District Induction Manual: Supporting Beginning Special Educators

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Note:

The majority of information in this manual was modeled from the practices in three districts that have extensive, long-term induction and mentoring programs for special education teachers. For more in-depth information about the model districts, go to Program Descriptions.

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Chapter 1:
Teacher Induction: The Big Picture

Beginning teachers face significant challenges as they assume the complex work of teaching while they are still learning to teach. In addition to the activities involved with learning to effectively teach, they must also learn to work with others; collaborate with colleagues, administrators, paraprofessionals, and parents; and manage varied administrative tasks. New teachers often find the demands of the first years to be overwhelming and stressful, and whether these teachers thrive and remain as educators depends, at least in part, on the supports they receive (Billingsley, Griffin, Smith, Kamman, & Israel, 2009) and the extent to which they experience success with their students (Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, & Donaldson, 2004).

Purpose of Induction

In response to the need to foster teaching effectiveness, state and district leaders are turning to carefully planned induction programs to support new entrants during the first critical years. The key purpose of induction programs is to help beginning teachers improve their teaching effectiveness so that their students have opportunities to achieve higher standards such as those outlined in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; www.corestandards.org). Professionals design induction programs with the understanding that novice teachers need continual professional learning opportunities and thoughtful guidance to develop into accomplished teachers. Another key purpose of induction programs is to champion teacher commitment so that educators are effective and want to stay in the field of teaching. The chapter *Determining District Goals and Readiness for Induction* (Chapter 3) addresses considerations for determining district priorities for induction programs.

The Unique Needs of Special Education Teachers

Leaders can design induction programs with all teachers in mind. For example, both general and special education teachers will likely need assistance with

- understanding CCSS,
- using effective instructional practices,
- selecting and modifying appropriate curriculum materials,
- learning to effectively manage classrooms,
- promoting positive student behavior,
- collaborating and co-teaching with others, and
- working with parents.

Special education teachers often have unique needs, and they benefit from experiences tailored to their needs. These experiences include

- learning how to develop individual education programs (IEP) using CCSS;
- addressing the needs of students who could benefit from Tier 3 interventions (i.e., intensive individualized instruction);
- developing behavior and transition plans;
- using specialized materials and assistive technology; and
- selecting and using alternative assessments.

Components of Induction

Induction programs often feature varied experiences to address the needs of teachers. Although induction relates to teacher mentoring, induction is a much broader concept. Figure 1 provides a framework for thinking about components for induction programs. Each component of this big-picture view is briefly explained below and elaborated upon in other chapters of this manual. These components may overlap and must be mutually supportive. For example, if ongoing professional development (PD) addresses effective teaching practices, mentoring—including observations and feedback—should also support these practices.

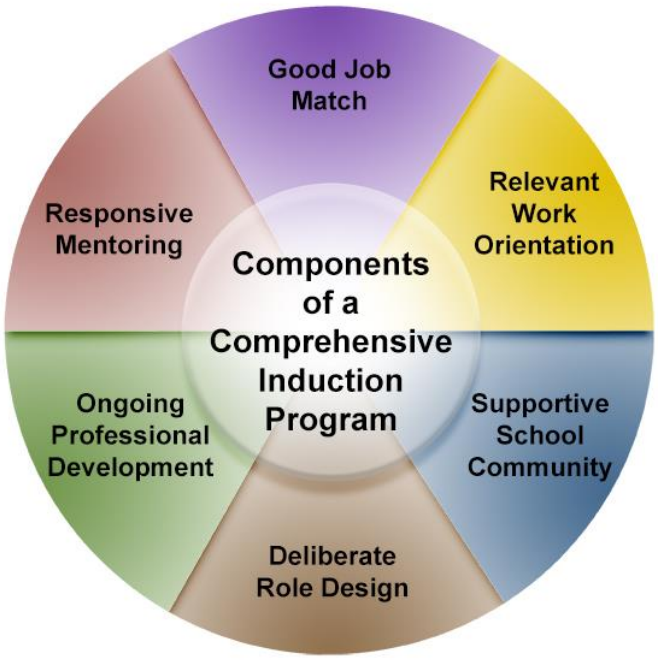

Figure 1. Components of a comprehensive induction program by B. Billingsley & M. Kamman. Adapted from *Teacher Induction: Providing Comprehensive Training for New Special Educators,* http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/. Adapted with permission.

Good job match. "A new teacher's effectiveness and success in the classroom may depend not only on her general qualifications, but also on the fit between her skills, knowledge,

and dispositions and the teaching position she has been hired to fill" (Johnson et al., 2004, p. 6). To the extent possible, beginning special education teachers should receive placement in jobs that match their backgrounds. For example, special educators have varied preparation; teach students with different disabilities; and work in various types of settings (e.g., resource classrooms, full-time classrooms, co-teaching classrooms). Special education teachers are more likely to stay in their jobs if their positions are good matches given their previous experiences, preparation, and interests (Billingsley et al., 2009). The chapter *Understanding Beginning Special Education Teachers* (Chapter 2) provides information about teacher preparation in special education as well as tips to help leaders make good job matches.

Relevant work orientation. All novice teachers must learn about the key components of working in their districts and schools and must receive timely advice about the first weeks of teaching. They must learn about key policies, resources, instructional expectations, and mentor support. In addition, new special education teachers must learn the facets of teaching in special education (e.g., managing caseloads and schedules, learning district procedures for IEP development). Typically, orientation involves several days of meetings held prior to the start of the school year; teachers may also meet with their mentors and begin planning for instruction. Providing thoughtful orientation is critical for getting new teachers off to a great start as they learn about important local policies and practices. The chapter *Developing Orientation Programs* (Chapter 4) outlines priorities for orientation as well as a sample orientation program for beginning special educators.

Supportive school community. Principals who value students with disabilities, their families, and their teachers help to create a climate in which teachers and students feel part of the school. Beginning special education teachers may not feel a sense of belonging in their schools, and they sometimes report feeling isolated from others. Taking the time to explicitly welcome all novice teachers and creating structures that encourage collaboration between new general and special education teachers helps to create a village of support for new entrants. Principals who acknowledge their schools' roles in serving all students also help to create environments that emphasize and value students with disabilities. The extent to which principals support students with disabilities also influences how others view and support these students (York-Barr, Sommerness, Duke, & Ghere, 2005). The chapter *Creating Supportive Work Contexts* (Chapter 5) addresses the components of creating a supportive school community.

Beginning Special Education Teacher:

"I did not even know what our behavior guide and my caseload looked like, and I had these kids coming into my classroom. I had no idea what their needs were. I did not have my folders with their IEPs. My kids had behavioral plans I did not even know about."

Deliberate role design. Beginning special education teachers may not always understand what leaders expect of them, which can interfere with their effectiveness and contribute to anxiety and stress. Some novice special educators experience role conflict, which occurs when others (e.g., district administrators, principals, mentor, teachers) have different expectations for them. Administrators and mentors should help clarify new special educators' roles to help these educators understand the priorities and productively direct their time. Administrators and mentors must also help beginning special educators protect their instructional time and work to reduce administrative demands (e.g., excessive paperwork). The chapter *Creating Supportive Work Contexts* (Chapter 5) addresses ways to support novice special education teachers as they learn how to manage their varied roles.

Ongoing professional development. All teachers need opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills throughout their careers. Special education teachers' PD needs will vary depending on their preparation and the degree of match between their preparation and their jobs. In addition, special education teachers must learn more about areas that are specific to their students as needs arise (e.g., using assistive technology, learning to use an instructional strategy, working with paraprofessionals). PD can take the form of scheduled PD for beginning special education teachers, school- or district-based PD for all teachers, and individualized PD based on an individual development plan. Mentors play an integral role in assisting novice special education teachers in applying school- and district-based PD to classroom practice. Providing timely PD practices using effective practices (see chapter 10—*Planning and Providing Effective Professional Development*) is an integral part of fostering teachers' ongoing learning.

Responsive mentoring. Mentoring is a key component of induction. The key focus of mentoring is helping new teachers improve their instruction. Mentors provide three major sources of support to beginning special education teachers: (1) instructional coaching, (2) socialization, and (3) assisting with challenges. Instructional coaching includes observing new special educators, assisting in reflection on classroom practice, and offering constructive feedback. Socialization helps novice special education teachers become acclimated to the school and district culture, and it helps them learn how to work with others while also learning policies and procedures. Mentors also provide support by listening, problem solving, and helping beginning special educators address pressing challenges. Leaders can structure mentoring in a

number of ways; they can structure it in full- or part-time formats, in a group format, via electronic support, or through a combination of these methods.

Beginning Special Education Teacher:

"I could call my consulting teacher at any time and ask her anything, and she always offered to meet with me. She would come in and work with the kids and work with me. She would observe me in different settings, and she listened to me, too. She pretty much hit every area with which I needed help."

In addition to formal mentoring programs, others in the school serve as informal mentors by providing support in less structured ways. Special education teachers value informal mentoring perhaps because it grows out of collegial relationships in schools. E-mentoring programs are also useful in supporting beginning special education teachers who may not have someone with expertise within their schools or districts (e.g., educators in low-incidence areas who teach students with hearing or vision loss). Four chapters in this manual provide information about developing mentor programs—*Determining Mentor Structure* (Chapter 6), *Recruiting and Selecting Mentors* (Chapter 7), *Matching Mentors and Mentees* (Chapter 8), and *Providing Mentor Training and Support* (Chapter 9).

Leaders' Roles in Induction Programs

Leaders play key roles in coordinating the varied components of induction (see Figure 1) and determining the induction activities that are appropriate to their needs. District professionals must provide an explicit school-based induction process; this plan should include communication and coordination with beginning special educators, their mentors, and their general education colleagues. Effective school-based leaders make induction an integral part of the school, and they promote a positive culture by understanding and addressing the stressors new special education teachers face. Additionally, mentors, other faculty members, and even novice special education teachers themselves can help ensure that they meet induction goals. Listed below are induction activities for leaders.

District administrators. Special education directors, supervisors, and coordinators play key roles in facilitating teacher development by

- working with other district leaders, principals, and mentors to ensure that induction meets the unique needs of beginning special educators;
- helping principals understand their roles in ensuring that students with disabilities receive effective instruction so that they have opportunities to meet the standards set for all students;

- ensuring that principals and mentors understand expectations for novice special education teachers;
- providing PD in key identified areas for beginning special educators across the system; and
- identifying resources available to new special education teachers at the district level.

Principals. Principals play critical roles in induction because they influence many components of life in the school (e.g., mission, expectations, discipline policies, resources). Special education teachers who report strong principal support are more likely to be satisfied with their work, report fewer role problems, and have less stress and burnout than those who have less support (Billingsley et al., 2009). Principals support new special educators by working with others to provide strong induction programs by

- welcoming beginning special education teachers and integrating them into the school,
- advocating for all students in their schools so that special education teachers are not the sole advocates for students with disabilities,
- listening and helping new special education teachers problem solve when they encounter difficulties,
- fostering collaborative relationships,
- helping novice special educators acquire the resources they need to teach, and
- helping beginning special educators protect their instructional time.

