



Embracing Contraries: Combining Assistance and Assessment in New Teacher Induction

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Background/Context:

Although the induction literature has traditionally recommended separating assistance and assessment, there has been growing recognition that assessment is integral to promoting and gauging teacher quality. This has led to increased interest in approaches to new teacher induction that meld support, development, assessment and accountability.

Focus of Study:

This article provides images of mentoring from two well-regarded induction programs that integrate assistance and assessment to promote quality teaching. The programs are the Peer Assistance and Evaluation Program (PAEP) in Cincinnati, and the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP). The article highlights the possibilities and pitfalls of each approach.

Research Design:

The research uses a qualitative case study design involving multiple layers of data collection. Program level data included interviews with program leaders, analysis of program documentation, and observations of staff meetings and mentor training. We observed program implementation by shadowing experienced mentors as they worked with new teachers and asked each mentors in our sample to submit documentation of one year's work with one successful and one struggling new teacher.

Conclusions:

A comparative analysis reveals that assistance and assessment can coexist. Participating in assessment and evaluation did not prevent mentors from forming trustworthy relationships, although it sometimes made that more challenging. In both programs mentors were highly regarded teachers, carefully chosen, with extensive professional expertise. They earned respect by establishing credibility as useful support providers. Mentors addressed novices' concerns, but they also assessed how new teachers were meeting students' learning needs. In both programs, new teachers set professional goals and were expected to demonstrate progress towards those goals. Mentoring conversations structured around "records of practice" provided opportunities to move beyond self-report and personal opinion. Mentoring can be most educative when mentors engage in assistance and assessment structured by appropriate frameworks and processes, get support from a professional community that upholds professional teaching standards, and receive training and ongoing professional development to carry out their important responsibility.

In an essay on the teaching of writing, Peter Elbow (1986) argues that teaching requires two conflicting stances. On the one hand, teachers must adopt an inviting stance toward students, nurturing their efforts with praise and support, withholding strict judgment, acting on the belief that all are capable of learning. On the other hand, teachers must serve as guardians of knowledge and stewards of the discipline, upholding high standards so that grades, credits, degrees and certificates have meaning. Elbow insists that in order to teach well, teachers must find a way to be loyal both to students and to society.

Elbow's argument about embracing conflicting obligations poses a serious challenge to the field of teacher induction where assisting and assessing new teachers are considered incompatible functions for mentor teachers (Huling-Austin, 1990). The traditional recommendation in the induction literature calls for the separation of these functions. The argument goes like this. Trust is a necessary condition for effective mentoring. New teachers will be unwilling to trust mentors who also evaluate them (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997; Odell, 1987). New teachers who do not trust their mentors will be reluctant to share problems and ask for help, so mentoring will be ineffective. Therefore, any assessment by mentors must be done privately to offer "beneficial feedback" from a "friendly critic" (Huffman & Leak, 1986). Evaluation, particularly for purposes of continued employment, must remain an administrative function.

This position is widely reflected in induction policies and practices. Most programs define their mission as offering

short-term assistance to ease new teachers' entry into teaching by providing information, guidance, and "psychological support" (Gold, 1996), helping novices cope with their first year on the job so they will stay in teaching. Most programs rely on mentor teachers to assist new teachers and school administrators to assess them (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999). Most programs endorse the view that mentors should be confidential support providers, not formal evaluators (Breux & Wong, 2003; Brock & Grady, 1997; Brooks, 1987; Colbert & Wolff, 1992; Gold, 1996; Halford, 1999; Moir & Stobbe, 1995; Villani, 2002).

This support-oriented approach to mentoring is a humane response to the challenges of beginning teaching, but it does not offer a comprehensive rationale for serious induction. Induction programs focused on the goal of retaining new teachers through support ignore the fact that new teachers are still learning to teach and need professional development as well as support (Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Schwille, & Yusko, 1999). Nor does such an approach provide a mechanism for ensuring that new teachers learn to teach effectively so that the right teachers are retained and desirable teaching practices promoted. If induction programs are serious about retaining new teachers *and* improving teaching quality, then mentoring must be viewed as a form of professional development and mentors must see themselves as responsible for helping novices develop an effective teaching practice.

In recent years, one can detect some growing interest in approaches to induction that meld support, development, assessment and accountability (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, 1992; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996, 2003). A handful of states (e.g., California, Connecticut) and a few districts (e.g., Toledo, Cincinnati, Columbus, Rochester) have programs integrating these functions. This "new wave" (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999) of induction activity rests on an evolving consensus around professional teaching standards (Danielson, 1996; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1994) and a growing recognition that assessment is important in promoting and gauging teacher quality. The Association of Teacher Educators, traditionally an advocate of separating assistance and assessment, has called for a "standards-based approach" to new teacher induction, which "combines the provision of new-teacher assistance with a multifaceted method for the assessment of new teacher abilities" (Commission on Professional Support and Development for Novice Teachers, 2000; Odell & Huling, 2000; Odell, Huling, & Sweeney, 2000).

The prospect of combining assistance and assessment raises difficult questions. Can mentors evaluate their colleagues without sacrificing valuable assistance? Can mentors who assist and assess be objective in their evaluations, or will they lower their standards? Will mentors who evaluate distance themselves from new teachers? Will new teachers be receptive to assistance from someone who must evaluate them? Darling-Hammond, Berry, Haselkorn and Fideler (1999) found that combining assistance with formalized assessment risks the possibility of assistance being geared toward narrowly defined teaching behaviors at the expense of teachers' reflective problem solving skills or assessment of student needs. The debate continues over who should be responsible for assisting and evaluating new teachers and how these two functions should be defined and carried out.

Despite the pervasiveness of standards for teachers and students and calls for greater accountability, we still know little about induction policies that call for mentors to assist and assess or about the practice of mentoring in such programs. Ingersoll and Smith (2003; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) have shown that induction programs that provide a combination of different support structures, including mentoring, can positively affect teacher retention, but they acknowledge that large-scale quantitative data offer little information about the character, content, and quality of mentoring. While it is important to determine the impact of induction on teacher retention, policy-makers and program developers concerned about teacher quality also need images and ideas about the kind of mentoring that integrates the dual functions of assistance and assessment in ways that promote quality teaching.

