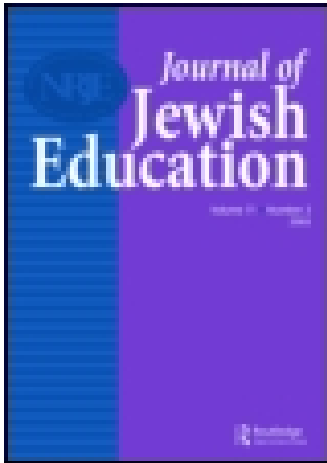


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## **Developing Comprehensive Induction in Jewish Day Schools: Lessons from the Field**

SARAH BIRKELAND AND SHARON FEIMAN-NEMSER

*Effective school-based induction for new teachers involves much more than mentoring; it requires a comprehensive array of supports buttressed by a collaborative professional culture. Yet few schools are able to offer such a nourishing environment to their new hires. What would it take to bridge the gap between the real and the ideal? In 2005 team of researchers and practitioners launched a three-year project with two goals: a) to help the leaders of four Jewish day schools create comprehensive systems of induction for their new teachers and b) to carefully document the process. This paper presents the theory behind our work, our strategies for effecting change and lessons learned along the way.*

### INTRODUCTION

In 2003, a task force on professional recruitment, development, retention, and placement convened by the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA) reported a chronic shortage of Jewish educators and urged increased attention to helping new teachers succeed. Soon afterward the Jewish Educator Recruitment and Retention Initiative (JERRI) raised consciousness about the need for induction as a means of retaining new teachers in Jewish day schools. Painful stories of promising young day school teachers who drop out before they have a chance to master their craft (Ingall, 2006), evidence of high turnover rates among new hires (Kelner, Rabkin, Saxe, & Sheingold, 2005) and attention to the “graying” of the day school faculty (Ben-Avie & Kress, 2008) added to the sense of urgency.

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This call for greater investment in the induction of Jewish educators mirrors a broader, nationwide trend: New teacher induction has become a hot topic in recent years as mounting education research demonstrates that well-designed induction supports can improve new teachers' effectiveness (Villar, 2004) and increase the likelihood of their retention (Kapadia & Coca, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). These are important considerations in a profession that loses between 30% and 50% of its entrants in the first five years (Huling-Austin, 1990; Ingersoll, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

As education researchers have turned their attention to the question of how best to induct new teachers into their schools and the profession, consensus has emerged about what elements are necessary to help new teachers succeed (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 1998; Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005; Johnson & Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Although people often use the terms induction and mentoring interchangeably, we now know that mentoring alone is not enough. Mentoring is only one component of effective induction; teachers need other supports such as reasonable teaching assignments, regular opportunities to co-plan with and observe colleagues, regular, transparent performance evaluations and access to complete teaching curricula (Kapadia & Coca, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Research also tells us that very few schools are prepared to offer novice teachers a comprehensive array of induction supports (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). By and large, American schools are not nourishing sites for new teacher learning. They treat novice teachers as expert from their first day on the job, maintain norms of autonomy and isolation that limit new teachers' access to colleagues' expertise, and organize teachers' work so that opportunities for ongoing professional learning are rare. This is true in Jewish day schools as well as secular public schools (Flexner & Gold, 2003). In other words, there is a big gap between the ideal supports that leaders in the field envision for new teacher induction and the realities of practice.

In 2004, this gap was clearly visible to the practitioners and scholars at the Mandel Center at Brandeis University involved in the Day School Leadership through Teaching (DeLeT) program. DeLeT provides an intensive year of pre-service teacher education to promising college graduates and midcareer changers, including a year-long mentored internship in a day school classroom. After providing sound initial preparation to DeLeT fellows and then watching them struggle in area day schools without the necessary supports, the Mandel Center team wondered, "Could we help school leaders create the induction supports necessary to nourish these new teachers? What would it take to bridge the gap between the real and the ideal?"