Principal:

"I intentionally hooked up my novice with a mentor teacher I wanted her to work with in the building. The mentor had been around and knows the district well. She was very familiar with the ins and outs of the building and the student services department—where to get the resources and what not. Their personalities just clicked. I wanted someone she could work with who was very nurturing, very, you know, 'if you need anything, I'm here.' I told my beginner to talk to your mentor, talk to me. We will talk with each other, and between the three of us, we will get you through this. And she did."

Formal and informal mentors. Formal and informal mentors have many of the same responsibilities. Examples of the supports that mentors provide to beginning special education teachers include

- providing emotional support through listening, showing interest in new special education teachers, and helping new special educators problem solve;
- modeling and giving advice about how to manage work and complete IEPs;
- sharing resources; and
- providing support on varied instructional tasks such as instructional planning, effective practices, and ongoing monitoring of student progress.

Beginning special education teachers. New special educators can assist with their own learning as they actively seek to continue their own PD and locate solutions to challenges. Beginning special education teachers should keep a list of questions, needs, and concerns to discuss with their mentors. Accomplished special education teachers also engage in a number of activities that can help them adjust to the demands of teaching through

- seeking out relevant and meaningful learning experiences (Bishop, Brownell, Klingner, Leko, & Galman, 2010);
- asking others for assistance and advice; and
- using supports outside of the school (e.g., pre-service faculty members, professional organizations, online resources [see Table 1], CEC Reality 101 blog [http://www.cecreality101.org/]).

Table 1

Online Resources Aligned With New Special Education Teachers' Learning Needs

New Teachers' Learning Needs	Examples of Website Resources
1. Content Knowledge and Standards	
IRIS Modules and Case Studies	• CSR: A Reading Comprehensive Strategy • PALS: A Reading Strategy for High School • Improving Writing Performance: A Strategy for Writing Expository Essays • Applying Learning Strategies to Beginning Algebra (Part 1) • Cultural and Linguistic Differences: What Teachers Should Know • Teaching and Learning in New Mexico: Considerations for Diverse Student Populations
LD OnLine	• The Clarifying Routine: Elaborating Vocabulary Instruction • Vocabulary Assessment and Instruction
Special Connections	• Strategies for Accessing the Science Curriculum for Special Needs Students • Strategies for Accessing the Social Studies Curriculum for Special Needs Students
2. Effective Instruction	
cast.org	• Universal Design for Learning resources
4Teachers.org	• Assistive technology website resources
IRIS Modules	• Differentiated Instruction: Maximizing the Learning of All Students • RTI (Part 1): An Overview • RTI (Part 2): Assessment • RTI (Part 3): Reading Instruction • RTI (Part 4): Putting It All Together • RTI (Part 5): A Closer Look at Tier 3
National Center on Response to Intervention	• RtI in Middle Schools webinar
Special Connections	• Direct Instruction • Universal Design for Learning • Instructional Accommodations
3. Assessments	
Intervention Central	• CBM Warehouse

New Teachers' Learning Needs	Examples of Website Resources
IRIS Modules	• Classroom Assessment (Part 1): An Introduction to Monitoring Academic Achievement in the Classroom • Classroom Assessment (Part 2): Evaluating Reading Progress
National Center on Response to Intervention	• Introduction: CBM for Progressing Monitoring • Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Reading • Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Math • Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Written Expression and Spelling • Using CBM to Determine Response to Instruction
Special Connections	• Curriculum Based Assessment/Measurement • Data-Based Decision Making • Quality Test Construction • Grading • Assessment Accommodations
4Teachers.org	• RubiStar for quality rubrics • QuizStar for online quizzes • Assessment website resources (e.g., managing assessments, alternate assessments, authentic assessments, portfolios)
4. Behavior Management	
IRIS Modules	• Addressing Disruptive and Noncompliant Behaviors (Part 1): Understanding the Acting-Out Cycle • Addressing Disruptive and Noncompliant Behaviors (Part 2): Behavioral Interventions • Classroom Management (Part 1): Learning the Components of a Comprehensive Behavior Management Plan
Special Connections	• Teacher Tools Related to Functional Behavior Assessment • Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Planning • Positive Behavior Support Interventions • Classroom and Group Support

New Teachers' Learning Needs	Examples of Website Resources
5. Collaboration With Others	
Beach Center on Disability	• Family-related resources
IRIS Modules	• Collaborating With Families
Special Connections	• Cooperative Teaching • Working Successfully With Paraeducators
6. Managing the Job and Dealing With Stress	
Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)	• Reality 101: CEC's Blog for New Teachers
IRIS Modules	• The Pre-Referral Process: Procedures for Supporting Students With Academic and Behavioral Concerns • Teacher Induction: Providing Comprehensive Training for New Special Educators
Special Connections	• Creating a Schedule

Note. Reprinted from "Supporting New Teachers: How Online Resources and Web 2.0 Technologies Can Help," by B. Billingsley, M. Israel, & S. Smith, 2011, *Teaching Exceptional Children, 43,* pp. 20-29. Copyright 2011 by Council for Exceptional Children. Reprinted with permission.

Chapter 2:
Understanding Beginning Special Education Teachers

To better understand how to support beginning special education teachers, leaders must recognize the diversity of new special educators entering the teaching profession; they also must examine the typical challenges novice special education teachers face. The following section includes an overview of the preparation, classroom contexts, and experiences of beginning special education teachers. It concludes with considerations for ensuring good job matches for novice special educators.

Preparation

There are two main paths for entering the field of education: (1) a traditional route and (2) an alternate route. It is important to note that each route offers a high variability in programs.

Traditional route. The traditional route allows prospective teachers to enter university settings in order to earn degrees in education. Typically, teacher education programs are 4 or 5 years in length; they include course work and practicum experiences, and students exit with degrees.

Alternate route. The alternate route offers abbreviated tracks into the classroom. This route, which comprises programs that vary in length and intensity, is designed for individuals who have bachelor's degrees in fields other than education and seek certification in a teaching area.

Implications for induction. New special education teachers enter the classroom from a variety of preparation routes. Consequently, it is likely that districts will have novice special educators who fall on a continuum of needs. For example, a beginning special educator with a degree in English who completed an alternate route through a summer institute and will take education course work throughout her first 2 years will likely need intense assistance in instructional and behavior strategies. In contrast, a beginning special educator with a master's degree in special education and a strong foundational command of instructional content and teaching strategies may need help refining his or her practices. Understanding the preparation with which novice special education teachers enter the classroom helps district professionals assess and address teachers' needs.

Classroom Context

Most special education teachers have a broad certification in pre-K-12 special education, which allows them to work in a variety of classroom contexts. Moreover, special educators teach within multiple service delivery models with students of varying disabilities and often in high-needs locations.

Grade levels pre-K-12. Beginning special educators may accept positions in settings ranging from preschool through high school.

Delivery models. New special education teachers may receive positions in a variety of instructional contexts. They may co-teach in general education classrooms, work in resource rooms and full-time special education settings, or serve as consultants.

Student population. Beginning special educators often teach students across disability areas (e.g., autism, learning disabilities, behavior and emotional disorders, intellectual disabilities).

High-needs locations. Schools in rural and urban areas have different challenges. A beginning special education teacher in a rural location may be the only new special educator in a school and may be required to meet the needs of students across grade levels, content areas, and disability designations. A beginning special educator in an urban setting may not be the lone special education teacher, but he or she may be part of a junior teaching staff with little or no veteran teachers in the building. New special education teachers in any high-needs school must tackle issues related to the context (e.g., fewer resources, academically and behaviorally challenging students) at the same time they deal with the struggles of being first-year teachers.

***Implications for induction*.** It is critical for district leaders to understand the prior preparation and experiences of new special education teachers in order to assess these teachers' needs. For example, novice special educators may not have prior practicum experiences in their current teaching contexts. For instance,

- a beginning special educator with practicum experience in an elementary school may teach in a middle school,
- a new special educator with little knowledge about working with students with autism may teach in a co-teaching setting where these are the primary students served, or
- a novice special education teacher may teach in a rural middle school where he or she is responsible for multiple content areas and students of varying disabilities.

Understanding the classroom context assists mentors in providing the appropriate support for new special education teachers.

Experiences

The following information about the experiences of beginning special education teachers comes from two sources—Billingsley et al. (2009) and Jones, Youngs, and Frank (2011).

The experiences of new special education teachers narrow down to three main concerns: (1) inclusion, collaboration, and interactions with adults; (2) pedagogical concerns; and

(3) managing roles. Induction experiences and the mentoring preferences of novice special education teachers are also significant.

The experiences of beginning special education teachers vary greatly and depend on multiple factors. Teacher self-efficacy and perceived support, for example, contribute to the overall experiences of new special educators.

Inclusion, collaboration, and interactions with adults.

Inclusion and collaboration with general educators. Novice special education teachers may face challenges in collaborating with general educators due to

- general educators' resistance to teaching or accommodating students with disabilities;
- inadequate time to collaborate with general educators because of large, overwhelming caseloads;
- general and special educators' inadequate knowledge of collaboration and how to include students with disabilities; and
- lack of physical proximity to general educators.

Interactions with colleagues. Interactions with colleagues make a difference to novice special education teachers because

- informal support from colleagues and mentors can increase commitment among novice special educators and may have as much, if not more, effect than formal mentoring;
- poor relationships with colleagues can increase the chance of burnout among beginning special educators;
- new special educators' perceptions of collegial support are as important as the actual support they receive;
- general educators invested in the success of students with disabilities are more likely than those who are not invested to provide new special educators with needed resources; and
- beginning special educators who feel a sense of belonging in the school are more likely than those who do not feel connected to access resources from colleagues.

Interactions with administrators. New special education teachers value positive and supportive relationships with administrators; therefore, principals should create a culture of collaboration among general education teachers and beginning special educators. Beginning special education teachers with supportive administrators have

- higher levels of commitment,
- more opportunities for PD,
- fewer problems and less stress,

- higher job satisfaction and less burnout, and
- more perseverance and resources to support working through challenges with inclusion.

Interactions with paraprofessionals. Often, paraprofessionals have been at a school longer than new special educators, and they know both the students and the school. Novice special educators sometimes find it challenging to work with paraprofessionals. Beginning special education teachers may

- be reluctant to manage, train, and evaluate adults who are often older than they are;
- feel inadequately prepared to supervise, manage, and coordinate paraprofessionals; and
- require additional help and training in working with paraprofessionals.

Interactions with parents. New special education teachers need assistance with parent communication and planning and conducting parent conferences. Challenges identified by novice special education teachers include

- low parent involvement,
- anxiety about initial interactions and subsequent follow-ups, and
- uneasiness in conducting different types of meetings.

Pedagogical concerns. Beginning special education teachers' responsibilities vary depending on their students, service models, and content areas. Like beginning general education teachers, new special educators need help. New special educators, however, require attention to curriculum, teaching, and assessment; materials; and behavior management. Beginning special education teachers also come from different preparation programs; therefore, differences in initial preparation may influence how comfortable they are with the curriculum and the content of their lessons.

Curriculum, teaching, and assessment. New special education teachers must be able to meet the needs of their students across a range of areas, including

- academics,
- social skills,
- assessment,
- learning strategies,
- transition,
- instructional and assistive technologies, and
- alternative instructional delivery methods.