In this paper, we draw on data from a study of induction programs, policies, and practices (Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Katz, Schwille, & Yusko, 2000) to examine two programs where mentors assist and assess new teachers: the Peer Assistance and Evaluation Program (PAEP) in Cincinnati, and the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP) in Santa Cruz.¹ By examining differences in how mentor teachers in these programs incorporated regular assessment of teaching into their work as mentors, we highlight the possibilities and pitfalls of each approach. We argue that it is not only possible to combine assistance and assessment, but that it is impossible to separate them and still take new teachers seriously as learners. When mentors and induction programs embrace these contraries as Elbow recommends, their ability to accomplish the dual goals of retention and improved teacher quality may be increased. Still, there are risks that must be addressed as well.

THE NEW TEACHER INDUCTION STUDY

The New Teacher Induction Study combined case studies of well-regarded induction programs with studies of a cohort of new teachers in each site. Among other things, we wanted to understand how different programs conceptualized the functions of assistance and assessment and what this looked like in the thinking and practice of mentor teachers. Because this issue has important implications for policy and practice, we chose programs representing variations on the assistance/assessment theme.

RESEARCH SITES

Based on a review of the induction literature and consultations with other researchers, induction experts, and state and local informants, we selected three programs with strong reputations and relative maturity.² All three programs began in the “first wave of induction activity” (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999) which occurred in the early to mid-eighties. Each program is located in a state and/or urban district with supportive induction policies. Each program also represents a key variation on the relationship between new teacher assistance and assessment.

In Cincinnati’s Peer Assistance and Evaluation Program (PAEP), mentors engaged in assistance and *summative* assessment. PAEP mentors viewed assistance and assessment as interconnected. They combined a version of clinical supervision with direct recommendations, backed by authority to enforce their recommendations. In the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP), one of California’s Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment programs, mentors combined assistance with *formative* assessment. SCNTP mentors used learner-centered coaching models and formative assessment to influence the growth of new teachers. State teaching standards and a vision of new teacher development enabled Santa Cruz mentors to bridge assistance and assessment.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This analysis draws on data gathered during the academic years from 1998-2000.³ Data collection and analysis moved from general (program level) to specific (interactions among new teachers and mentors). To identify program goals and official mentor responsibilities related to assistance and assessment, we collected and analyzed: (1) interviews with program leaders responsible for program development and oversight and the training of mentors; (2) program documentation, including program guidelines, handbooks, manuals, contracts, press clippings, forms and protocols used for assisting and assessing new teachers; and (3) field notes from observations of mentor staff meetings and training sessions. To see how these protocols were used in practice, we shadowed seven experienced mentors in Santa Cruz and four in Cincinnati, watching them work with new teachers before, during, and after teaching. We fleshed out this picture of mentoring by asking four mentors at each site to submit paperwork documenting one year of work with two new teachers, one successful and one struggling.⁴

The first level of data analysis occurred during data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Our research team typically had several months between field visits to compare observations and field notes and to surface unanswered questions to be pursued in later visits. During this time, field researchers wrote up and shared mentor teacher observations and interviews according to a common protocol which included questions about assistance and assessment. Using program level data and the “shadowing” write-ups, the research team constructed 30-page program cases mid-way through the study (Feiman-Nemser, Yusko, Carver, & Schwillie, 1999).

At the second level of analysis, we revisited transcripts and documentation for evidence of assistance and assessment at the program level and in the work of mentors with new teachers. First, we looked for the kinds of interactions that mentors identified as “assistance.” Then we looked for evidence of “assessment” in mentors’ documentation and communication of new teachers’ areas for improvement. In Cincinnati, these instances were easy to identify because both assistance and assessment occurred during formally structured observations and conferences. In Santa Cruz, we relied on mentors’ definitions of these two dimensions, looking closely at activities that they considered assistance and assessment and at their descriptions of how the two functions came together in their work with new teachers. We examined field notes and transcripts of interactions between mentors and new teachers to analyze specific instances of how mentors assisted and assessed new teachers, including whether and how they shared assessments directly with new teachers.

Here we focus on the third level of analysis, offering a cross-case comparison (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that underscores similarities and differences in the two programs and situates these differences in the policies and practices of each program. First, we provide a brief overview of each program as it was organized at the time of the study, with a particular focus on expectations regarding assistance and assessment of new teachers. Drawing on illustrative examples of mentor-novice interactions, we highlight the potential benefits of each attempt to combine assistance and assessment and identify possible pitfalls. After analyzing each case separately, we conclude with common characteristics of mentoring approaches that responsibly combine assistance and assessment, new questions raised through the comparison of different approaches, and a set of necessary conditions that enable this challenging combination.

PAEP: COMBINING SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND ASSISTANCE

Founded in 1985 and run jointly by the union and the administration, the Cincinnati PAEP is one of the longest running Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs, which arose from the “new unionism” movement (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986; Koppich, 2000; Moir & Bloom, 2000). Often identified as a program to improve or remove ineffective veteran teachers, the PAEP also provided new teacher induction support by

involving mentors unabashedly in formative *and* summative assessment as well as traditional forms of assistance. The PAEP has received national recognition as a promising example of new teacher induction (Anderson & Pellicer, 2001; Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999). During our study, the PAEP was staffed by twenty consulting teachers (CTs), chosen from a pool of “lead teachers” selected as exemplary teachers and leaders by a district panel of administrators and teachers.⁵ CTs were released full-time from classroom teaching to work in the PAEP for up to three years, assisting and evaluating up to 14 new teachers each year.⁶ New CTs were trained each summer by the program facilitator and returning CTs.

CTs were expected to offer multiple forms of assistance, including “providing or arranging for classroom materials, reviewing curriculum, suggesting and discussing teaching and classroom management techniques, orienting new teachers to record-keeping requirements, demonstrating teaching, arranging for observation of other teachers, and planning for instruction” (PAEP Program Guidelines). In addition, CTs were expected to “orient new teachers to district-wide goals, the appropriate graded courses of study, and other relevant curriculum materials.” CTs provided assistance through informal contacts with new teachers as well as small group seminars and presentations called “practica.” The core of their work took the form of six required formal observations which were written up and used as the basis for conferences.

DIRECT FEEDBACK ABOUT TEACHING AS THE BASIS FOR ASSISTANCE AND ASSESSMENT

The backbone of the PAEP consisted of a formal process of observing new teachers, writing up observations, and holding conferences about those observations. CTs had to observe each new teacher at least six times throughout the year and evaluate each lesson as “satisfactory” or “less than satisfactory.” In the spring, CTs used these write-ups as the primary evidence for recommending whether new teachers’ contracts should be renewed and whether they should be retained in the program. In their write-ups, CTs provided detailed, evaluative feedback that functioned as a form of assistance and assessment. At times, the high-stakes nature of the process seemed to limit the substantive focus of CT feedback and make it more difficult for CTs to establish supportive personal relationships with new teachers.