In 2005, a team of teacher educators and scholars, including the authors of this article, came together at Brandeis University to form the Mandel

Center's Induction Partnership,<sup>1</sup> a three-year project with two main goals: 1) fostering comprehensive systems of new teacher induction in four local Jewish day schools; and 2) distilling lessons from the field about what such an endeavor entails. We wanted to learn what it would take to move partner schools toward strong schoolwide induction programs while, at the same time, studying the factors that enabled and constrained the change process<sup>2</sup>.

This article presents some of what we did and what we learned. We begin by discussing the idea of new teacher induction as something comprehensive and schoolwide, an idea that we brought into the project and refined over our three years of working with day schools. Next we describe what we did to help our partner day schools develop comprehensive induction for their new hires. We then turn to a discussion of lessons we learned along the way and what they imply for other day schools that wish to nurture new teachers through comprehensive systems of induction.

## GUIDING IDEAS ABOUT COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLWIDE INDUCTION

The first few years of teaching represent a critical phase in new teachers' development. No amount of preservice preparation can fully prepare a candidate for the realities of the job, and new teachers must develop their practice in the classroom. Thus new teachers have two jobs: teaching and learning to teach in a particular school context (Feiman-Nemser, 1983, 2001). Research demonstrates that in order to develop an effective teaching practice and the feeling of efficacy that will keep teachers in their jobs, new teachers need a wide array of supports within their schools (Johnson & Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004; Kapadia & Coca, 2007). Research also demonstrates that those supports are most effective when embedded in supportive professional cultures (Johnson & Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004; Kapadia & Coca, 2007). This idea about the important interplay between supportive structures and professional culture guided our work with schools.

### Structural Elements of Comprehensive Induction

Based on the literature about effective new teacher induction and our own experience in schools, we identified a number of structures and practices that we hoped to help our partner schools develop. They include an early,

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<sup>1</sup>This project was funded in part by a grant from the Covenant Foundation.

<sup>2</sup>The Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis is an academic center dedicated to the study and improvement of teaching and learning in Jewish education. The research of the Induction Project illustrates the kind of practice-centered, inside-the-action research typically undertaken by the Mandel Center.

information-rich hiring process; summer preparation and formal orientation; access to complete curricula; regular interaction with colleagues and educative mentoring; and ongoing assessment of practice and a transparent rehiring process. In this section, we briefly elaborate each element.

#### EARLY, INFORMATION-RICH HIRING

Teachers begin to learn about a school's professional culture and expectations the very first time they enter the building for an interview. Therefore, hiring is the first step of teacher induction, representing an often-overlooked opportunity to purposefully introduce candidates to the school's mission, values, resources and community (Liu & Johnson, 2006). By organizing an early and thorough hiring process that involves the candidate's potential colleagues and allows for a rich exchange of information, a school can ensure a good fit between a candidate, the available position, and the school's goals before investing in the teacher. Likewise, candidates can make informed decisions about the settings in which they will develop their professional identity and practice.

#### SUMMER PREPARATION AND FORMAL ORIENTATION

The summer before new teachers begin their jobs provides an important opportunity to get to know colleagues and to start planning for the coming year. This is only possible when school leaders give new teachers their teaching assignments well before school starts and ensure them regular access to their classrooms, curricular materials, and experienced colleagues over the summer months. A thorough formal orientation should introduce school policies, procedures, and facilities; provide guidance on topics such as how to work with parents, co-teachers, classroom aides, and other colleagues; and explore the school's mission, vision of good teaching, and community.

#### ACCESS TO COMPLETE CURRICULA

For many new teachers, the first year on the job is characterized by a "mad scramble" to create daily lesson plans (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002). New teachers consistently report that they crave guidance about what to teach and how to teach it, yet few schools provide them with complete curricula (Kauffman, 2002). A complete teaching curriculum includes a comprehensive list of grade-level skill and knowledge objectives for students, content through which to teach those skills and knowledge, suggested methods for delivering content and assessing understanding, and supporting materials. At its best, carefully chosen curricula support the mission of the school and its vision of good teaching and strengthen teachers' subjectmatter and pedagogical knowledge.