Materials. It is important to provide sufficient materials and resources for novice special educators because they may not know how to pull from alternative resources or how to use what is available whereas seasoned teachers are better able to draw upon a multitude of sources.

Behavior management. Beginning special educators grapple with

- managing challenging student behaviors;
- students' refusal to work; and
- power struggles and disruptive student behavior (e.g., throwing chairs, verbal aggression, making sexual gestures).

Some new special educators request more administrative support, and others handle behavior issues in house by finding alternative tasks and avoiding power struggles with disruptive students.

Managing roles. Novice special education teachers may become frustrated when heavy caseloads, scheduling problems, role confusion, and non-teaching demands reduce their instructional time with students.

Caseloads. Large, complex caseloads may prevent beginning special education teachers from providing effective instruction and behavior management. New special educators may struggle with trying to accommodate the multiple levels and needs of their students.

Scheduling problems. Time management is a critical concern for novice special educators who often need help with managing their time while teaching, planning lessons, writing IEPs, and scheduling meetings.

Role confusion. Beginning special education teachers may deal with role uncertainty and conflicting expectations from administrators, colleagues, and parents. Some schools have clearly defined procedures and responsibilities while others do not. Role confusion may create a sense of anxiety and disconnectedness among new special educators and may contribute to job dissatisfaction. Some teachers also have problems organizing and managing their varied responsibilities (e.g., instructional demands, IEPs, working with many different people).

Non-teaching demands. New special education teachers need help writing meaningful IEP goals and objectives, notifying parents, scheduling meetings, and managing other logistics.

Induction experiences. Emerging research suggests that the support that stems from induction and mentoring programs may increase the retention, effectiveness, job manageability, and overall success of beginning special education teachers. New special education teachers report that induction assists in the application of teacher preparation in the classroom,

pedagogical content knowledge, and classroom management. Overall, induction for novice special educators may have a positive effect on teacher and student achievement.

Mentoring preferences of beginning special education teachers. Research from surveys yields mixed results about the preferences beginning special education teachers have for their mentors; however, there are several characteristics and qualities identified as most valuable.

Qualities of mentors. Emotional support is among the highly ranked qualities of special education mentors. Mentors perceived as emotionally supportive effectively communicate and are sensitive to the needs of new teachers; they are also

- approachable,
- caring,
- open,
- respectful,
- patient, and
- sensitive to the changing needs of new teachers.

New special educators are more likely to seek help and find the induction process more effective when they are paired with mentors who

- teach students with similar characteristics (e.g., age, disability);
- teach the same grade level and subjects; and
- understand special education procedures, paperwork, and instruction.

Frequency of mentoring. Formal and informal support from mentors is valuable. Mentors received highly effective ratings when they had either formal or informal contact with beginning special education teachers at least once per week. Formal support includes scheduling meetings, facilitating collaboration and communication, and providing emotional support. Informal support includes unannounced visits, handwritten notes, phone calls, and emails.

Content of mentoring. The content of mentors' interactions with new special education teachers should include

- emotional availability and understanding (e.g., supporting through listening, sharing experiences, providing encouragement) of the challenging aspects of teaching;
- support with school and district procedures and assistance with paperwork;
- support with curriculum, materials, behavior management, and other strategies;
- help with addressing professional areas such as cultural competence and diversity, supporting families, and integrating IEP goals into the general curriculum; and
- encouragement of reflection through open-ended questions about data and implementation efforts to allow novice special education teachers to reflect on their own practices.

Good Job Match

Perhaps one of the most important steps that leaders can take is to ensure that beginning teachers are suited to their assigned positions. Taking time to consider applicants' backgrounds, as well as their dispositions and preferences, will help leaders make decisions about the extent to which applicants are good matches for certain positions. A well-developed job interview is essential to this task. Table 1 provides examples of interview questions used to assess prospective special educators' experiences, preparation, and readiness for teaching. Making notes about each candidate's strengths and needs not only helps with hiring decisions, but can also be used to determine areas of needed support. More specifically, leaders should consider the following areas of job match:

- Area of disability: To what extent are prospective applicants prepared for the range of students they will teach (e.g., students with autism spectrum disorders [ASD], learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities)?
- Age and grade level: Do the applicants have preparation and experience at the target age and grade level?
- Content preparation: To what extent do the prospective teachers have preparation in the content they will teach (e.g., reading, mathematics)?
- Program model: What are the applicants' experiences in varied work settings? (e.g., co-teaching settings, resource rooms, full-time classrooms)?

In addition, conducting interviews at the school allows applicants to understand the culture of the school and determine whether a position is consistent with what they hope to achieve in their work. In this sense, the interview is an introduction to teaching assignments and for those who are hired, the beginning of induction.

Table 2

Interview Questions for Prospective Special Education Teachers

Areas	Possible Questions	Strengths and Needs
Experience and Preparation for Position	• Tell us about yourself and your preparation for this position.	
State Requirements: (1) Licensure (2) Required teacher tests College program accreditation	• Tell us about your current licensure status in this and other states.	
Teacher Dispositions	• How would your students describe you? • Tell us about what you bring to this position? • What was your biggest challenge in your last job or internship; how did you address this challenge?	
Teacher Roles	• Describe your ideal teaching position. • What do you view as the role of the special educator in the school? • What concerns do you have about filling this role?	
View of Special Education	• What are the characteristics of effective instructional environments for students with disabilities?	
Understanding Students With Disabilities	• Describe the needs of a student with disabilities with whom you have worked over a period of time.	
Understanding Diversity and Working With Families	• Describe considerations you have made in addressing the needs of students and families from diverse backgrounds. • How do you communicate with parents?	
Assessment and Monitoring of Learning	• Describe strategies you use to assess student learning. • How do you prepare students for state assessments?	

Areas	Possible Questions	Strengths and Needs
Collaboration and Co-Teaching	• Tell us about your experiences collaborating with general educators. • Give an example of a situation that worked well and any challenges you encountered. • What are various ways that you could collaborate and/or co-teach with general educators?	
Knowledge of Content and State Standards	• How do you teach to the state standards? • What content area(s) do you feel best prepared to teach and at what levels? • For the area you selected, outline some considerations that are important to teaching that content.	
Instructional Strategies	• What teaching strategies have you used in your teaching? • How do you decide which teaching strategies to use?	
Individualized Education Program (IEP) Transition Planning	• How you would facilitate an IEP meeting? • How would you incorporate transition planning in the IEP?	
Student Behavior	• How would you work with a student who regularly disrupts class and refuses to cooperate?	
Paraprofessionals	• How would you establish a positive working relationship with paraprofessionals?	
Assistive Technology	• Describe your experiences or training using assistive technology.	

Note. Adapted from *Cultivating and Keeping Committed Special Education Teachers*, by B. Billingsley, 2005. Copyright 2005 by Corwin Press. Adapted with permission.

Chapter 3:
Determining District Goals and Readiness for Induction

Induction is important in supporting beginning teacher development. As district professionals develop induction programs targeting the needs of new special education teachers, the first task is to create clearly defined goals. Goals should define both what district professionals will try to achieve (i.e., outcome goals) and what they will do to reach their desired outcomes (i.e., process goals). Listed below are examples of outcome and process goals for improving teacher effectiveness and increasing teacher commitment and retention.

Improving Teacher Effectiveness

Improving teacher effectiveness is an important goal for any induction program. Because special education teachers perform diverse roles in schools, a variety of components contribute to teacher effectiveness. New special education teachers must be able to provide effective instruction to students; collaborate with parents and other professionals; and collect, analyze, and manage data and records. These responsibilities can challenge novice special education teachers.

Improving instructional effectiveness. New special education teachers have diverse placements that often necessitate they master several content areas, evidence-based special education pedagogy, and behavior management skills.

Outcome goal. Beginning special education teachers will improve their knowledge and skill in implementing evidence-based practices in literacy, mathematics, and other content-areas of instruction.

Process goals. Beginning special education teachers will

- create action plans to improve their knowledge and skill in implementing evidence-based instruction,
- regularly meet with mentors,
- attend PD workshops in indicated needs areas, and
- receive observation on several occasions by mentors and/or principal.

Mentor teachers will

- assist mentees in establishing their action plan goals,
- observe mentees and provide feedback on a monthly basis,
- help mentees identify PD resources to meet their goals, and
- keep records of their interactions with mentees and monitor mentees' progress.

Administrators will

- identify school-based colleagues who can assist beginning special education teachers in meeting their action plan goals,
- support new special education teachers in identifying learning opportunities, and
- assist novice special educators in finding instructional materials and resources appropriate to their instruction goals.

Increasing collaboration. Interacting with other adults in a positive and productive manner is a critical skill for special education teachers. Most special education teachers must collaborate daily with a variety of adults, including general education colleagues, paraprofessionals, parents, administrators, and other service providers. Through collaboration with general education teachers, special education teachers working on grade-level teams and in co-teaching classrooms plan for, deliver, and evaluate education.

Outcome goal. Beginning special education teachers will improve their knowledge and skills in communicating, interacting, and solving problems with other special education teachers, general education colleagues, paraprofessionals, parents, administrators, and other service providers.

Process goals. Beginning special educators will

- learn effective communication skills to use with general education colleagues,
- learn to negotiate conflict with mentors and administrators,
- engage in collaborative planning,
- use strategies for communicating the results of data analyses,
- understand the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals and other service providers, and
- communicate with administrators on a regular basis.

Mentor teachers will

- model effective communication techniques and strategies;
- help mentees learn to effectively deal with conflicts and solve problems;
- assist mentees in engaging in collaborative planning;
- help mentees develop proficiency in communicating the results of data analyses; and
- partner with mentees to create open lines of communication between colleagues, other professionals, and parents.

Administrators will

- effectively communicate the roles and responsibilities of beginning special education teachers, general education teachers, paraprofessionals, and other service providers in serving students with disabilities;

- encourage mutual respect among professionals;
- set school learning goals that address the needs of all students;
- assign reasonable roles and activities to new special education teachers;
- facilitate collaboration between novice special educators and general educators;
- communicate with beginning special education teachers on a regular basis; and
- assist new special educators with parent communication when needed.

Improving data management. Collecting, analyzing, and organizing data are responsibilities of special education teachers who must manage caseloads of students and keep and update IEPs. Special education teachers must also collect and analyze academic and behavioral student data to inform instruction.

Outcome goal. Beginning special education teachers will learn methods of collecting, recording, analyzing, and organizing student data in ways that inform instruction.

Process goals. Beginning special educators will

- discuss with mentors appropriate data collection methods,
- report to mentors about how they analyze and use data to assess and inform instruction, and
- organize and integrate data to present to others (e.g., parents, professionals) and use to inform IEPs.

Mentor teachers will

- explain and model how mentees can use data collection methods for various purposes (e.g., IEPs, inform instructional goals, assess progress), and
- explain and model how to organize and integrate data to write IEPs and present data to parents and other mentees.

Administrators will

- ensure that beginning special education teachers have time to collect and analyze classroom data,
- support new special education teachers in communicating data results to other professionals and parents, and
- ensure that general education colleagues assume some responsibility for working with novice special educators to improve student data.

