice teachers. More concretely, it is a formal program of systematic and sustained assistance provided to novice teachers by professionals specifically assigned to that responsibility. Additionally, Wong (2002) stressed that the best way to support, develop, and cultivate an attitude of lifelong learning in novice teachers is through a new teacher's induction program that is focused on teacher training, support, and retention. Moir and Gless (2001) maintained that induction experiences have the potential to frame the future of the teaching profession.

Additionally, teachers' support programs (induction programs) can help schools and districts to meet the various challenges and to take advantage of the opportunity each presents (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). Wilkinson (1997) believed that teacher induction should include the following steps:

1. Help novice teachers make different decisions.
2. Listen to the call for assistance by new teachers.
3. Individualize teaching assignments to meet professional developments needs.
4. Include the novice teacher when designing the professional development plan.
5. Provide adequate information about school policies and procedures.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures

High teacher attrition during the first 3 years has become a substantial problem for school districts throughout the nation. In fact, keeping good teachers has become one of the most important agenda items for most school districts (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Darling-Hammond's study sought to address the alarming and costly country-wide crisis that could eventually deprive children of a quality education, whereas the applied dissertation sought to address a countywide school district crisis.

Methodology

Development and evaluation problem-solving methodologies were selected as appropriate approaches to identify and produce a product that provides development strategies to decrease the current novice teachers' attrition rate within the school district (Scriven, 2002). The criterion for the development of the product was to develop effective strategies for teacher preparation that would assist new educators during their first 3 years of teaching. The product would provide the district’s schools with strategies for developing support systems that would foster stronger ties among the administration, the staff, and the new educators. Furthermore, the product would represent a problem-solving investigation and qualitative research designed to answer the research questions.

Formation of committees. Formative and summative committees were formed to determine the appropriateness of the evaluation results and to validate the project and implementation process. The committees were instrumental in the validation of strategies and procedures that would decrease the new teacher attrition in the school district. The members of the formative and summative committees were selected based on their levels of expertise. Formative committee members included an assistant principal and two school-based new educator program facilitators. The members of the summative
committee included a school principal, a seasoned NESS instructional coach, a school advisory forum chairperson (community member), and a parent volunteer.

The formative committee observed the qualitative instruments (survey, questionnaires, and interview questions) utilized for the research study to determine the appropriate design and content area. Then, the formative committee reviewed the draft of development plan and procedures for increasing the retention of novice teachers. The plan was based on the methodologies and effective strategies identified in programs practiced by educators in other Florida school districts, data from current novice teachers, data from novice teachers who chose to leave the district, and data from successful veteran teachers. After the formative committee reached a consensus for style, form, and content, a final draft was delivered to the summative committee for validation. The summative committee reviewed the final draft for reliability and appropriateness for novice teachers in the target school district. It was intended that the summative committee would make the necessary recommendations to achieve program success.

Instrument: Evaluation design. The evaluation methodology selected was based on the formative and summative experimental design. Welch (2000) suggested that a formative experimental approach played an important role in gathering data and in developing strategies for program improvement. Equally, Scriven (2002) reported that summative evaluation provides information to make decisions or assist in making judgments about program adoption, continuation, or expansion. Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) determined that both evaluations assist with judgments about a program’s overall worth or merit in relation to important criteria. The evaluation design for the instrument selected was tentative until validated by the formative committee.

Literature review. A comprehensive literature review was conducted during the
research study. The scope of the review included research-based plans of actions from knowledgeable research analysts within the field, historical attrition rates of novice teachers in the school district, prior district implemented activities to decrease the problem, and effective teacher-preparation activities and procedures practiced by other school districts.

Procedures

Ten procedures were used to answer the 10 research questions posed in the applied dissertation project. Each procedure was discussed in relation to the research question that it was designed to answer (see Table 1).

Table 1

Outline of Procedures and Responsible Parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Assigned members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formation of committees</td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review and research</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop focus group</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail and conduct surveys</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>Researcher, FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct interviews</td>
<td>3, 5, 6</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of qualitative data: questionnaires, literature reviews, surveys, interviews</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Researcher, FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan and product</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validation and modifications</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Researcher, FC, SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for implementation and evaluation</td>
<td>9, 10</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. FC = formative committee; SC = summative committee.

Research Question 1: Historical attrition data for novice teachers. The school
district's historical attrition rates for novice teachers were available through a number of resources. The school district has a Research, Statistics, and Evaluation Department that provides school-based and district-based information. Additionally, the school district's Department of Instructional Staffing and Human Resources Development maintain all related data concerning school-based employees. The researcher contacted these resources to obtain the historical attrition rate of novice teachers in the school district.

**Research Question 2: Activities to address teacher attrition data.** The school district has a Human Resources Development that addresses the need of all instructional, noninstructional, and administrative employees. This department houses all programs and activities the school district has implemented to address the attrition rate of novice teachers. The information obtained was categorized based on implemented programs and their efficacy. The information was compared to strategies obtained from the reviews and data from other Florida school districts.

**Research Question 3: Survey of novice teachers who resigned.** The formative committee reviewed the questionnaires, surveys, and interview questions posed to the participants. The committee provided input and guidance as to modifications and revisions to question formatting in order to achieve the objective criteria.

Braverman (1998) in his review of evaluation surveys noted that surveys constitute one of the most important data-collection tools available for evaluation. Mail and electronic surveys were sent to former novice teachers of the district. The response to the surveys assisted in determining the negative factors and pitfalls former novice teachers encountered during the first 3 years that led to their departure. Fitzpatrick et al. (2004) determined that when the purpose of the survey is to measure opinions, behaviors, attitudes, or life circumstances quite specific to the program, the evaluator is likely to be
faced with developing his or her own survey instrument. That indeed was the case with the researcher who developed questionnaires, surveys, and interview questions for this study.

A brief letter, survey (see Appendix A), and informed consent form were mailed or e-mailed to novice teachers who had chosen to leave the school district. It was intended that the teachers would supply vital information to further develop the research and assist in answering Research Question 3.

On April 6, 2005, the researcher drafted the survey for novice teachers who had resigned from district schools and submitted criteria to the formative committee for review. After 2 days, the committee suggested the following two revisions to the draft: to reduce the number of questions from 10 to 5 in order to maintain the interest of the respondent and to create an open-ended comment section to permit free expression of the respondent. After a second submission, the formative committee reached a consensus on form, style, content, and question format, and a final draft of the survey was submitted to the summative committee. The summative committee checked each question for appropriateness, clarity, and consistency with the school district's format as well as with principles of questionnaire design and content. The committee validated the draft and made no suggestions for further improvement.

Research Question 4: Survey of 1st-year teachers. Interviews are often a key to qualitative data collection. Qualitative interviews are used for learning the perspectives, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences of others (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Stake (2000) remarked that the interview is a major highway leading to numerous, multifaceted realities. For the applied dissertation study, the purpose of the interviews was to obtain actual experiences from current and prior novice teachers. Participants were asked a
series of questions pertaining to their experiences and were provided opportunities to express additional information relevant to the study.

A collective group of novice teachers from the district completed the survey, and they were interviewed. They formed a focus group made up of novice teachers from three elementary schools, two middle schools, and three high schools. The participants were current novice teachers. The information obtained from the novice teachers revealed their immediate concerns and attitudes toward teacher preparation.

On February 15, 2005, the researcher submitted the Survey of 1st-Year Teachers (see Appendix B) and draft criteria to the formative committee for review. After 2 days, the committee validated the draft and checked the survey for design, content, and reliability. Next, the final draft of the criteria was submitted to the summative committee. The summative committee checked each question for appropriateness, clarity, and consistency with the school district format, as well as principles of survey design and content. The committee validated the draft and made no suggestions for improvement.

Research Question 5: Questionnaire for successful novice teachers. Fitzpatrick et al. (2004) found that focus groups have become an increasingly popular method of obtaining qualitative information from a group of individuals. Focus groups have been utilized to obtain information on how individuals react to planned or existing services, policies or procedures, or to learn more about the needs and circumstances of participants. They also noted that focus group participants may suggest new methods or describe circumstances that pose problems with the existing program.

In the applied dissertation study, the focus group consisted of successful novice teachers from three elementary schools, one middle school, and two high schools. Essentially, the information acquired for the study required three to four participants from
each school totaling approximately 12 to 16 individuals. Focus groups typically consist of 8 to 12 individuals who are relatively homogeneous (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

The participants of the study were former novice teachers. A school district training coordinator stated that the participants were perfect candidates for the study. Essentially, the information acquired from the surveys revealed novice teachers' success and assisted in providing effective practices and procedures that were presented as a part of the development plan.

On March 10, 2005, the researcher submitted the questionnaire for veteran teachers (see Appendix C) and draft criteria to the formative committee for review. After 3 days, the committee validated the draft, checked for proper questionnaire design, content, and reliability. Next, the final draft of the criteria was submitted to the summative committee. The summative committee checked each question for appropriateness, clarity, and consistency with the school district format as well as principles of questionnaire design and content. The committee validated the draft and made no suggestions for improvement.

Research Questions 6 and 7: Other district information. Five other Florida school districts had experienced similar teacher attrition problems. Telephone calls, e-mails, and mailers were sent to these districts inquiring about the programs that were implemented to decrease the attrition of their novice teachers. The school districts responded and provided contacts and resources. Additionally, the Florida Department of Education’s Bureau of School Improvement and Staff Development was contacted to obtain information on other school districts that have utilized successful novice-teacher programs.

The information obtained from the telephone interviews (see Appendix D) was
largely qualitative and analyzed accordingly. In practice, a telephone interview is typically more akin to a questionnaire administered orally than to a personal interview (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Telephone interviews that were conducted with administrators from the school districts provided some data for Research Question 5 as well as for Research Questions 6 and 7. Probing questions were asked in order to obtain the necessary retention information concerning novice teachers. The administrators provided examples and documentation of successful teacher retention programs utilized by their districts. The information obtained from these districts was analyzed, than compared in order to identify areas of consistency. The analysis revealed successful strategies that were utilized to develop an effective teacher-preparation program.

**Research Question 8: Plan and product.** Patton (2002) determined that searching for patterns and categories is part of analytic induction that underlies all qualitative analysis. This search builds levels of confidence in the evaluation conclusions. He also recommended exploring and forming impressions, identifying patterns or themes, focusing and concentrating, and making verifications and assimilations.

The initial stages of this applied dissertation's analysis process involved exploring and forming impressions based on the data gathered from the review of literature, surveys, and interviews. The researcher sought to discover consistencies in the data gathered from all sources. Furthermore, the range of patterns built or otherwise assisted in determining the contributing negative or positive factors for attrition of novice teachers in the school district, thus, demonstrating reasonable conclusions concerning the reasons that novice teachers were leaving the district. Additionally, the acquired data and consistencies were utilized to develop a program that contained strategies to reduce the attrition of novice teachers in the school district. Furthermore, the development plan
consisted of areas that addressed the immediate needs of current novice teachers, developed additional strategies to retain successful novice teachers, and presented the strategies of successful preparations programs for novice teachers that have been implemented by other school districts.

Research Questions 9 and 10: Recommendation, implementation, and evaluation. The formative committee reviewed the planned development strategies for program improvement. Furthermore, the committee observed the criteria, standards, and objectives for achieving the goals for program improvement. Modifications and revisions were recommended.

The summative committee reviewed the evaluation model provided by the researcher and formative committee. The committee provided input and guidance. Finally, the summative committee approved and validated the evaluation model for program implementation and evaluation.

First, the recommendations and development plan for change were provided in written format. The recommendations clearly defined the actual reasons why a large percentage of novice teachers had chosen to leave the school district within the first 3 years. Second, the recommendations involved statistical evidence relating to other districts and the strategies and programs employed to increase the retention rate of novice teachers. Third, the recommendations consisted of a development plan the school district could utilize to decrease the attrition of novice teachers. Finally, the development plan included a suggested timeline for implementation of a target group and guidelines to achieve program consistency.

Fitzpatrick et al. (2004) recommended the use of summative focus evaluation. The evaluator of this type of evaluation (a) judged the overall success of the program to
make decisions about program continuation or expansion and (b) identified the criteria and standards utilized to judge the success of the program. The criteria should be used to judge the success of the strategies for program improvement. One particular area might be used to measure the percentage of novice teachers who complete the 1st-year preparation program. The program evaluator would search for decreases within the overall resignations of novice teachers during the first 3 years. Consequently, the standard should indicate the level of school-based and district-level support the novice teachers received over a 3-year period. The area should be evaluated based upon selected schools implementing all levels of the recommended program. Thus, for example, if 80% of the strategies were effective, the district leaders could conclude that the program had met its expectations. Finally, the educators of the school district should utilize the recommendations in order to decrease the attrition of novice teachers.

Assumptions

Five assumptions were made for this research study. First, it was assumed that the data gathered through reviews, surveys, questionnaires, and interviews would be accurate and complete. Second, it was assumed that the formative committee possessed the expertise to validate and make suggestions on the appropriateness of restructuring a teacher-preparation program. Third, it was assumed that the summative committee would have the expertise to validate a development plan and provide systematic recommendations for the school district to reduce the number of novice teachers leaving the field. Fourth, it was anticipated that the participants and other persons involved in the study would be cooperative and supportive of the researcher’s endeavors. Last, it was intended that the research possessed the necessary information from these sources to enhance the study.
Limitations

There were two limitations to this research study. First, the development plan was tailored to decrease the number of novice teachers leaving the school district. Thus, the research might not be appropriate for newly hired teachers or experienced teachers from other school districts. Second, the data utilized from surveys, questionnaires, and interviews conducted were limited to the school district’s novice teachers. Therefore, the results of this study should not be considered a generalization for all programs for novice teachers.

