

NTIP EVALUATION

FINAL REPORT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Cycle III February 2010

I believe it has made me a more competent, organized, effective teacher who is able to handle what is thrown at me. I know who I can turn to for support if I need it and where to look for assistance. It has been a wonderful, helpful program. (New Teacher, Female, Questionnaire Respondent)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), including requirements for the performance appraisal process for new teachers, was developed by the Ontario Ministry of Education following consultation with education partners including the faculties of education, parent groups, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), teacher federations, principals, and trustees. A comprehensive literature review examining induction in other countries and a pilot project that involved 21 school boards contributed to the final shape of the NTIP which came into legislation through the passing of the Student Performance Bill in June 2006. The NTIP requires that all Ontario publicly funded school boards offer the NTIP to their new teachers, and all teachers new to Ontario's publicly funded schools are required to participate in the NTIP. New teachers are defined as teachers certified by the OCT who have been hired for the first time in Ontario into permanent positions (full-time or part-time). The NTIP comprises three induction elements (orientation, mentoring and professional development) and includes the requirement for all school boards to appraise their new teachers two times within the first twelve months of employment. Upon receiving two *Satisfactory* ratings on the teacher performance appraisal (TPA), the new teacher receives an NTIP notation on his/her Certificate of Qualification on the OCT's public website. The University of Ottawa under the leadership of Dr. Ruth Kane was invested with the responsibility of conducting an evaluation of the implementation of the NTIP across Ontario in its first three years of operation (2006/2007, 2007/2008 & 2008/2009). This report presents the findings from the third year (Cycle III) of the evaluation project and relevant comparison to previous two years (Cycle I and Cycle II) of the evaluation project.

This research study examines the impact of the Ontario New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) and the experiences of new teachers, mentors and school principals¹ during 2006-2009. The following research questions were developed by the Ontario Ministry of Education to frame this project.

1. Have there been any changes in retention rates of new teachers at school board and provincial levels?
2. Have teaching assignments for new teachers changed since school boards began implementing the NTIP?
3. Do new teachers indicate, and do principals and mentors report that new teachers exhibit enhanced competency in: classroom management and planning; assessment and evaluation; communicating with parents; and/or, teaching students with special needs and other diverse learners?
4. If so, is this a result of professional development, mentoring or a combination of both?
5. Do new teachers find the NTIP beneficial in helping to improve their teaching practice?
6. Do mentors feel that their teaching practice has improved as a result of the mentoring relationship?
7. What barriers have new teachers and their mentors faced in participating in the program?
8. What were their views regarding the usefulness of the program?

¹ In this report, "principals" refers to both principals and vice-principals who participated in the study.

9. Do new teachers feel an increase in confidence and job satisfaction as a result of the NTIP?
10. Do mentors plan to continue in their mentoring roles in ensuing years?
11. Do mentors and principals feel that the training they received to prepare them for their role in the NTIP was adequate?

METHODOLOGY

This project comprises a province-wide evaluation of the (NTIP) and its implementation in schools across Ontario over three annual cycles. The research design draws on data generated through both quantitative (web-based questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews) means to ensure both province-wide coverage and an opportunity for the richness of personal experience of the NTIP to be examined. The evaluation of the NTIP is conducted through two distinct but related phases, each of which is being repeated in three annual cycles. *Phase One* comprised province-wide questionnaires for new teachers, mentors and principals who participated in the NTIP. All new teachers, mentors and principals were invited (via email through their School Board NTIP contact) to complete a questionnaire targeted to their group. In each of the three years, *Phase Two* involved interviews of new teachers, mentors and principals in 13 selected school boards to determine their experiences of the NTIP.

ONTARIO NEW TEACHER POPULATION

Across the three years of this project (2006/2007, 2007/2008 & 2008/2009) over 18400 new teachers were appointed to positions in Ontario schools. Of these new teachers, approximately 8% were appointed in French language school boards each year. In the Cycle I of the project 57% of schools reported hiring at least one new teacher. This increased in Cycle II with 63.3% of schools hiring at least one new teacher but decreased in Cycle III to 53.4%. Fewer than 300 of Ontario schools report hiring more than five new teachers each year (Cycle I, 234; Cycle II, 283; Cycle III, 211). The number of new hires varies significantly from one region to the next, with the Toronto region consistently accounting for approximately 40% of the new teacher appointments in all three cycles and the Thunder Bay region accounting for approximately 3% each year.