Increasing Teacher Commitment and Retention

A strong commitment to teaching special education is important for district leaders. Teachers who experience success in their work are more likely than teachers who do not experience success to be satisfied with their jobs and feel committed to the school and special education

teaching. Unfortunately, new special educators are more likely than their senior colleagues to move from one school or district to another. High levels of turnover are disruptive to the workplace and student learning. The primary goals of an induction and mentoring program should be to help teachers have a positive experience as they transition into teaching and increase teacher commitment and retention.

Helping new teachers become part of the school. Helping new teachers become part of the school is an important component of induction. A positive school climate and welcoming environment can help special education teachers develop positive relationships with colleagues and feel part of the school.

Outcome goal. Beginning special education teachers will report an overall positive and supportive experience in their schools during the first years; they will indicate that they feel valued and connected to their students, general and special educators, and administrators.

Process goals. Beginning special education teachers will

- regularly meet with school-based mentors;
- regularly meet with administrators;
- participate in general education teams (e.g., grade-level teams, teacher learning groups), data teams, and PD activities; and
- solve problems with mentors regarding school politics and other work dilemmas.

Mentor teachers will

- regularly meet with mentees;
- orient mentees to school layout, school procedures, and school and district policies;
- introduce mentees to colleagues and other relevant personnel; and
- listen to mentees' concerns and assist in focusing on solutions.

Administrators will

- welcome beginning special education teachers to the school with orientation and introductions to school staff and resources,
- organize schedules or provide release time to facilitate collaboration,
- discuss with new special education teachers concerns and solutions to conflicts, and
- ensure that general education colleagues productively work with novice special education teachers.

Increasing job satisfaction, commitment, and retention. As with any job or profession, job satisfaction tends to result in greater commitment to the organization and the profession. To reduce teacher turnover and increase commitment, induction and mentoring programs should

assess the extent to which special education teachers are satisfied with their jobs and if they are not satisfied, to address areas that can help improve satisfaction.

Outcome goal. Beginning special education teachers will report being satisfied with their jobs (e.g., teacher retention will improve with 95% retention among first-year teachers).

Process goals. Beginning special education teachers will

- regularly attend work,
- express to mentors that they are able to manage the different responsibilities of their jobs,
- demonstrate confidence in their instruction, and
- indicate that they are enjoying their current positions.

Mentor teachers will

- provide mentees with both positive feedback and constructive assistance to help them with their job performance,
- discuss mentees' concerns and issues and work to resolve problems, and
- advocate for mentees' needs.

Administrators will

- create an encouraging environment for beginning special education teachers,
- discuss and provide support for problems encountered by new special education teachers, and
- attempt to match novice special educators to desired positions.

Determining District Readiness

The next step is for leaders to assess the district's readiness to develop an induction program so that they can achieve the selected goals. The Implementation Matrix was designed to help district professionals make this determination of need through the identification of strengths and weaknesses. The Matrix worksheet guides individuals through a series of questions to identify the current level of implementation, and it directs readers to specific areas of the manual for assistance.

Developing a Fiscal Plan for Supporting the Mentoring Program

In order to sustain a long-term mentoring program, leaders must proactively address the need for financial resources to support the program. Many districts leaders have a dedicated budget for formal mentoring that includes items such as stipends for mentors, materials and resources, and PD opportunities for mentors and new special education teachers. In many cases, the scope of this budget determines the level of support beginning special education teachers receive. If district professionals do not have a robust budget for mentoring, other resources such as Title II

funds are sometimes available. Also, grant funds or additional funding from the State Department of Education may be available to build a mentoring program while allowing time for the investigation of more sustained funding options. It is also important to keep in mind that there are costs associated with not supporting new teachers, including separation and recruiting costs and the possibility of higher attrition, lost investments in PD, and school instability.

Chapter 4:
Developing Orientation Programs

Providing school- or district-based orientation before school begins helps prepare beginning special education teachers for the exciting first weeks in the classroom. Suggestions for orientation goals and activities are listed below. An example of structuring orientation for new special education teachers is also included in this section.

Goals for Orientation

Goal 1. Orient participants to school and district policies and procedures.

Activities.

- Provide beginning special education teachers with a policies and procedures handbook.
- Show new special education teachers how and when to complete major paperwork requirements.
- Share a list of personnel available to help new special educators.

Goal 2. Familiarize participants with district and school instructional expectations.

Activities.

- Review expectations of district, principal, parents, and colleagues for specific teaching positions.
- Have different people (e.g., superintendent, principal) speak about expectations.
- Teach appropriate strategies for dealing with expectations.
- Provide district contact information for instances in which there are unresolved differences in expectations.

Goal 3. Meet and begin establishing relationships among beginning special education teachers; set schedules with mentors.

Activities.

- Facilitate mentor/mentee icebreakers.
- Review roles and responsibilities.
- Discuss mentor/mentee expectations.
- Set schedule for the first month.

Goal 4. Offer strategies and tips for the first days, weeks, and months of school.

Activities.

- Provide time for mentor/mentee co-planning.
- Schedule mentor visits to mentee classrooms to help set up classrooms for success.
- Arrange mentee visits to veteran classrooms.
- Develop first day or first week to-do checklist.
- Provide a calendar for the school year with key dates and reminders.

Goal 5. Provide an overview of special education policies and procedures. (Beginning special educator orientations often do not include this goal, but it is essential for helping beginning special education teachers feel prepared for the start of school.)

Activities.

- Provide overview of district and school procedures for special education paperwork (e.g., IEP, behavior management plan, manifestation).
- Practice writing IEP, behavior management plan, transition plan, and protocol for running meetings.
- Share information about individual students on caseload and allow time for review and discussion with mentors in preparing IEP meetings.
- Review district alternative assessment.
- Highlight the role that state assessments play in determining the progress of students with disabilities.
- Discuss the plan for communicating and establishing relationships with general education colleagues.

Sample Orientation

What follows is an example of one district's 3-day orientation schedule for novice general educators with separate sessions designed for beginning special education teachers. This is a district-based orientation, but teachers within the same school and region work together to create community. Items in black apply to all beginning teachers. Items in blue apply to beginning special education teachers. Beginning special education teachers have an additional day to address content related to special education.

First Day of Orientation

Activity	Who?	What?
Breakfast/meet and greet	Beginning teachers, superintendent, and school- or region-based supervisors	Superintendent and supervisors welcome beginning teachers, give them a district overview, and discuss with them expectations from both the school and district levels.
Induction program overview and expectations	Beginning teachers and induction supervisor	Induction supervisor gives beginning teachers an overview of the program and reviews beginning teachers' expectations for induction.
Break-out meeting with district supervisor	Beginning special education teachers and district supervisor	Beginning special education teachers review expectations for special education.
Question/answer session	Everyone	

Second Day of Orientation

Activity	Who?	What?
Breakfast/networking	Beginning teachers and mentors	Beginning teachers get to know each other and their new mentors.
Meet your mentor	Beginning teachers and mentors	Mentors welcome beginning teachers, facilitate icebreakers, and help pave the way for a successful socialization process.
Setting up your classroom	Beginning special education teachers and mentors	Mentors discuss with beginning special education teachers general routines and the basics of setting up a successful classroom.
Typical first-month challenges	Beginning special education teachers and mentors	Mentors teach beginning special education teachers about common obstacles and strategies for overcoming them.
Goal setting	Beginning special education teachers and mentors	Mentors assist beginning special education teachers with creating realistic goals for the first month of school.
Mentoring expectations	Beginning special education teachers and mentors	Mentors discuss with beginning special education teachers first-month mentoring schedules, mentor/mentee expectations, and where-to-go-for-help topics.

Third Day of Orientation
Special Education Teachers Only

Activity	Who?	What?
Breakfast/networking	Beginning special education teachers and mentors	Beginning special education teachers get to know each other and their new mentors.
Special education policies and procedures	Beginning special education teachers and mentors	Mentors review with beginning special education teachers IEP policies and procedures, data collection, behavior plans, transition plans, RtI, meetings, scheduling, alternate assessment, and caseloads.
Paraprofessional supervision	Beginning special education teachers and mentors	Mentors discuss with beginning special education teachers strategies for supervising paraprofessionals.
Collaboration with general education peers and other service providers	Beginning special education teachers and mentors	Mentors discuss with beginning special education teachers strategies for establishing relationships with general education colleagues and service providers.
Survival tips for beginning special education teachers	Beginning special education teachers and mentors	Mentors review with beginning special education teachers easy-to-implement strategies before these teachers report to their classrooms.

Chapter 5:
Creating Supportive Work Contexts

Principals and district leaders often work together to provide new teachers with key supports; however, principals and assistant principals are usually the administrators with which special educators interact the most, so their roles in supporting teachers are crucial.

A key role of district leadership is to ensure that principals have the knowledge and skills to support teachers as they work to facilitate the learning of all students in their schools, including those with disabilities. Unfortunately, in some schools, educators have low expectations for students with disabilities or see students with disabilities as others' responsibility. When this is the case, special education teachers serve as the primary advocates for students with disabilities, sometimes in settings where advocacy is not welcome. In particular, beginning special educators struggle when they are the primary or lone advocates for students in their schools.

Supporting New Teachers Through a Supportive School Community

Principals support new teachers by helping them work with other school staff members to ensure that everyone works together to help students with disabilities succeed within the general education curriculum. A key role for principals is to explicitly support inclusive schools and emphasize everyone's role in helping students with disabilities achieve. Principals who clearly voice their support for students with disabilities send the message that all students with disabilities within the school are welcome, valued, and supported by both general and special education teachers. Table 2 outlines strategies principals can implement to support new special education teachers.

Beginning Special Education Teachers:

"My principal is supportive, and knowing she is there to help is what makes all the difference for me . . . I may not always get what I request, but I do know she cares about my students, and she includes us like anyone else in the school."

"I have a wonderful, supportive principal. I'm not going anywhere."

Table 3

Creating a Supportive School Community for Beginning Special Education Teachers

Goals	Strategies
Create a Welcoming School Community	• Openly welcome all beginning special education teachers. • Treat all beginning special education teachers as equal members of the school community. • Encourage the school community to take an active role in supporting beginning special education teachers. • Periodically check in with beginning special education teachers. • Communicate to beginning special education teachers a willingness and availability to help.
Develop an Inclusive Community	• Develop a school mission that includes the importance of serving all students. • Involve all teachers in discussing how to help students with disabilities achieve. • Keep beginning special education teachers in physical proximity of other teachers. • Involve beginning special education teachers in grade-level teams and professional learning communities. • Support general educators and beginning special education teachers in similar ways. • Take an interest in students with disabilities. • Include students with disabilities in school activities.
Provide Emotional Support to Beginning Special Education Teachers	• Listen to beginning special education teachers. • Ask for input from beginning special education teachers while making decisions. • Communicate confidence in beginning special educators. • Provide encouragement to beginning special education teachers. • Recognize beginning special education teachers' accomplishments.
Facilitate General and Special Education Teacher Collaboration	• Encourage ongoing communication among special and general educators. • Set expectations for general and special educator collaboration. • Provide professional learning support on the topic of teacher collaboration. • Facilitate the development of schedules that encourage teacher collaboration.
Encourage Connections with Others	• Provide opportunities for beginning special education teachers to spend time with exemplary teachers in school or visit teachers in other schools. • Jointly meet with beginning special education teachers to discuss needs.