Delimitations

To conduct this study in a timely and cost efficient manner, the data collected were limited to the information from 15 to 18 novice teachers from three elementary schools, two middle schools, and three high schools. Participants were limited to novice teachers in South Florida who volunteered for this study.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

School systems with high teacher turnover typically fill many vacant positions with uncertified or new teachers, making it harder to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act that has mandated that all teachers be highly qualified by June 2006 (Useem & Neild, 2005). Furthermore, efforts for school improvement require a reasonable degree of staff stability; it is almost impossible to create successful change with transient or inexperienced staff. Novice teachers rarely make smooth transitions into teaching because often they are hired at the last moment, left isolated in their classroom, and are provided with minimal assistance. Consequently, attrition rates among new teachers often are five times higher than among experienced teachers (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997).

The purpose of this applied dissertation was to evaluate the attrition rates for novice teachers in the school district and develop strategies for improvement. The researcher primarily addressed the controlling factors that contribute to novice teachers’ success or lack of success in the school district during their initial years in the profession, but also focused on strategies to improve the teachers’ induction program and to assist novice teachers in making effective transitions into a lasting career in the district. Developmental and evaluation methodologies were utilized to address the 10 research questions in this study.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, What are the school district’s historical attrition rates for novice teachers? The researcher found that school district staff does not maintain and analyze statistical data on historical teacher attrition rates. On November 17, 2004,
the researcher met with the assistant director and a team of staff of Department of Instructional Staffing for the school district. Initially, the researcher met with various team members who provided an overview of the screening and hiring process designed for teacher candidates. Some specific screening areas were the application procedures, acceptable references, required documentation, and criminal background check. The hiring process involved procedures that assist qualified candidates in their job search.

After meeting with the team, the researcher met with the assistant director of the department of instructional staffing. The two discussed the attrition rates of teachers and the possible reasons for the retention problem. The researcher shared his personal concerns as they pertained to the attrition of novice teachers. One area discussed was the number of novice teachers resigning annually. The assistant director shared her concerns pertaining to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. A dialogue ensued on the negative implications of the school district not securing enough qualified teachers and about the possibilities of sacrificing the level of education for children. The two examined the school district’s statistics concerning teacher hiring and resignation for the past 8 years. After the examination, the assistant director shared that the rate of teacher retention had drawn the attention of the school district’s administrators and other independent researchers and that the school district had plans to research and analyze the factors contributing to the attrition of novice teachers. However, specific dates and documentation relating to this possible exploration were not provided.

After the conference, the assistant director provided the researcher with a collection of data concerning rates of attrition of newly hired and novice teachers for the 1999-2000 through 2003-2004 school years (see Table 2). The historical rates of attrition were reported as novice-teacher resignations and as retired teacher resignations.
Table 2

*Comparison of Historical Rates of Teacher Attrition by Number and Percentage of Resignations*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice teachers</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired teachers</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>518</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As indicated in Table 2, the novice teachers' resignation percentage showed a steady increase from 1999-2000 through 2001-2002 and then began to decline during the
2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years. The data revealed that, during the 1999-2000 school year, 734 teachers chose to resign or retire from the school district. However, during that same year, 26% of the novice teachers left for miscellaneous reasons. During the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years, the number of novice teachers resigning in comparison to retired teachers revealed a slight increase as their percentage that rose from 26% to approximately 32%. Conversely, during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years the novice teachers’ and retired teachers' resignations increased significantly, growing from 757 in 2001-2002 to 955 by 2003-2004. However, the novice teachers’ resignation percentage dropped from 32% in 2002-2003 to 26% in 2003-2004.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, What activities have the school district conducted to address the novice-teacher attrition? Annually, the school district loses a percentage of their teaching staff due to teacher retirement and teacher turnover. In fact, some teacher attrition is normal for educational institutions chiefly because faculty often transition to other school districts or careers. However, it became a problem when a large number of newly hired novice teachers chose not to return. Thus, the school district staff developed a teacher-preparation program to address the apparent loss of important instructional employees.

History of school district induction programs. In the 1980s, the school district chose not to develop a formal induction program to prepare and support novice teachers. In fact, the school district’s only requirement for new teachers was a passing score on the state's certification examination. Ultimately, the state education department mandated that all school districts had to develop induction programs to assist new teachers during or the initial year. As a result, in 1991, the school district developed and implemented a
program for novice teachers. The induction program consisted of assigning each novice teacher a peer teacher and a professional educator to assist in career transition. New teachers were held accountable for mastering the state’s six areas of measurement and performance and for practicing effective classroom professionalism. Eventually, the program was revised and renamed the NESS.

In 1998, the staff of the school district’s Human Resources Development designed the NESS as part of a continuum of instructional support that progresses from preservice to teacher leadership. In addition, individualized coaching and learning community activities were designed to center on the Florida's Domains of Effective Teaching; this has proved to be an effective program. Overall, the learning communities have provided opportunities for participants to convene in order to explore areas of common concerns such as personal growth and the examination of students’ work. Additionally, learning communities have operated along norms that include regularly scheduled meetings with agendas and facilitators.

The NESS program consists of four levels of support based on the new educators’ educational background and prior teaching experience. Level 1 is for teachers who hold a college degree and who have had no previous teaching experience, and Level 2 is for teachers from a college of education with less than 2 years of full-time successful teaching experience. Level 3 is for teachers with the required degree in education and more than 2 years of successful, full-time teaching, and Level 4 is for teachers who have a degree in education and hold positions as department chairs.

The school district implemented its current induction program for novice teachers in 1998. However, the teacher induction consists of two training development and support programs: the New Teacher Academy and the NESS. According to the Florida
Department of Education (2003), the New Teacher Academy is mandatory for teachers who have pursued alternative certifications and who have not graduated from a school of education. For all others, this program is optional but highly recommended and supported. Independent research has demonstrated improvement among participants. The academy is an intensive, interactive course of study dedicated to assisting novice teachers in making the initial classroom experience positive and rewarding. The New Teacher Academy’s components include classroom management, instructional delivery, curriculum, and professionalism. The academy's components consist of (a) a 5-day (8 hours per day) intensive training sessions, and (b) a 2-day (2 hours per day) follow-up sessions.

*Alternative Certification for Educators.* This is the target school district’s 3-year, state-approved program designed to assist teachers with temporary certification to become permanently certified and meet the state requirements for subject areas. In August 2000, Alternative Certification for Educators was initiated as a pilot program and as part of the district’s continuum of instructional support that spans from preservice through teacher leadership. The staff of the school district’s Human Resources Development implemented the Alternative Certification for Educators program as teacher preparation that eliminated the rigid certification requirements.

Patterned after the Florida Professional Education Competencies, the Alternative Certification for Educators program includes online training to ensure that experienced on-site NESS instructional coaches and online mentors approach their jobs as supportive colleagues with appropriate knowledge and skills. The following topics are included in the training program for instructional coaches:

1. Role of the novice teacher mentor.
2. Classroom observations and data collection.

3. Characteristics of the adult learner.

4. Collegial coaching.

5. Overview of Florida Professional Education Competencies.

6. Practical applications of technology for online tutors.

The target school district’s Department of Instructional Staffing determines who meets the requirement for participation in the Alternative Certification for Educators program. The Alternative Certification for Educators is available to full-time teachers with bachelor degrees who have qualified for a Florida temporary certificate, but who lack the professional preparation course needed for the 5-year Florida Professional Certification. Furthermore, this program offers eligible teachers the option to complete professional certification requirements through an online Web-based approach, rather than the traditional method of prospective teachers attending a college or university and taking specific courses to meet the requirements.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked, What reasons do novice teachers give for a decision to leave the school district? On April 15, 2005, the researcher requested from the target school district’s Research, Statistics, and Evaluation Department and Department of Instructional Staffing a list of novice teachers who decided to resign. After a few weeks and upon the advice of the two departments, the researcher consulted specific schools in the district in order to obtain the needed information. After several inquiries of principals at 12 schools, the researcher received the names and addresses of 21 former novice teachers. On May 2, 2004, 21 questionnaires (see Appendix A) were e-mailed or mailed to former novice teachers with an anticipated immediate response. Fortunately,
after 3 weeks, the researcher began to receive completed questionnaires; however, the researcher only received 11 out of 21 or 52%. This obviously meant that 10, or 48%, of the questionnaires were either lost or unanswered. Of the 11 questionnaires returned, only 2 respondents, or 18%, reported that they would return to the school district, if asked to return.

Question 1 of the survey for novice teachers who had resigned asked the respondents why they decided to leave the school district. Of the 11 respondents, 2 respondents, or 18%, reported that they were asked to resign due to ineffective teaching methods and poor classroom management. Additionally, 9 respondents, or 82%, said that they decided to leave for a number of other reasons.

Of the 9 respondents, 1 attributed the major reason for leaving to low salary and explained that, after 4 months of teaching, it became clear that a teacher's salary did not correspond to the teacher's level of commitment. Thus, many of these teachers resigned and chose noneducational careers where they perceived that the pay was commensurate with the job. Two respondents gave similar answers; both agreed that their schools’ overall conditions were deplorable and unbearable. One respondent reported that, on numerous occasions, automobiles were vandalized, and, on one occasion, classrooms were vandalized during a teacher's workday. After several requests for a school transfer were declined, one teacher voluntarily resigned. The other respondent shared that the school lacked updated teaching materials and a former teacher stressed the same. All believed that this lack of educational material somehow had a negative effect on the teachers’ ability to deliver effective lesson to students. Additionally, the teachers thought that the overall facilities were not appropriately maintained, particularly the restrooms that were consistently plagued with poor plumbing conditions.

Considering the responses of the final 6 of the 11 respondents, the researcher
found that 4 reported that the administration was ineffective in meeting their career path needs. Two respondents shared similar responses concerning the administrators’ open door policy. They perceived that this policy was highly questionable or ineffective. Most respondents stated that occasionally the administration did not offer appropriate solutions to deeply concerned school-wide issues. One of these 2 respondents stated that the school’s administrator shared that he or she might wish to seek another career path after the school year ended. The other respondent stated that the administrators generally had no time to discuss teachers' concerns or issues. On numerous occasions, teachers were referred to a grade-level supervisor (team leader) or to other colleagues who essentially served mentors.

The other 2 of the 4 respondents shared that they were not excited about the evaluation process of the school administrators, the team leader, and the NESS coach. One of these 2 respondents stated that the NESS coach did not empower them but rudely and constantly made derogatory remarks about their appearance and their overall ability to connect with students. After meeting with the administrators and coach, the respondent shared that the meeting clearly appeared to benefit the coach as the teachers’ concerns were dismissed, but the coach’s concerns were addressed.

The last two respondents both agreed that the lack of collegial support was the clear reason they decided to resign. One reported that other teachers at the school apparently disliked them. It was shared that on numerous occasions they were given cold and unsympathetic treatment and were shut out of school gatherings. The other respondent reported that he constantly encountered verbal disagreements with fellow teachers. The respondent shared that the collegial support was poor and that, in a resignation letter to the school and district, he stated that the resignation would benefit all parties.
Wong and Asquith (2002) indicated that mentoring alone does not provide any positive feedback on teacher effectiveness or classroom longevity. Many new teachers complained that assigned coaches did not observe them or review lesson plans. In addition, Wong and Asquith shared that administrators take a wild guess that the new teacher and mentor will bond and form an effective working relationship. Other respondents shared that during the annual evaluation by the administration, it appeared that the evaluator was often critical and unclear. No solutions were offered for teaching deficiencies even though critical errors were found.

Question 2 asked novice teachers who had resigned whether the school district’s school-based representatives offered the necessary training and support to teachers during the periods of employment. Six of the respondents, or 55%, referred the researcher to Question 1 concerning the overall support received during their stay. However, the respondents came to a consensus when it pertained to the training received during their stay. Two of the 6 respondents shared that they thought the training was above average. They believed that the overall training provided the appropriate strategies that enabled them to deliver effective daily lessons. One respondent stated that the training was very organized. It was the best that they had received since attending the university.

Four of the 6 respondents had mixed responses concerning the training they had received. Two of the 4 respondents perceived that the training offered applicable information that was effective in instructing students; however, the training did not meet the needs of all students. The other two of the 4 respondents added that the training was applicable; however, the material did not meet the specific needs of the students in the lower percentile academic level. The training was intended to be cross curricular; in reality, it focused on only one area of the curriculum.

The last 5 respondents, or 45%, considered their overall support and training as
below average or unacceptable. Two of the 5 respondents agreed that the school level support and training was horrible. Both agreed that the administrative and collegial support were nonexistent throughout the school year. One of the two respondents reported that he or she felt isolated and frustrated. Additionally, when the teacher sought support, it appeared that no one had the necessary time to conference. Consequently, the respondent had the same belief concerning training. Each of the two respondents shared that the training offered was either nonrelevant or unrelated to the current classroom level curriculum. The other 3 of the 5 respondents rated their support and training as their most horrible teaching experience. One of the 3 respondents refrained from comment because of a possible negative outcome.

Question 3 asked the participants for descriptions of the types of training received. In response, 28% of the respondents shared that they received training that chiefly related to the curriculum needs of their grade-level students, 36% of the respondents shared that a majority of their training pertained to the Florida Performance Measurement Systems, and 36% of the respondents shared that they received training that was based on theory and methodology.

Question 4 asked the respondents whether their training and support involved pleasant or unpleasant experiences. Each respondent referred the researcher to Questions 1 and 2. A majority of the respondents provided the following ratings for training and support experiences: above average = 19%; average = 36%; and below average = 45%.