Questionnaire Participation

Across the three annual cycles, questionnaires were completed by 3524 new teachers; 3165 from English Language School Boards (~90 %) and 359 from French Language School Boards (~10%). The participation of new teachers from the French language school boards increased from 3% of respondents in Cycle I, 8% in Cycle II, to 11.4% in Cycle III. Respondents across Cycle I and Cycle II were from public (64%) and Catholic (36%) school boards and they represented 14.5% of the new teacher population. In Cycle III, the participation rate grew to 28.3% of the new teacher population with 64.5% of the questionnaire respondents teaching in public schools and 34.9% in Catholic schools. In Cycle I, 60% of the new teacher respondents had graduated from their teacher education programs within the previous two years, increasing to 72% in Cycle II. This decreased in Cycle III, where 63.8% of respondents reported graduating from teacher education programs between 2006 and 2008.

Across the three years, 2318 mentors completed questionnaires, 2070 (89.3%) of whom taught in English language school boards and the remaining 248 mentors (10.7%) taught in French language school boards. The participation of mentors from French language school boards increased from 4% on Cycle I to 13.1% in Cycle III, a relative increase of over 300%. In Cycle III, mentors were both from public (67.4%) and Catholic (32.6%) school boards.

Questionnaires were completed by 1800 principals and vice-principals across the three year evaluation. A total of 1600 of the participants (88.9%) were principals from English language school boards, with the remaining 200 (11.1%) working in French language school boards. Participation by principals increased from 410 in Cycle I, to 612 in Cycle II, to 778 in Cycle III and the relative participation of principals/vice principals from French language school boards doubled across the three cycles (from 6.3% in Cycle I to 12.7% in Cycle III). In Cycle III, principal and vice-principal respondents were from both public (68.5%) and Catholic (31.5%) school boards.

PHASE TWO SAMPLE

Across the three years of the evaluation, teachers and principals and vice-principals from 38 different school boards participated in interviews to determine their experiences of the NTIP. School sites were selected each year from 13 school boards (Toronto District School Board participated in all three years) with attention to ensuring representation from Catholic and public, French and English, rural and urban, and large and small school boards. Across the three cycles, research team members visited 135 school sites comprising 64 elementary and 66 secondary and 5 schools which identified as 'other'. Of the sites visited, 69 were public schools and 66 were Catholic schools. Interviews were conducted in a total of 26 schools in nine of the 12 French language school boards.

Across Cycle I, II and III, the research team interviewed a total of: 275 new teachers (221 English-language teachers; 54 French language teachers); 183 mentors (137 English-language teachers; 46 French language teachers); and 109 principals/vice-principals (91 English-language school boards; 18 French language school boards).

FINDINGS

The New Teacher Induction Program rests on the assumption that a systematic process of induction, mentoring and professional development will accelerate the beginning teachers' development towards the level of experienced classroom teacher. In the introduction of the NTIP, the Ontario Ministry of Education has been explicit in its goal that NTIP "seeks to promote teacher excellence by contributing to professional growth" of the new teacher (Anthony, de Korte & Kim, 2008). It is clear from this three year province-wide evaluation of the NTIP Evaluation Project that new teachers, mentors, principals and school board contacts perceive the NTIP to have been a necessary and worthwhile initiative that has made significant progress towards meeting this goal. New teachers across Ontario are confident in their own abilities as beginning teachers responsible for supporting student learning. They are overwhelmingly satisfied with their choice of profession; they intend to remain in the teaching profession and a large majority would like to remain in the same school.

This evaluation was charged with examining the participants' *experiences* of the NTIP and the *impact* these experiences had on new teacher performance across key areas.

