

Braintree:
Promising Practices and Implementation Tools

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District(s) Where Implemented: Braintree Public Schools

4. Lever Addressed and Title of Promising Practice: Comprehensive Induction of New Teachers.

5. How This Practice Reflects District's Mission & Core Values:

The primary objective driving the Braintree Public Schools is excellence in instruction and in student achievement. District leaders see recruitment of faculty and staff as the most important part of their work and adopted the State Performance Standards as the yardstick for both hiring and evaluating teachers. Prospective candidates for positions are measured against the standards on which they are ultimately evaluated. Beyond the thoughtful and rigorous hiring process, a critical piece of ensuring that the teaching staff is of the highest quality is to provide the highest quality New Teacher Induction Program.

6. Goals of This Practice:

The goal of Braintree's Comprehensive Induction Program is to help new teachers transition successfully into the system and support their ongoing personal and professional growth and development, focused on student achievement. From hiring onwards, a significant amount of time and people resources are dedicated to comprehensively supporting new teachers.

Description of this Practice and how it Addresses Criteria for this Lever:
TWO-DAY NEW TEACHER ORIENTATION: District leaders coordinate a two-day New Teacher Orientation Program at the start of the school year which begins with an overview by the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. The focus is on district and school culture, familiarization with policies (for example, anti-bullying policy, internet use (AUP), the teacher evaluation system, and special needs services). The district's mission, values and beliefs are also presented and topics such as stress and resilience are addressed. The second day of the

orientation process is building-based. New teachers meet with their principals, directors, and special sessions are devoted to SPED services and technology use. The focus with technology is twofold: (1) to address appropriate use, and logistical, administrative functions such as email and the electronic grading system (2) philosophy and practice regarding the use of technology in the classroom – technology should be used as a teaching tool in instruction, rather than as an end in itself.

The two-day orientation includes a combination of district-wide and site-based meetings, but both days begin and end with all new staff together. The underlying philosophy is that teachers new to the district are critical to the work force and must be embraced and supported at all venues, and on many levels, right from the start.

MENTORING: Once new teachers have been hired, and they have met their principals, assistant principals and directors, mentors for each new teacher are selected. Teachers must have five years of teaching experience to be considered for the role of mentoring and matches made between mentors and new teachers take into account content expertise, personality and proximity, in terms of where their respective classrooms are located. Mentors are required to enroll in a 6-hour Mentor Training and three teachers lead this training – one at each school level. The district is investigating a Mentor Refresher Course for mentors who were trained previously.

The role of the mentor is promoted as supportive, confidential, and non-evaluative. New teachers and mentors observe each other teaching and the goal is to share honest feedback in a coaching, not supervisory manner. Coverage of classes is provided for this purpose as needed. Classroom observations are not mandated but strongly encouraged and the focus is on pedagogy, relationship-building and classroom management. Mentors are available to assist in crises and with burning issues. Mentors guide new teachers through the relevant schools' calendars to help teachers anticipate and be prepared for everything that happens in a given year.

Administrators (Principal and Headmasters in rotation) meet with new teachers at the high school level to address topics including classroom management, or dealing with parents. The numbers of new teachers at the middle and elementary schools are much smaller so formal induction sessions are replaced with one to one mentor-new teacher meetings.

Check-in Mentor meetings are held mid-year at building sites to support mentors in their work, and teachers and mentors are surveyed annually to

get feedback on the effectiveness of the Mentor Program. This feedback is integrated into planning for the Mentor Program, going forward.

Mentors receive a \$1,000 stipend per year and are required to submit a log of their work with new teachers. The Assistant Superintendent oversees the Mentor Program.

DEPARTMENT SUPPORT: There are many support teams in place for new teachers. In addition to building principals and assistant principals, department chairs and curriculum leaders work in concert to support all staff new to the district. The mindset is one of shared ownership of the responsibility to help new teachers be successful.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR NEW TEACHERS: There are several course offerings for new staff. Examples are: The Skillful Teacher (for teachers and administrators), Second Step, Autism, Co-Teaching Models, ELL Teaching, and Effective Use of Technology. The district has developed a five-year Strategic Plan focused on cultivating instructional leadership internally. Strengthening the New Teacher Induction Program is an important part of this plan.