In Question 5, the respondents were asked to suggest what, if any, improvements the school district should make to its practices in the area of the development of novice teachers. Of the 11 respondents, 4 shared that the development of novice teachers should seek to assist the novice teacher. A majority of these respondents asserted that individual teacher development was important as it pertained to their particular needs. The teachers
shared that they wanted training or support that was designed and based on their particular developmental needs. Additionally, 4 respondents believed that training was imperative as it pertained to development; however, these respondents identified school-level support as the most important factor. The consensus was that the support that they received provided them with the assurance that their daily performance was effective. Most of the respondents believed that the overall support enabled them to accept the daily challenges associated with teaching.

Two of the 11 respondents suggested that the school district staff should seek to revamp the entire teacher development program and that change was imperative to meeting the needs of novice teachers. The respondents stressed that the teacher development program should offer immediate strategies that should meet the daily and weekly instructional needs of novice teachers, strategies such as classroom management, subject-area delivery, parent interactions, and paperwork detail. Furthermore, most novice teachers would benefit from networking with other novice teachers at similar schools.

One respondent indicated that the school district should change the entire teacher-preparation program but believed that the district staff was content with the program. In addition, it was noted that the school district’s teacher-induction administrators should create a program that seeks to develop novice teachers and provide district-level support to assist schools.

To summarize, data were provided from the responses to questions posed to the respondents. Each question was categorized based on the feedback.

In Question 1, a majority of the respondents, or 36%, agreed that the lack of administrative support was their reason for resigning. Additionally, two group responses, or 18%, agreed that work conditions and collegial support caused them to resign.
However, one group, or 18%, shared that they would consider returning if provided the opportunity, whereas another 10% agreed that a low salary was the reason that they chose to resign from the school district.

In Question 2, 19% of the participants believed that their training was above average and, therefore, found the experience beneficial. Next, 36% of the respondents asserted that training and support were average and believed adjustments were needed that would be teacher centered, and 45% of respondents reported that their experience was not acceptable and below average.

In Question 3, the smallest group, 27% of respondents, believed that the curriculum-level training was important. The next group, or 36%, shared that they received Florida Performance Measurement System training. The last group, or 37%, identified that theory and methodology were the major areas of the training that they received.

In Question 4, 19% rated their experience as pleasant or above average. Another 36% rated their experience as pleasant or average, and 45% rated their experience as unpleasant or below average.

In Question 5, one group, or 36%, believed that the developers of the teacher development program should seek to meet the individual needs of novice teachers. Another 36% of respondents agreed that the development program for novice teachers should have training as a component; however, it should focus on teacher support. Another group, or 19%, stressed that the school district developers needed to change the entire development program. In addition, 9% believed that the development program needed revisions but that the district administrators might not approve the change.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question asked, What are the concerns and attitudes of
1st-year teachers within the school district? On March 5, 2005, the researcher e-mailed
14 elementary, middle, and high school principals requesting an opportunity to conduct
research and collect quantitative data from their novice teachers and NESS graduates.
Three weeks later, 10 principals, or 71%, approved the proposed research and referred the
researcher to the NESS site coordinator to schedule the visitations. The researcher then
e-mailed the NESS coordinators to arrange the site visits and provided a brief description
of the proposed research. After reviewing the scheduled NESS meetings of four
elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools, the researcher attended
10 meetings from April 05, 2005 through May 26, 2005.

During NESS meetings, the researcher discussed the reasons and importance of
the research and addressed the questions and concerns of novice teachers and NESS
graduates. The researcher noted that the attrition rate of novice teachers has consistently
been an area of concern. Furthermore, the researcher shared that the study was predicated
on gathering data from experts and teachers throughout the school district on attrition of
novice teachers. The researcher shared that the opinions, perceptions, and concerns of the
NESS participants were important for the overall improvement of the induction program.
He expressed that the data collected from past and present novice teachers were essential
to the continuance of the research. Then, the researcher indicated that the study would be
written to assist the school district leaders to create a more effective induction program
for novice teachers. Finally, the researcher discussed the protection of privacy, presented
the informed consent forms for signatures, allowed the novice teachers to complete the
survey (see Appendix B) and interviewed the NESS graduates.

Of the schools attended, the researcher made presentations to 47 novice teachers,
of whom 34, or 72%, completed informed consent forms and questionnaires. For the 28%
who were not interested in completing the survey, the most common reason was concern about possible negative feedback from their immediate supervisors or their school’s administrators. Some were concerned that administrators would acquire the data and limit their career progress. The other reasons were a lack of time because of the demands of incomplete grading of student assignments, a lack of interest in improving the teacher development program, and a prior off-site commitment (see Table 3).

Table 3

Responses to Survey for 1st-Year Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Positive training and support</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Feedback teaching strategies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Helpful, knowledgeable mentor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. School administration helpful and supportive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Colleagues helpful and supportive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Rewarding teaching experience</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = undecided; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree.
The data from the responses of the 34 first-year teachers were categorized. Questions 1 and 2 were similar in the format and survey responses, so the responses to these questions were combined. Of the 34 respondents, 18% indicated that the training and support received at their site was excellent. A few of these respondents agreed that the training was structured to their daily instructional goals. All respondents from this group expressed that the school support was the driving force behind their desire to remain a teacher.

Of the 34 respondents, 15% rated the training and support offered at their schools as good or average. Most respondents clearly stated that the training generally assisted them with the daily instructional needs of students; however, it was devoid of strategies for parent conferences and had few student management strategies. This group of respondents agreed that the school-level support was based upon the specific grade-level taught. Most stated that some grade levels were group oriented, whereas others had less involvement.

Of the 34 respondents, 35% revealed that the training and support were unacceptable or intolerable. The most common reason teachers gave for these inadequacies were complicated or outdated instructional materials for the classroom. Furthermore, they perceived that the planned gatherings lacked an encouraging environment. Most respondents shared that administrators had not fully assisted them during the school year.

An additional 26% of the 34 respondents strongly disagreed with the effectiveness of the training and support provided at their school site. The most common reason given was inconsistency in the scheduling of school-based meetings for novice teachers. The respondents stressed that other school-wide activities superseded the scheduled novice-
teacher meetings. The remainder shared that they were only required to attend two
meetings during the school year. This group strongly disagreed that support was offered
at their schools. In fact, a majority asserted that support was nonexistent. The remainder
added that support was provided for them if emergent situations arose. Finally, 6% of the
34 respondents were undecided on the level of training and support provided at their
schools.

In response to Question 3, 32% of the 34 respondents strongly agreed that the
coaches assigned to them were helpful and knowledgeable about current teaching trends
and best practices. Furthermore, 35% of the respondents agreed that the coaches were
helpful and knowledgeable of current teaching trends and best practices. Both groups
shared similar responses pertaining to the coach assigned during the 1st year of their
teaching experience. A collaborative statement showed that the coaches’ positive
attitudes and supportive efforts had enabled these teachers to complete the school year;
consequently, the coaches became the main source of information for complicated tasks
that came up during the school year. The remainder of the respondents identified the
coaches as the only school representatives who provided positive and constructive
criticism that enabled them to succeed.

Of the 34 respondents, 9% disagreed concerning the overall efforts of the coaches.
These respondents shared that the coaches were neither helpful nor knowledgeable about
teaching trends or best practices. A few respondents noted that the coaches were not
aware of the current expectations established for novice teachers, and the coaches rarely
shared any applicable instructional strategies.

Furthermore, 3% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the effectiveness of
the coaches assigned to them. One respondent noted that the coach only met with 1st-year
teachers four times during the school year. The respondents also shared that other teachers at their school sites were more helpful and knowledgeable of instructional strategies than the coaches. Only 21% of the respondents were undecided in their responses concerning the coaches’ helpfulness or knowledge of teaching trends and best practices.

In response to Question 4, of the 34 respondents, 22% strongly agreed that the administrators were helpful and supportive during the 1st year. An additional 18% agreed that the administration was available for staff development and maintained an open-door policy. A majority of the respondents from these groups stressed that the administrators regularly provided positive feedback and strategies for educating their students. The remainder expressed that the administrators always listened to their input and assigned leadership roles within the school to the novice teachers.

Of the 34 respondents, 37% disagreed with the efforts of the schools’ administrators. A majority reported that the administrators did not provide the necessary support or assistance during the school year. Furthermore, it was shared that the administrators were often too busy and did not attempt to arrange time with novice teachers to discuss concerns. One respondent noted that the administrator shared data about his teaching performance and provided feedback through a written report and not through human contact where a dialogue might have made a difference.

Finally, 23% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the overall support and assistance of their schools’ administrators. This group stressed that on numerous occasions the administrator expressed displeasure concerning given teaching abilities and rarely spoke to them unless it pertained to their teaching duties. Last, the administration often listened to the novice-teacher input on possible teaching strategies but never
implemented any of the best practices.

In response to Question 5, 15% of the respondents strongly agreed with the assistance and support provided by their colleagues. Another 30% agreed with the efforts of their teaching colleagues chiefly because of the positive reception that the respondents received from their colleagues when they were hired. Some respondents identified various colleagues and shared that these teachers had made their transition into teaching a pleasurable experience.

Of the respondents, 15% questioned their colleagues’ abilities to offer them assistance or support. Additionally, 34% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the support and assistance provided by their colleagues. The majority of the respondents revealed that their colleagues rarely provided professional assistance or support. Some noted that most colleagues consistently expressed their negative views of the school and its administrators. Several shared that the assumptions of a positive work environment was merely a dream. Their colleagues generally discussed matters that pertained to issues outside of the school or about another colleague. The remainder of the respondents stressed that they found comfort in isolation, with minimal colleague interactions because this would enable them to remain professionally focused and dedicated to the teaching profession. Of the 34 respondents, 6% were undecided in their responses concerning the support or assistance provided by colleagues.

In response to Question 6, 15% of the 34 respondents strongly agreed that teaching in the school district had been a rewarding experience. Furthermore, 21% agreed that their teaching experience with the school district had been rewarding. A majority reported that the school district had provided a solid foundation for teaching as a career. Some of the respondents identified the school district as the best school district in Florida.
and that their school site offered excellent learning materials, effective professional
development programs, and supportive working environments.

However, 38% of the respondents disagreed that the staff of the school district
attempted to provide a rewarding teaching experience. Of the respondents, 11% strongly
disagreed with the efforts of the staff of the school district to provide novice teachers
with rewarding experiences. Commonly reported was a disgruntlement that caused the
novice teachers to seek another career or another school district. Some of the respondents
clearly stated that the teaching experience at their school site was the motivating factor
behind the decision to pursue another career. Finally, 15% of the 34 respondents were
undecided on the survey.

Research Question 5

The fifth research question asked, What factors do teachers with at least 5 years
experience cite as reasons for their success? On March 24, 2005, the researcher received
the approvals from 10, or 71%, of the 14 principals to conduct quantitative research on
NESS participants. As previously noted, the researcher attended 10 meetings and
presented the request for volunteers for quantitative research from April 5, 2005, through
May 26, 2005. Fortunately, the NESS coordinators invited the experienced teachers to the
meeting on the scheduled day. The researcher made a presentation to 35 teachers, each
with at least 5 years of experience, interviewed 77% of the teachers, and surveyed 23% of
the teachers.

The data in Table 4 reflected the responses to Question 1 of the 27 teachers with
at least 5 years of experience. Their positive and negative responses were based on three
categories of support: coaches or administrators, colleagues, and training. Of the 27
respondents, 55% asserted that the training and support received during the initial year was a positive experience, whereas 45% of the respondents stressed that the support received from their coaches or administrators was positive.

Table 4

*Positive and Negative Perceptions of the Training and Support Received in the Initial Teaching Year (N = 27)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of coach/administrators</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of colleagues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESS training</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of coach/administrators</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of colleagues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESS training</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of the respondents with at least 5 years of experience agreed that the assigned coaches were helpful and knowledgeable and were excellent mentors, positive supports, and very knowledgeable concerning all aspects of teaching in their school. By comparison, the group identified the administrators as friendly, supportive, and experienced in meeting the developmental needs of novice teachers.

The analysis indicated that 13% of the 15 positive respondents reported that their colleagues were the most helpful and supportive group during the initial year. Several
respondents described the assistance and support as great. Most importantly, this group of respondents suggested that the professional relationships established with colleagues have been quite beneficial to their success.

Next, 6 participants, or 40% of the positive respondents who had at least 5 years of experience, agreed that the NESS training was very effective during the initial year. Specifically, the respondents shared that the instructional strategies, best practices, and informative monthly meetings were beneficial to their overall success. Most respondents stressed that the monthly meetings, portfolios, guest speakers, and learning activities were the factors that enabled them to remain focused during the initial year.

In contrast, 12 participants, or 45% of the 27 respondents provided negative responses to training and support received during the initial year. Of these respondents, 6 participants, or 50% of the 12 negative respondents, reported that the training and support provided by the coaches or administrators involved a negative experience. A majority of the respondents stressed that the school support system was poor and frustrating. A few respondents shared that the assigned coaches were quite discouraging and seemed more focused on the monetary values of the NESS program.

Concerning colleagues, 1 participant, or 8% of the negative respondents, reported that colleagues were negative and unprofessional. Specifically, several suggested that they were taught the fine art of gossiping instead of the fine art of teaching, that this art of discussion became the daily routine at their site, and that no professional development or best practices were discussed during the faculty gatherings. Finally, 5 participants, or 42% of the 12 negative respondents, described the NESS training as a negative experience during the initial year. Most agreed that the training received was not specifically geared for their level or instructional need. Some respondents clearly stated
that the NESS training and support were nonproductive.

Of the 27 respondents to Question 2 who had at least 5 years of experience, 18 participants, or 67%, reported that the training received did not prepare them for a teaching career in the school district. A majority of the 18 respondents stressed that the training lacked the necessary fundamentals for the daily teaching demands, whereas a minority of the 18 respondents shared that the training received was inferior compared to the level of training provided at the university. In contrast, 9 respondents, or 33%, shared that they received enough training to prepare them for teaching career in the school district. Most respondents clearly stated that the training provided valuable and informative strategies for their career development. Several respondents agreed that the NESS training was a positive and excellent experience.