Observation Write-ups

The process itself was highly formalized. CTs took copious notes during their observations, which typically lasted one class period. CTs usually departed without saying anything to the new teacher although they sometimes left a note indicating when they would return for the conference. The lack of casual communication between CTs and new teachers appeared to reinforce the CTs’ evaluative role, but it also gave CTs time to reflect on the observation without feeling pressured to provide immediate feedback. CTs spent two to eight hours writing up their observations according to a common format which included the following categories: (1) Environment, (2) Chronology/Description, (3) Comments/Suggestions, (4) Recommendations, (5) Summary, (6) Conference notes, and (7) Assistance given.

In the “Environment” section, CTs commented on classroom décor, charts or posters on the walls, furniture arrangement, displays of student work, directions on the chalkboard, and the posting of relevant district standards. The bulk of the write-up consisted of the “Chronology/Description,” usually a paragraph for every 5-10 minute block of the lesson. The tone in all the write-ups we examined was detached and formal, as in this excerpt from a write-up of a “less than satisfactory” kindergarten math lesson:

[The teacher] began to explain the assignment of making a pattern. Many students were inattentive. [The teacher] asked the students to raise their hands again. One child stood by the closet door. A student called out to the teacher. She reminded the student to raise his hands. After the students became silent, she explained the assignment again. “When you get your paper, write your name, then make a pattern with your shapes.” The teacher asked for someone to explain a pattern. A student explained a red and blue pattern, while some students listened. Others talked amongst themselves.

This typical write-up focuses on lesson mechanics (i.e., directions, transitions, the level of student engagement, behavior of off-task students) and management of student behavior. Although the narrative mentions what the students were doing, the write-ups we analyzed placed little emphasis on lesson content, the match between activities and goals, or evidence of students’ thinking or learning. The CTs’ dominant focus on classroom management as an essential skill for beginning teachers to learn seems to have resulted in a primary focus on student and teacher behavior in the write-ups.

In the “Comments/Suggestions” section, CTs provided feedback, including positive aspects, suggestions for improvement, and questions to stimulate discussion during conferences. “Recommendations” were a special form of suggestion that new teachers were *required* to demonstrate by the next CT visit in order to receive a “satisfactory” evaluation. Most CTs focused their feedback on classroom management and the presence of lesson plans aligned with the district’s “promotion standards,” i.e., content standards for student learning. In the “Summary,” the lesson was evaluated as “satisfactory” or “less than satisfactory,” justified by a few brief sentences.

Post-observation Conferences

By contract, CTs were required to hold a post-observation conference within five working days of an observation.

These conferences provided the primary opportunity for CTs to assist new teachers. CTs managed these conferences in varying ways, communicating different assumptions about assistance and assessment. Some CTs used conferences to promote reflective conversations, whereas others used conferences to reinforce their evaluations.

One CT, Suzanne, adopted a “cognitive coaching” (Costa & Garmston, 1994) approach, hoping to scaffold new teachers’ thinking by eliciting self reflection and guiding them to consider how they might adjust their instruction to deal with frustrations in their teaching. For example, Suzanne wanted to help one new teacher see that off-task behaviors occurred when her students were not engaged so that she would realize that instructional design played a role in such behavior. She hoped to “get to [the teacher] without telling her, ‘It’s not the kids.’ I wanted her . . . to self-educate herself.”

In the conference, Suzanne shared her write-up, summarized the lesson (which had occurred three days prior), and asked the new teacher, “What was your feeling about the day’s lesson? Did it go as you planned? Is there anything that you would change?” After briefly criticizing the basal reader, the new teacher said the students had become “fidgety” at the end of the lesson. When Suzanne asked why she thought this had occurred, the teacher said it had something to do with the springtime and the number of “impulsive” students. Suzanne then focused on the off-task behaviors of two children—one bright student and one repeating kindergartener. She encouraged the teacher to consider which activities had engaged each student and pushed her to wonder whether boredom might occasionally lead to off-task behavior. At this point, Suzanne read aloud a comment from her write-up, encouraging the teacher to think about maximizing student engagement as a deterrent to off-task behavior. Suzanne knew this teacher would have to hear the idea many times before it sank in. She said, “I had just talked to her on the phone . . . last Sunday, and we kind of talked about the same things . . . She’s got to hear it seven times, so that’s why I continue to bring it up.”

Another CT, Yolanda, adopted a more formal approach, structuring conferences as opportunities to correct and edit write-ups. In one forty-minute conference which Yolanda described as typical, Yolanda began by asking the new teacher how she thought the lesson went. After the teacher’s brief answer, Yolanda took out her write-up, covered it with a blank piece of paper and read it, aloud, line by line. After reading each paragraph, Yolanda paused to ask, “Is that right?” Yolanda had left spaces for the teacher to fill in correctly spelled names of specific students. Yolanda read aloud the comments and questions in the last section of her write-up and invited the teacher to respond.

Yolanda said she reads the form aloud to make sure new teachers cannot claim that they never heard something that was in writing. She concluded the conference by reading the final statement: “I reminded [the teacher] that she had the right to make a written rebuttal.”

After the conference, CTs added “Conference notes” to their write-up, describing the conference and the new teachers’ responses. CTs also listed the assistance provided to the new teacher up to that point, noting every contact between the new teacher and the CT, for example, “practica,” “activity packets,” “phone calls,” “demonstration lessons,” and “assistance sessions.” These portions of the write-ups provided evidence that CTs had offered significant *amounts* of assistance, but they provided no information about the *content* of assistance or CTs’ strategies to help new teachers progress toward professional goals. Copies of each completed write-up were distributed to the personnel office, the principal, the new teacher, the consulting teacher, and the PAEP Panel.

