

**EVALUATION OF
THE NEW TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM (NTIP)
YEAR ONE RESULTS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**Project Leader
Ruth G. Kane, PhD
University of Ottawa**

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, principal and trustee associations. 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. 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 two years of operation (2006/2007 & 2007/2008). This interim report presents the findings from Cycle One of the two-year evaluation project.

This research study examines the impact of Ontario's New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) and the experiences of new teachers, mentors and school principals during initial implementation in the year 2006/2007. 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 at school board and provincial levels?
2. Have teaching assignments changed since school boards began implementing the NTIP?
3. Do new teachers report, and do principals and mentors report new teachers exhibiting 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 teachers faced in participating in the program?
8. What were their views regarding the usefulness of the program?
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 administrators feel that the training they received to prepare them for their role in the NTIP was adequate?

As noted in the body of this report, data generated in year one (2006/2007) is not sufficient to respond to research questions 1 and 2 as these require data series generated over a number of years.

METHODOLOGY

This project comprises a province-wide evaluation of the NTIP and its implementation in schools across Ontario. The research design draws on data generated through both quantitative (web-based questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews) as a means of ensuring 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 two 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 are invited (via email through their School Board NTIP contact) to complete a questionnaire targeted to their group. *Phase Two* involved interviews of new teachers, mentors and principals in selected school boards across the province to determine their experiences of the NTIP.

ONTARIO NEW TEACHER POPULATION

Across Ontario, 6541 new teachers were appointed to positions in the 2006/2007 academic year. Of the 4877 schools in Ontario, in the 2006/2007 school year 2773 (57%) reported hiring at least one beginning teacher. Of these 2773 schools, 1325 (48%) have hired only one new teacher and 234 (8%) have hired five or more new teachers. The number of new hires varies significantly from one region to the next, with the Toronto region accounting for 2990 (46%) beginning teachers in 2006/2007. In contrast, 127 new teachers were hired in the Thunder Bay region which accounts for 2% of new teachers hired within Ontario.

PHASE ONE SAMPLE

Questionnaires were completed by 1006 new teachers; 974 from English Language School Boards (97%) and 32 from French Language School Boards (3%). Respondents were both from public (65%) and Catholic (35%) school boards. The respondents represent 15% of the total new teacher population. Over half the new teachers had graduated from their teacher education programs within the previous two years (60%) and the majority (74%) of the new teachers were teaching full-time in one school.

Overall, 662 mentors completed questionnaires, 632 (96%) of whom taught in English Language School Boards and the remaining 30 mentors (4%) taught in French Language School Boards. Mentors were both from public (61%) and Catholic (39%) school boards. The majority of the mentors (86%) reported mentoring only one new teacher.

Questionnaires were completed by 410 principals or vice-principals. A total of 384 of the participants (93.7%) were principals from English language school boards,

with the remaining 26 (6.3%) working in French language school boards. Principal/Vice-principal respondents were from both public (60%) and Catholic (40%) school boards.

PHASE TWO SAMPLE

During Phase Two the research team visited 47 school sites (across the 13 boards) comprising 19 elementary schools, 26 secondary and two schools categorized as “other”. Of the sites visited 27 were public schools and 20 were Catholic schools. Eight schools were located in three of the French language school boards.

During Phase Two the research team interviewed: 101 new teachers (85 English-language school boards; 16 French language school boards); 74 mentors (60 English-language school boards; 10 French language school boards); and 32 principals/vice-principals (27 English-language school boards; 5 French language school boards)

FINDINGS

The NTIP “seeks to promote teacher excellence by contributing to professional growth” of the new teacher (Anthony, de Korte & Kim, 2008). There is no doubt from this first cycle of the NTIP Evaluation Project that the overwhelming majority of participants (new teachers, mentors and principals/vice-principals) feel that the NTIP is a necessary initiative and that in this initial year it has made significant progress towards supporting new teacher professional growth. This evaluation sought to examine participants’ *‘experiences’* of the NTIP and the *‘impact’* these experiences had on new teacher competence across target areas.

Findings do demonstrate clearly that the participants’ *‘experiences’* of the NTIP are positive and encouraging. The most convincing conclusions that can be made about the *‘impact’* of the NTIP surround the combined effect of the NTIP induction elements which result in new teachers feeling welcomed and valued members of their school and school board community. There is clear evidence that new teachers, mentors and principals perceive that the NTIP has positively impacted on new teacher competence. Mentors believe that they are making a worthwhile contribution to the development of the new teachers’ professional growth through offering support and guidance while themselves benefiting from a renewed professional commitment. Principals believe that new teachers are more confident as educators and have settled more quickly into their professional roles because of the range of supports available through the NTIP and in some cases, principals and mentors point to the potential for enhanced student achievement over time as the NTIP induction elements become more embedded within the school culture.