## REGULAR INTERACTION WITH COLLEAGUES AND EDUCATIVE MENTORING

Schools are most effective as sites for new teacher learning when experienced teachers feel a collective sense of responsibility for working with their novice colleagues in formal and informal ways. Structures like grade level and content area teams may facilitate practice-centered collaboration between novices and experienced teachers, a feature of schools associated with teacher satisfaction and effectiveness (Johnson & Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004; Little, 1982; Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996; Newman & Wehlage, 1995). Such interactions include formal, one-on-one mentoring, a key component of induction with the potential to deeply influence novices' efficacy (Villar, 2004). Formal mentoring is most effective when mentors are well-trained and supported in taking an "educative" role (see Feiman-Nemser, 1998), assisting novices in enacting the school's vision of good teaching.

## ONGOING ASSESSMENT OF PRACTICE AND TRANSPARENT REHIRING CRITERIA

When teacher assessment is linked to clear standards for instruction and treated as a learning opportunity for all involved, it can be a powerful form of professional development. Informal, formative assessments are a critical part of the mentoring process, as mentors and novices determine what skills and knowledge to focus on in relation to the school's vision of good teaching and the teacher's current learning needs. Any formal assessments that inform school leaders' decisions about whether or not to rehire a teacher should also be linked to the school's vision of good teaching and carried out with a transparent process. If assessment is ongoing throughout the year, novice teachers should know how they are doing and what they need to work on, so that spring rehiring decisions do not come as a surprise.

## The Importance of a School's Professional Culture

The elements of strong induction elaborated above constitute a set of interdependent and complementary structures that facilitate new teacher learning and development. They represent the concrete outcomes we sought to promote in our four partner schools. We knew, however, that these elements cannot stand alone, that investing solely in putting these pieces in place would not guarantee their effectiveness. We also had to invest in developing a positive professional culture to surround and animate these elements.

The professional culture of a school powerfully mediates new teachers' experiences (Johnson & Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004; Little, 2001). As Kardos and Johnson (2007) demonstrate, if norms of frequent collaboration among colleagues and open discussion of teaching practice are absent, structures like mentoring that are supposedly intended to help novices learn to teach successfully can fall flat. For example, in a

school where open discussion of teaching practice is tacitly discouraged, a novice and mentor may meet every week, but spend their time complaining about the students instead of discussing ways to help students learn. In a school where teachers work in isolation, a new hire may learn a lot about school policies during orientation but still feel uncomfortable asking for help planning lessons in September. Therefore, induction supports work best in schools where new and experienced teachers regularly collaborate around instructional issues and there is a shared sense of responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning.

We reasoned that a school's professional culture is buttressed by community members' understandings of teaching and learning, and we knew that in order to help our partner schools create strong systems of induction, we needed to broker certain ideas: that teaching is complex intellectual work and learning to do it well takes time; that the entire faculty is collectively responsible for novice teachers' success; and that schools can, indeed must, be sites for serious teacher learning. We needed to help schools articulate their missions and make explicit their visions of good teaching and learning. We needed to help them foster norms of collegiality and collaboration. Otherwise the structural elements of induction would be disconnected from animating purposes and understandings.

#### PUTTING THE GUIDING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE: THE INDUCTION PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

We chose our partner schools purposively from among local Jewish day schools that already had relationships with the Mandel Center. The five schools originally chosen for the partnership had hired graduates of the DeLeT teacher preparation program, and each school served as a placement site for the program's yearlong internship. The schools varied in size, organizational structure, denominational sponsorship, and, as we learned, in their readiness to tackle the challenges of putting serious induction practices in place.

In the first year of the partnership (2006–2007), the number of new teachers in the schools ranged from 4 to 10. In order to participate in the partnership, school leaders had to attend an orientation at the Mandel Center with a member of their school board and agree in writing to work with the coach assigned to their school. Early in the first year, one school dropped out; a year later, two new schools asked to join the partnership for a total of six.

Our guiding ideas about the structural and cultural conditions that we hoped to foster in the partner schools shaped the intervention we created. Given the importance of committed leadership and leaders' power to shape culture, we chose to invest in building school leaders' understanding of the importance of induction and familiarizing them with the elements of comprehensive support for new teachers. Knowing that each school has a

unique culture and context, we agreed that coaches needed to tailor their strategies to the needs and realities of their assigned school. At the same time, we wanted to create a broader conversation among leaders of different schools by providing opportunities for school leaders to network and collaborate. Finally, we believed that there must be structured opportunities for ongoing research and reflection that could inform the practice of school leaders and the Mandel Center team and generate knowledge for the field. That meant building research into the ongoing work of the partnership.