The CT’s write-ups, which the program facilitator described as “practically legal documents,” demonstrate the intertwining of assistance and assessment in the PAEP. As vehicles for assistance, they provide detailed feedback about lessons that formed the basis for conversations between new teachers and CTs. They also contain specific suggestions and recommendations to help new teachers improve their instruction. The time between observations and conferences allowed CTs to consider carefully their feedback rather than sharing their first impressions of the lesson. At the same time, the perceived need to justify all recommendations with evidence curbed informal interactions between CTs and new teachers. The handling of conferences varied dramatically among CTs, ranging from cognitive coaching approaches to evaluation and editing sessions. The formal status of the write-ups and their widespread distribution reinforced the CTs’ evaluative role and may have affected the CTs’ ability to establish open relationships with some new teachers. All the CTs we interviewed had experienced some distrust on the part of some new teachers, but every CT also shared stories of developing productive relationships with new teachers by taking their assessment responsibilities seriously and using this knowledge to make recommendations that helped new teachers improve.

As an evaluative tool, the write-ups sent a clear message about whether each lesson was “satisfactory” or “less than satisfactory.” The write-ups guaranteed that the CT’s concerns would be discussed in the conference. The requirement that new teachers follow CT recommendations to receive subsequent “satisfactory” ratings enhanced CTs’ authority. The public distribution of the documents underscored the fact that the CT’s primary goal was to hold new teachers accountable to achieve competence in instruction. Unfortunately, the high-stakes nature of this assessment as well as the required structure of the write-ups appeared to limit their content. We did not observe conferences that dealt with less observable aspects of teaching such as planning for instruction, understanding of broad curricular goals, or assessment of students’ learning.

CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR NEW TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Advocates of PAR argue that mentor teachers, who spend more time in new teachers' classrooms than other teachers or administrators, are in the best position to assess new teachers and make recommendations about their future employment (Anderson & Pellicer, 2001; Koppich, 2000). CTs gained authority through their credentials as lead teachers. The CT selection process ensured that CTs were strong teachers with extensive teaching experience in the same subjects and grade levels as the new teachers they assisted. CTs wanted to help new teachers succeed, but they did not consider it their responsibility to provide unconditional emotional support. They firmly believed in "the process" outlined by the program guidelines. Although they recognized that their feedback might make new teachers uncomfortable, they felt a sense of pride and professional responsibility for raising the quality of teaching in the district by offering assistance when possible and by eliminating poor teachers when necessary.

In December, CTs wrote a midterm evaluation for each new teacher, offering a general assessment and indicating serious deficiencies to be remedied by March, based primarily on evidence from observation write-ups. The evaluation summarized the number of "satisfactory" and "less than satisfactory" lessons, described the new teacher's performance, and listed the assistance provided to date. These evaluations, like the write-ups, enabled CTs to communicate needed changes to new teachers and gave them the power to enforce recommendations. Because the documents were shared with principals, CTs could enlist their help.

The most stressful part of the CTs' job occurred in March, when CTs determined whether each new teacher had made sufficient progress. CTs presented one of three recommendations to the PAEP panel, composed of five administrators and five teachers: 1) non-renewal of the teacher's contract; 2) renewal of the teacher's contract; or 3) renewal of the teacher's contract with the stipulation that the teacher remain in the program and make adequate progress the following year. CTs stated their recommendations, explained their rationale, and summarized their assistance. New teachers could attend and present contrasting evidence if desired. The panel ruled on the CTs' recommendations; if CTs did not provide sufficient evidence of assistance, the panel overturned non-renewal recommendations, even for teachers with severe problems.

Before making their presentations to the PAEP panel, CTs relieved their stress by holding hands and praying for strength. Closeted in their designated room, they did not speak to new teachers who came to contest their recommendations. CTs expressed mixed feelings about conducting high-stakes evaluation and telling new teachers when they were unsuccessful, as shown in this interview with one CT, Brenda:

Brenda: Seeing people succeed [is one of the most satisfying parts of the job] . . . Last year it happened a lot, but then the flip is, [this year] I had a lot of people that didn't succeed. But also, there are some people who won't be back in the classroom hurting children.

Interviewer: Right. So you have to feel good about that.

Brenda: Well, yeah, I guess. When I can get away from it and look back at it. Right now I can't do that. I presented seven people at the March meeting [two weeks ago]. I'm still recovering.

Despite their discomfort, CTs felt they were performing an important service by removing poor teachers who harmed students. As Yolanda, a CT, said:

When I see teaching that is so inappropriate, I want to jump up and say, 'Stop, you can't do this.' . . . I don't like seeing children ripped off, not given the opportunity to learn, and that really bothers me.

Some CTs were motivated by their desire to be respected by the panel. As Brenda said:

Knowing that I had to present them not only to a panel, but to a panel of people I consider colleagues, whose opinion really matters to me. . . . Personally, I don't want to get up and make a presentation and be overturned. They keep saying, 'Don't take it personally,' but I never did get to that place.

One shortcoming we observed in the PAEP system of evaluation and accountability was the lack of shared teaching standards. When we asked about standards and frameworks, CTs showed us the *Teacher Appraisal Manual*, a 1984 handbook with checklists and behavioral objectives for six teacher roles.⁷ This manual was not discussed in the CT training we observed, nor did CTs refer to these guidelines in their write-ups or informal conversations with one another. It appeared that the manual was only used by CTs near the end of the year when completing final evaluations. In the fall, CTs did help new teachers develop a set of professional goals called "job targets" which provide one measure for judging success in their work together. Typically one target related to instructional design, a second to classroom management, and a third to some other aspect of teaching such as communication with parents.

The official description of CT responsibilities, the forms and structures of the program, and the need to decide whether teachers should be allowed to continue teaching, all underscored the CTs' evaluative responsibility. Principals and administrators almost universally referred to the program as the "peer review" program and called CTs

“peer appraisers.” Nevertheless, CTs thought of themselves primarily as new teachers’ allies, not detached observers or vindictive evaluators. Staff at every level of the program explained, “You cannot assess new teachers unless you first assist them.” One CT sought us out to say: “One thing you should know about this program. It is called the P A E P. The ‘A’ comes before the ‘E.’ Assistance comes before evaluation, and I try to make that the focus of my work.”

The desire to keep assistance foremost was a prominent theme in our interviews and observations. For example, we observed one CT mentally tabulating the number of “satisfactorious” and “less-than’s” which a new teacher had received and choosing not to write up a negative observation that would be detrimental to a teacher’s record.

Another CT shared instances where she had temporarily abandoned her role as observer/evaluator to intervene in an unsuccessful lesson. Another CT talked about using new teachers’ concerns to help them improve their teaching, not to hold it against them:

I try to be human. I never use anything against them that they tell me. I try hard not to turn what they give me as information into something that would harm them. I try to take what they tell me, you know, turn it in a way that benefits them. So I don’t hurt them personally or professionally.