We can claim with confidence that new teachers report feeling better about themselves as teachers as a result of their participation in the NTIP. New teachers report that the NTIP has enabled them to be welcomed and supported in their schools and most report increased levels of confidence and satisfaction in their roles as teachers. At this time they attribute this enhanced sense of belonging and confidence to a number of variables including the orientation to the school board, their professional development opportunities and the relationship with their mentor and with colleagues.

In general, participants suggest that orientation to the board and the school is something that evolves in the early days of a teacher's appointment and so is facilitated much more effectively with new teachers appointed well before the beginning of the school year. There are certain aspects that are priorities such as a physical walk around the school, location of key colleagues in administration and support positions, school behavioural policy, expectations in terms of such things as fire drills, discipline, etc., and these should be addressed prior to a teacher's first day of teaching. Other procedural matters could be introduced through a school binder and reinforced through regular staff meetings. What appeared to be a critical message from participants is that they would like to commence their positions with a clear understanding of the expectations that the principal has of them in terms of teaching and in terms of supporting established school policy and procedures and who to contact if they are unsure.

Mentoring is consistently lauded as the most important of the NTIP induction elements although all elements generated high usefulness ratings. Mentoring is construed by new teachers as pragmatic, friendly and supportive. The relationship was predominantly an informal one that operated according to felt needs of the new teachers. It is apparent that most new teachers view the mentor primarily as someone who will support their socialization into the school and assist them in response to any difficulties they may encounter in the classroom. They want to be paired with someone who is approachable and supportive and who is able to respond to their often very pragmatic questions related to specific areas such as report card writing and mastering new systems within their board for maintaining and reporting students' performance. Mentoring was reported consistently as being more effective if the mentor and new teacher are in the same school and in the same division and grade level. It also was apparent that close proximity within the school is a positive influence. Of significance also is the support offered by colleagues within the school which speaks to the nature of the school culture which is recognized by the new teachers as being fostered in large part by the leadership within the school.

The mentors' role in induction is integral, complex and multi-dimensional, as they guide, lead and provide pedagogical advice and personal support to new teachers, with the ultimate goal of improving the new teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. What is evident in this study, however, is that while mentors are strongly committed to supporting the new teachers they are somewhat tentative in their roles and they look to the future to explore the potential of more structured mentoring. This is not to say that mentoring should be prescriptive – it is above all else a relationship between two people and so must have the freedom and fluidity that comes with building relationships. Rather, there is a call by mentors for clearer explication of the possibilities of the role and the key areas that mentoring could focus on. The emotional and affective support of new teachers is viewed as a critical first step, however, there was a growing interest on the part of mentors for strategies to ensure that mentoring is productive towards pedagogical and instructional goals. Mentors called for additional training and support to identify new teacher needs and then opportunities to build a plan with their new teachers that would respond to these needs effectively.

While the NTIP was reported as a positive and necessary initiative, the study did give rise to identification of some barriers to new teachers participating fully in all induction

elements offered through the NTIP. Some barriers were systemic, others more contextual and localized. Across the province there is a need for school boards to establish systems for dissemination of information and resources to new teachers, mentors and principals simultaneously. In addition there is a need to ensure professional development opportunities are differentiated according to division and subject specialization.

At a school level, adopting the NTIP induction elements as integral to school culture will take time and commitment on the part of the principals and mentors in particular. Geographic isolation of some schools has significant time consequences for new teachers and mentors who wish to participate in the NTIP induction activities. This is also felt in terms of finding appropriate supply teachers to cover release days offered. For mentors the most often articulated barrier related to a lack of surety of the scope of their role although most looked forward to next year when they were more confident of how they would proceed. An important but largely under utilized element of mentoring is observation and feedback on new teachers' classroom teaching. This is an area that both new teachers and mentors seldom engaged in and many reported hesitancy due to possibilities of misinterpretation as evaluative. Those participants who did engage in observation and feedback rated it as a most significant element in their development.

Overall, the greatest barrier was lack of time – time scheduled so that mentor and new teacher could plan or work on targeted areas together; time to visit other schools/teachers in their fields; and, time to have the much needed professional conversations and reflection. All participants acknowledged that in most cases the time allowances in terms of release days were generous – the barrier was in balancing the desire to stay in the classroom with the need to plan for a supply teacher to enable attendance in the activities offered. For many new teachers the sheer volume of work and commitments during this first year resulted in them not fully utilizing their release day allowances and they would like to have seen these offered over the first two years of teaching.

