Introduction

THE CHALLENGE

Never has the need to recruit and retain qualified new teachers been greater. Student populations are growing in number and diversity, and reform movements are demanding a higher quality of teaching. The growth of ethnic and minority student enrollment is creating a critical need for minority teachers. Rural and urban areas are experiencing steady growth in the number of English language learners, prompting a demand for teachers sensitive to the needs of non-native speakers (Lenhardt, 2000; NWREL, 1997).

Meanwhile, teacher attrition and retirements continue to increase and some areas of the nation are experiencing shortages of qualified teachers (RNT, 2000). A change in the way schools attract, develop, and retain new teachers is in order.

THE SOLUTION

An increasing number of school systems are recognizing the value of teacher induction programs in retaining and improving the performance of promising new teachers. Research has demonstrated that beginning teachers who receive support are more likely to remain in the teaching field. Equally important, new teachers who receive developmental assistance in their early years are more likely to develop effective teaching practices that endure throughout their careers (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Moir, 2003).

Induction programs can assume many forms, ranging from short orientations to multiyear programs that provide developmental support as novice teachers progress. The induction program format suggested in this book is a multiyear developmental program that includes the components of orientation, mentoring, directed activities, seminars and workshops, and individualized, ongoing professional development. Individual schools' needs and contexts are viewed as central to selecting the format and content of the induction program.

The following factors, considered requisites for an effective induction program, are considered and explored throughout this book.

Effective teacher induction programs require

- Team effort
- Grounding in individual school needs and context
- A school environment conducive to student and teacher learning
- A comprehensive and developmental approach
- Adequate funding and resources
- An evaluation cycle