Of the 27 respondents to Question 3, four of the participants, or 14%, shared that the coaches offered the most assistance during the initial year. In like manner, 8 participants, or 30%, mentioned that coaches, administrators, and colleagues provided an equal amount of assistance during the initial year. Most respondents described the assistance received as supportive and beneficial to their achieving career success. Finally, 15 participants, or 56%, responded that colleagues provided them with the most assistance. Several respondents agreed that their colleagues effectively modeled the expectations and behaviors of teaching professionals.

In Question 4 of the questionnaire for teachers with at least 5 years of experience (see Appendix A), the respondents agreed on three areas of the new educator program that required improvement. An overwhelming number of the respondents suggested that a new educator program needed components that provide assistance in technology training, lesson plan writing, and state requirements. Second, most respondents agreed that it was
important for new teachers to observe experienced teachers within their grade level or subject area. Third, the participants suggested that new teachers needed ample planning and instructional time with coaches. The respondents added that the time shared should prepare the new educators by providing feedback, solutions for change, and one-on-one developmental encouragement.

Of the 27 respondents, 4 participants, or 15%, reported an interest in career advancement by qualitatively assisting the novice teacher. Most of the experienced teachers were clinical educators, certified to coach 1st-year teachers. Six respondents, or 22%, shared that no assistance had been provided since the initial year. In contrast, 9 respondents, or 33%, revealed that the NESS coach assigned during the initial year provided assistance upon request. Similarly, 8 respondents, or 30%, asserted that their colleagues had consistently provided the necessary assistance. Both groups of respondents equally agreed that the school-based support received since the initial year had provided them with a strong foundation for their overall success.

Question 6 asked for one factor that could be attributed to the teachers’ careers in the school district. Of the 27 respondents, 67% reported that the one factor that attributed to their teaching career was the desire to teach. All respondents in this category shared that teaching students or simply reaching individuals were also the major factors. In like manner, 33% stressed that the collegial support was the contributing factor to their teaching career. One respondent expressed that the camaraderie and support provided colleagues enabled her to become teacher of the year.

Research Question 6

The sixth research question asked, What have other Florida school districts implemented to address teacher retention problem? The selection of the five Florida
school districts was primarily based on the similarities in faculty size and location throughout Florida. The school districts had restructured their induction programs in order to retain a larger percentage of the novice teachers annually. On March 26, 2005, the researcher e-mailed five school district administrators within the state. The purpose of the e-mails was to schedule a telephone interview and obtain a copy of each school district's induction program. Within weeks, the researcher received e-mails stating that the interviewing of district administrators would not be permissible. However, the district administrators recommended the utilization of summarized descriptions of the induction programs for new teachers located on their Web sites for the research. The findings concerning the induction programs for the five districts included the goal, the objective or purpose, and the components of the program.

School District 1, as of February 2004 and for the 2 years thereafter, has maintained 7% attrition of novice teachers. Prior to this, the school district had an average teacher attrition of 15% annually.

The goals of School District 1’s Teacher Induction Program is to provide for the development, demonstration, and documentation of the professional education competencies while providing a technical and psychological support system for all 1st-year teachers. Most significantly, the program objectives require that the staff of the office of instructional employment identify 1st-year teachers employed by School District 1, monitor and maintain records of the 1st-year teachers’ progress in the induction program, provide in-service opportunities for 1st-year teachers, mentor these teachers, and foster administrative contacts. Additionally, the leaders of School District 1 must support the efforts of 1st-year teachers to demonstrate the Florida Professional Education Competencies and notify the Florida Department of Education of satisfactory completion.
of the professional education competencies.

Components of the induction program include providing an orientation program for 1st-year teachers and developing a diagnostic summative and professional development plan. The orientation program is completed within the first 45 days of employment. In addition, coaches and administrators provide feedback for 1st-year teachers to improve their areas of concern, interest or need with the assistance of the mentor teacher. This feedback ensures that 1st-year teachers demonstrate mastery of the Florida Professional Education Competencies and provides documentation of the competencies as needed by the mentor teacher or administrator.

School District 2, as of February 2004, had an attrition rate of 8% for novice teachers. Prior to this, the school district had an average teacher attrition rate of 18% annually. The school district developed and implemented its current induction program and has achieved positive results.

The goal of the Preparing New Educators program is to provide collegial coaching designed to help new educators in School District 2. The primary purpose of the program is to ensure that teachers have the opportunity and support necessary to develop into highly effective educators. The criteria and benchmarks used in this program come from the heavily researched Florida Performance Measurement System and the Florida Professional Education Competencies for teachers of the 21st Century.

The program has several objectives. Participants will (a) demonstrate effective teaching practices as determined by the 121 indicators of the Florida Performance Measurement System; (b) demonstrate evidence of the following 12 Florida Professional Education Competencies: assessment, communication, continuous improvement, critical thinking, diversity, ethics, human development and learning, knowledge of subject
matter, learning environments, planning, role of the teacher, and technology; and (c) will complete all training required by state statute and expected by the district.

Components of the induction program involve assigning participants to a support team and peer teacher and creating a program length (that could be from 1 year to 3 years) to meet the teaching proficiency of participants. Next, trained auditors from the district office observe and audit participants’ portfolios for program compliance. If a participant accomplishes a satisfactory rating on portfolios, he or she has completed the program successfully.

School District 3, as of February 2004, had an attrition rate of 8% for novice teachers. The attrition rate was not available for prior school years.

Overall, the purpose of the Teacher Induction Program is to increase student learning by providing a set of supervised support services for teachers in the 1st year of teaching in Florida, assist new teachers in continuance of their professional development, and verify satisfactory performance for the professional certificate. The components of the program involve time management, a minimum of 180 days with pre- and postplanning, orientation (training), and school orientation. New educators must demonstrate mastery in the Florida Professional Education Competencies and classroom observations. The following instruments are used: (a) the Florida Measurement Performance System is administered within 45 days of employment, as an initial screening instrument; (b) four Formative Classroom Instruments; and (c) the Florida Measurement Performance System is administered as a final summative measure of the training. Finally, new educators must complete a Professional Records Organizer, achieve a passing score on the state certification examinations, and receive satisfactory signatures from support team members.
School District 4, as of February 2004, had an attrition rate of 10% for novice teachers. Attrition rates were not available for prior school years. The goal of this program is to prepare new teachers for the profession and teachers new to School District 4, through a structured induction program that introduces them to the culture, expectations, and vision of School District 4.

The program participants attend either Great Novices or School District 4 Teacher Induction. During a unit involving *The First Days of School* (Wong & Wong, 2001), teachers participate in school orientation activities, and work on completing the Florida Professional Educational Competencies. Next, new educators develop a professional relationship with a mentor that allows for reflection, observation, and modeling of effective teaching behaviors. New educators focus on the 12 Florida Professional Education Competencies for teachers of the 21st Century and demonstrate job performance knowledge of the following topics: school, department, and grade-level curriculum; school improvement plan; and community served by the school. They are also familiarized with the School District 4 Framework for Higher Achievement, initiatives determined by the work location supervisor, and procedures and expectations of the Instructional Personnel Assessment System. In addition, they complete 60 hours of basic training in English for speakers of other languages. Finally, new educators attend other training offered by the instructional coaches and the district.

School District 5, as of February 2004, had an attrition rate of 8% for novice teachers. Prior to this attrition rate, the district averaged 18% to 21% from 1999 through 2003 school years. The implementation of the restructured teacher preparation caused a decrease in the district’s attrition rate and assisted new teachers during their initial years of teaching.
The goal of the Educator Support Program, School District 5’s formal program of support for newly hired educators, was to improve the initial teaching experience of newly hired educators, thereby having a positive impact on student learning. This was accomplished by supporting the new educators in the development of instructional and other professional practices including the criteria of the Florida Professional Education Competencies. Systems of support include a support team, staff development opportunities, observations that include pre- and postconferences, and written and oral feedback.

As educators develop, they move through the following three levels of competencies: preprofessional, professional, and accomplished. The components of the program involve portfolio activities. The Educator Support Program contact at each school receives a portfolio for each new educator who is teaching on a temporary certificate. The new educator’s portfolio contains the approved components. As activities are completed and submitted, they are placed in the portfolio and the appropriate area of the list is dated, showing completed sections. New educators keep copies of documents in their portfolio. The length of the program is determined by a participant’s ability to complete a portfolio within 33 weeks. Completion of the Educator Support Program does not guarantee continued employment in the School District 5.

Research Question 7

The seventh research question asked, What are the characteristics of successful teacher retention programs? Breaux and Wong (2002) reported that the following school districts have demonstrated the use of effective teacher retention programs:

1. Newport-Mesa School District had reported annual retention rate for novice teachers of 85%. However, after the school district implemented a 2-year induction
program, the retention rate for novice teachers increased to 97%.

2. Lafourche Parish Schools had an annual novice-teacher attrition of 51%. Immediately after introducing, an induction program for new teachers, the school’s attrition rate decreased to 39% and then by another 12%. The Lafourche Parish Schools currently have a 97% teacher retention rate and resulting in the Louisiana School District adopting this teacher-induction program for all schools.

3. Islip Public Schools had experienced a 63% retention rate of novice teachers. After implementing a formal 3-year induction program, the retention rate of the district’s novice teachers rose to 96%.

4. Flowing Wells School District had experienced an attrition rate of 38% for novice teachers. Because of the induction program, the school district decreased its attrition rate to 3%. The Flowing Wells induction program is so well known and replicated that the staff hold an annual workshop to explain their structure to other interested school districts from around the country.

The components of successful teacher retention programs consist of a systematic program that trains and supports novice teachers for more than 1 year. According to Breaux and Wong (2002), this kind of program must be structured to include 3 years of training and development made up of the following components:

1. Novice-Teacher Orientation (8 days) includes team building and instruction, classroom instructional practice, school culture and community, professional and personal needs, classroom management and procedures, classroom discipline, daily classroom procedures, and training wrap-up and luncheon.

2. Coach and Administrator Training (3 days) includes team building and commitment, teacher support, and teacher observations.
3. First-Year Induction includes teacher group meetings, informal observations, demonstration classrooms, district-level training, and support systems (coach and administrator).

4. Second-Year Training includes teacher group meetings, informal observations, demonstration classrooms, district-level training, support systems, and initial work on a portfolio.

5. Third-Year Training includes teacher group meetings, informal observations, demonstration classrooms, support systems, completion of a portfolio, and completion of the induction training.

*Research Question 8*

The eighth research question asked, What programs or activities should be recommended to the school district to address its novice-teacher retention program? The beginning years of teaching should be structured like a medical school residency, with novice teachers regularly communicating with veteran teachers on instructional practices and classroom management (see Appendix E) as well as receiving constructive feedback and formal evaluations on their performance (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003). Likewise, Mutchler (2000) suggested that good induction programs improve teacher retention and also influence teaching practices, increase teacher satisfaction, and promote strong professional development and collegial relationships. Weiss (1999) demonstrated that well-designed induction programs reduce rates of teacher turnover and increase teacher effectiveness early in a career. Such programs range from help with policies, procedures, and guidance on classroom management, to feedback on instructional strategies and other aspects of professional practice that assist new teachers.
The following recommendations are designed to address the target school district’s novice-teacher retention problem:

1. District and school administrators should foster an atmosphere of support and teamwork so that novice teachers strive to learn and continue to grow as professionals and team members. Some initiatives to achieve the atmosphere will require district-level administrators to create various opportunities throughout the school year to meet with novice teachers through district-sponsored activities, quarterly gatherings, and annual novice-teacher support groups held at the district office. The meetings should promote a positive environment and provide supportive encouragement. Likewise, school administrators should provide novice teachers with on-site opportunities to meet informally with the school principal and assistant principals. The meetings should enable novice teachers to discuss various challenges and receive feedback from their immediate supervisors.

2. Human Resources Development should require novice teachers, coaches, school liaisons, and school administrators to attend in-service training and monthly learning community meetings to support the philosophy of teamwork. This training should involve 2 days of training for administrators, and 3 days of training for coaches and school liaisons. The attendance at the annual meetings would benefit all groups: the novice teachers would receive the immediate training required prior to the start of school, and coaches, school liaisons, and school administrators would receive additional training based on the latest strategies for teacher induction.

3. Novice teachers should be informed of the registration dates for New Teacher Academy. All new teachers should be required to attend the training prior to the preplanning week of school.
4. Novice teachers should be required to read *The First Days of School* (Wong & Wong, 2001) prior to attending the New Teacher Academy.

5. District leaders should consider restructuring the New Teacher Academy. Moreover, the participants’ training should be lengthened from 5 days to 8 days. The novice-teacher training should include classroom management, classroom procedures, discipline plan, instruction planning, professional standards and expectations, effective preparation for the 1st day and the 1st week of school, and school district policies and procedures.

6. The induction program for new teachers should be extended from 1 year to 3 years. In the 1st year, intensive training and support should include (a) new teacher observations of veteran teachers; (b) bimonthly visits to demonstration classroom; (c) informal observations (four by the coach and two by the school liaison); and (d) 2 additional training days at the New Teacher Academy, 1 day in October and 1 day in March. In the 2nd year, teacher development and support should include (a) new teachers attending three of nine of the monthly learning-community meetings, (b) four visits to demonstration classrooms, and (c) informal observations (two by a coach and one by a school liaison).

7. Levels of teacher proficiency should be developed throughout the 3 years of training from novice, to advanced beginner, competent teacher, and finally, advanced teacher.

8. School liaisons and coaches should be encouraged and trained to develop demonstration classrooms on site for the development of novice teachers.