Given these assumptions and beliefs, we required each school to designate an induction leader to oversee the work in the school. We provided individualized coaching at each school and cross-school activities for induction leaders, mentor teachers, and heads of school. We also conducted ongoing research in the partner schools to record schools' progress (or lack thereof) and adjust our interventions accordingly.

### Designating Induction Leaders in Partner Schools

Very early in the partnerships we discovered that heads of school must be advocates for new teacher induction but cannot be relied on to make it happen. We realized that each school needed someone responsible for overseeing the formal induction program and its ongoing improvement. Therefore, we asked each school head to designate an induction leader, preferably an experienced and respected faculty member, and give that person authority to oversee induction as well as time to fulfill her responsibilities. The induction leader became the primary point of contact in each school for our Induction Partnership Team.

### Providing Individualized Coaching

Given our belief that change efforts must be schoolwide and individually tailored to each school's particular context, we chose to invest in coaches who could develop ongoing relationships with the leaders in their partner schools and design appropriate interventions. We carefully selected coaches from the local education community, assembling a team with deep and rich experience in teacher education, school leadership, and relevant research. Each coach made a two-year commitment to her school, spending an average of three days a month on site the first year and a day and a half on site the second. Our coaches invested their time in the following activities, although not necessarily in the same order nor with the same degree of attention:

- educating the heads, board members, and induction leaders in their partner schools, introducing them to research about the power of comprehensive induction and sharing theories about the importance of supportive professional cultures;



- supporting induction leaders in building strong mentoring programs through onsite coaching of induction leaders and mentors, schoolwide workshops for mentor teachers, and some individual coaching of mentors;
- working with induction leaders to build other schoolwide support structures such as accessible curricula, formal orientation, and early, information-rich hiring processes;
- helping teams of administrators and teachers articulate their visions of good teaching and adopt or adapt teaching standards that they could use in formative and summative assessment of teachers' practice;
- providing individual coaching on an as-needed basis to administrators, induction leaders, board members, or mentors regarding issues related to school change.

Coaches also gathered monthly to discuss progress in their partner schools, share resources, and brainstorm solutions to difficult problems.

### Facilitating Cross-School Conversation and Joint Learning

Because there were skills and ideas relevant to all partner schools, and because we believed that leaders would benefit from a network of colleagues who were also focused on induction, we created a series of cross-school activities. These included two intensive workshops about the fundamentals of comprehensive, schoolwide induction for heads of school, induction leaders, board members, and other leaders; quarterly conference calls for the heads of school; and semi-annual workshops for mentor teachers. In the second year of the project, induction leaders requested that we form a study group just for them which met monthly for three years—beyond the conclusion of our formal partnerships—facilitated by one of the coaches.<sup>3</sup>

### Pursuing a Research Agenda

From the beginning, the Induction Partnership Project had two main goals: 1) fostering comprehensive systems of new teacher induction in four local Jewish day schools and 2) distilling lessons from the field about what such an endeavor entails. Therefore, we entered the partnerships with an ambitious research agenda. The data collection was designed to uncover common challenges and facilitating factors in fostering strong school-based induction as well as evidence of our schools' progress in implementing the elements of induction we had identified at the outset of the project.

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<sup>3</sup>At the time of this writing, the induction leaders from our partner schools continue to meet regularly, without the facilitation of a Mandel Center coach, at their own initiative, and on their own time.

Coaches documented their work with partner schools through monthly fieldnotes detailing their coaching strategies, goals, perceived outcomes, and dilemmas. They periodically interviewed the beginning teachers, mentors, and induction leaders to inform their own coaching as well as the research component of the project. In addition, the coaches digitally recorded some key meetings with school leaders (with those leaders' permission) so that we could transcribe the meetings and analyze the content. In addition, a Mandel Center researcher assigned to the project periodically interviewed heads of school, beginning teachers, and mentors in each school about current induction practices, what was working well, and perceived roadblocks.