Many consulting teachers stated that they enjoyed their jobs most when they assisted new teachers and then saw positive changes in their teaching.

Embracing assistance and summative evaluation produced a culture where CTs viewed themselves as support providers as well as professional gatekeepers. The CTs’ desire to keep ineffective teachers out of schools, their focus on students’ needs, and their pride in maintaining professional respect gave CTs courage and inner determination to perform the uncomfortable, often stressful role of evaluator. CTs wanted new teachers to benefit from their advice, but they were not afraid to state when lessons were not satisfactory or to enlist the help of principals when necessary. CTs used write-ups and mid-year reviews to communicate their learning goals for new teachers through specific suggestions and recommendations they were required to follow. Ultimately, CTs saw themselves as advocates, trying everything possible to help new teachers, celebrating their successes, but eliminating poor teachers who failed to progress satisfactorily.

SCNTP: COMBINING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND ASSISTANCE

The Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP) offers a contrasting perspective in its combination of individualized assistance and *formative* assessment. Veteran teachers, called advisors, are released from classroom teaching to work full-time for two years with 13 new teachers. Advisors apply for the position with their principal’s support and are selected by a committee composed of the program director and experienced advisors. Advisors visit new teachers weekly to “observe and coach the new teacher, offer emotional support, assist with short- and long-term planning, design classroom management strategies, teach demonstration lessons, provide curriculum resources, and facilitate communication with the principal” (SCNTP Handbook, 1998, p. 3). Together, advisors plan monthly seminars on topics of concern to new teachers.

Assistance and formative assessment come together in prescribed assessment events and in the ongoing support and guidance that advisors offer new teachers. Formative assessment drives ongoing assistance as advisors help new teachers study and improve their practice. The overall tone of assessment in the SCNTP is upbeat and positive, with a focus on helping new teachers reach their potential. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing mandates formative assessment as a central component of California’s Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Program (July, 1997). The SCNTP uses its own state-approved assessment system⁸ which has three components: (1) development of individual learning goals and action plans; (2) formal observations of teaching; and (3) analysis of student work.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS: GOAL-SETTING TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENTAL GROWTH

The program begins with self-assessment. In September, advisors met with new teachers to help them locate themselves on the “Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities” which outlines five levels of performance for each element of the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.⁹ Together, they recorded personal learning goals and action plans on a “District Goals/Individual Learning Plan” form, or ILP, which satisfies a California legal mandate that all teachers must set professional goals within the first twenty days of the school year. The ILP served as an “integrated system of support and assessment” guiding mid-year and end-of-year reviews.

In January or February, advisors met with each advisee to reflect on the new teacher’s progress. They summarized this conference on a special form, citing evidence and listing “next steps” for each goal. In May, advisors and new teachers revisited the ILP and other materials amassed over the course of the year (e.g., collaborative assessment logs, interactive journals, observation data, plan books, letters from parents) to engage in a comprehensive “end-of-year review.” A conversation guide, reflecting the focus on goals, evidence, progress, and student learning, structures the end-of-year review.

New teachers completed a final assessment on the Developmental Continuum and filled out “Reflection” worksheets where they summarized key actions, successes, and next steps for the coming year. At a final seminar, mostly a celebration of progress, they created “journey maps,” noting high and low points during the year, milestones and obstacles, periods of uncertainty, support encountered, insights about professional growth, and “next steps.”

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT TEACHING: FLEXIBLE STRUCTURES WITH A FOCUS ON CONTENT

New teachers had weekly, on-site contact during and after school with advisors. Although the length of the visits varied, we observed quite a few 90-minute sessions. Unlike the PAEP, advisors talked with new teachers immediately following observations. These conversations were structured by and recorded on a Collaborative Assessment Log, which provided an informal record of each visit. They also helped to insure that “the learning gleaned from the conversation would continue to serve as a focus for professional development and improved classroom instruction” (Santa Cruz New Teacher Project, 2000).

Collaborative Assessment Logs

The content and structure of the Collaborative Assessment Log is a concrete embodiment of the integration of assistance and formative assessment. The form is divided into four quadrants, with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (complete with elements) listed at the bottom of the form for easy reference. The four quadrants contain guiding questions that invite reflection and conversation about new teachers’ successes (“What’s working?”), challenges (“Current focus, challenges, concerns), and next steps for both the advisor and the new teacher. The first quadrant encourages advisors to solicit new teachers’ feedback as a first step in the conversation. Space for the date and focus of the next meeting reinforces the ongoing nature of the work. One copy of the form goes to the new teacher, one to the advisor, and a third to the program records which are not shared with principals.

Our observations indicated that advisors’ use of the collaborative logs varied. An experienced advisor, Laura, explained how she uses the logs:

I use [the Logs] with everybody every time. . . . It’s almost like data or evidence that I was there and what we did. If we have time to have a conversation . . . I try to get a bunch of things out at the beginning of what’s going on these days or what’s a big issue right now, maybe get four or five things out. Then we look at them and I say . . . ‘Which is the most important thing we need to talk about right away?’ . . . Other times, the conversation is more free-flowing and they’ll say like, ‘I’m really concerned about [Student X’s] progress and I don’t know what to do.’

Sometimes advisors did the writing; sometimes the novice filled in the log. Some weeks the logs contained a lot of detail; other weeks the notes were quite sketchy. Sometimes the writing was done during the conversation; other times it provided a conversation summary. Advisors apparently used this form as a flexible tool, without the gravity that accompanied the CTs’ write-ups, but also without the level of detailed description that we found in the CT’s documentation.

Conferences

To illustrate how advisors provide assistance by engaging novices in learner-centered, evidence-based talk about teaching, we describe conferences between one teacher (Vanessa) and one advisor (Rachel). We chose this advisor from the ten that we shadowed because her mentoring reflects the stance and practices advocated in the training and weekly staff meetings that we observed and because her work with Vanessa illustrates some of the dilemmas associated with the formative assessment side of her role. Vanessa, a second-year teacher, worked in a fourth/fifth grade classroom. Many of her students read on a second- or third-grade level, partly because English was their second language. The following episodes demonstrate the power as well as the risks associated with SCNTP’s version of assistance and assessment.