9. Opportunities should be arranged for novice teachers to attend neighboring schools to observe other veteran teachers and demonstration classrooms.
10. An induction celebration or celebration of learning should be developed for novice teachers who complete the 3-year program.

Research Question 9

The ninth research question asked, How should the development strategies to improve the novice-teacher program be implemented? The improvement strategies for the program for novice teachers are predicated on district administrators communicating the vision, values, and guiding ideas. As a result, these principles could be used to accomplish specific results by implementing the following strategies:

1. The school district’s Human Resources Development should (a) facilitate the improvement strategies process; (b) reexamine the NESS philosophy and goals; (c) reaffirm program commitment, guidelines, and expectations with personnel; (d) communicate the improvement strategies to district personnel; (e) train school-based personnel; (f) monitor the implementation process; and (g) evaluate the success outcomes.

2. Revisions to NESS Program should include (a) a mandatory 3-day training program for administrators, school liaisons, and coaches; (b) an extension of the teacher orientation process from 4 days to 8 days; and (c) an extension of the induction program for new teachers from 1 year to 3 years. Next, coach and novice teacher should meet once per week. There should be an assurance that administrators and liaisons are held accountable for school-based training, development, and support.

3. Concerning dates of implementation, the research indicated that the improvement strategies should be implemented from July 2006 through May 2007 and that progress should be evaluated annually throughout the May 2009 school year.

4. The implementation process should include (a) a 3-day workshop for
administrators, liaisons, and coaches; (b) a revision of the development process that reevaluates 1st-year intensive training and extra support for novice teachers; (c) a 2nd-year developmental training and moderate support; and (d) a 3rd-year moderate training and moderate support.

The cost factors to the school district for implementing the improvement strategies would be as follows:

1. Orientation training for personnel would cover (a) school administrators' additional training component; (b) school liaisons at $25 per hour or $300 per week; (c) coaches at $25 per hour or $300 per week; and (d) novice teachers at $25 per hour or $400 per week.

2. A 3-year induction development program for novice teachers would include (a) school liaisons at $650 per year or $1,950 for 3 years and (b) coaches at $1,187 per year or $3,561 for 3 years. The cost factors would be charged to teacher training fund.

*Research Question 10*

The 10th research question asked, How should the strategies for improvement be evaluated? The evaluation of the improvement strategies is essential to the decisions that support program continuance. McNamara (1998) stressed that the program evaluation should be a careful process of collecting information about a program or some aspect of a program, in order to make necessary decisions about the program. Essentially, the type of evaluation undertaken depends on what the evaluators want to learn about the program. Fitzpatrick et al. (2004) reported that summative evaluating is concerned with providing information for evaluators' decision making and for assisting with judgments about program adoption, continuation, or expansion. Concerning the summative evaluation that was utilized, the researcher concentrated on making judgments about program expansion
or dissemination throughout the school district. Most importantly, the summative evaluation should focus on assisting the staff of the school district in achieving job satisfaction for novice teachers. In addition, the program evaluators should seek to identify the overall program’s success at selected schools based on the improvement strategies presented to the school district.

Fitzpatrick et al. (2004) indicated that, for verification and or documentation, staff from Human Resources Development and other school staff might ask for an evaluation of the impact of new development strategies by taking the following six steps:

1. The director of Human Resources Development should determine evaluation goals, analyze results of data, and report results to the superintendent and to the school board.

2. The director of Human Resources Development should consider the following areas when facilitating the evaluation: (a) all program components as planned and functioning as intended; (b) a free flow of information; (c) a clear system of accountability; (d) satisfied participants through processes, reviews, and revisions; (e) a proper outlet for new ideas and for criticism; and (f) encouragement to provide input. Senge (1999) indicated that evaluators must gather information continually to assess progress toward established goals, measure how strategies are working, and determine whether efforts are achieving desired results as intended. Likewise, continuous monitoring allows program evaluators to assess whether the key features are working as intended and whether the evaluation enhances the program.

3. The Human Resources Development teams should (a) conduct interviews with novice teachers, (b) conduct interviews with coaches, (c) observe classrooms, (d) provide instructional and management support, (e) provide feedback, (f) gather data, and (g)
analyze data.

4. The analysis of data made by the Human Resources Development's evaluators should involve their (a) reading through all data; (b) organizing comments into similar categories, concerns, suggestions, and strengths; and (c) attempting to identify patterns or associations (McNamara, 1999).

5. School administrators and liaisons should (a) conduct interviews with novice teachers, (b) conduct interviews with coaches, (c) conduct informal and formal observations, and (d) attend monthly learning-community meetings.

6. Coaches and novices should (a) complete needs assessment surveys, (b) complete fundamental growth questionnaires, (c) meet in monthly learning community meetings, (d) contribute to demonstration classrooms, and (e) create developmental portfolios.

The Human Resources Development teams should gather and read all data from selected schools. The data should be organized in similar categories based on concerns, suggestions, and strengths from school-level personnel and novice teachers. Finally, the Human Resources Development director and teacher development teams should attempt to identify patterns and associations from data in order to create a report for the school district.

McNamara (1998) explained that analyzing data (whether from questionnaires, interviews, or observations) always starts from a review of evaluation goals and areas of consistency with collected data. Additionally, evaluators must specify a target goal of constituents, the percentage of constituents to achieve the specific outcomes.

The overall program evaluation should result in a target goal of 80% success rate for novice teachers. Continuous personal career achievement of novice teachers is the sole purpose for the improvement strategies. Above all, Senge (1999) reported that direct
personal benefits constitute the first source of reinforcing energy for sustaining deep change. In addition, it is inherently satisfying to work in a team where people trust one another and agree upon a common purpose.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Dramatic increases in the attrition rates of novice teachers have drawn attention to the link between teacher development and teacher support during the initial years. Leaders of school districts throughout the nation, including those of the target school district, need to consistently seek to implement teacher development strategies to meet this annual challenge. Teacher attrition is frequently seen as either a problem for workforce planning and resources or an indicator of the relatively poor quality of school life and teacher morale (MacDonald, 1999). Likewise, it has been determined that conditions within schools have deteriorated and, consequently, are causing increasing levels of teacher dissatisfaction and stress, if not attrition.

The results of this research project have indicated that the target school district has not implemented adequate strategies to decrease the attrition rate for novice teachers. Therefore, the researcher has found that the school district needs to reevaluate and restructure the policies and procedures utilized to assist novice teachers during the initial years and institute strategies to retain most of the newly hired teachers. The researcher embarked on this applied dissertation project to evaluate and develop strategies to decrease the attrition rates for novice teachers within the school district. The results of the evaluation and improvement strategies will be presented to the Research, Statistics, and Evaluation Department for consideration and possible implementation.

The objective of the applied dissertation was to evaluate the contributing factors for the attrition rate of novice teachers and to research, compare, and develop strategies to improve the novice teacher's induction program. To evaluate, research, compare, and develop strategies to improve the retention of novice teachers at the school district, the researcher developed 10 research questions to be answered during the project. First,
extensive reviews were conducted to assist the researcher in obtaining background information and becoming familiar with successful teacher programs and useful evaluating strategies that could be implemented in a program for novice teachers. In addition, numerous evaluation procedures were conducted to answer the research questions. Finally, by answering the research questions, the researcher was able to evaluate the reasons that have been attributed to the attrition rate and write a developmental strategy for an improvement plan for the novice-teacher program.

**Historical Attrition Rates for Novice Teachers**

The review of literature related to novice teachers did not provide accurate attrition information for this research project. A meeting with the assistant director of instructional staffing was helpful because it enabled the researcher to obtain data for the number of novice teachers hired and for those who resigned during the 1999-2000 through 2003-2004 school years. This process was beneficial because the researcher was able to obtain the most accurate information on novice teachers from the employee files of the school district and was provided an opportunity to discuss the attrition rates with a managing officer of the organization. After the meeting, the researcher’s immediate concerns were confirmed regarding the depth and breadth of the problems of effectiveness in retaining novice teachers and the effectiveness of the components of their induction program.

**Activities to Address Attrition**

Upon review of the related literature, the researcher gained insightful and helpful information pertaining to teacher retention programs (Breaux & Wong, 2002; Moir & Gless, 2001; Serpell & Bozeman, 1999; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Wilkinson, 1997; Wong, 2002). Two programs designed by the school district, NESS and the
Alternative Certification Educator program assisted novice teachers during the initial years. The reasons that the NESS and Alternative Certification Educator programs were developed, adopted, and implemented were twofold. First, the NESS program is an effective formal induction program geared to support, develop, and cultivate an attitude of lifelong learning in novice teachers, and, second, the induction programs for new teachers have been successfully used by numerous school districts throughout America.

In fact, Lafourche Parish School District in Louisiana in August 1996, and Flowing Wells School District in Arizona in September 1998, both being accredited school districts, developed and implemented effective induction programs for new teachers that reduced their novice-teacher attrition rates from 39% to 4%, respectively. Leaders of these school districts cited induction programs as a vital tool for the development of novice teachers. Each program involved a systematic process used by staff (a) to train novice teachers through the use of observations, modeling, and hands-on activities; (b) to support new teachers throughout the first 3 years; and (c) to make novice teachers aware of district philosophies, procedures, policies, and cultures as they transition into the teaching field.

Similar procedures for teacher induction have been practiced by the staff of the target school district, procedures that have been predicated on the 12 Florida Professional Education Competencies and school-wide support. Likewise, teacher retention programs similar to Alternative Certification Education have assisted new teachers with noneducation degrees. The programs organized by school districts throughout the nation and by the target school district have addressed the perceived shortages of teachers and have offered individuals with a desire to change careers with an opportunity to teach and become fully certified without participating in traditional education programs.
Reasons for Leaving School District

Those shaping the development process have found an increased level of new teacher dissatisfaction and stress, if not attrition. The researcher found that the primary reason a majority of new teachers leave the profession is a lack of development and support necessary to face the reality of the classroom and the hundreds of management decisions made daily. Most new teachers are left in a precarious position jeopardizing their ability to become successful in the teaching profession.

The researcher conducted a survey of novice teachers who resigned, and 11 respondents provided a range of responses pertaining to the five open-ended questions. Of the 11 respondents, 8 stated that the working conditions and the lack of administrative or collegial support were the main reasons for leaving the school district. The Florida Department of Education Web site indicated that, in the target school district, 75% of the novice teachers who resigned expressed dissatisfaction with their job. This information was categorically presented and reported only basic data.

Another survey question inquired as to the training and support the teacher received. Fifty-five percent stated that school representatives provided above average or average assistance to teachers. However, 45% of the respondents shared that the training and support provided was below average. The respondents perceived that the organization had inadequately prepared them for the teaching profession. Furthermore, this group indicated the reasons that they as novice teachers chose to resign.

One important question inquired about the possible improvements to the NESS program. Of the 11 respondents, 10 perceived that the school district needed to redevelop or restructure the NESS program. All agreed that the level of training and support provided did not effectively assist them during the initial years. A comparison of the
literature reviewed and the responses of participants to the surveys revealed that the school district did not develop adequate exit interviews or surveys to obtain input from the teachers who resigned.

**Feedback from 1st-Year Teachers**

It was anticipated that the novice teachers would encounter daily hindrances and develop lesson plans to stimulate the intellect of their students (Brock & Grady, 1998; Croasmun et al., 2000; Hoerr, 2005). Furthermore, according to researchers, novice teachers show resiliency by personally securing information and by steadfastly determining to overcome the challenges of the initial years. With such resolve, the new teachers should be able to balance the daily and weekly issues of the classroom, the students, the parents, and the administrators.

In the applied dissertation study, 34 first-year teachers from 10 different schools completed a Likert-scale questionnaire. On Questions 1 and 2 of the survey, 36% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the level of training, support, and feedback was beneficial to their career. Conversely, 61% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the level of training, support, and feedback. The response to the two questions concurred with Research Question 4 and the literature review. The majority of the respondents were not actually content with the levels of training, support, and feedback that they had received from coaches. This caused levels of ambiguity that generally presented the novice teacher with no immediate career-lasting alternatives.

The respondents also disagreed or strongly disagreed with the levels of assistance and support received from school administrators and colleagues. This supported the literature review that indicated that most novice teachers feel overwhelmed by and isolated from their supervisor or colleagues (American Association of Retired Persons &
Harris Interactive, 2003; Watzke, 2003), thus, leaving novice teachers to struggle with the daily and weekly frustrations of the teaching profession. Watzke (2003) indicated that teacher developers identify the beginning years of teaching as particularly problematic as teachers enter their initial stage of development. Furthermore, the results of this question tended to support the alienation and loneliness that a majority of novice teachers experienced and that subsequently led to a high attrition rate in the target district.

Finally, Question 6 showed that 46% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the overall induction process during the initial years with the school district. This supported the idea that a majority of novice teachers have struggled with the decision to remain with the school district or the teaching profession after the first 3 years.

Factors Contributing to Career Longevity

To answer the question about factors contributing to career longevity, the researcher interviewed 27 teachers with at least 5 years experience from 10 different sites. In response to Question 1, 55% of the teachers perceived that the training and support that they received during the initial years was a positive experience, whereas 45% of the teachers indicated that the training and support received was negative. This mixture of teacher responses supported the concern that a major group of teachers perceived that the induction program inadequately prepared teachers for lasting careers.