The researcher periodically analyzed the extant data to look for trends or common dilemmas that might inform the coaches' work, feeding the findings back into the project during monthly coaches' meetings. For example, when early interviews with beginning teachers in our partner schools revealed that many were deeply concerned about how to communicate effectively with parents, coaches began strategizing with induction leaders and mentors about how best to support beginning teachers in that part of their jobs. At the end of the partnership, we mined the data for evidence of schools' progress and lessons for the field.

#### INDUCTION PRACTICES IN OUR PARTNER SCHOOLS: PROGRESS AND FACTORS THAT FACILITATE IT

Overall, the coaches had varying levels of success in helping their schools create strong systems of induction. In three of the six schools, the coaches made very modest progress in aiding the development of strong, culturally embedded systems of induction. In three of the schools, the coaches helped to implement significant changes that are still in place today.<sup>4</sup>

##### Limited Progress in Three Partner Schools

At the beginning of the Mandel Induction Partnership Project (May 2005), few formal structures were in place in our partner schools and school leaders shared limited understanding of how they might effectively foster new teachers' learning. Two years later, we saw few significant changes in three of our schools. These three schools now assign mentors to all of their new teachers, and administrators in each report that they urge mentors to co-plan with and observe their mentees. However, despite mentor's attendance at

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<sup>4</sup>We do not provide a detailed description of each partner school's progress and limitations here; such an analysis appears in "The Mandel Induction Partnership Project Evaluation, January 2009," available through the Mandel Center.

Mandel Center trainings on “educative” mentoring, we found little evidence the mentors were taking an educative stance toward their mentees. Some beginning teachers reported that they rarely met with their mentors, while others reported that they did meet regularly but rarely talked about teaching and learning. At the end of the partnership, the leaders in these three schools maintained the idiosyncratic hiring processes and opaque standards for evaluation they had at the beginning of the partnership, with little movement toward more transparent or inclusive processes.

We did see some signs that induction practices were continuing to evolve, however. For example, in 2008, an administrator at one of these schools reported that the administrative team had recently revised the hiring guidelines to facilitate a more “information-rich” process, and the induction leader reported that every novice teacher received targeted curricular support as well as mentoring that year.

### Great Strides in Three Partner Schools

In the other three schools, we observed significant changes not only in the support structures available for new teachers, but also in the leaders’ overall approach to teacher learning. For example, in 2005, at the beginning of our partnership, the induction leader in one of these three schools illustrated the need for our partnership by describing the school’s treatment of a novice teacher the year before: “We had a DeLeT graduate, a new teacher, a really lovely person. We made her teach science, Jewish studies, Hebrew. She got the ADD kids.” Nearly three years later, in the spring of 2008, the same induction leader described a radical transformation in the way her school inducts new teachers: “There is an entirely different view here of what it means to support a new teacher...I really feel that when a new teacher comes to (this school) now, we assist them in growing as an educator in all ways. For two years.”

We observed that the three schools that made the most progress understood and embraced the schoolwide aspect of comprehensive induction. The changes that these schools made went far beyond providing serious mentoring for teachers, although each did develop a teaching-focused mentoring program. All three redesigned their approach to hiring so that it involved more teachers and made it a more collective enterprise. They took up the challenge of figuring out what kind of teaching they wanted to see in their schools and administrators and faculty spent a year collaborating to create a description of what such teaching looks like. Those visions of good teaching then could become a tool for guiding the school’s hiring procedures, the content of summer orientation, mentors’ work with new teachers, the focus of ongoing professional development, and supervisors’ evaluations.

These three schools also began to rethink the relationship between supervisors and mentors, realizing that the conventional “firewall” that

prevents mentors from discussing new teachers' practice with their supervisors was not serving them well. Keeping new teachers' struggles from their supervisors makes sense when your goal is simply to provide new teachers with emotional support, however, as these partner schools began to see induction as a way to help new teachers develop the teaching practices that will allow them to succeed at the school, they realized that everyone needed to work together in the service of that goal. All three eliminated the firewall, creating regular three-way meetings between new teachers, their mentors, and their supervisors. In keeping with the ethos of collective responsibility, each also took steps to educate parents about induction and to enlist them in actively supporting new teachers' growth rather than complaining about new teachers' foibles.

