Nurturing New Teachers


The statistics are startling: Fully one-half of the teachers who begin their careers this year will not be around five years from now. Nearly a third will exit the profession within three years. What causes the dream of so many to die so quickly? The implicit question posed in this book is, “What are we going to do about it?”

Developing a Teacher Induction Plan is best described as a workbook in which the authors blend research and personal expertise. The real strength of the book, however, lies in a host of exercises that lead administrators to probe deeply into every area of school life. The book does not supply answers. Instead, it leads us through a thought process. The answers come from within us and are as unique as our situations.

The authors begin with an exercise asking us to identify the people who will play a part in teacher induction and the specific responsibilities each will assume. This exercise, like all of those that follow, is printed on reproducible pages and includes plenty of white space. Ideas may be recorded right on the page by those working alone or in a group. As the book progresses, the reader responds to questions about such areas as current trends in the school and school system, orientation of new teachers, mentoring, classroom management, continuous development, and means of evaluating the induction program.

Schools and school systems of any size will find value in this book. Because it probes rather than prescribes, it allows principals to design programs as simple or as detailed as desired. In the book’s final exercise, the reader is asked to describe in his or her own words every aspect of an induction program that will be implemented, including why the program is needed and how it will be evaluated.

Effective teacher induction is essential for those entering the teaching profession and this book is an excellent guide for retaining and growing those new to our schools.

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Evaluating Evaluations


Teacher quality is among the few critical variables principals can control in influencing student success in schools. Some of the books on teacher evaluation are more useful than others. I recommend Peterson and Peterson’s Effective Teacher Evaluation. The authors’ purpose is to present principals with assessment strategies that have been significantly refined and expanded during the past 25 years.

One is struck with the scope of the authors’ research: more than 100 separate studies are referenced to support their findings, some of which reinforce effective practices many principals already incorporate in teacher evaluation. For instance, the authors stress the importance of using multiple data sources and advocate walk-throughs.

But other findings from the research are unexpected, even counterintuitive, given assumptions that prevail in current evaluation practice. For example, the authors state that “teacher evaluation as a way to improve practice is oversold to educators and the public. There are few instances in the literature where a teacher evaluation system has been empirically shown to make a difference” (my emphasis). Elsewhere, addressing a perennial controversy, the authors argue “it is a myth that it is virtually impossible to dismiss the unsatisfactory teacher…[unless] poorly developed teacher evaluation systems leave principals out on a limb alone.” These and other assertions, supported by research, are eye-openers, inviting practitioners to look beyond our own schools and districts to see wider trends from the research on teacher evaluation. And that’s healthy for us to do.

Beyond research-based recommendations, the authors provide several thoughtful and immediately useful tools for principals to apply in realizing the suggested strategies.

I would be interested to learn how student achievement data can be used in teacher evaluation within the framework of No Child Left Behind. I’ll look forward to the next edition of Effective Teacher Evaluation to find out.

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