2006/2007 was the first year of mandatory implementation of the NTIP across Ontario, which accounts for the program being well established in some areas while other areas are in early implementation stages. The findings from Cycle One also signal that the contexts and needs of new teachers vary across the province due to geography, teaching assignments and prior experience. The challenge remains to exemplify how the NTIP makes a difference to new teachers' teaching and student learning through ongoing study of the impact of the various induction elements of the NTIP and the ways in which they are experienced by key participants across Ontario.

There is the need to be cautious in seeking to isolate the NTIP induction elements in a cause and effect relationship with enhanced teaching and student achievement. Teaching is complex and there are multiple variables that influence the myriad of interactions that occur daily within a new teacher's classroom. The goal of this study is to gather data from a range of sources, both quantitative and qualitative, to ensure with confidence that claims made can be substantiated. For the most part during the Phase two interviews we are generating data on the perceptions of new teachers, mentors and principals regarding the professional development of new teachers. Taken together, the triangulation of sources can give some confidence of authenticity to the claims. These are further substantiated by the Phase One quantitative data. With a strengthening of the

research instruments we suggest that Cycle Two data will give further strength to the findings of Cycle One.

CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of Cycle One enable us to identify a number of considerations from the research population that may serve to inform the ongoing implementation of the NTIP across Ontario. Considerations presented below are derived from both Phase One and Phase Two and are summarized into point form and organised according to the focus of the consideration: Ministry of Education, the school boards and schools. They reflect both suggestions made directly by participants and considerations derived from analysis of the data, and are offered as a formative outcome of the first cycle of the NTIP Evaluation.

Ministry of Education

It is agreed by an overwhelming majority of participants that support for new teachers in their induction into the profession is critical and thus that the NTIP is a necessary initiative.

- Continue to fund the NTIP as a necessary initiative for new teachers.
- Examine the implications of re-defining new teachers to include Long Term Occasional teachers to enable their participation in the NTIP.
- Consider extending the existing NTIP funding over the first two years of teaching which would allow new teachers the opportunity to fully access the necessary induction elements of the NTIP, the time to critically reflect on their own professional learning and to embed new understandings into their practice.
- 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.

School Boards

- Offer, early in September (or before school commences), an initial orientation and professional development that serves the purposes of welcoming the new teachers but also includes a pedagogical element of preparing for day one.
- Offer release days for mentors and their new teachers to attend an introductory session together where they are both given an overview of the goals and expectations of the NTIP so they both get the same message. The groups could then be separated for specific activities but the goals would be that both mentor and new teacher hear the same description of goals, possibilities, focus etc. in an initial common session.
- Schedule other orientation days during the year to accommodate new teachers hired after September.
- Establish systems for regularly communicating with new teachers directly via email and ensure that mentors, principals and new teachers receive the relevant information at the same time.
- 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 discuss potential professional development opportunities with their mentors and plan ahead.

- Differentiate professional development targeted to meet the specific needs of the particular groups of new teachers participating according to divisions and teaching subjects.
- Continue to develop relevant training for mentors that includes strategies for identifying new teachers' needs and planning for creative ways of addressing these needs that focus on the target areas of planning, classroom management, assessment and evaluation, communication with parents, and meeting needs of diverse learners.
- Explore the possibility of releasing new teachers from an expectation of supply coverage for their peers so that their preparation periods are protected thus allowing them more time.
- Continue to encourage principals and mentors to differentiate the NTIP program for individual new teachers in ways that take account of previous teaching experience.

Schools

- Continue to establish orientation and welcome activities for new teachers in schools as early as possible, either before classes begin or as soon as the teacher is hired, even if in the middle of the school year.
- Schedule an official time where all new teachers to the school are given the emergency procedures, how to call a supply teacher, policies and procedures with students exhibiting challenging behaviors, what forms to fill out, who to contact, etc.
- Establish mentor-new teacher partnerships as early as possible, i.e., during the weeks following the arrival of the new teacher.
- Allow both new teacher and mentor input into the choice of mentor/new teacher partnerships.
- Where possible have mentor and new teacher teaching in same grades and same subjects.
- Promote observation and feedback as part of the mentoring relationship – both the new teacher observing the mentor and the mentor observing the new teacher.
- Continue to give new teachers the opportunity of participating in sessions together with other new teachers; offer them the opportunity to discuss their experiences and concerns, and possibly create a support network as a result.
- 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.
- Recognize that the principal, as school leader, needs to embrace the NTIP and explicitly advocate for the NTIP as a priority and an essential element of building the school culture.
- Explore the possibility of releasing new teachers from an expectation of supply coverage and/or extra-curricular activities.