However, even these three schools did not realize the ideal of comprehensive, school-based induction we had originally envisioned. Data collected from novice teachers and induction leaders in 2008 indicated that some mentor and novice pairs rarely discussed teaching or curriculum, the newly created hiring guidelines were not yet implemented in a consistent way, teachers did not yet have access to complete curricula in the subjects they taught, and formal evaluations of teachers did not yet incorporate the schools' standards for teaching. These schools had made great strides in supporting their novice teachers, yet three years after the partnership began, there were still significant gaps in their support for new teachers' professional learning. These gaps underscore the complexity of the changes involved in creating comprehensive induction, and the fact that school change takes time.

### School-Level Factors that Facilitate Comprehensive, Schoolwide Induction

What enabled some schools to make more progress than others? A careful analysis of coaches' fieldnotes and interview and survey data from our partner schools led us to conclude that several key factors made the difference between the partner schools that developed strong induction practices and those that did not.

#### COMMITTED, SAVVY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The success of a school-based induction program relies on the commitment and investment of school leaders. Those leaders in our partner schools—heads of school in some cases and high level administrators in others—who believed that a serious effort to address new teachers' needs could be a vehicle for addressing teachers' professional learning, generally, worked to integrate induction supports into the life of the entire school. They strove to develop a supportive professional culture by fostering a schoolwide

appreciation that learning to teach well takes time and promoting the idea that the entire school is responsible for helping new teachers succeed. They educated board members and parents about the importance of helping new teachers develop their practice, and when preparing the budget they prioritized induction activities such as protected time for mentors and new teachers to meet and release time for induction leaders. Without their support, the programs could not have been successful.

#### A TALENTED AND WELL-RESPECTED INDUCTION LEADER

We found that who the induction leader was mattered a great deal in our partner schools. The schools that made the most progress in developing comprehensive and schoolwide systems of induction were those that assigned a skilled and well-respected faculty member to the role of induction leader. These experienced teachers were well positioned to engage their peers, the experienced teachers who served as mentors, in productive conversations about teaching and learning to teach. They were also well positioned to communicate with school leaders on behalf of the mentors and to serve as an effective liaison to the Mandel coach.

In our three schools where the induction leader fit this description—the three schools that had the most success in implementing induction—the induction leader balanced a sometimes difficult role of leading her colleagues in the development of an educative mentoring program and holding them accountable for that work. This required strong interpersonal skills and a willingness to challenge the deeply rooted norm of egalitarianism among teachers (Little, 1982; Lortie, 1975) and it was sometimes difficult to manage. As an induction leader in one of our more successful schools described that

As a teacher I was really well liked by everybody. I was everybody's friend and as I began to get into the mentoring and take this role [of induction leader] I have discovered that not everybody is as fond of me as they used to be. I have had very, very, very close friends find fault with me around induction.

Yet, these induction leaders also report that the experience of leading their colleagues in the induction work has been a rewarding professional experience. The same induction leader who has struggled with the disapproval of her fellow teachers has said, "For me professionally, this work has been huge. I think that [the new leadership role I am taking in the school next year] is entirely because of the Induction Partnership."

The schools in our partnership who assigned administrators or outside consultants as induction leaders did not meet with the same success, particularly in developing a cohort of strong and committed mentors. The administrators simply did not have the time or capacity to remain focused on

induction; too many other demands competed for their attention. We also observed that the administrators and outside consultants had a harder time than the experienced teachers building a cohort of educative mentors. Taking on the task of examining teaching practice with new teachers can feel risky to mentors, as it necessarily exposes their own practical knowledge. Mentors simply appeared more comfortable taking such risks under the guidance of a peer than under the guidance of a supervisor.