Mary Kate McGinnis, Teacher Induction, IRIS Module:

"I don't feel like before I started my job, and somebody said, 'These are your expectations. This is what you're expected to do.' And that left me with a lot more questions than would have been necessary if someone would have said, 'This is what you need to do. This is what you're expected to do as far as meetings, as far as expectations on a lot of different things.' Sometimes I would do things that I later found out I didn't need to do, so that would have saved me some extra work. Luckily, I had a really good mentor teacher, and she was very helpful, and I was able to go to her with a lot of questions."

Strategies for Deliberate Role Design

New special educators sometimes express confusion about what is expected of them, especially when there are no other experienced special education teachers in the school to guide them. When role expectations are not clear, beginning special education teachers may find it difficult to direct their energy in productive ways. In addition, if there are not adequate school structures (e.g., careful scheduling, time for collaboration, discipline guidelines), novice special educators may find it difficult to accomplish key goals.

A key responsibility for new special education teachers is to organize their work, as well as paraprofessionals' work, in ways that benefit their students. Leaders and mentors should help novice special education teachers clarify their roles; acquire the resources they need; provide supports (e.g., discipline policies, guidelines for working with paraprofessionals); and help them protect their teaching time (see Table 3). New special educators may have the following questions:

- What must I do to work out my schedule with general education teachers?
- How do I address the needs of my students when I cannot be in some classrooms?
- Where do I find reading materials that are appropriate for my students?
- What technology is available to help me with my work?
- How do I coordinate the role of paraprofessionals?
- How do I manage the paperwork and still have time to teach?
- How do I teach when I am struggling with student discipline?

Beginning Special Education Teachers:

"I am struggling with trying to teach classes in four different subject areas and several grades, and I am buried in paperwork."

"I can't implement my lesson because I have a few students who are so disruptive, and I can't seem to get that under control."

"I am learning the content along with my students, and that makes for a not very good lesson sometimes."

Table 4

Strategies for Deliberate Role Design

Goals	Strategies
Provide Protected Status	• Reduce caseload in the initial year and/or reduce number of subjects beginning special educators teach. • Reduce initial expectations/provide assistance with initial eligibility meetings, IEPs, and paperwork. • Encourage mentors to help outline a plan for difficult meetings.
Clarify Job Expectations	• Clarify major expectations. • Help beginning special education teachers establish priorities. • Identify job roles that may be delegated.
Assist With Scheduling	• Solicit input from beginning special education teachers while designing the master schedule. • Outline strategies for scheduling. • Support the scheduling of students that allow beginning special education teachers to maximize their instructional time. • Provide example of prior schedules. • Have mentors assist with initial schedule.
Assess Resource Needs	• Assess resource needs several times throughout the first year. • Provide materials inventory from the prior year. • Explain procedures for ordering materials; provide a budget. • Inform beginning special education teachers about sources of resources in the district (e.g., lending libraries). • Work with other leaders and mentors to help provide needed resources.
Provide Disciplinary Support	• Provide school-wide expectations about discipline. • Suggest resources for managing student behavior (http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/iris-resource-locator/). • Consider school-wide positive behavioral supports (www.pbis.org). • Facilitate development of crisis plans for students with chronic and challenging behaviors.
Assist With Meetings	• Attend initial IEP meetings and key meeting with parents and advocates. • Encourage mentor to lead initial IEP meetings to model practices. • Provide written guidelines for IEP development. • Attend meetings that may be challenging for the beginning special education teacher.

Goals	Strategies
Provide Guidelines for Paraprofessionals	• Provide written guidelines for paraprofessionals. • Offer examples of paraprofessional schedules. • Give tips for working with and supervising paraprofessionals.
Assist With Organization and Time Concerns	• Set realistic goals and develop to-do lists. • Provide a calendar with key due dates (e.g., IEPs, PD, faculty meetings). • Assist with organizing student data. • Provide organizational strategies for working across general education settings (e.g., using a binder, hanging file box, technology). • Assist with setting up student file system.
Explain Teacher Evaluation System	• Clarify expectations and evaluation processes. • Clarify how beginning special education teachers are evaluated if evaluation differs from what other teachers receive. • Offer positive and constructive feedback about beginning special education teachers' performance prior to formal evaluations.

Chapter 6:
Determining Mentoring Structure

Determining the structure of mentoring is an important step in creating a comprehensive induction program. This section highlights five mentoring structures: (1) full-time mentoring, (2) part-time mentoring, (3) group mentoring, (4) e-mentoring, and (5) multi-layered support. It also features overviews of the mentors' roles and the potential advantages and disadvantages of each mentor structure (see Table 4); offers examples of mentoring structures from model programs; and details how frequently mentors and mentees should meet. Last, this section includes a link to the *Mentor Handbook: Supporting Beginning Special Educators* (Kamman et al., 2013), which includes information about the types of content mentors should consider while working with beginning special education teachers.

Full-Time Mentoring

Full-time mentors are typically veteran special educators who devote 100% of their professional time to mentoring new special education teachers. Full-time mentors usually receive a teacher salary plus a supplement. Mentors may work beyond the teacher contract period and sometimes assist with new teacher orientation, PD, and program coordination.

Full-time mentoring has several benefits. It allows mentors to solely concentrate on supporting novice special education teachers instead of juggling mentoring with their own teaching demands. A full-time structure can also facilitate matching mentors and mentees by experience, disability area, or grade level. Furthermore, full-time mentors have more availability and scheduling flexibility; they are seldom relegated to meeting during lunch, planning time, or after school. Full-time status allows mentors the flexibility to watch mentees teach or model lessons and meet at any time of the day at the mentees' convenience. Full-time mentors often have interactions with collegial groups to help them solve problems while addressing the needs of struggling mentees. One disadvantage of a full-time structure is its high cost. Additionally, full-time mentors are not based in the schools and are not immediately available to assist mentees with crises. Finally, full-time mentors are not part of the school culture and may have more difficulty helping mentees with school-based dynamics.

Part-Time Mentoring

Part-time mentors are usually veteran teachers assigned to schools that have beginning special education teachers. Mentoring is an added responsibility that comes with compensation (e.g., reduced instructional duties, stipends). Although part-time mentoring may reduce the cost to the district, it may also increase the stress on mentors, who must balance mentoring and teaching responsibilities; often, part-time mentors devote planning, lunch, or after-school free time to their mentees. One advantage of part-time mentoring is that mentees have immediate access to colleagues in the same building. The mentors' proximity and ready access help alleviate feelings of isolation, foster socialization into the school community, and build

foundations for later collegial collaboration, can be established. One common challenge is matching veterans with new special education teachers. Given the small number of special education teachers at a given school, it may not be possible to closely match mentors and mentees by disability area or grade level. In some schools, there may not be a veteran special educator in the building.

Group Mentoring

In group mentoring, a veteran teacher serves as a mentor to a group of novice special education teachers with similar classroom contexts. Full- or part-time mentors receive compensation according to assignment. In this structure, the group collaborates to solve individual instructional challenges. Because the mentor/mentee ratio is larger, school and district professionals can maximize the pool of qualified mentors. Mentees who work in groups often develop a bond and build a network of support for each other. Although the group members may set goals that are common among several mentees, a disadvantage of this structure is that mentees may not get the individual attention they need to professionally develop and improve their instructional skills (e.g., modeling, collaborative lesson planning). In this format, some instructional problems of mentees may be overlooked. Moreover, some mentees may be reluctant to bring up their classroom problems in a group setting.

E-Mentoring

E-mentoring is a new and innovative approach that utilizes technology (e.g., email, blogs, discussion boards, chat rooms, wiki, website content, Skype) to provide support. School assignment does not limit mentors; mentors are selected based on their expertise and carefully matched to mentees. Mentees and mentors have flexibility regarding when they post questions, answers, and general comments. In addition, the accessible nature of email and discussion forum postings allows for easy access at home or school. Furthermore, reading email and postings requires individuals to sign in, thus producing a permanent record of participation. E-mentors may have full- or part-time status. Because e-mentoring is an emerging model, there is little available information about compensation. One disadvantage of e-mentoring is the required technology infrastructure; a substantial investment from district leaders is necessary. Additionally, mentors are not part of the school culture and may have difficulty helping mentees with community-related issues. Although e-mentoring does provide flexibility, mentees may not have immediate assistance with their concerns. Also, mentors may not be able to observe mentees and provide substantive feedback.

Multi-Layered Support

In a multi-layered mentoring approach, school and district leaders utilize several mentoring structures to provide comprehensive support. For instance, leaders may employ full-time, district-based mentors to focus on mentees' instructional issues and part-time, school-based mentors to help mentees broker school cultures and deal with immediate classroom crises. Although a multi-layered model is more costly to the district and requires communication between all levels of support, it is more likely to meet the needs of all mentees.

Table 5

Mentoring Models

Model	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Full-Time Mentoring	Experienced district-based teachers devote 100% of their professional time to mentoring. Mentors are typically assigned 10 to 20 mentees. In addition to their base salaries, full-time mentors often receive stipends.	• Focus on instructional mentoring. • Better mentor/mentee matching. • Increased mentor availability. • Time for collaboration and PD.	• Substantial fiscal commitment. • Less immediate mentor availability. • Mentors not part of school culture.
Part-Time Mentoring	Experienced teachers receive mentee assignments in the same school as an added responsibility. Part-time mentors usually receive stipends for each mentee they mentor.	• Minimal cost to the district. • Immediate mentor availability. • Assistance for mentees in brokering school culture and peer collaboration.	• Difficult to manage teaching and mentoring responsibilities. • Difficult to match mentors/mentees in some locations.
Group Mentoring	Full- or part-time mentors support a small group of mentees.	• Increased pool of qualified mentors. • Encourages collaboration. • Facilitates peer support. • Costs less than full-time mentoring.	• Lack of mentor/mentee confidentiality. • Limited contact with mentors. • Difficult to meet individual needs.
E-Mentoring	Full- or part-time mentors interact with mentees via technology such as email, blogs, discussion boards, chat rooms, wiki, website content, and Skype.	• Not limited by location/time. • Precise mentor/mentee matching. • Allows for easy access. • Produces archived information.	• Requires technology infrastructure. • Mentors not a part of school culture. • Lack of assistance for immediate concerns.
Multi-Layered Support	Leaders utilize several models of mentoring to meet mentees' needs.	• Comprehensive support. • Mentees less likely to feel unsupported.	• Extensive communication between all levels of support. • Substantial fiscal commitment.

The NCIPP recommendation is to use a multi-layered structure for providing the most comprehensive support for beginning special education teachers. Two district exemplars of induction and mentoring programs that implement a multi-layered structure are as follows:

Olathe Unified Public Schools (OUSD), Kansas:

Olathe Unified Public Schools implements mentoring using a two-tiered structure. Beginning teachers receive support from a full-time, district-based instructional resource teacher and a part-time, building-level mentor. Instructional resource teachers provide individual instructional assistance, collaborate with beginners to design professional development, and help novices with any other classroom concerns. Building-level mentors primarily focus on school-level policies and procedures. Click here for a full description of how OUSD's two-tiered mentor structure meets the needs of novice special educators.

Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD), Missouri:

The Special School District employs a multi-leveled structure for mentoring. Beginning teachers receive support from (a) school-based mentors; (b) full-time, district-based instructional facilitators; and (c) IEP partners. The three mentors provide complementary supports for beginning teachers. School-based mentors provide assistance with school-level policies and procedures, location of resources and materials, problems that crop up, and immediate instructional concerns. Instructional facilitators are primarily concerned with planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development for beginning special education teachers. IEP partners assist beginners with procedural rules and regulations. Click here for a full description of how SSD's multi-leveled mentor structure meets the needs of novice special educators.

Developing Guidelines for Frequency of Mentor/Mentee Interactions

Many factors influence how often mentors interact with their new special education teachers, but there are two main considerations at play: (1) formal mentoring requirements for number of observations and meetings and (2) level of difficulty that the beginning special education teachers face in their instructional contexts. Setting and enforcing guidelines for the frequency of interactions between mentors and mentees will ensure that new special education teachers and their mentors have a clear understanding of the time commitment required in the mentoring

program. For example, one program may have requirements for biweekly observations and feedback meetings while another may have requirements for primary email correspondences that include weekly check-ins, sharing of lesson plans and student data, and virtual problem-solving meetings through Skype or FaceTime. In addition to scheduling these formal meetings, there should be clear guidelines for how novice special education teachers will receive support when struggling with their job responsibilities; these guidelines may include expectations for communications and a calling tree of whom to contact if assigned mentors are unavailable.

Developing the Content of Mentoring

The content of a mentoring program should include a combination of instructional supports centered around evidence-based teaching practice and emotional supports that beginning special education teachers may require as they transition into their teaching responsibilities. The *Mentor Handbook: Supporting Beginning Special Educators* (Kamman et al., 2013) provides strategies and approaches for mentors to help structure the content of the mentoring experiences they develop and implement with their new special education teachers. This handbook is available both as a document and as a web-based tool with linked resources.

Chapter 7:
Recruiting and Selecting Mentors

Once district professionals have selected a mentoring structure, they must develop a plan for recruiting and selecting mentors for beginning special education teachers. The recruitment and selection of mentors to guide new special educators are of upmost importance to the success of the induction program and, ultimately, the effectiveness of teachers in the district.

The following topics highlighted in this section will help in the creation of the district plan for the recruitment and selection of mentors:

- Mentor characteristics.
- Mentor responsibilities and roles.
- Mentor incentives.
- Application and interview questions.

Induction Program Director:

"When it comes to special education mentors, we select those who are highly skilled and have the most experience. They must be at the top rung of the ladder and must be lead teachers because they are going to have far more strategies due to familiarity with that age group, context, or disability. They will understand what is cognitively and developmentally appropriate. They have a lot more credibility in the field, and this is really important when it comes to teacher trust; if they pass the application phase, they've listed six references, and we call four of those references and ask them how they collaborate with others, what are their leadership skills, how have they gone above and beyond."

Mentor Characteristics

There are many personal and professional characteristics identified as beneficial for mentors.

Personal characteristics. Research in special education indicates that novice special education teachers prefer mentors who are

- strong communicators,
- approachable and available,
- supportive and patient,
- well-organized and responsible,
- respectful,
- complimentary of others, and
- willing to share ideas.

Professional characteristics. Research examining beginning special education teachers' satisfaction with mentoring suggests that successful mentors

- have veteran-teacher status (i.e., 3 or more years of successful teaching experiences in special education);
- have taught students who have similar disabilities, have taught at the same grade level, and have taught the same content as their mentees;
- have knowledge of system information pertaining to the school, district, and special education; and
- are interested in their own PD and collaborate well in their schools.

Mentor Responsibilities and Roles

Mentors of new special education teachers have three primary responsibilities: (1) provide instructional coaching, (2) facilitate novice special education teachers' socialization into their careers and school cultures, and (3) assist novice special educators with the varied problems they may encounter in the first years. There are many different roles related to these responsibilities. During the process of selecting mentors, district professionals must clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of mentors.

Responsibility: mentor as instructional coach.

Role: advisor. If the professional characteristics listed above have been carefully considered, the hired mentors will be highly skilled teachers who have experience with the daily instructional problems and challenges beginning special education teachers face. Their experiences will make them well-suited to fill the advisory role. As advisors, mentors may provide advice on topics such as classroom management, instructional decision making, PD, and using data to make decisions. Specifically, mentors should

- reflect on and discuss classroom practices;
- locate and share materials and example lessons;
- plan, participate in, and direct PD activities; and
- use action plans.

Role: collaborator. Coaching also involves a collaborative relationship in which mentors and mentees work together on instructional design, sharing, and generating ideas for mentees to utilize. To assist in the collaboration role, mentors should

- use reflective questioning,
- co-teach with mentees,
- co-plan with mentees, and
- allow mentees to observe mentors in classroom practice.

Role: evaluator. Mentors must either formally or informally evaluate mentees' professional growth. Mentors must observe, evaluate, and provide feedback to mentees. To assist in the evaluator role, mentors should

- communicate with mentees expectations about the evaluation procedures,
- conduct pre-observation meetings to discuss lesson plans,
- conduct post-observation meetings for reflection and mentor feedback, and
- plan for improvement in classroom practice.

Responsibility: mentor as socialization agent.

***Role: guide*.** Mentors are responsible for guiding mentees through their transitions into a new environment and profession. To ease this challenging transitional phase, mentors should

- provide an overview of school and district rules and policies;
- assist with classroom setup;
- offer procedural support in areas such as school and district paperwork and special education procedures (e.g., setting up, writing, and running IEPs); and
- connect with colleagues and broker school culture.

Role: facilitator. New special education teachers often deal with daily challenges in instruction; communication with paraprofessionals, parents, and general education colleagues; and managing caseloads and IEPs of students with disabilities. Mentors should be empathic during these stressful times and should help mentees by facilitating communication with staff, parents, and administrators. To assist mentees in advocating for themselves, mentors should

- teach effective communication strategies (e.g., reflective listening);
- model; and
- role play difficult scenarios.

Role: encourager. The most frequently cited area of needed support for beginning special education teachers during their first year of teaching is emotional support. Mentees value mentors they identify as supportive and caring. To assist in the encourager role, mentors should

- provide specific praise,
- acknowledge understanding of mentees' challenges,
- reinforce and remind mentees of the positive changes they have made, and
- use action plans to stay focused.

Beginning Special Education Teacher Describing Mentor:

"When she comes in to observe, she comes with a smile on her face. I know she is happy to see me. She is never short of hugs, never short of personally embracing me, and then I know she is truly there for me. She just has that calming effect on me."

Mentor:

"One of the first things that must happen is emotional support. The observation and evaluation process intimidates a lot of novices. One of my goals is to put a non-threatening face on this process. I want to be very encouraging."

Mentor Incentives

Depending on the chosen mentoring structure and the districts' resources, mentor incentives will vary. There are two incentives district professionals can provide to mentors: (1) financial incentives and (2) professional incentives.

Financial incentives. The most common monetary incentive is a stipend directly paid to mentors. For full-time mentors, this may be additional workdays beyond the regular teacher contract or several thousand dollars more than the base teacher salary. Part-time mentor stipends typically range from $500 to $1,200 annually. Part-time mentors may also be released from teaching duties to meet with and observe mentees. If district leaders can afford release time for mentors, it will support them in conducting classroom observations and providing feedback.

Professional incentives. Mentors professionally grow through formal and informal professional training. Mentors may attend national conferences or participate in coaching training. They may also become a part of a mentoring community to improve and change mentor practices. They also learn from their mentees; this can be rewarding by itself.

Application and Interview Questions

District professionals create and align applications and interview questions regarding mentor characteristics, responsibilities and roles, and incentives. Below is an example of an application for a mentor position at Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS). Following this example is the interview protocol used by the Special School District (SSD) of St. Louis County in Missouri for full-time mentor positions. These examples can be used as guides in creating applications and interview questions.

Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) Sample Application

CCSU Mentor Application Form

Updated 8/21/07

Personal Information

Employee Name (please print): _____

District(s): _____ School(s): _____ Department: _____

Current VT Educator Licensing endorsement(s) held: _____

Please indicate which group(s) of individuals you are interested in mentoring (check all that apply):
New/Beginning Teachers Student teachers/Post Bacs TAP Participants Other_____

Work History

Please describe the subject areas, content areas and grade levels taught within the past five years.

Professional Commitment

Please describe your involvement in student activities, school/district projects, events, committees and the like within the past five years.

Time Commitment

Being a mentor will require face-to-face contact with the assigned teacher/pre-service teacher throughout the day/week, during prep &/or professional periods, during lunch, before/after school, during school breaks, and the like. Mentors would also be required to attend and participate in a summer mentor training and orientation session, regular monthly meetings, and the like.

Are you willing and available to make this time commitment? Yes / No (please circle one)

Mentoring Experience

Please describe your previous experience in a mentoring capacity within the past five years. (Such could include participating as a cooperating teacher or teacher mentor, being a sponsor for a UVM 209 student, participating in inter-disciplinary teams, and the like.)

Reflection

How would you see your role as mentor?

Teachers who are interested and qualified to mentor shall complete an approved application form by **June 10th** of the preceding school year. Applications received after June 10th shall be considered on position available basis. The school principal and/or his/her designee shall be responsible for the selection and assignment of mentors with input/feedback from the TAP coordinator, mentor coordinator, team leader, and/or department chair. The decision of the school principal shall be final. Selection and assignment of mentors shall be made on an annual basis. See below for a list of qualifications.

All new teachers and pre-service teachers who are to be assigned a mentor shall be referred to herein as mentee.

Mentor Qualifications:

- Demonstrated proficiency as an educator in content area, teaching techniques, and leadership.
- Ability to make the time commitments necessary for successful mentoring (including face-to-face contact with the assigned mentee throughout the day/week, during prep &/or professional periods, during lunch, before/after school, during school breaks, and the like; summer mentor training and orientation; regular group council meetings; and the like).
- Highly committed to the task of preparing individuals for success as educators, and/or helping individuals find success and gratification in their work as an educator.
- Evidence of success as a cooperating teacher, or other mentoring capacity.
- Proven professional commitment to the school and district including recent and significant involvement in student activities, school/district projects, events, committees and the like.
- Willingness to observe and be observed.
- Demonstrated excellence in working with adults.
- Proven commitment to on-going professional development.
- Demonstrated sensitivity to others' points of view.
- Demonstrated willingness to be an active and open listener.
- Demonstrated competence in social and public relation skills.
- Available for possible two-year mentoring option if needed.
- Hold a valid Vermont teaching license with a corresponding endorsement and instruction level as the mentee (or of which the mentee is seeking) preferred.
- Must work (or have recently worked if retired) within the same school/department/team of the mentee, and have experience and/or knowledge of the content area/grade assignment of the mentee.
- Work schedule must permit common meeting times with the mentee during the course of the day/week.
- Masters degree (or equivalent) plus five years of teaching experience preferred, but not required.