Because advisors visited new teachers on a regular basis and kept track of their interactions, they usually had a focus in mind for their observations. On one occasion when we were observing, Rachel arrived right before the lesson. When she asked Vanessa what she should look for, Vanessa replied, “Buy in. I like doing whole class [instruction], but I don’t know if it’s 100% effective for the kids.” Early in the year, Vanessa had abandoned the language arts centers that Rachel had helped her create the previous year in favor of whole class instruction. While Rachel observed the lesson, she took notes, keeping track of activities in relation to the time, selectively quoting Vanessa’s words, noting questions, and documenting evidence of student engagement.

Reviewing her notes before the conference, Rachel knew she faced a difficult task. On the one hand, she wanted to support Vanessa’s decision to experiment with whole class teaching. On the other hand, her professional judgment led her to question the efficacy of this approach, especially for teaching comprehension to second language learners. Moreover, she had evidence that some students had participated in the lesson without really learning.

During an hour-long conference, Rachel and Vanessa reviewed Rachel's notes, summarized what Vanessa learned, identified next steps, and analyzed the coaching process. Posing questions to elicit Vanessa's thought processes, decision-making, and reflections, Rachel guided Vanessa away from seeing whole class or centers as an either/or choice. Rachel began the conference by inviting Vanessa to reflect on "things that have gone well lately." Vanessa mentioned some positives, including how helpful it was to get Rachel's detailed observation notes to see "all the things I did." When Vanessa said, "Reading groups are going well," Rachel pushed for evidence, and Vanessa explained that her students were "zipping through books" faster than the previous year. When Rachel asked Vanessa about comprehension, Vanessa admitted that she had not done much work on comprehension, and Rachel wrote this down on the Collaborative Assessment Log as a continuing focus for their work.

Next, Rachel invited Vanessa to reflect on her original question about "buy-in" during whole group instruction. Vanessa expressed her concerns about losing the bottom quarter of the class. Asked to elaborate on the pros and cons of the whole group strategy, Vanessa cited only pros (faster pace, less work). Rachel encouraged her to "say a little more about your doubts." When Vanessa admitted that "some kids space out," Rachel linked her statement to the California teaching standard about engaging all students. Vanessa questioned whether she should change her whole practice for the seven students who were "spacing out," but Rachel countered by suggesting that instead of seeing the decision as "either/or," meaning whole class instruction vs. small group work, she might decide which format is most appropriate for which activity.

Pushing a step further, Rachel raised the issue of comprehension (even though that was not the agreed-upon focus). She explained that she had read with a few of Vanessa's students the week before and was concerned that they skipped over parts of the story that they did not understand. When Rachel asked Vanessa what she was most and least comfortable with in her teaching, Vanessa stated that she was most uncertain about comprehension. Rachel argued that teaching comprehension through whole class instruction made it hard to assess student understanding and deprived Vanessa of a major source of delight in teaching:

I think it's possible to move a whole group forward in reading comprehension, but I don't know how satisfying it will be to you. What you are sacrificing is that you are not getting back the juice, how they are processing it, their insights, the sweet things they say, the questions they are afraid to ask but ask each other. A lot of those moments are fun and it's different from whole group participation and delivery. They are with you now because your management is outstanding. What you're missing are the dangerous short cuts they are taking, how they get meaning from what each other says, but not from their own understanding.

The conversation ended with Rachel suggesting that next time they talk about how to incorporate small group work around comprehension and think more about how "different strategies are good for different things."

Like the PAEP, the SCNTP provides forms and protocols to promote evidence-based conversations about teaching. Unlike CTs in PAEP, advisors use these tools flexibly rather than as fixed records of practice. The Collaborative Assessment Log and the protocol for the analysis of student work structure conversations between advisors and new teachers. They enable advisors to solicit new teachers' thoughts and to share their concerns without the bottom line of accountability. Rachel raises her concern that Vanessa seems to be favoring fluency over comprehension and she will continue to put this concern on the table. But she does not require Vanessa to change her practice.

ANALYSIS OF STUDENT WORK: AN OCCASION FOR FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

The title of "advisor" suggests someone who has little role in formal evaluation. Moir and Stobbe (1995) explain, "Knowing the importance of a trusting relationship in the teaching and learning process, the advisor enters the new teacher's classroom in a non-evaluative and non-judgmental way" and provides "emotional support and safe structures for reflection and feedback" (p. 85). In their interviews with us, advisors emphasized the importance of non-judgmental support. They maintained a strict policy of confidentiality, not even sharing negative evaluations of new teachers with building principals. The SCNTP promotes professional accountability by creating a strong community of advisors working within the framework of public teaching standards. Advisors act as a professional conscience for new teachers, asking for evidence of student learning, offering alternative interpretations of classroom life, and connecting new teachers to effective models and practices. One central occasion for this kind of activity was the analysis of student work.

Two or three times a year, generally coinciding with school marking periods, advisors and new teachers met in pairs or clusters to examine student work using a specific protocol. The Analysis of Student Work taught novices to recognize and interpret specific capabilities and learning needs of particular students while reinforcing the disposition to base instructional decisions on performance data. As the associate director explained, "This is our way to get at differentiating curriculum and instruction to meet different needs." To prepare for the analysis, new teachers and advisors reviewed grade level expectations and arranged to gather appropriate student work samples. First-year teachers typically focused on writing samples. Second-year teachers used results from a reading assessment related to phonemic awareness, phonics skills, and/or comprehension. Secondary teachers used subject-specific standards to guide their selection of student work.

The first step in the process involved sorting student work into three piles based on whether the work was above, at, or below expectations. During the sorting process, the advisor and new teacher discussed qualities of the work that justified their classifications. Next, the new teacher selected one sample from each pile for further analysis and brainstorming of next steps for each student. After carefully studying three work samples and deciding what each student needed to move his or her learning forward, the new teacher reflected on the overall implications of the exercise for planning and teaching. The results of the analysis were recorded on a form. Later, the advisor wrote a detailed reflection about the impact of this formative assessment on the new teacher's instructional practices. Here is how Rachel assessed the impact of analyzing student work on Vanessa's writing program:

With Vanessa, the analysis of student work has been highly effective in shaping the teaching of writing. . . . Previously there had been no program, only sporadic, unrelated skills lessons. Her new writing program contains two sessions a week on student-driven writing with a focus on content and fluency; two sessions a week of teacher-guided work with a focus on explicit skills; organized writing practice with a focus on the structure of English to meet the needs of second language learners. *There was a big shift in awareness for Vanessa about the need to teach writing directly and how to address different needs within that structure.* (italics added)

This reflection shows how the analysis of student work allows for the intertwining of formative assessment and ongoing assistance. As the sessions helped new teachers learn to identify and address the learning needs of individual students, they also enabled advisors to assess new teachers' progress and effectiveness. As Rachel observed, "In addition to providing us with valuable planning time, the Analysis of Student Work was a real benchmark in noticing [Vanessa's] growth as a teacher."