In response to Question 2, 67% of the teachers perceived that the training was limited or nonexistent. This response concurred with the report that teachers were not properly prepared to address the daily situations such as classroom encounters and parent contacts. For this lack of preparation, the respondents believed that the school district’s teacher-induction program needed strategies to address the specific areas mentioned.
The final question of the survey addressed the school employees (coaches, administrators, and colleagues) who provided the teachers with the most assistance and support during their initial years of teaching. Interestingly, the respondents indicated that their colleagues offered the most assistance, including strategies for classroom management that had enabled them to maintain their positions with the school district. In contrast, the respondents did not perceive that the administrators and coaches provided adequate support or assistance during challenging or daily classroom encounters. These findings indicated that district administrators and Human Resources Development staff need to provide school-level training opportunities for administrators and coaches to become familiar with the most recent strategies for properly acclimating teachers during their initial years.

*Florida Programs for Teacher Retention*

Effective teacher-induction programs are predicated on developing novice teachers through strategies that focus on training, support, and retention. More importantly, novice teachers need to be exposed to a variety of teaching techniques and learning processes. Thus, school policy makers need to design an induction program that facilitates the transition of novice teachers into the profession (Hope, 1999; Wong, 2002; Yopp & Young, 1999). Research Question 6 is important in that the Florida Department of Education has mandated that its 67 school districts must develop and implement an induction program for novice teachers.

To satisfy Research Question 6, the researcher sent surveys to district-level program directors of eight Florida districts. After several telephone calls and e-mails, the researcher received responses from five school districts. The findings indicated that the primary goal of the five school districts was to immerse novice teachers in a 1-year
induction program that focused on support services and was based on the Florida Professional Education Competencies. The school districts had similar goals and purposes; however, each developed a program that was predicated on its specific location and teacher groups.

The program from School District 1 is an induction program based on 1st-year teacher orientation, mentor observations, and constant documentation of the development of the novice teachers. This school district certainly has an induction process that seeks to provide support and train novice teachers. This program is in agreement with the review of related literature because it reflects a developmental perspective on how teaching is learned.

The program from School District 2 is an induction program designed to assist novice teachers through collegial coaching, effective demonstration of classroom management, and portfolio completion. School District 2's induction program is centered on the novice teacher’s growth and support. This induction program concurred with the findings of the literature review because it engaged in collegial assistance and teacher development.

In School District 3, the induction program seeks to provide supervised support, professional development through observations and completion of professional credentials. Likewise, in School District 4, the induction program is based on introducing novice teachers to the district’s culture, expectations, and vision. Overall, novice teachers are expected to become knowledgeable of their school, to master their specific curriculum, and to serve in the schools’ surrounding community. The induction programs developed by both School Districts 3 and 4 assist novice teachers at various levels of continued support and long-term training. Furthermore, their induction programs
facilitate the transition of novices into effective, collaborative, and reflective teachers.

Finally, in School District 5, the induction program is designed to provide a support system for novice teachers who complete a district-designed induction portfolio. This staff members of this school district demonstrate the effective suggestions of the literature review by orienting novice teachers to the teaching profession via systematic contact with the intention of assisting in teachers' professional growth and development.

**Successful Programs for Teacher Retention**

Effective teacher retention programs consist of induction strategies that are comprehensive, coherent, and sustained. The facilitators of the developmental process focus on training, supporting, and retaining novice teachers and seamlessly advancing them into lifelong learning. Most importantly, the induction process should allow staff to acculturate novice teachers to the mission and philosophy of the individual school and district. As a result, novice teachers should connect with the district, the school, and their colleagues. The aim is that, ultimately, novice teachers should want more than a job; they should want to contribute to a group and to make a difference (Wong, 2002, 2003, 2004).

To aid in this endeavor, Wong (2002, 2003, 2004) determined that successful retention programs consist of sustained systematic induction processes that are used to train and support novice teachers throughout the first 3 years of teaching. The induction process focuses on providing training and support to all employees such as the novice teachers, coaches, and administrators. Novice teachers, during the initial training (orientation) days, receive strategies on (a) classroom instruction, management, and discipline; (b) writing and planning effective lessons for various learning styles; (c) procedures for implementing policies on routine activities such as bell work, dismissal, and homework, all of which are commensurate with professional standards and
expectations. In addition, the novice teachers receive support from all qualified parties within the district and school.

At the district level, the superintendent of schools and staff provide a grand welcoming of new teachers to the district, and the director of Human Resources Development introduces the teams that are assigned to help the novice teachers and reviews with them the 3-year training program plan (Wong, 2002, 2003, 2004). At the school-level, administrators provide the novice teachers with a support base of individuals (coaches and colleagues) that nurture the novice teachers throughout the induction process. Coaches receive strategies that enable them to assist novice teachers professionally and personally. Additionally, the coaches agree to commit to providing the novice teacher with top-notch instructional development through weekly and monthly informal observations, intuitive feedback, and the consistent modeling of professionalism.

School administrators are constantly immersed in strategies that provide his or her school with the most recent technology, instructional material, and funds (Wong, 2002, 2003, 2004). These administrators implement developmental programs and secure a myriad of staff to assist the novice teacher in all capacities. According to Wong, these components can serve as a model for the development strategies for the induction program of new teachers.

The retention strategies implemented by the other Florida school districts assisted the districts to decrease their attrition rates considerably and assisted novice teachers because the development strategies were focused on sustained classroom techniques, district and school support, and opportunities for professional growth. The strategies for the induction of new teachers were feasible for both urban and suburban schools in that
the strategies were designed to train and support the novice teacher regardless of his or her educational background. For these reasons, the target school district should consistently introduce and implement induction strategies that enable novice teachers to succeed and remain with the district.

**Recommendations**

Effective induction programs improve teacher retention, influence teaching practices, and promote strong professional development. Likewise, organized induction programs decrease the attrition of novice teachers and increase new teacher effectiveness during the initial years. Most importantly, effective induction programs provide assistance to novice teachers in the following areas: (a) helping with district policies and school procedures, (b) suggesting strategies and support for classroom management, (c) giving immediate feedback on classroom instruction, and (d) providing support in the professional and personal aspects that are related to teaching (Mutchler, 2000; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003; Weiss, 1999). The results of an evaluation of the induction programs revealed that 23% of the novice teachers did not receive enough training or support to prepare them for lifelong teaching careers. Consequently, their perception of a lack of training and support led to high teacher attrition rates.

The induction area that most commonly requires improvement is teacher orientation training. The Florida school districts' induction programs that have a 3% teacher attrition rate require novice teachers to attend 2 weeks of orientation. Furthermore, the content area covered by these districts is based on strategies that prepare novice teachers in areas ranging from classroom instructional strategies for students with various learning styles, to classroom-management procedures and routines, and
classroom discipline and planning (see Appendix E).

The second area of need for novice teachers involves them observing a demonstration classroom regularly. The objective of the demonstration classroom is for the novice teacher to become familiar with effective instructional practices for all aspects of the classroom. Both Florida school districts that have approximately a 3% teacher attrition rate could serve as models for the development of novice teachers.

The third area involves improving working relationships between coaches and novice teachers. The majority of coach relationships fail for two reasons (a) a lack of commitment of coaches to novice teachers and (b) a lack of quality time spent between the coach and the novice teacher. The relationship of the coach and novice teacher as structured by the school districts with a 3% novice-teacher attrition rate is focused on the coach becoming an important aspect of the novice teacher’s overall success. The coach is annually required to attend 3 days of training to become familiar with the most recent strategies to use when assisting novice teachers. Moreover, in order to satisfy this requirement the coaches are provided release time twice a month to observe novice teachers and provide constructive feedback for instructional growth.

The fourth area of need involves the length of the induction program. The induction program implemented by the other school districts requires 3 years. In the 1st year, novice teachers are required to attend nine of the monthly school-based support meetings, to conference with the coach regularly, and to visit demonstration classrooms. In the 2nd year, teachers are required to attend five of the monthly school-based support meetings to conference with coaches and to visit the demonstration classrooms twice a month. Finally, in the 3rd year, teachers are required to complete an instructional competency portfolio consisting of accomplished practices ranging from lesson plans and
student achievement scores to best practices. These teachers attend three of the monthly school-based support meetings, where they learn to develop strategies to improve teacher effectiveness.

Another area of need for novice teachers throughout the initial years involves an increase in support from persons from all segments of the educational institution. Based on the results of the researcher’s experience, teacher surveys, and teacher questionnaires, relationships with school staff is critical for establishing a strong foundation for the development of novice teachers. Most importantly, to escalate the levels of support requires veteran teachers, administration, custodial and office staff to develop lines of support for novice teachers by assisting novice teachers with instructional challenges and best practices in addition to developing intervention strategies for daily classroom and discipline challenges. Colleagues may also provide assistance for the daily requirements that are related to paperwork and classroom materials. It would behoove the leaders of the school district to consider induction strategies implemented by other districts where there has been a substantial decrease in the attrition of novice teachers.

Finally, although several recommendations for the implementation of improvement strategies for teacher induction were outlined in chapter 4, the following recommendations are also offered:

1. The strategies for teacher induction should be implemented by the school district in July 2006 and should be developed and implemented with a sample population. This implementation date would ensure that the developmental improvement strategies begin as indicated in the study. Furthermore, the program should be evaluated in May 2007 to determine whether it has assisted in decreasing the novice-teacher attrition problem.
2. A quarterly needs assessment should be developed and administered to novice teachers, coaches, and school administrators to determine whether the strategies for teacher induction are assisting each group and whether the program objectives are being achieved.

3. A training center for induction of novice teachers should be developed at the Human Resources Development location. The training center should be responsible for developing the procedures and instructing support staff, program trainers, coaches, and administrators for effective development of novice teachers.

4. An Internet list of the induction programs for new teachers should be developed and presented on the school district’s Web site. The Internet information should consist of development strategies of induction programs, best teaching practices, teacher testimonials, and feedback opportunities for novice teachers, all of which could be accessed 24 hours a day.

Implementation

A review of literature indicated that school districts should reevaluate the approach used to prepare teachers and the levels of support that novice teachers receive during the decisive 1st years. Moreover, school districts must develop well-designed induction programs that seek to professionally develop and qualify novice teachers regardless of whether they are to be trained in a traditional or alternative preparation program (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Senge, 1999).

The director of Human Resources Development should initiate the implementation of the improvement strategies by restructuring the induction program, communicating the changes to selected schools, training the school-level personnel,
monitoring the implementation of improvement strategies, and evaluating the success outcomes. Based on the success of other Florida school districts, the improvement strategies of the target district's induction program should be measurable and effective and should assist the school district in minimizing its attrition of novice teachers. It is recommended that the school district select six schools with high novice teacher attrition rates to develop a pilot program, preferably two elementary, two middle, and two high schools. A limited pilot program would enable Human Resources Development staff members effectively to implement development strategies with smaller teacher groups and to evaluate a smaller program to determine the level of success.

To this end, the staff of Human Resources Development should gather data and present the findings and cost factors to the school board in order to receive an approval to expand the development strategies throughout the district. The formative and summative processes should be utilized to develop and implement the pilot program. These instruments should determine whether the development strategies are meeting the objective of decreasing the attrition rate of novice teachers. Overall, formative and summative evaluations are concerned with providing information to serve decision making and to assist with judgments about program adoption, continuation, or expansion (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004).

**Evaluation**

Program evaluation essentially allows district-level directors and school-based administrators to decide whether the programs are indeed useful to constituents. Furthermore, program evaluation is a prudent process of compiling information about a program in order to make necessary decisions about its continuance. Finally, program evaluation should be designed to collect data in order to determine the strategies for
improvements and overall effectiveness (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004; McNamara, 1998; Senge, 1999).

The evaluation process should assist the Human Resources Development to determine whether the strategies for teacher induction achieve the goal of decreasing the attrition rate of novice teachers within the pilot schools. It is known that traditional program evaluation is concerned with providing information to serve decision making and to assist with judgments about program adoption, continuation, or expansion (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Most importantly, the procedure for evaluating the development strategies should require indirect and direct contact with the program constituents. The indirect contact is predicated on analyzing the numbers of novice teachers who are hired and resign from pilot schools during the initial years. Conversely, the direct contact should require the team members of the Human Resources Development zone to schedule quarterly informal interviews with novice teachers, coaches, and administrators to gather data.

From the researcher’s experience, it is important to receive feedback from constituents and to create a needs assessment based on input from each group. Therefore, the interviewing process of the groups would be threefold: (a) zone team members should obtain the perceptions and concerns of the program constituents, (b) the novice teachers should observe and experience immediate levels of support, and (c) the Human Resources Development staff should collect information based on input from constituents. The teachers surveyed indicated that they did not perceive that this type of program evaluation process and level of support existed with the current NESS program.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that the procedures followed in the applied dissertation
provided responses to the 10 research questions. The results of this study demonstrated that each of the research questions was answered.

The resignation of novice teachers has been a major contributor to the lack of qualified teachers available to the target school district annually. Consequently, the Human Resources Development developed and implemented proactive induction programs to decrease the attrition of novice teachers. Although preventive teacher programs have been implemented, the surveyed teachers perceived that these programs needed to be restructured to retain, train, and support the novice teachers.

Quantitative data collected from novice and experienced teachers rated the induction programs as substandard and needing to be restructured. A majority of the teachers agreed that the induction program lacked strategies for training development of new teachers, strategies that they perceived to be crucial during the initial year. Furthermore, the surveyed teachers indicated that novice teachers preferred support systems that were predicated on providing opportunities for teacher growth through constructive feedback and a nurturing environment.

Successful induction programs for new teachers are structured primarily on training, development, and support. Additionally, these programs concentrate on extensive teacher orientation and teacher induction. Most importantly, these induction programs are teacher centered and provide novice teachers with critical support and developmental training that enables them to achieve success in the teaching field. A major challenge for school districts is to provide the novice teachers with the kind of training, development, and support needed to remain in the profession. It would behoove school districts with increasing teacher attrition to promote the professional and personal achievement of novice teachers, thereby increasing the retention of promising new
Implications

The results of this applied dissertation have implications for the target school district and its induction program. It is anticipated that strategies for improving the induction program would benefit the novice teachers and assist the school district. Newport-Mesa Schools, Lafourche Parish Schools, Islip Public Schools, and Flowing Wells School District have practiced the induction program strategies effectively (Breaux & Wong, 2002). Equally, the improvement strategies have assisted these school districts to decrease their novice-teacher attrition rates on an average of 45%. Furthermore, two of these school districts have organized induction programs that have been replicated and have benefited novice teachers in numerous school districts nationwide.