In their first year, teachers are working feverishly simply to stay afloat. The mentoring relationship is the most critical support in the first year and while courses may be offered or suggested, this happens more in teachers' second years of teaching, and beyond.

Teachers are continually encouraged to take courses, both in their early and later years in the classroom. With new teachers, the approach is often formal in that leaders and mentors will strategically suggest a teacher take a particular course - based on their observations in the classroom, and conversations they have with the teacher. Teachers are also encouraged to freely choose what they would like to study, in a climate that fosters ongoing learning and continuous improvement.

Criteria Addressed within this Practice:

Induction:

The district has a Comprehensive Induction Plan that includes program elements, roles and responsibilities, implementation processes and timelines, and identifies necessary tools and resources. All members of the district and school community share collective responsibility for contributing to new teacher and administrator growth. Provision for professional growth of new teachers and administrators is an

integral part of the school district's professional development plan for all educators.

The induction process is informed by the Common Core of the Professional Knowledge and Skills and is focused on instruction.

Induction programs provide comprehensive support for all teachers and administrators in their first three years of practice.

Professional development for new teachers is specialized and developmentally appropriate.

Programs are differentiated to address educators' specific areas of responsibility and levels of experience.

Induction and mentoring programs are provided with the administrative supports and resources necessary.

The selection, training, responsibilities and rewards for mentors are informed by research and are part of the district's Induction Plan.

Time for mentoring new teachers and administrators is a part of the school day and provides opportunities for observation, consultation, and reflection.

The district Induction Plan includes a process for collecting program data and conducting ongoing formative evaluation and regular summative evaluation of program effectiveness. This occurs for the Mentor Program in the district.

Applicable Grade Levels:

All grade levels PreK –12

9. How This Practice Was Implemented So It Was More Successful Than Others Used:

- 1) Formalizing the Mentor Program in partnership with the Braintree Teachers' Association added to the importance of and commitment to the program.
- 2) The district previously hired outside consultants to lead Mentor Training but the current preferred method is to use in-house trainers. This builds internal capacity and the trainers know the vision, values and the culture of the district – so they are able to offer the training in a meaningful and authentic context.
- 3) The two-day Orientation Program is continually reviewed and tweaked. The scope of what is covered has been reduced because the amount of information shared with new teachers proved to be overwhelming. Pedagogy and content discussions happen later in departments, while topics such as Special Needs Services, which cross the work of all teachers, and is time-sensitive, are covered in the two days of orientation. Teachers are assured that all they need to know will be threaded through the year in a timely fashion and at a healthy pace.

4) Supervisors (principals and directors) schedule time with new teachers so this connection is in place from the beginning. The goal is to help new teachers get acclimated to the district's general expectations of them, as well as those at the individual school sites. Curriculum and instruction are discussed. Spending time in this way, early on, and focusing on curriculum and instruction sends a message about the district's priorities. Surveys are sent to new teachers every year for feedback on the two-day orientation and improvements are made accordingly.

10. How This Practice Changed The District or School:

Approximately 40–50 new teachers are hired annually. The retention rate of new teachers is very high. Those who do leave are retiring, moving, or leaving to raise their families. There may be a few teachers who do not meet the standards and they are not retained. This is part of the commitment to maintaining high performance standards for teachers. Teacher feedback reflects that all new teacher support combines to serve the needs of new teachers and has a significant impact on teachers staying in the profession and their positions in Braintree.

11. Resources (time, money, materials etc.) Required For Successful Implementation:

The Comprehensive Induction Program consumes significant time and personnel. Personnel at different levels including leaders and teachers are involved in the implementation of new teacher supports. Comprehensive New Teacher Induction Services are a line item in the budget. Professional Development money and Entitlement Grants are also funding sources for this work.

Tools Used To Implement or Advance This Practice: (surveys, needs, assessments, technology tools, rubrics, feedback Forms etc.)