Although the Collaborative Assessment Logs and Analysis of Student Work protocols offered useful tools for assessing new teachers' effectiveness, the advisor's influence often depended on their moral authority. On more than one occasion, we observed advisors insisting that new teachers could not let a student fall through the cracks. The emphasis on "reflective conversations" which followed the new teacher's lead and the desire to build trusting relationships sometimes inhibited mentors from giving direct feedback or advice. Still, we heard one mentor say, "If there's something there, I draw it out, but if there's nothing there, I have to put it in." Even so, we observed less direct feedback in the SCNTP compared with PAEP about aspects of teaching that were not working and we never saw or heard of advisors recommending that unsuccessful teachers discontinue teaching. Although program leaders distinguished their view of mentoring from "feel-good" support, we observed instances where SCNTP advisors were unwilling to confront unacceptable teaching practices head-on (Carver & Katz, 2004). In one staff meeting, several advisors admitted that some of their new teachers should not be teaching, but they had not directly shared this assessment with the new teachers. Even when Rachel felt Vanessa was engaging in mistaken teaching practices, she opted for indirect ways of influencing her beliefs and practice.

Overall, the SCNTP model shows how individualized assistance can be combined with standards-based, formative assessment. Freed from the pressures of summative evaluation, advisors garnered respect through their credibility as teachers and their expertise as mentors. Working with new teachers on a regular basis over two years, advisors could cultivate trust and approach learning to teach as an ongoing process (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b). The absence of summative assessment and the two-year time frame made it easier for advisors to forge strong, trusting relationships with new teachers and help them get inside the intellectual and practical challenges of teaching.

The combination of assistance and formative assessment seemed to work well as long as new teachers made acceptable progress. If, however, the new teacher's practice bordered on the unacceptable, the advisors had no recourse beyond their own moral suasion. The program's reliance on a model of cognitive coaching that turns on "reflective conversations" inhibited advisors from making or enforcing direct recommendations. Advisors adopted a generous attitude toward new teachers' potential and counted on novices' respect for and faith in their professional wisdom. The strict maintenance of confidentiality to promote trust prevented advisors from enlisting principals' help.

COMBINING ASSISTANCE AND ASSESSMENT

What can we learn from these two induction programs about combining assistance and assessment in teacher mentoring? How can these cases help move the field beyond limited models of technical and emotional support to more courageous and sophisticated images and conceptions of mentoring? While many assume the impossibility of combining these functions, the examples presented here demonstrate that mentors can embrace the contraries of assistance and assessment and that doing so strengthens their work.¹⁰

The parallel with good teaching is compelling. As Peter Elbow (1986) notes, good teachers fully embrace both functions in what he calls "a paradoxical coherence." First they advertise their gate-keeping functions and communicate high expectations, then they position themselves as student allies, working to help them prepare for assessments and succeed in their learning. Elbow believes this alternating stance "naturally leads a teacher to higher standards yet greater supportiveness" (p. 155).

Both the Cincinnati and the Santa Cruz induction programs rely on full-time mentors to assist new teachers and assess their progress and learning. Despite programmatic differences, mentors in both programs embrace the contraries of assistance and assessment, setting high expectations, appraising new teachers' strengths and weaknesses, communicating their concerns directly or indirectly, and offering suggestions to remedy shortcomings. At the same time, mentors in PAEP and SCNTP face different challenges stemming from differences in the way that assistance and assessment are defined and enacted. PAEP offers a vision of mentors holding themselves accountable for gate-keeping and new teacher learning. SCNTP offers a vision of mentors dedicated to new teacher development based in professional standards and informed by ongoing assessment. Examining how the two programs combined these functions enabled us to see how different conceptions of assistance and assessment affect the character of mentoring, the relationships between mentors and new teachers, and the mechanisms for ensuring professional accountability.

When we presented our analyses at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting, discussant Patricia Wasley, Dean of the School of Education at the University of Washington, concluded the session with the following claim. "What we need for effective induction is the *courage* of the Cincinnati consulting teachers and the *sophistication* of the Santa Cruz advisors." Wasley pointed to CTs willingness to share critical feedback with new teachers and advocate for the removal of ineffective teachers and to advisors' skillful use of standards and evidence and their ability to focus new teachers' attention on student learning. Her comments motivated us to undertake this comparative analysis and to highlight four features that contribute to responsible integration of assistance and assessment in the mentoring of new teachers.¹¹

GOAL-DRIVEN, LEARNING-ORIENTED

Both induction programs have learning at the heart. This includes the learning of new teachers and the learning of their students. Mentors understood that they were responsible for helping new teachers learn to teach successfully in a particular context. They knew that this outcome required purposeful and sustained support and guidance over time. The SCNTP allocated two years of mentoring for beginning teachers; the PAEP offered one year with the possibility of a second in cases where beginning teachers still needed to improve but showed promise and/or deserved more assistance.

In both programs, new teachers were required to set goals for their learning and to demonstrate progress in meeting those goals. While the source of the goals and the means of assessing them differed, their presence gave focus and direction to mentors' efforts. Mentors in both sites addressed novices' immediate problems and concerns, but they kept their eyes on the larger purpose of helping new teachers meet the learning needs of students. In Cincinnati, new teachers identified "job targets;" however, these goals were less prominent than the learning agenda set by CTs through their specific suggestions and recommendations which told new teachers directly what they needed to do differently. CTs seemed to share a tacit view of good teaching based on effective management and lessons aligned with the district's content standards. They did not refer to common teaching standards.

In the SCNTP, the state's teaching standards offered a basis for identifying goals and the standards-based "Developmental Continuum" served as a tool for assessing new teachers' progress. Program leaders frequently invoked the standards that appeared at the bottom of the Collaborative Assessment Log that mentors and new teachers filled out each time they met. The standards shaped the interpretive lens advisors brought to their classroom observations and influenced the content of their conversations with new teachers.

EVIDENCE-BASED ANALYSIS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

In both programs, mentors structured conversations about teaching and learning around "records of practice" (Ball and Cohen, 1999), including field notes from classroom observations and samples of student work. They also used such data to support claims about new teachers' progress and to identify areas for improvement. Such evidence-based mentoring moved mentoring conversations beyond self report and personal opinion to a new level of analysis and objectivity. Practiced effectively over time, this kind of mentoring has the potential to foster new norms of professional discourse and to develop teachers' capacity for sophisticated analyses of teaching and learning.