Ultimately, the improvement strategies would enable the target school district to provide novice teachers with additional training and support during their critical beginning years. The school district has an organized induction program that seeks to meet the developmental needs of novice teachers over a 3-year period. This is not completely evident due to the reported novice-teacher attrition and the researcher-generated surveys and questionnaires completed by the teachers. Of course, it would be effective to provide novice teachers with additional training during orientation, to allow extended time (from 1 year to 3 years) for training and development, and to devise a district-level and school based support system. The implementation of the improvement strategies would mean that novice teachers would be thoroughly immersed in learning strategies (observing veteran teachers and practicing these techniques in the classroom) that would help them become more prepared to handle instructional, student, parent, and classroom challenges faced daily. Secondly, novice teachers would be encouraged to
develop as teaching professionals through annual progression with support from coaches, administrators, and colleagues.

Coaches would benefit from the program improvement through an extended period of time (3 years) and commitment to novice teachers. Furthermore, coaches would provide and establish effective professional relationships with novice teachers, thus, sharing valuable feedback and administering crucial support. For the best results, the improvement strategies for teacher induction would afford school-based personnel opportunities to train and develop novice teachers at a slower pace that is often more conducive to learning.

Because of the various trainings and implementations, schools within the district would benefit by decreasing the number of novice teachers required annually and ensuring that qualified teachers were available to educate students. Students would also benefit by receiving daily instruction from competent and capable classroom teachers.

It is important for the staffs of school districts to develop the necessary training to provide an induction program that assists novice teachers. These induction programs should be based on an induction system that prepares and supports a novice teacher for a long-term career.

Finally, the target school district would benefit by decreasing its attrition rates of novice teachers through proactive development measures. These measures would ensure that teachers receive the necessary support to enable them to grow professionally and remain with the school district and the teaching profession.

Dissemination

There are four recommendations for dissemination of this applied dissertation study concerning an induction program for novice teachers. The recommendations are as
follows:

1. All team members--school district's support staff, school-based administrators, and school liaisons--should become informed about the teacher-induction improvement strategies and of the implementation and evaluation processes in a district meeting.

2. The improvement strategies for teacher induction and the implementation and evaluation processes should be formally presented to the school board for approval.

3. A report should be disseminated to the Florida Department of Education describing the benefits of the improvement strategies for teacher induction as they pertain to novice teachers.

4. A summary describing the results of this study and comparative studies should be available for public viewing as an Internet link on the district’s Web site.

**Future Research**

There are three recommendations for future research resulting from this applied dissertation study:

1. A longitudinal study should be conducted to compare and evaluate the effect that the improvement strategies of teacher induction have on novice teachers beyond the initial 3 years.

2. A comparative study should be conducted in all of the target school district's urban schools to determine the effect that the improvement strategies of teacher induction have on schools with higher teacher retention numbers.

3. Additional surveys and questionnaires should be developed and administered to obtain direct feedback from teachers who resign, including 1st-year teachers and veteran teachers. The feedback would provide data for future program development.
References


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pledge to America’s children. New York: Author.


Appendix A

Novice Teachers Who Resigned
Novice Teachers Who Resigned

1. Tell me the reason you decided to leave the County Public School.

2. Did County Public School’s school based representatives offer you the necessary training and support during your stay?

3. If at all possible, please describe the type of training you received.

4. Was your training and support a pleasant or unpleasant experience?

5. What improvements should the school district make to its practices with novice teacher development?

Comments:________________________________________________________________________
Appendix B

Survey for 1st-Year Teachers
Survey for 1st-Year Teachers

Dear Participant:

Many improvements in the New Educator Support System Program have come based on participant’s input. The research committee needs your evaluation of the program. To the right of each statement are numbers that correspond to the words below. Circle one of the numbers that best describe the words about the statement. Any additional comments are relating to the positive or negative aspects of the program would be appreciated and can be included in the area provided.

5 - Strongly Agree
4 - Agree
3 - Undecided
2 - Disagree
1 - Strongly Disagree

1. The training and support you are receiving has made your teaching career pleasant.

2. The new educator program has offered me many opportunities to obtain feedback and develop teaching or student strategies.

3. My mentor is helpful and knowledgeable about current teaching trends and best practices.

4. The school administration is helpful and supportive.

5. My colleagues are helpful and supporting.

6. Teaching in the school district has so far been a rewarding experience.

Comments: ____________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
____________________________________
Appendix C

Questionnaire for Teachers
With At Least 5 Years of Experience
Questionnaire for Teachers
With At Least 5 Years of Experience

I/D code: _______________   Date: __________

1. Tell me your impressions of the training and support you received during the initial year. Were there any positive or negative experiences?

2. Did it appear that you received enough training to prepare you for a teaching career in the school district?

3. Who offered the most/least assistance mentor, principal, or colleagues?

4. What parts if any, of the new educators program needs improvement?

5. Please describe the type of support and training you are currently receiving?

6. Please describe one factor that attributed to your teaching career in the school district? Why?

Comments_______________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you
Appendix D

Telephone Interview
Telephone Interview

Interview Questions for Administrators of Other Florida District Schools

1. Please, briefly describe the novice teacher attrition your district experienced?

2. What research was conducted in order to develop a revised novice teacher program?

3. Please, share the program’s strategies and procedures that were implemented to decrease the novice teacher attrition.

4. What type of success has your district had with the revised program?

Comments ___________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

*Please, provide a copy of your teacher induction program.
Appendix E

Developmental Strategies for Improvement
Teacher Induction Improvement Strategies
for the School District

by
Rogé James Byrd

2006
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Teacher Induction Improvement Strategies
for the School District

Program Overview

Novice teachers have been often described as “works in progress” and encounter unique working conditions as they adjust to having total responsibility for student learning (Breaux & Wong, 2002). Most importantly, they must not only be competent in their subject and know how to teach it, but they must maintain a climate in which teaching and learning can take place.

The induction program improvement strategies developed for the school district is intended to benefit the school district in three areas:
(1) Improve novice-teacher performance in the classroom, this is achieved by assisting teachers to acquire knowledge and build a conceptual understanding;
(2) Show an increase in teachers’ ability to facilitate the learning process for their students that increases teacher engagement by creating a professional atmosphere through collegial support;
(3) Develop a continuum oriented support system, that enhances through multiple levels of immediate professional and personal support.

In addition to easing the novice teacher into teaching, the induction program improvement strategies is intended to produce a safety net for the most vulnerable teachers by strengthening their skills and knowledge, as well as preparing them for successful careers. Specifically, the induction improvement strategies will improve teacher development and support; help deter the flow of novice from the school district and the teaching profession.

Implementation of Improvement Strategies

Wong (2004) reported that once the vision, values, and other guiding ideas are formulated, they could be used to implement the strategies and specific results that must be accomplished. The school district Human Resources Development will be responsible for overseeing the improvement strategies to the novice teacher program. Some administrative adjustments would be to reexamine the New Educator Support System (NESS) program is philosophy, reaffirm the commitment to the guidelines and expectations, communicate the improvement strategy to schools, train the school level personnel, monitor the implementation of improvement strategies, and evaluate the success outcomes of the enhanced novice teacher program.

Examine NESS Program Philosophy

Senge (1999) asserted that when implementing change it is important to begin by holding in-depth conversations with executive teams on the organization’s purpose, vision, values, and guiding principles. The current NESS program is structured on continuously assisting teachers to examine their practice. It also encourages teachers to implement new techniques and seek support opportunities to improve their practice. It is
imperative that the district’s Human Resources Development seeks to reexamine the philosophy and reemphasis these departmental goals to its constituents, thus enabling the constituents to focus on what really matters to novice teachers.

Revisions in NESS program

The majority of revisions will involve changing the initial phases of the novice teacher program. Some elements will involve a mandatory four day induction or refresher course for administrators, liaisons, and coaches. The next element is to revamp the length and the progression rate of novice teachers. Another element involves requiring coaches and novice teachers to meet once a week to discuss their strengths and weaknesses and develop individualized strategies for career improvement. Finally, the school level administrators or liaisons would be held accountable for implementing the revisions at their schools.

Revise the Guidelines and Expectations

The current school district guidelines and expectations for novice teacher development are based on the following:
1. Time to Meet and Talk
2. Physical Proximity
3. Communication Structure
4. Teacher Empowerment and School Autonomy
5. Interdependent Teacher Roles
6. Openness to Improvement
7. Trust and Respect
8. Cognitive and Skill Base
9. Supportive Leadership
10. Socialization

Senge (1999) suggested that organizations allow people to step forward and ask to be accountable for specific results that matter to them as individuals. Senge added that organizations avoid assigning accountabilities unilaterally, if possible. In order to reaffirm the commitment to the above guidelines and expectations, the Human Resources Development must achieve buy-in from the NESS teacher development teams. The Human Resources Development will permit the various teacher development teams to become accountable for certain aspects of the guidelines and expectations. The teacher development team members will be held accountable for implementing numerous parts of the guidelines and expectations into his or her daily practice.

Communicate the Improvement Strategies

Senge (1999) shared that nothing can grow in a self-sustaining way unless there are reinforcing processes underlying its growth. Furthermore, profound change requires investment of time, energy, and resources. It requires at least an initial core pilot group, genuinely committed to new organizational purposes and methods. The Human Resources Development will gather and analyze novice teacher attrition rates and select four schools from each academic level that have contributed to the high attrition rates. In addition, the Human Resources Development teacher development teams will meet with
the selected school personnel to discuss recommitment and strategies of Human Resources Development to schools for improvement to the novice teacher program.

**Train School-Based Personnel**

The Human Resources Development’s teacher development teams will schedule and meet with the selected schools administrative personnel. It is important that the teacher development teams present the calendar of events (training and program dates) to these employees. Furthermore, the team will communicate the importance of 100% attendance by all school level NESS personnel.

**Dates for Implementation**

It is recommended that the improvement strategies be implemented from July 20, 2006 through May 24, 2007 and progress annually through May 24, 2009 school years. How will improvement strategies be implemented?

1. The school district Human Resources Development will conduct a mandatory four day workshop for administrators, liaisons, and coaches.
2. An informal two day meeting will be required for administrators, liaisons, coaches, and novice teachers.
3. The length of novice teacher program and progression rates will be revised.
   a. First year intensive training and support provided.
   b. Second year developmental training and moderate support.
   c. Third year moderate training and moderate support.
   d. Novice teacher progresses from novice teacher, advanced teacher, competent teacher, and proficient teacher.

**Cost Factors of Implementation**

The cost to the school district to implement strategies is minimal. The school level administrators are required to attend approximately fifty developmental workshops throughout the school year. An additional component will be added as the novice teacher development training. Thus, no additional cost will be required for this employee. School liaisons, coaches, and novice teachers, per the local union contract, are required to receive a stipend of $25 per hour for additional hours beyond the normal workday. The cost factor for this group will be based on a 4-hour day and 4-day week. This equates to approximately $400 per teacher. The cost for this employee will be charged to the novice teacher training funds.

**Induction Program Improvement Strategies**

Induction improvement strategies involve a process of systemically training, developing, and supporting novice teachers before the first days of school and continuing this process throughout three years. Research supports that the induction process include (1) easing the transition into teaching, (2) improving teacher effectiveness through training in classroom management and effective teaching techniques, (3) promoting the district and school’s culture, and (4) increasing the retention of greater numbers of highly
qualified teachers (Breaux & Wong, 2002).

The induction improvement strategies process begins with eight days of orientation training prior to the first day of school. Novice teachers are instructed in team building, classroom practices and procedures, classroom management and discipline, and professional and personal needs. Support and training continues systematically, following the teacher’s development over a three year period.

Components of Induction Program Improvement Strategies

Successful induction programs include:

Novice Teachers

1. An eight day orientation program
2. A teaching enrichment program predicated on training and development for three years
3. A continuum support system
4. Opportunities for teachers to develop portfolios

Coaches and Administrators

1. Team building and commitment
2. Teacher support
3. Teacher observations

Difference between Induction and Orientation

Induction is the entire process of systematically training and supporting novice teachers during their first few years of teaching. Conversely, orientation is one component of a successful induction program; it involves becoming familiar with the policies and procedures of the school and school district. Additionally, orientation can be done in eight days, whereas induction may take several years (Breaux & Wong, 2002).

Eight-Day Orientation Program

Novice teachers are required to participate in an eight day orientation program. All teachers new to the district are required to attend eight days of in-service prior to the return of the continuing teachers; this is mandatory the first-year teacher’s contract. Furthermore, each new teacher is required to read Harry Wong’s, The First Days of School, prior to the start of the orientation training. The program structure is focused on the following:

Day 1- Focus: Team Building and Information Gathering

The training will begin with a welcome address from the school district superintendent, all school board members, and teacher union president. This greeting should be predicated on creating an atmosphere of “family” and “team.” The initial day
should conclude with question and answer sessions; providing novice teachers with opportunities to become well informed about the school district. Additionally, novice teachers should be paired with coaches. This team concept approach should encourage a positive and effective work relationship between coach and novice teacher.

Day 2- Focus: Instructional Practices

The Human Resources Development director and his or her teams will facilitate the orientation processes. Human Resources Development team members and veteran teachers will conduct mini-workshops throughout each day. Novice teachers are introduced to local state, district, and school classroom standards and practices. In addition, veteran teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools will share with the new teachers their current, successful classroom strategies. Finally, teachers will visit demonstration classroom, the demonstration classrooms model the first day procedures and routines used at the beginning of the year.