Special School District (SSD) Full-Time Mentor Interview Questions

Planning and Development Instructional Facilitator Interview Questions
(Revised October 2009)

Name of Applicant_____ Date of Interview _____
Interviewer: _____ Verbal Score: _____
Presentation Score: _____ Written Score: ___ Score Total: _____/72

Scoring Key:
1 – Little or no knowledge
2 – Some knowledge, but some errors or "red flags"
3 – Some knowledge
4 – Demonstrated valid and complete understanding

1.) Reflect on your education and professional career and describe how your experiences would contribute to the department as an Instructional Facilitator.

1a) Describe specifically your experience as professional developer.

2.) In this position you may be responsible for several projects with coinciding deadlines.

Pretend you have a training to prepare for next week, you have a district-wide committee to prepare for, you have coaching scheduled today and have 10 voice mail and 20 email messages to reply to, and your supervisor just asked you to research a strategy and write a synopsis of the strategy including resources and the research. How might you respond?

- _ Think ahead and plan
  Initiate activities, reprioritize
- _ Organized way of keeping due dates
  Calendar
  Economical way of responding to emails
  Evidence of time management

1__2__3__4__

Planning and Development Instructional Facilitator Interview Questions
(Revised October 2009)

Name of Applicant_____ Date of Interview _____
Interviewer: _____ Verbal Score: _____
Presentation Score: _____ Written Score: ____ Score Total: _____/72

3.) You will be expected to research and support learning in a variety of areas, what might you do to be comfortable and knowledgeable in these areas and support new learning and professional development?

	Talk to experts in the field
_	Read the research
	Analyze data, talk to stakeholders
_	Seek out staff & supervisors who are knowledgeable and experienced
_	Attend professional development
_	Utilization of e-learning

1__2__3__4__

4.) What successful strategies have you used to reflect on your teaching and student learning? How might you provide online professional learning that supports teacher reflection on their teaching practices and their students' learning?

	Protocols
_	Journaling
	Videos
_	Awareness of own reflective practices
	Use of coaching
_	Collaborative work with others
	Blogs
_	Discussion questions posted
	Other digital means

1__2__3__4__

5.) Describe your learning style and how you tend to work in a group. What type of group member (s) do you tend to work with best? Why?

	Awareness of own learning style
_	Awareness of work in group
	Awareness of compatibility
_	Flexibility
	Use of different styles to compliment work
_	General acceptance of others and their work

1__2__3__4__

Planning and Development Instructional Facilitator Interview Questions
(Revised October 2009)

Name of Applicant_____ Date of Interview _____
Interviewer: _____ Verbal Score: _____
Presentation Score: _____ Written Score: ___ Score Total: _____/72

6.) How might you advocate your position if different from another group member? What factors would influence your decision?

_ Advocate based on research Identifies type of decision _ Understand others point of view Consider multiple perspectives _ Collaborate

1__2__3__4__

7.) What must you consider when planning, providing and evaluating high quality professional development?

Based on Improvement plans of district/school _ Leadership support Learning is based on needs of staff to improve student performance /Student data driven _ Design addresses adult learning needs/ Provide processing activities Preparation includes opportunities for high engagement _ Process includes describe, model and practice Use of Technology (PowerPoint, I-movies, etc.) _ Provide follow-up/job-embedded support for implementation for fidelity Evidence of participant/student outcomes _ Evidence of Guskey's 5 Levels of evaluation _ Data informs what additional support and skills are needed _ Parent component

1__2__3__4__

8.) You will be working with beginning and experienced teachers. Describe a 3 tiered level of support for students in academics and behavior. What might you expect to see at the universal level, secondary level and tertiary level?

_ Core curriculum _ Continuum of interventions Individual level of interventions Student can access all _ Interventions are evidence based Decisions based on data _ Progress monitoring _ Interventions reflect intensity of needs

1__2__3__4_

Planning and Development Instructional Facilitator Interview Questions
(Revised October 2009)

Name of Applicant_____ Date of Interview _____
Interviewer: _____ Verbal Score: _____
Presentation Score: _____ Written Score: ____ Score Total: _____/72

9.) A teacher has attended training in Learning Strategies, but states her students are not achieving. What might be possible considerations as you support the teacher?

	Intervention matches need
_	Implementation with fidelity
	Data analysis
_	Social validity
	Decisions based on data

1__2__3__4__

10.) What are some online course management systems you have used or read about?

	Moodle
_	Adobe Connect
	Go To Meeting
_	Elluminate
_	Blackboard
	WebX

1__2__3__4__

11.) What are essential components of an online course management system we need to consider here at SSD?

_	Ease of use for participants
_	Accessibility by staff working in partner districts
_	Access 24/7
	Survey/quiz feature
_	Blogging
_	Answer might include synchronous v asynchronous

1__2__3__4__

Planning and Development Instructional Facilitator Interview Questions
(Revised October 2009)

Name of Applicant_____ Date of Interview _____
Interviewer: _____ Verbal Score: ____
Presentation Score: ____ Written Score: ___ Score Total: _____/72

12.) What are advantages and disadvantages of online professional development?

ADVANTAGES:
_ 24/7 access
Need to travel for PD eliminated
_ 21st century learning
Colleges using so graduates are accustomed to it

DISADVANTAGES:
_ Need some face to face to build relationships and rapport
Some staff remain challenged in using technology
_ Staff must have access to Internet and in some cases must have administrative rights to download (which staff might not have in some partner districts)

1__2__3__4__

13.) What are some online tools that support communication and collaboration within planning, implementation and evaluation of professional development activities? What are advantages and disadvantages of each?

ADVANTAGES:
Wikis
_ Online tool used to collaborate
Anyone can access or specific log ins with passwords can be set
Blogs
_ Can be a stand alone or embedded component within another online tool
SharePoint
Free to SSD staff
Is a tool supporting collaboration and sharing of documents
Google Apps
_ Free
Open source applications including spreadsheets and survey tools
_ Can give link to shared documents within other tools such as SharePoint or within an email

DISADVANTAGES:
Wikis
_ Staff need some initial training on how to use
Blogs
_ May need monitoring and norms for use which really aren't disadvantages, but something to consider
Online tool used to collaborate
_ Some districts block stand alone blogging
SharePoint
Does not support multimedia
_ Is inaccessible to individuals who are non-SSD
Google Apps
May need some training
_ Must have a Google account to create the documents including spreadsheets and survey tools

2__4__6__8__

Planning and Development Instructional Facilitator Interview Questions
(Revised October 2009)

Name of Applicant_____ Date of Interview _____
Interviewer: _____ Verbal Score: ____
Presentation Score: ____ Written Score: ___ Score Total: _____/72

14.) *Presentation Instructions:*

Create and present a five minute professional development activity on a digital resource of your choice for online learning. Pretend that the interview team is the adult learner group that you are teaching.

- _ Eye contact
- _ Voice quality
- _ Audience rapport/Engagement/body language
- _ Content
- _ Amount = time available
- _ Process/Activities
- _ Organizers/Visuals
- _ Creativity
- _ Fluid

_____/10 pts

15.) *Written Instructions:* - 20 minutes

Using the computer, publish a word document of a news release announcing the completion of a staff development activity or program. Include the results of your activity. Post your document on SSDLife at the following link:
https://share.ssdmo.org/PrivateSites/learningassessment/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx

- _ Use of data
- _ Grammar/Spelling
- _ Sentence structure
- _ Structure
- _ Quality (coherence, creativity)
- _ Response follows directions

_____/10 pts

Chapter 8:
Matching Mentors and Mentees

Purposefully matching mentors and mentees is critical for successful mentoring relationships. It is especially important in special education with beginning special education teachers coming from a variety of preparation routes and teaching across K-12 settings in all content areas, in diverse delivery models, and serving students in various disabilities categories.

To create successful matches between mentors and mentees, leaders must consider many factors. According to research, new special education teachers prefer mentors who are professionally and personally similar to them. Mentors and mentees can be matched, in order of priority, according to

- grade level;
- content area;
- teaching role (i.e., disability of students taught);
- geographic location and context;
- age and gender, and
- personal characteristics.

Grade, Content, and Student Disability

Beginning special education teachers are clear in their desire to have other special education teachers as mentors. This match is the single most important factor for mentees. As often as possible, matching mentors and mentees with the same grade level, content area, and student disability characteristics is ideal because it enables mentors to provide support based on prior or current experiences.

Geographic Location and Context

At the school level, situations beginning special education teachers encounter vary considerably regarding school climate, administrators' perceptions toward special education, and collegiality. Mentors in the same location as mentees can provide immediate support and assistance with school-based issues and can assist in enculturation.

Age, Gender, and Personality

Mentors and mentees must establish a good working rapport and relationships built on trust. Some district professionals try to match mentors and mentees based on age, gender, and similar personality characteristics.

Chapter 9:
Providing Mentor Training and Support

Training is essential in preparing mentors to support beginning special education teachers. The investment made in initial and ongoing training can assist mentors in developing the coaching skills necessary to both initiate and sustain meaningful support to new special education teachers and create a structure for dealing with challenges. Successful district mentoring programs include two components: (1) an initial training session that prepares mentors for their roles and responsibilities and (2) an ongoing process for mentors that supports continued development of mentoring skills and provides assistance with challenging situations.

Initial Training

The first decision district leaders must make is how to provide the initial training for mentors. The initial training of mentors is essential in developing skills to support new special education teachers. Initial training can be provided (a) by personnel within the district, (b) by an outside consultant who visits the district, or (c) by sending mentors to training outside the district. In order to make a decision regarding which format best meets a districts' needs, district professionals must address the following questions:

Will personnel within the district provide the training to mentors?

If yes, the following questions can assist planning:

- Who will conduct the training? Does this person have experience providing staff development for adults?
- How much time will be designated for initial mentor PD?
- When will the training be conducted (e.g., during the summer or pre-planning)?
- What materials will be needed?
- Will this training occur in a face-to-face format or online?
- How much funding will be allocated to support training?

Will someone be hired to visit the district to train mentors?

If yes, the following questions can assist planning:

- How will an outside trainer be selected?
- What qualifications must this person have?
- How much money will be allocated for a trainer?
- Will the initial training be customized to the needs of the school district?
- How much time will be designated to this initial mentor training?
- Will accompanying materials need to be purchased?
- Will the trainer provide any follow-up? If so, will this occur in person or online?

Will mentors be sent to training outside the district?

If yes, the following questions can assist planning:

- What is the content of the training that mentors will attend?
- Will the content of the training match the needs of the school district induction program? If not, will there be flexibility to change the training to address the mentoring needs of the district?
- What will be the cost of training one mentor?
- Will there be a mechanism for mentors to share information with mentors who do not attend this training?
- When will the training be available?
- Will there be any follow-up after the training?

Ongoing Support for Mentors

Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD), Missouri:

Full-time mentors attend biweekly sessions. In the sessions, mentors discuss successes, solve problems, learn new strategies for working with beginners, plan professional development for mentees, and discuss common efforts with mentees.