#### ACCESS TO EXTERNAL SUPPORT AND EXPERTISE

In order to successfully facilitate change, school leaders needed to look beyond their own school communities for ideas and support. The induction leaders, mentors, and administrators in our partner schools learned a great deal about comprehensive induction and what it entails from their Mandel-assigned coaches; they also learned a lot from one another. In particular, the induction leaders in our three most successful schools leaned on one another for moral support, advice, and resources. Between meetings, they shared ideas and materials in person and via email. For example, here is the text of a December 2008 email from one leader to the group:

[An induction leader at another school] and I met yesterday and she showed me the evaluation document [another induction leader] had shared with her. She had wanted to meet to hear about my experiences with developing my school's induction program, and I shared a number of stories and materials for her to use. We also talked about the organizational obstacles she is facing at her school. I really enjoyed making the connection between our schools.

The same week, an induction leader sent the group an article about the phases of first year teaching, a draft of her school's procedures for "teacher-centered" supervisory conferences, and notes from her recent presentation to department heads and mentors. None of us entered the partnerships knowing exactly what building strong systems of induction would entail, and as induction leaders made their way through this complex work they reported being "extremely grateful" for access to the expertise and wisdom of colleagues.

#### A "CRITICAL MASS" OF WILLING AND EXPERIENCED MENTORS

We encouraged mentors in our partner schools to meet regularly in study groups. At first, the Mandel Center coaches facilitated these study groups with the induction leaders' support; the coaches gradually released responsibility so that by the end of the partnership induction leaders were planning and facilitating the study groups with minimal coach support. We observed that

in the three schools that made significant progress, there were enough mentors (at least four) to form a study group, and those mentors were willing to take the time to meet regularly. In each of these schools the mentors formed their own professional learning community, exploring what it meant to help novices develop their practice, practicing mentoring skills such as conducting focused observations and giving feedback, and sharing resources with one another. The schools could not always offer them protected time to meet, which meant that they met on their own time, often late in the day. One induction leader described the energy her school's mentors brought to those meetings.

We sometimes met after faculty meetings from 5:00 to 6:30 but the energy each and every time was amazing. It was a lot to ask of a teacher to come to a faculty meeting until five and then to meet as a cohort, and every time the meetings would fly and people did not want to leave because there was so much to talk about and so many issues to sort through together as a group of mentors.

In each of the three schools that managed to get mentor study groups up and running, the mentors reported valuing the meetings as opportunities for their own professional growth. One explained that as a result of mentoring and participating in the study group among a community of colleagues, she was "much more aware and honest" about her own teaching than she had been before. Another mentor commented that taking responsibility for someone else's practice has made her "vigilant about whether my students are learning," and another reported that thinking hard about how to help novices learn to teach makes her feel like a "true professional."

The cohort of mentors encouraged one another to take risks in their mentoring and teaching practice, and created an informal, internal system of accountability for taking the work of mentoring seriously. The cultures the mentors created in their study groups had implications for the overall cultures of their schools, as the schools' most experienced faculty modeled ongoing discussion of practice, a sense of responsibility for their colleagues' professional growth, and excitement about their own continued learning for all of the other teachers in the school.

#### AN APPRECIATION AMONG SCHOOL LEADERS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF A VISION OF GOOD TEACHING

Administrators and induction leaders in our more successful partner schools demonstrated an early understanding that effective support of beginning teachers relied on a clear and shared understanding of what good teaching looks like at their school. Leaders in these schools were willing to work together to frame one.

Very few schools operate with shared and explicit visions of good teaching. In the beginning of our induction partnership, administrators and mentors in each partner school reported only vague and implicit agreement about what good teaching looked like at their schools. As a mentor teacher in one partner school put it, "I think we all have a general sense of what good teaching is. I think that with all the people we've hired, we've surrounded ourselves with the people we know agree with us on good teaching. But I don't think we've made it explicit." A mentor in another school said, "I think that [our vision of] good teaching is implicit. We have talked from time to time about what it is, but we don't have enough time. There is nothing explicit that I should be modeling for my mentee."

Without a shared and explicit understanding of what good teaching looks like, beginning teachers do not know what they are striving for, experienced colleagues do not know how to help them, and administrators do not know what the focus of professional development should be or what to look for in evaluating teachers. Mentoring becomes an idiosyncratic endeavor, not necessarily connected to the standards that supervisors use when making rehiring decisions.