An additional goal was to identify, if possible, what contribution specific components of the NTIP made to different aspects of new teachers' professional growth. There is no doubt from the evidence over the three annual cycles of this evaluation that new teachers' experiences of the NTIP were generally positive and that their participation in the NTIP did have an impact on their professional practice as beginning teachers. Across all three years of the evaluation new teachers consistently credit the NTIP with contributing to their enhanced confidence in their role as teachers, enriched satisfaction in their choice of the profession, and a real sense of being welcomed and valued by their school communities. The NTIP is contributing to new teachers' professional growth and mentors and principals report that the new teachers' enhanced confidence has positive impact on their relationships with pupils and teaching performance, which leads to enhanced student achievement.

The different components of the NTIP (orientation, professional development, mentoring) serve complementary roles in the NTIP and are credited with supporting the professional growth of new teachers in different ways. Those new teachers who attended orientation, had a formal mentor², and attended professional development rated the NTIP more useful than those who did not participate in all three elements. Generally new teachers are very satisfied with their orientation to their respective school boards and these sessions are understood to provide critical information on school board processes, policies and resources that are essential to new teachers. Importantly the school board orientations enable new teachers to identify key board personnel and to be introduced to other new teachers within their subject and/or grade level and thereby initiate important networks across the board.

School based orientations were highly valued by those new teachers who were offered them; however this is one area that remains inconsistent in practice across the province. In many cases the absence of a dedicated school orientation reveals itself as a missed opportunity on the part of school administration to ensure the new teacher/s are given a staged introduction into the school expectations, policies, procedures, culture and personnel. The experience of a school orientation appeared to be dependent on the number of new teachers within the school and the size of the school, however it is clear that many new teachers, while welcomed by the school administration and their colleagues, felt somewhat at a loss as to the specific roles of support staff within the school and who they should contact in specific circumstances.

The new teachers' experiences of professional development emerge as somewhat variable across the province. New teachers from the secondary division consistently rate professional development as less useful than their elementary colleagues. While there is professional development in some priority areas which consistently receives high ratings e.g. classroom management, assessment for learning, there continues to be concerns about the mismatch of many of the professional development opportunities. Professional development is perceived by the new teachers to be offered according to pre-determined ministry priorities rather than according to needs of the new teachers themselves. There is perceived to be a preponderance of professional development offered as generic sessions and typically facilitated by elementary consultants who may not resonate with the secondary new teachers and the expectations surrounding their needs. In addition, new

² When speaking generally about new teachers and mentors it is assumed that new teachers could have more than one mentor.

teachers assigned to French Immersion positions report having special professional development needs that are not met through the NTIP. Typically professional development is facilitated in English, not French and usually only English language resources are disseminated. These calls for closer attention to the focus and delivery of professional development have been consistent across in all three cycles of the evaluation.

Mentoring emerges as the most influential component of the NTIP in terms of both the new teachers' experience and perceived impact on professional practice. At the most basic of levels, having an assigned mentor provides the new teacher with an identified person whom they can contact regarding questions and challenges they may encounter on day to day basis. The mentor was their "go to" person who was able to direct them elsewhere if necessary to address the question or concern. The perception of the usefulness of the mentoring relationship was dependent on a number of variables which when aligned, assured a positive and productive partnership which was perceived as having a definite impact on the teaching of both the mentee and also, to some degree, the mentor. Successful partnerships ensued when both mentor and mentee had a say in the match, when the match was made as early as possible in the year, when mentor and mentee had congruent teaching assignments, when they were in the same school and when opportunities are made available for shared release time and observation of each other's teaching. Crucial to the mentee was having someone who was willing and able to act as a mentor. While having a mentor in same school was considered very important, ensuring that the mentor had experience in the same teaching assignment, particularly for secondary teachers, took precedence over having someone close at hand. Across the province of Ontario there are many cases of excellent mentoring programs and some others that are evolving. This is not to claim that mentoring works in isolation from the other components of the NTIP. The findings are very clear – all components of the NTIP are rated positively by new teachers, mentors and principals and active participation in all elements of the NTIP results in positive outcomes for the new teachers.

The consistency of results across all three years does provide some level of confidence in making claims about the role of the NTIP in addressing key areas identified as challenging for new teachers. These areas include: classroom management; assessment and evaluation; differentiated learning; and, communication with parents.