*Teachers are encouraged to take notes and ask questions to achieve active participation.

Day 3- Focus: School Culture and Professional Needs

District level representatives provide resources and discuss options as it pertains to the personal and professional needs (insurance, health care, etc.) of teachers. Novice teachers spend time with the principal, assistant principals, coach, and support personnel, at their assigned school to discuss grade specific curricular, textbooks, and school based procedures. In addition, the school based personnel will address teacher contributions to the school, developing relationships with colleagues, and providing services for the school. Finally, administrators will discuss opportunities for teachers to grow and develop professionally.

Day 4- Focus: Classroom Management and Routines

Novice teachers are separated into 45-minute learning sessions. Each session content area will concentrate on strategies to enhance novice teacher performance as it pertains to lesson planning, instructional strategies, time management, parental connections, and student learning styles. Lesson planning. Teachers will receive and practice writing lesson plans that reach and motivate students to learn. Instructional strategies. This area will provide teachers with strategies to integrate visual, auditory, and tactile manipulative that will enrich student learning. Time management. Novice teachers will receive strategies that will enable them to become time management oriented. Some strategies will address instructional length, timing of assignments, and demonstrate flexibility within lessons. Parents connections. It is important that novice teachers know the dos and don’ts to utilize when dealing with parents. Furthermore, teachers will receive strategies for effective discussion of information about instructional program and individual students. Student learning styles. Novice teachers will receive instructional strategies to utilize when connecting with their students. Some specific instructional strategies areas will include cooperative learning groups, ESE, ESOL, and LEP students.

Day 5- Focus: Classroom Discipline (Harry Wong)

Novice teachers will be gathered in one area for this focus area. The teachers will observe Harry Wong’s, The First Days of School, classroom discipline videos. Next,
teachers will be separated in groups to discuss and practice the discipline strategies learned in the videos. Some areas addressed will be managing student behaviors, monitoring student behavior, and responding to student behavior. After this session, the teacher will receive strategies for bell assignments, classroom signals, class dismissals, and homework. Bell assignments. Novice teachers are introduced to strategies for developing bell assignments that are based on instructional focus (subject area). Classroom signals. This session is geared to enable teachers to effectively maintain classroom conduct. Class dismissal. Novice teachers will be immersed in strategies necessary for transitions between subjects or classes. Homework. The homework strategies will be predicated on specific ways to assign, receive, and grade this assignment.

Day 6 and 7- Focus: Creating Positive Learning Environments

This focus area requires two consecutive days for teacher training. The first day addresses creating an environment of rapport, and establishing a culture of learning. The second day provides strategies for managing classroom procedures and organizing physical space. Creating an environment of rapport. Novice teachers will receive and role-play strategies for interactions with students and student interactions. Some concerns are teacher ability to remain calm and professional regardless of the situation. Teachers will learn strategies for de-escalating inappropriate student confrontations. Establishing a culture for learning. The teacher expectations are essential to student achievement. Teachers will become familiar with the importance of content. Managing classroom procedures. Although students are the focus, teachers need to become familiar with strategies for handling non-instructional duties and dealing with volunteers and paraprofessionals. Organizing physical space. Teachers will become immersed in strategies for safety and arrangement of furniture, as well as creating accessibility to learning and to the use of physical resources.

Day 8- Focus: Training Wrap-up and Luncheon

This day will be reserved as an opportunity to summarize the training that novice teachers received and to celebrate the orientation training completion with a luncheon.

Three-Day Training for Administrators and Coaches

Day 1- Focus: Team Building and Commitment

The administrators and coaches will meet with school district governing board, Human Resources Development director, and Human Resources Development team members. It is important that the governing board members address the novice teacher attrition rates, financial and educational loses, and best teachers retention. Furthermore, the Human Resources Development director will address the commitment required pertaining to the improvement strategies and revisions within the program in practice. The second part of the training will require the school based personnel to assist the Human Resources Development with the first three days of orientation. Coaches are immersed in trainings that strengthen their abilities to instruct. The training areas are as follows: characteristic of good mentors, mentor’s roles, and strategies for problem solving (Brown et al., 2003).
Day 2- Focus: Novice Teacher Support

The support provided to novice teachers should be predicated as a continuum, starting with personal and emotional support, expanding to include specific task-problem-related support, and culminating with the capacity for critical self-reflection on teaching practice (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). The school based support system is the most imperative to novice teacher development and retention. As a result, the school based personnel’s training is aligned with the research. **Personal and emotional support.** The personnel will receive assistance for offering sympathy and perspective and will provide advice to novice teachers. **Specific task-or-problem-related support.** Personnel will utilize strategies to assist novice teachers in approaching new task. Furthermore, this group will receive coaching strategies that will enable novice teachers to learn from mistakes within the practice. **Critical reflection on teaching practice.** The school based personnel will become familiar with strategies for modeling the reflection process, guiding through the practice, and proposing solutions to the problem. The strategies specifically are designed to enable novice teachers to reflect on practices and to gain teacher perspective. Finally, school based personnel will train school support staff in providing support and development for novice teachers.

Day 3- Focus: Teacher Observations

The final day of training requires school based personnel to observe novice teachers, periodically. Participants will be advised to visit the novice teacher classrooms once a week as an informal observation, and three times annually as a formal observation. It is important that the observer be seen as support personnel and not as a deterrent. The intent is to decrease the stress related with this teacher development procedure and encourage teachers to ask questions in order to grow professionally.

**Three-Year Teacher Induction Program**

First-Year Induction (Intensive training and support)

**Novice teacher support group meetings.** Novice teacher support group meetings should be predicated on encouraging teachers to discuss their classroom concerns and challenges without fear of negative implications. The first year support meetings are structured on strategies learned in orientation and immediate areas that require developmental feedback. Finally, it is important to have veteran teachers present classroom strategies successfully. This approach enables novice teachers to identify with professionals in practice.

**Informal observations.** The observations for novice teachers should be non-intimidating. This approach encourages novice teachers to inquire of observer and receive feedback that is perceived as helpful.

**Demonstration classrooms.** Demonstration classrooms are predicated on a model class that features the most effective instructional and disciplinary practices offered at school. Veteran teachers, who have expressed a desire to assist novice teachers to success, should maintain the demonstration classrooms. Finally, it is important that novice teachers and continuing induction teachers contribute to the classroom by developing or modeling instructional best practices.

**District level training.** The district level continuance training should be structured to assist novice teachers in classroom development and provide innovated instructional
strategies. Novice teachers should be encouraged to use e-mail as they identify various challenges encountered and receive developmental feedback.

**Support system.** Coaches are provided release time to observe the novice teacher and provide feedback. The coach is responsible for acclimating the novice teacher to the school system, and the school. In addition, the coach assists with information regarding curriculum, classroom management, classroom instruction, and assessment.

Second-Year Training (Developmental training and support)

**Teacher support group meetings.** During the second year, teachers are required to attend four teacher support group meetings. It is important that the teachers receive feedback and provide input on instructional challenges.

**Informal observations.** The teacher should schedule the informal observations. It is important that observer and teacher concentrate on instructional and developmental areas that offer opportunities for teacher to improve.

**Demonstration classrooms.** The second year teacher should visit the demonstration classroom often to observe and obtain best practice strategies to implement in the classroom. Furthermore, teacher should note successful practices and make documentation in portfolios.

**District level training.** The second year teacher is required to attend the district training. Second year training is predicated on providing teachers several opportunities to discuss and reflect on successes and challenges. Finally, the district meetings for this group should not be scheduled with other teacher groups.

**Support system.** The coach should meet with teacher three times a month. Furthermore, the coach is required to informally observe the teacher once a month and model best practices.

**Begin portfolio.** Second year teachers are required to begin a portfolio. The portfolio consists of the following instructional practices (a) unit plan with five lessons (b) student achievement data (c) demonstration classroom best practices (d) video of instruction (e) reflected and development notes and (f) classroom management plan and rules.

Third-Year Training (Moderate training and support)

**Teacher support group meetings.** The teacher is required to attend three support group meetings. Additionally, the teacher is required to contribute learnt strategies through presentation and by providing feedback to novice teachers.

**Informal observations.** The informal observations should be reduced to three per year and mutually scheduled by observer and teacher. Most importantly, the observations should be based on assisting the teacher to develop instructional and classroom strategies that will enable the teacher to achieve long-term success.

**Demonstration classrooms.** The teacher is responsible for developing, modeling, and implementing a learning strategy for the demonstration classroom as well as for other classrooms. Evidence of this learning strategy should be video taped and noted in portfolio.

**Support system.** Coach is responsible for scheduling four informal observations with teacher. The observations should provide the teacher with opportunities to receive constructive and valuable feedback for growth and development.

**Complete portfolio.** The completed teacher portfolio should consist of the
following; (a) items from the first years (b) classroom management plan (c) reflective and development log (d) individual growth plans (e) professional development plan (f) signatures from coach, administrators, and district level trainers.

Finally, the completion of teacher induction program should conclude with a celebration of learning (Candlelight Luncheon) and teacher awards (framed certificates) presented by the superintendent (Breaux & Wong, 2002).

* Novice teacher progresses from novice teacher, advanced teacher, competent teacher, and proficient teacher based on developmental growth.

**Evaluation of Improvement Strategies**

In addition, McNamara (1998) stressed that management should decide what the evaluation goals should be and how the resulting data will be analyzed and reported by to the organization. The school district director of Human Resources Development and his staff will conduct and gather the data for the evaluation. Currently, the school district Human Resources Development has a NESS teacher development team assigned to each of its zone area schools. McNamara (1998) reported that program evaluations should be designed to collect data in order to determine the strategies for improvement’s overall effectiveness. The literature reviewed indicated that school district evaluators are to consider the following key areas when designing a program evaluation:

1. All program components are planned and function as intended.
2. Evidence of a free flow of information.
3. Evidence of a clear system of accountability.
4. All participants are satisfied with processes, or reviews and revisions is taking place.
5. Employ proper outlets for new ideas and for criticism.
6. All participants are encouraged to provide input.

The teacher development team will conduct interviews to obtain the concerns and suggestions of novice teachers, visit classrooms to provide instructional and student management support, and create feedback and ongoing support based on the information acquired from program constituents. Secondly, school administrators and NESS liaisons will conduct interviews with novice teachers and coaches to develop strategies for professional empowerment, complete informal classroom observations to offer ongoing staff development, and attend monthly NESS meetings to provide site level support. Lastly, novice teachers and coaches will complete needs assessment surveys and fundamental growth questionnaires generated by the Human Resources Development based on the needs assessments of novice teachers.

As team members encountered challenges they could address problems in the larger group, and the fact that program support staff, were involved in learning efforts throughout the organization has helped them maintain credibility (Senge, 1999). The Human Resources Development teacher development teams’ evaluations will be conducted quarterly over a three year period. It is important to note that this evaluation process will commence three times per school year. The program evaluations conducted by school administrators and liaisons will be conducted every two months, or monthly, based on the specific needs of the novice teacher. Likewise, the novice teachers and coaches’ self-evaluations, surveys, and questionnaires will be conducted monthly.
Summary

Implementing the induction improvement strategies at the school district will assist the district to provide novice teacher with training, development, and support that is based on successful practice. Consequently, the school district’s schools will benefit from the improvement strategies by decreasing the number of teachers required annually and ensuring that qualified teachers are available. Students will benefit by receiving daily instruction from competent and capable classroom teachers. As a result, the improvement strategies will enable the school district to provide novice teachers with additional training and support during the critical first years.

Recommendations

Implementations. There are several recommendations for the implementation of the Applied Dissertation as was outlined in the results section of chapter four. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Improvement strategies should be implemented by the school district on July 2006, and should be developed and implemented with a sample population. This implementation date would ensure that the developmental improvement strategies begin as indicated in the study. Furthermore, the program should be evaluated on May 2007, to determine if it decreases the novice teacher retention problem.

2. A quarterly needs assessment should be developed and administered to novice teachers, coaches, and school administrators to determine if teacher induction improvement strategies are assisting each group and if the programs objective are achieved.

3. A teacher induction training center should be developed at the Human Resources Development location. The training center should be responsible for developing the procedures and instructing support staff, program trainers, coaches, and administrators for effective novice teacher development.

4. An Internet program of the teacher induction program should be developed and presented on the school district’s website. The Internet program would consist of induction development strategies, best teaching practices, teacher testimonials, and feedback opportunities for novice teachers to access.

Dissemination. There are four recommendations for dissemination of this Applied Dissertation for the school district and the teacher induction program. The recommendations are as follows:

1. All the school district teacher induction team members, district level support staff, school based administrators, and school liaisons become informed of the teacher induction improvement strategies and the implementation and evaluation process in a district meeting.

2. The teacher induction improvement strategies with implementation and evaluation are formally presented to school board members for approval.

3. A report should be disseminated to the Florida Department of Education describing the benefits of the teacher induction improvement strategies as it pertains to novice teachers.
4. A summary describing the results of this study and a comparative study should be available for public viewing as an Internet link on the district’s website.

Future Research. There are three recommendations for future research resulting from this Applied Dissertation. It is recommended that

1. A longitudinal study should be conducted to compare, and in addition, evaluate the effect the teacher induction improvement strategies have on the school district’s novice teacher beyond the initial three years.

2. A comparative study should be conducted in all the school district’s urban schools to determine the effect the teacher induction improvement strategies has on schools with higher teacher retention numbers.

3. Additional surveys and questionnaires should be developed and administered to obtain direct feedback from teachers who resign, first year teachers, and teachers with experience. The data collected is intended to receive immediate feedback from constituents for future program development.
References