Mentors will undoubtedly encounter challenges while supporting novice special education teachers because beginning special education teachers faces different sets of challenges. Providing ongoing PD and support ensures that mentors receive assistance with difficult mentoring situations and allows for continued PD. Two effective means of delivering this ongoing support are (1) engaging in ongoing collaborative meetings with other mentors and (2) participating in PD courses that address mentors' roles and needs.

Ongoing collaborative meetings. Ongoing collaborative meetings allow mentors a venue for discussing the challenges they face and for developing solutions for those challenges. Additionally, mentors can work together to improve the institutional mentoring structures within the school district by aligning mentoring to create consistent support and introducing new research-based ideas to improve the roles of mentors.

Professional development courses. PD courses provide an ongoing and structured format for developing and strengthening mentoring skills. Courses vary in length and may take place over the course a school year or during the summer.

Olathe Unified School District (OUSD), Kansas:

Olathe Unified School District has a strong professional development component for their mentors. Mentors must participate in a variety of strands, including the following, which are available to mentors throughout the year:

- *Mentoring 101: The Nuts and Bolts*
- *Classroom Management for Mentors: Helping Improve the Effectiveness of Your New Educator's Management Skills*
- *Working Relationships: Helping Your Mentee Work With You and Other Staff*
- *Advanced Mentoring: Helping New Educators Reflect and Grow*

Chapter 10:
Planning and Providing Effective Professional Development

PD involves opportunities to improve beginning special education teachers' knowledge and skills. New special education teachers need PD that is available for all teachers (e.g., strategies for content instruction). However, novice special education teachers also need PD targeting their needs. Examples include PD focused on effective classroom routines, understanding the role of special educators within the school's RtI system, and working with support staff to support struggling learners. Leaders developing PD for beginning special education teachers must determine the structure and content of PD. The information that follows can assist district professionals in making choices about PD topics and determining how to provide PD.

Components of Effective Professional Development

Research in both general and special education suggests that for PD to influence a teacher's knowledge, attitudes, and classroom practice in a manner that ultimately impacts student achievement, it must

- Focus on content (i.e., improve knowledge of subject and/or special education strategies);
- include active learning (e.g., observing, planning, analyzing);
- involve teachers' participation in groups in which they discuss and share implementation strategies and critically analyze student work to determine if their efforts to improve instruction are impacting students;
- be coherent and aligned with the goals of teachers, the district, and the school;
- occur over time and involve opportunities to revisit concepts and strategies taught; and
- address instructional areas relevant to new special education teachers (e.g., concerns of the new special education teachers).

Structure of Professional Development

Implementing PD is a matter of choice, and leaders must base their efforts on several factors, including mentoring structure, PD infrastructure, and district resources. District leaders typically structure PD or beginning special education teachers in the following three formats: (1) group courses, (2) group meetings, and (3) individual plans. Below are descriptions of each PD structure and examples from districts currently implementing the structures.

Group courses. Group courses are a series of lessons taught prior to beginning special education teachers entering the classroom and through their first few years in the classroom. Stakeholders pre-determine which courses are appropriate and beneficial for a group of new special educators. Topics for courses typically address novice special education teachers' general and individual needs. For example, all beginning special educators are likely to need information

about IEPs and conducting manifestation determinations. Many will also need information about instructional strategies for the content they teach (e.g., how to improve fluency of struggling middle school students with disabilities). District professionals can determine topics for PD by conducting a needs assessment completed by either the new special education teachers or their mentors.

Group meetings. In group meetings, all or some novice special education teachers in a district meet to discuss a topic. Meetings are typically scheduled on a regular basis throughout the year. Group meetings are less formal and have more varied topics than courses. District leaders often use this format for monthly meetings with all new special educators in the district.

Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD), Missouri:
Beginning teachers in the Special School District of St. Louis County attend a series of courses developed and implemented by full-time instructional mentors. In the first 2 months of the school year, mentors assess their beginners' needs. Using the needs assessment, all mentors work together to decide on the topics for the professional development series. Topics are assigned to mentors based on expertise. Mentors are then responsible for creating the courses and implementing professional development by regularly meeting with a group of novices. Examples of professional development topics include collaborative teaching, instructional strategies for secondary mathematics, self-advocacy, pre-emergent literacy, and strategies for supporting students with autism. Following the professional development courses, beginning teachers meet with their instructional mentors to discuss what they learned and how they can integrate the new knowledge and skills into their classroom practices.

Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS):

All new teachers are invited to attend a meeting two times per month in the fall and once a month in the spring (a total of 11 meetings). The topics of the monthly meetings are tailored to beginning teachers' needs and are broken down by grade level, content, and disability. The monthly meetings give beginning special education teachers a place to share concerns and ideas with their peers. The special education teachers have the option and are encouraged to attend general education meetings to increase collaboration.

Individual plans. Beginning special education teachers enter the classroom from a variety of preparation routes and teach in a multitude of contexts. There is not one PD plan that will fit the needs of every new special educator. Having individual plans for novice special education teachers is especially important because these teachers are likely to vary greatly in their knowledge and skill. For example, beginning special education teachers who come to the classroom from traditional 4-year teaching programs will likely be ready to step into the classroom. The PD needs of new special education teachers in abbreviated alternate route programs, on the other hand, may be different. These teachers will have had only a few weeks of preparation before stepping into the classroom and will need intense support beginning on the first day. Therefore, it is critical for district professionals to plan individualized PD for novice special education teachers. Conducting a thorough needs assessment can help mentors and administrators identify beginning special education teachers' needs and create a plan for PD.

Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD), Missouri:

The instructional mentor is responsible for assessing beginners' needs and planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development for the beginning teachers. Through this process, the mentor develops and implements a series of professional development courses for a group of beginners. Based on the needs assessment, each beginner attends a professional development course and sets individual goals for improvement in classroom practice as measured by student achievement. Throughout the year, beginners must show progress toward these goals through observation and by providing mentors with student data. Together, mentors and mentees work to achieve individual goals.

Content of Professional Development

Prior to requiring that beginning special education teachers attend PD trainings, district professionals must determine which PD content is most important for new special education teachers to learn. Mentors can help by conducting needs assessments, and then they can group novice special educators based on similar content needs.

District administrators may be in charge of coordinating available PD experiences and individualized mentoring support for beginning special education teachers. PD opportunities through workshops and trainings are potential resources for this support. PD topics that new special education teachers are likely to require are as follows:

Content. Novice special educators need information about the content they teach. Some areas in which they may need PD include state and district content standards; reading, writing, and math teaching strategies; and performance-based assessment.

Behavior management. Behavior management is one area in which beginning special education teachers may struggle. Some areas in which they may need PD include positive behavior support, functional behavioral assessments, and strategies for students with autism or emotional disabilities.

Disability specific. New special education teachers may be assigned to teach students with unfamiliar disabilities; therefore, they may need PD related to the disability areas.

Co-teaching and collaboration. Co-teaching and collaborating with general education colleagues can be a very intimidating experience for novice special education teachers. Co-teaching may require beginning special educators to teach in other teachers' classrooms. Consequently, knowledge about initiating and maintaining effective collaborative relationships is critical for these teachers.

Teaching strategies. New special education teachers may begin the school year with expert knowledge in some teaching areas but less in others. Increasing knowledge of evidence-based strategies can help them manage their classrooms, improve instructional techniques, and better integrate technology to actively engage students with disabilities.

Use of technology. Each district and school will have different instructional and assistive technologies to assist in teaching and learning. Moreover, new technology is continually developed to assist students with disabilities in the classroom. It is important for novice special education teachers to gain knowledge in technology-enhanced teaching strategies and the use of assistive technologies to support students with disabilities.

Paperwork. Federal and state laws and regulations, transition planning, and IEP development are just a few of the important issues related to special education paperwork. All of the various school, district, and state rules and regulations regarding paperwork can overwhelm and confuse beginning special educators. PD opportunities that provide these teachers with knowledge of procedures and strategies for effectively managing paperwork will be very beneficial.

Paraprofessionals. New special education teachers are often assigned paraprofessionals to help support student learning. However, many of these teachers have little or no training in how to effectively manage paraprofessionals. PD related to managing paraprofessionals is critical for many novice special educators.

Parents. Interacting with parents is imperative for any teacher. Beginning special education teachers often struggle with how to communicate student progress with parents. PD in effective parent communication strategies and how to deal with conflict can be helpful.

Chapter 11:
Evaluating Mentor Programs

Once district leaders develop and implement a comprehensive induction program, they must create a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the program. An evaluation can inform district professionals about the components of the induction program that are successful, and it can highlight areas that demand revision.

Steps to Evaluating Induction Programs

Involve key stakeholders in the development of induction evaluation. Including representatives from all key stakeholder groups ensures the consideration of all viewpoints in the evaluation process. This group of stakeholders may differ depending on the district; however, typical members include

- mentors,
- beginning special education teachers,
- principals,
- district administrators,
- community members,
- parents, and
- older students with disabilities.

Align with induction program goals. The evaluation plan should include strategies for assessing each goal in the induction program. Three different induction goals and possible evaluation strategies are listed below.

Induction goal. Beginning special education teachers will improve their knowledge and skill in implementing evidence-based practices in literacy, mathematics, and other content-area instruction.

Possible evaluation strategies.

- Observe classroom practice.
- Review student achievement data.
- Interview principals.
- Conduct surveys.

Induction goal. Beginning special education teachers will report being satisfied with their current instructional positions.

Possible evaluation strategies.

- Conduct beginning special education teacher surveys.
- Conduct principal surveys.

Induction goal. Reduce beginning special education teacher attrition by 30%.

Possible evaluation strategy.

- Collect retention data.

Delineate key elements of induction and include multiple strategies for how to evaluate. A comprehensive evaluation addresses each area of induction (e.g., orientation, mentoring, PD, administrator collaboration). Also, an evaluation must include multiple methods of collecting data. Using just one source, like a survey, will not provide enough rich data to inform strengths, weaknesses, and potential revisions of the induction program. Data collection methods include

- teacher observations;
- mentor logs;
- teacher portfolios;
- student achievement;
- interviews of mentors, new special education teachers, and principals; and
- retention data.

Analyze the data. Each evaluation approach requires a strategy for analyzing the data. The stakeholder group members must answer questions for each approach. Sample questions are as follows:

- If interviewing principals, how will the information be used? Will interviews be coded and themed?
- If student achievement data are used, what constitutes growth?
- If teacher observations are employed, how is growth over time determined? How will growth be reported?

Plan for revisions to improve where data show a need. Once the data are analyzed and organized, key stakeholders must come together to determine the strengths and needs of the induction program. Using the data to anchor the recommendations, stakeholders should create a plan for revising the program where improvements are necessary.

Sample Evaluation Plan

Professionals at the Special School District (SSD) of St. Louis County in Missouri comprehensively evaluate their induction program every 3 years. They collect multiple measures (e.g., achievement data, observations and interviews, staff perception, stakeholder input). They use the data to identify strengths and weaknesses in the program and inform necessary revisions. A copy of their most recent evaluation can be found here.

Chapter 12:
Induction Resources

Induction Module

IRIS Teacher Induction Module: Providing Comprehensive Training for New Special Educators, http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources.html

Readings

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