Leaders in three partner schools saw that a shared vision of good teaching was the cornerstone of a comprehensive and systematic approach to induction, and they formed committees of teachers and administrators to create one. In one of the partner schools, the process involved examining and discussing teaching standards from a variety of sources, choosing language and standards that fit the group's values, and working together to create a continuum that described how teacher practice might evolve from beginning to expert for each of the standards they articulated. The induction leader then created a mentoring "curriculum" around these school-specific standards, casting the accompanying continuum as a tool for teachers to use when discussing their practice with one another and their supervisors.<sup>5</sup> The process took more than a year.

AN ACCEPTANCE AMONG MENTORS AND LEADERS THAT THEY ARE COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR NEW TEACHERS' SUCCESS

Finally, we observed among our more successful partner schools a shared understanding, fostered by the induction leader and administrators, that induction is a schoolwide commitment: Although only a handful of experienced teachers serve as formal mentors, everyone is responsible for ensuring the success of the school's beginning teachers. This shared belief allowed for an approach to induction that went well beyond one-on-one mentoring.

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<sup>5</sup>One year after the partnership ended, to the induction leader's dismay, the school had not yet formally incorporated the school's standards or continuum or practice into the teacher hiring or evaluation processes.



For example, it meant that grade-level team meetings, although they may not be formal mentoring occasions, were cast as opportunities to ensure that new teachers had the information and resources they needed to be successful. It meant that during a new hire's first summer setting up her classroom and exploring curricular materials, any of her experienced colleagues felt empowered to stop by and lend a hand. It meant that supervisors and mentors had an *obligation* to collaborate in ensuring that beginning teachers received the support they needed, rather than an obligation to withhold information from one another. And finally, it created an impetus for teachers and administrators to work together to manage parents' anxiety around beginning teachers' early mistakes. In one partner school, administrators created what they described as "a cocoon" for new teachers, shielding them from parent criticism and actively entreating those critical parents to support the new teachers' growth.

## CONCLUSION

In the Mandel Center's Induction Partnership Project, we took seriously the growing literature about induction and teacher learning. This literature tells us that new teachers need more than one-on-one mentoring; they need a comprehensive array of supports in order to thrive. It also tells us that structural supports will fall flat unless embedded in a professional culture that values collegial collaboration and is animated by shared ideas about good teaching and learning to teach. Drawing on that literature, we created a small scale partnership project, exploring with six local Jewish day schools what it would take to create the structural supports and cultural conditions that effectively help new teachers to develop their practice.

We were reminded that creating such change is slow and complex work. It is fraught with challenges, from deeply engrained norms of egalitarianism among teachers to tight schedules and shrinking budgets. At the end of our two-year coaching commitment, we well understood school leaders' temptation to rely on concrete, low-cost solutions like assigning mentors, crossing their fingers, and hoping that it would make a difference. We also knew that such quick fixes are insufficient. A series of "small wins" with partner schools nourished our belief that a deep investment in aligning structural supports and effecting cultural change is worth it.

As our partner schools took steps toward implementing comprehensive induction, such as articulating shared visions of good teaching, breaking down barriers between mentors and supervisors, and revising their hiring practices, it became clear that these changes intended to help novice teachers were, in fact, good for the entire faculty. Schools that are nourishing sites for new teachers' learning are nourishing sites for all teachers' learning. In that way, a focus on induction becomes a lever for whole school change, with benefits far beyond improved retention and efficacy of novice teachers.

We found that the schools that made the most progress in implementing comprehensive, schoolwide induction were those with strong leaders who understood the big picture: Although the project's stated intention was to create the conditions that nourish new teachers, the work it would take to get there would benefit the entire school. These leaders appreciated the power of a clear, shared vision of good teaching and were able to mobilize experienced faculty to help create such a vision and bring new teachers towards it. They fostered a sense of collective responsibility for novice teachers' growth that extended beyond the faculty, to parents and community members. Our work affirmed that leadership matters, that shared ideas can shape culture, and that when strong leaders nurture powerful ideas about teaching and learning to teach in their schools, the results can be transformative.

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