New teachers who have mentors within the same grade level, subject and school, who participate in professional development focused on assessment, and who have shared release time with their mentors during which they focus on such activities as location of resources and shared planning of instruction and assessment, report enhanced understanding and skills related to planning, assessment and evaluation. Elementary new teachers who have mentors with equivalent teaching assignments within the same school, who participate in professional development focused on classroom management and who take the opportunity to observe their mentors or have their mentors observe them and provide feedback report most positive impact on their development of enhanced classroom management strategies. With secondary new teachers, there was frustration at what was perceived as an elementary focus to professional development which in some cases lessened the potential positive effects. Those new teachers who report a positive impact on their understanding and skills related to differentiating planning and instruction to meet the special needs of students attributed this primarily to working closely with their mentors, with other colleagues within their school and to targeted professional

development that included “hands on activities”. The area that was consistently reported as not being as well supported by the NTIP was that of relating to and communicating with parents and caregivers. Assisting new teachers in developing enhanced skills and confidence in communicating with parents is an area that could benefit from greater attention in the NTIP.

School boards and schools are to be congratulated on the ways in which over the past three years, new teachers consistently report being welcomed and supported in their transition into the profession. With any new initiative introduced on such a large scale, there will always be aspects that will need adjusting on either a provincial, board or school level. Schools are very complex and busy contexts and teachers, mentors and principals have multiple demands on their time and attentions. Across the three year evaluation participants identified a number of barriers to effective participation in the NTIP. It is important to note that many school boards have addressed these barriers and have excellent models of induction operating within their jurisdictions. It is also apparent in this most recent cycle, that school boards have begun to share best practices, procedures and approaches to the NTIP. This demonstrates a shared commitment to the support of all new teachers across Ontario and authentic collaboration among school boards which is truly commendable.

Structured time for mentors and new teachers to engage in collaborative professional learning continues to present as the dominant barrier for many new teachers and their mentors. There are variations across the province to the number of release days and the degree of flexibility new teachers and mentors have in utilizing these days. As the NTIP becomes an embedded component of all schools, it is suggested that school boards provide increased flexibility to principals, new teachers and mentors in planning for professional learning that meets the new teacher’s specific needs.

Many new teachers are reluctant to leave the classroom to attend professional development and this anxiety is heightened for those new teachers who teach specialist classes such as music, English as a Second Language (ESL), French Immersion and special needs. Thus, we are faced by the contradiction that new teachers do want to attend professional development workshops, they do want to meet with their mentor in shared planning and professional dialogue, but they are loathe to leave their classrooms as they often perceive a day absent from the classroom could potentially threaten the fragile alliance they have established with their students. Allowing teachers to access NTIP supports in their second-year, a policy adopted by the Ministry of Education for 2009-2010, will lessen the number of days a new teacher is required to be out of his/her class over the course of a year. In addition there is a need for principals and mentors to reinforce with new teachers the value of days spent in professional development. At the same time, careful planning of the most useful professional development would ensure that days taken away from the classroom are not a focus of regret but viewed instead as a valuable professional learning opportunity.

The widespread resistance of both mentors and new teachers to engage in classroom observations and provide new teachers with critical feedback continues to be of concern. New teachers appear reluctant to take advantage of opportunities to watch lead teachers in action and mentors appear reluctant to promote observations and professional dialogue as a professional learning opportunity. There is also a perception among many mentors that observation of new teachers and the provision of critical feedback oversteps the line of

support and advocacy and encroaches on teacher appraisal. There is a need for school boards to consider how they can encourage new teachers and mentors to engage in observations of each other's practice so that they can benefit from this rich situated learning experience.

Throughout the three years of the evaluation of the NTIP concerns have been raised regarding the ambiguous position of teachers who hold beginning long term occasional (LTO) contracts³. While the Ministry of Education has responded to these concerns by enabling school boards to include beginning LTOs in the NTIP, there remains confusion as to how this will roll out in the coming years. There is no doubt that most respondents to the questionnaire and participants in the interviews feel that LTOs with longer contracts should be fully included in the NTIP.

