



Teacher Induction in Illinois: Evidence from the Illinois Teacher Study

In this second report using data from the Illinois Teacher Study, we provide results about teachers' satisfaction with their preparation courses and their participation in induction activities. We also assessed the relationship between participation and intentions to remain in teaching.

Satisfaction with teacher preparation. Illinois' teachers who entered teaching from the mid 1990s to 2001 told us they were satisfied with their preparation programs. More than 80% felt their programs prepared them at least adequately to be ready for teaching. Somewhat fewer teachers were satisfied with their preparation to work with students with special needs, implement the Illinois Learning Standards, and use technology for professional and instructional purposes. In focus groups, teachers told us they would have liked to have more student teaching experience, and more realistic expectations of what their first year of teaching would be like.

Participation in Induction Activities. The experiences new teachers have when entering teaching can have a profound influence on their successful transition into the profession and their choices to remain in teaching. Induction activities that help with this transition are the building blocks of an ongoing process of professional development that accompanies teachers' growth throughout their careers. From this study we have learned that nearly all schools/districts in the Illinois public schools are providing some type of induction activity, and that most are providing a wider range of activities than even five years ago. More than half of the newest teachers, those who became certified in 1999-2000, received at least six of the eight

induction activities that we asked about. Most teachers found the activities at least somewhat helpful in their transition to teaching.

Is participation in induction activities associated with intention to remain in teaching? We asked new teachers if they intended to still be teaching in 2006. Teachers who received at least six of the eight induction activities we included were twice as likely to tell us that they intended to remain in teaching. And four activities stood out as most important for retention – reduced assignments such as committee work, release time to observe other teachers, workshops on topics such as teaching methods, lesson planning or student discipline, and access to computers and other technologies to assess and try out classroom applications.

Illinois teachers find each of their induction activities helpful. However, it is only by providing *a full range of opportunities*, that include most activities associated with induction programs that we can expect to increase the proportion of teachers who choose to remain in teaching.

This report, **Teacher Induction in Illinois: Evidence from the Illinois Teacher Study**, is also available at <http://ierc.siue.edu> under "Publications." For more information contact Dr. Brenda Klostermann at the Illinois Education Research Council. Her email is breklos@siue.edu.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

This report explores the early professional development activities of teachers who received initial certification in 1999/2000 (“Starters”) and teachers with up to five years of teaching experience (“Stayers”) in the Illinois public schools (IPS).

SATISFACTION WITH TEACHER PREPARATION COURSES

Both Starters and Stayers felt their undergraduate studies and teacher preparation courses adequately prepared them for teaching.

Areas in which individuals reported feeling adequately prepared include:

- How to work collaboratively,
- Knowledge of the subject matter that they are certified to teach,
- Overall readiness to teach,
- Knowledge of and practice in appropriate instructional techniques, and,
- Knowledge of and practice in assessment techniques for their certified subject matter.

Areas in which individuals felt less prepared include:

- How to work with students with special needs,
- How to implement the Illinois Learning Standards into lessons, and,
- How to use technology for professional and instruction purposes.

Ratings for “how to use technology” have improved (65% for Starters, 53% for Stayers).

In focus groups, teachers indicated they would have liked to have more student teaching experience, and more realistic expectations about how hard their first year of teaching would be.

PARTICIPATION IN INDUCTION ACTIVITIES

Schools and districts have stepped up new teacher induction activities to help newly certified teachers “swim” rather than “sink” during the first year of teaching.

- Nearly all teachers in the study reported receiving at least one induction activity, and 90% received at least two.
- More than half (54%) of the Starters received at least six of the eight activities included in the study, compared to just one third (32%) of the more experienced Stayers.

Induction activities most likely to have been received by both teacher groups include:

- Access to computers and other technologies to assess and try out classroom applications (85% Starters; 72% Stayers),
- District/school workshops aimed at new teachers (81% Starters; 73% Stayers), and,
- Access at district/school expense to topical workshops (e.g., teaching methods, lesson planning, student discipline) (81% Starters; 79% Stayers).

Induction activities least likely to have been received, again for both teacher groups, include:

- Reduced duties (e.g., no committee assignments) (44% Starters; 34% Stayers), and,
- Release time to observe other teachers (45% Starters; 37% Stayers).
- Starters were more likely to have received classroom observation by experienced teachers that were Stayers (61% versus 36%).

HELPFULNESS OF INDUCTION ACTIVITIES

Most teachers in both groups found all of the induction activities they received during their first year of teaching to be “somewhat” to “very” helpful. And they hold similar opinions about which induction activities were most helpful.

About half of teachers in the two groups found the following activities very helpful:

- Access to computers and other technologies to assess and try out classroom applications (56% Starters; 54% Stayers),
- Formal assignment of an experienced teacher to provide mentoring (55% Starters; 52% Stayers), and,
- Access at school or district expense to seminars or workshops on topics such as teaching methods, lesson planning, or student discipline (53% Starters; 44% Stayers).

PARTICIPATION IN INDUCTION ACTIVITIES AND INTENTIONS TO CONTINUE TEACHING

Four specific activities were associated with the Starters’ intention to be teaching in 2006. However, two of the four (reduced activities and release time to observe other teachers) were least likely to have been received.

- Reduced duties (e.g., no committee work),
- Release time to observe other teachers,

- Access at district/school expense to attend workshops on topics such as teaching methods, lesson planning, or student discipline, and,
- Access to computers and other technologies to assess and try out classroom applications.

Twice as many Starters who participated in at least six different induction activities reported intentions to be teaching in 2006.

- About a third of those receiving from one to five activities did not intend to be teaching in 2006, compared to about 15% of those who received six or more activities.

THE ROLE OF TEACHER SATISFACTION IN INTENTIONS TO CONTINUE TEACHING

New teachers’ general satisfaction with teaching is related to:

- Finding their induction activities helpful,
- Receiving more induction activities,
- Receiving specific induction activities:
 - Support sessions with school administrators,
 - Release time to observe other teachers,
 - Topical workshops, and,
 - Access to computers and other technologies to assess and try out classroom applications, and,
- Intending to teach in 2006.
 - 85% of new teachers who are “very satisfied” intended to teach in 2006, compared to
 - 63% of those who are “somewhat satisfied,” and
 - 54% of those who are “dissatisfied” with teaching.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chart 6 graphically summarizes the relationships among the factors discussed in the report that were significant at the .05 level. Participation in specific induction activities and the more different induction activities received increases the likelihood of intending to teach in 2006. In addition, Starters who are more satisfied with their teaching are also more likely to intend to teach in 2006.

Results from our study suggests strategies for retaining teachers:

- Providing induction activities that include reduction of duties (e.g., no committee work), release time to observe other teachers, workshops at the district/school expense on topics such as teaching

methods, lesson planning and student discipline; and access to computers and other technologies to assess and try out applications in the classroom.

- Provide as many different induction activities as possible to assist new teachers in the classroom.

Comprehensive induction programs likely reflect overall professional learning environments that are supportive of their teachers and their teachers' career growth. In turn, increased teacher retention will help improve schools as learning environments for students.

Chart 6. Factors Related to Teachers' Intentions to be Teaching in 2006