This final cycle of the evaluation of the NTIP illuminated a barrier that was not so evident in previous years that relates to the roles of principals with respect to the NTIP. While principals do provide very positive feedback on the impact of the NTIP on the integration of new teachers in their schools and, in many cases, on the school culture and collaboration amongst colleagues, there is a sense that many principals feel somewhat disconnected from the actual operation of the NTIP. While it was understandable that in the introductory years principals may not have used their discretionary flexibility to build a NTIP to meet a teacher's specific needs, it appears that this is still something that principals do not take full advantage of. This is particularly the case where new teachers who have significant experience in other jurisdictions find themselves having to participate in NTIP sessions that some boards have mandated which are not coherent with their experience or their professional needs.

While some school boards have excellent communication systems through regular email, newsletters and interactive dedicated web sites, others are still struggling to reach this level of dissemination of and access to information. Cycle III findings do reveal that many school boards have established web sites that have provided a central portal through which new teachers, mentors and principals can access up to date resources on the NTIP and on mentoring. These school boards typically also have excellent communication systems with their new teachers, mentors and principals that ensure early and timely notification of professional development opportunities. There are also school boards whose communication with new teachers is inconsistent and provides inadequate information or time for new teachers and/or their mentors to adequately prepare for professional development opportunities. Associated with communication is the scheduling of professional development activities which in some cases conflict with key high stress times of the school year including report card writing and final preparation for examinations.

Some of the barriers that are identified as restricting full and effective participation in the NTIP are systemic, originating at the school board level with others being located at the school or even with the individual teacher. These barriers have consistently emerged each year and many school boards have made excellent progress towards addressing them. Now that Cycle III is completed and the NTIP is in a phase of

³ In the NTIP Induction Elements Manual , a beginning long-term occasional teacher is defined as "a certified occasional teacher who is in his or her first long-term assignment, with that assignment being 97 or more consecutive school days as a substitute for the same teacher." (OME, 2009, p.11)

consolidation in most school boards, it is timely that a focus of the coming years is a careful consideration of how the barriers articulated above could be removed so as to enable full and effective participation in the NTIP for new teachers in all school boards.

Becoming a teacher is an ongoing process of situated professional learning and development within the reality of school contexts. The results of this three year evaluation are overwhelmingly positive and the Ontario Ministry of Education can be optimistic about its investment in the NTIP. On balance, the evidence demonstrates that the NTIP is clearly achieving what it set out to do; it is supporting the professional growth of beginning teachers which promises enhanced teaching and a positive impact on student achievement. It is timely now to step back and identify those areas that emerge repeatedly from the three year evaluation as presenting challenges or barriers to the effective implementation of the NTIP. It is timely to examine ways of presenting alternative experiences for new teachers within the NTIP framework. In addition, when there is repeated evidence of new teachers having exemplary experiences of the NTIP and these are confirmed by mentors and principals, it is important to find ways of recognizing and sharing these best practices across school boards. In summary, the findings of this research are presented in the hope that they will assist the Ontario Ministry of Education and school boards to consolidate what they are doing well and to acknowledge changes that could be explored with the view to ongoing improvement.

Considerations to the Ministry of Education

- Continue to fund the NTIP as a necessary initiative for all new teachers including those on beginning long term occasional contracts.
- Continue to advocate for school boards and principals to differentiate the NTIP for individual teachers to take into account those who have experience in other jurisdictions and to meet the specific needs of new teachers with particular assignments including French Immersion, split level classes⁴ and special needs placements.
- Continue to support research into aspects of the NTIP such as the Teacher Performance Appraisal and ways in which elements of the NTIP contribute to teacher development.

Considerations to the School Boards

- Offer school board orientations in late August and again as required later in the year to welcome new teachers to the board expectations and inform them of board protocols and policies. Board orientations should include: employment/contractual issues (salary, health insurance, protocol for sick days, the Individual NTIP Strategy Form); a list of necessary contacts within the school board; resources and strategies for the first week and the first month; explanation of the NTIP process, including a timeline for proposed professional development seminars; elaboration on the TPA process and a proposed timeline for when each should occur; resources and board administrative software such as First Class, Mark Book and Web Portal; and, information pertaining to beginning LTOs as well as teachers with years of teaching experience.

⁴ Split-level classes are also referred to as combined grades.

- Provide opportunities for principals to fully understand their role and responsibilities within the implementation of the NTIP and encourage them to embrace the NTIP as a part of their pedagogical and professional leadership.
- Provide training for principals on appropriate responses to situations where new teachers receive *Development Needed* or *Unsatisfactory* performance ratings.
- Ensure all participants are familiar with expectations of their roles in implementing the NTIP with particular attention to the specific expectations of mentor and new teacher relationship.
- Review the ways in which release days are allocated and what expectations there are for their use by new teachers and/or mentors with the goal of enabling increased flexibility for new teachers and mentors, in consultation with the principal, to propose a NTIP plan that responds to the specific needs of the new teacher.
- Offer mentor training that introduces mentors to a range of mentoring models and clarifies the opportunities of their roles. Provide a range of guidelines for mentors as to key areas of focus for new teacher-mentor professional engagement.
- Introduce opportunities throughout the year for mentors to attend mentor training updates and to share mentoring strategies.
- Identify a cohort of lead teachers across divisions and subjects who would host observations by new teachers in their classrooms and be available for a debriefing meeting following observations.
- Encourage new teachers and mentors to undertake observations of teaching as a means to initiate and frame professional conversations. In so doing clarify the distinction between support and appraisal so that mentors can have confidence in this aspect of their role.
- Develop effective communication systems within the board so that new teachers, mentors and principals receive information about the NTIP activities in a timely manner and consider the establishment of a web-site or similar electronic forum for new teachers.
- Provide division-specific professional development where secondary new teachers are addressed by teachers/consultants with secondary experience.
- Offer targeted professional development for new teachers with particular teaching assignments such as those teaching split grade classes and with special education responsibilities.
- Give attention to the provision of special professional development for teachers of French Immersion which is delivered in French and provides French language resources and activities.
- Communicate an annual schedule of professional development to all new teachers, their mentors and principals early in the school year and encourage new teachers to develop early in the school year in consultation with their mentors and principals.
- Continue to encourage principals to differentiate the NTIP for individual new teachers in ways that take account of their current teaching assignment and their previous experience in other jurisdictions.

Considerations to the Schools

- School principals have a responsibility to have full understanding of the NTIP and of their responsibilities within the program. It is also essential that they understand and acknowledge the roles and responsibilities of others such as new teachers and mentors and are able to support them.
- School administration needs to explicitly embrace the NTIP to ensure that the NTIP is embedded as a critical component of school culture. This will encourage participation of mentors and new teachers in all aspects of the program.
- Closer attention needs to be paid to the teaching assignments of new teachers to ensure that where possible new teachers are not given the most challenging assignments. If new teachers are appointed in what are considered challenging assignments, careful consideration of support structures (both formal and informal) is required.
- Provide school-based orientation for new teachers that include: a tour of the building and designated areas (e.g. primary/junior division); clear information on administrative policies and procedures such as passwords, codes; explanation on where resources are located and/or how they are accessed; school discipline procedures to follow in cases of infringements; and, explanation of administrative tasks (e.g. bus schedules, school trip forms etc.)
- Matching of new teachers with mentors needs to be completed early in the school year and should involve the input of both the new teacher and the mentor.
- New teachers should be paired with mentors who have current or substantial experience in the new teacher's grade and/or subject in order to fully understand and support the new teacher within his/her particular instructional context.
- Encourage new teachers in consultation with mentors, to identify specific professional development activities that are best suited to the new teacher's professional needs. In keeping with this commitment, allow new teachers and mentors to determine the focus of release days as either professional development, observation and/or shared planning, as appropriate to the new teacher's specific needs.
- Promote observation and feedback as part of the mentoring relationship – both the new teacher observing the mentor and the mentor observing the new teacher. This could also involve identifying lead teachers within the school or in partner schools that would be willing to open their classroom for observation by new teacher and mentor together as a focus for professional dialogue.
- Identify a team of potential mentors regardless of the number of new teachers and support them to go to training sessions and develop their leadership potential. Through them develop a culture of mentoring within the school.