CT's six formal write-ups provided detailed documentation of new teachers' practice. The extensive chronological descriptions of classroom events enabled new teachers to "see" their classroom through the mentor's eyes, helping them notice things they may have missed while teaching and giving them new perspectives. Reading the descriptions and recommendations out loud provided an opportunity to share concerns and exchange alternative interpretations, although the formal purpose and legalistic tone of the conferences constrained the conversations. Assessments of lessons as "satisfactory" or "less than satisfactory" sent an unambiguous message to new teachers, as did recommendations which had to be followed by the next observation. New teachers knew where they stood and what they needed to work on, and they could count on the CT's energetic assistance to help them get there. CTs also recorded the kinds of assistance they offered new teachers.

SCNTP advisors also scripted lessons and provided detailed observational feedback to new teachers about their

teaching practices and their students' engagement and learning. Several times a year, they guided new teachers through systematic analysis of student work and periodically assessed new teachers' progress on the "Developmental Continuum." In the hands of skillful advisors, these mentoring practices demonstrated the power of basing analysis and appraisal of teaching and learning in data that can be shared, revisited, and subjected to multiple interpretations. Advisors also documented their interactions with new teachers over time, providing a record of the forms of assistance and the substantive foci of their joint work.

RESPECT AS A BYPRODUCT OF TRUSTWORTHY RELATIONSHIPS

According to conventional wisdom, trust cannot flourish between mentor and mentee if assessment or evaluation is part of the process. In this view, trust is a prerequisite or precondition of effective mentoring. It begins with friendly introductions and flourishes only in a risk-free environment of unconditional acceptance.

We found that participating in assessment and evaluation did not prevent mentors from forming trustworthy relationships. In both programs, mentors were highly regarded teachers, carefully chosen, with extensive professional expertise to share. They earned respect by establishing credibility as useful support providers. The combination of meaningful assistance and responsible assessment enabled them to form trustworthy relationships with new teachers.

In the PAEP, CTs gained respect and developed trust by providing helpful assistance, giving straightforward advice, and using their knowledge of new teachers' practice to identify areas for improvement. In the SCNTP, advisors gained respect through their steadfast support and the quality of their assistance. Their non-judgmental, learner-centered stance probably helped them earn new teachers' confidence, as did the confidentiality of their relationship. These conditions may have constrained their effectiveness with unreflective, resistant, or struggling teachers while enabling considerable progress with teachers who were willing learners. Therein lies the paradox of assessment without accountability.

ACCOUNTABILITY AS THE "TEETH" OF INDUCTION

Standards for new teacher development link areas of growth and improvement to an external professional authority, but what accountability mechanism insures that new teachers make adequate progress toward those standards? "Feel good" support is clearly insufficient, but there are times when learner-centered, non-evaluative support may not go far enough.

CTs authority derived from their evaluative power. The high stakes and public nature of their evaluations gave CTs the license and courage to share honest assessments of new teachers' strengths and shortcomings and the consequences of not responding to their recommendations gave "teeth" to the process. In the PAEP culture, CTs prided themselves on their role as professional gate-keepers. Their desire to keep ineffective teachers out of schools, their focus on students' needs, and their sense of accountability for new teachers' performance gave CTs the inner strength to perform the uncomfortable role of evaluator.

SCNTP derived much of their authority from their professional expertise and their participation in a strong community of support providers. Like CTs, advisors took seriously their responsibility to improve new teachers' practice and promote equitable learning opportunities for all students. Often advisors acted as a conscience, preventing new teachers from letting students fall through the cracks, asking for evidence of learning, raising alternative interpretations, and connecting new teachers to effective models. In the end, power over the process lay mostly with new teachers who determined how hard to work on their teaching and what changes to make. Advisors were more indirect about things that were not working well. We never heard advisors recommend that unsuccessful teachers discontinue teaching.

Involving mentors in summative assessment, as in the PAEP, empowers them to share honest assessments of new teachers' strengths and shortcomings and lends weight to their recommendations and suggestions. When mentors engage in formative assessment, as in the SCNTP, mentors must rely on their personal skills and influence to get their concerns on the table. Keeping mentors' assessments confidential may be less threatening; however, when new teachers engage in questionable practices or resist making changes to improve their teaching, confidentiality can obstruct efforts to ensure teaching quality or remove hopelessly ineffective teachers.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The work of the PAEP and the SCNTP mentors demonstrates that assistance and assessment can co-exist, but neither program has sufficiently addressed the underlying paradox—how to incorporate professional accountability as a function of mentoring, without jeopardizing openness and trust required for meaningful assistance. What would it take for mentors to combine assistance and assessment in ways that earn new teachers' trust while promoting their development and their students' learning?

Stringent mentor selection in both programs ensured that mentors were outstanding teachers, but few classroom

teachers have experience teaching adults how to teach. Mentors need a full complement of mentoring tools like teaching standards, protocols for analyzing student work, and formats for documenting observations and interactions with new teachers as a starting point. They also need opportunities to learn how to use these tools in educative ways.

When they work with struggling, resistant, or weak beginning teachers, mentors need courage to provide honest feedback and wisdom to assess their potential for growth. In the PAEP, CTs relied on forms and processes to structure their interaction with new teachers. They took time to weigh the evidence before sharing their assessments with new teachers. They benefited from a community of fellow mentors (and principals when necessary) to validate their assessments. When it came time for high stakes evaluation, including recommendations for non-renewal, CTs believed that their recommendations benefited students.

As we saw in the PAEP, the responsibility for high stakes evaluation can sometimes strain mentors' ability to form trusting relationships with new teachers. Mentors must earn new teachers' trust by demonstrating their unwavering commitment to the learning of new teachers and their students and by offering valuable and responsive support and guidance. The SCNTP advocates and cultivates a kind of professional mentoring that has the potential to overcome a new teacher's trepidation about acknowledging concerns and accepting feedback. Guided by a shared vision of good teaching and nurtured by a strong professional learning community, SCNTP advisors practice a sophisticated form of mentoring tailored to new teachers' individual needs. As long as new teachers make satisfactory progress, the combination of assistance and formative assessment works. When new teachers resist advisors' interventions or fail to make adequate progress in developing a responsible teaching practice, advisors needed more leverage than their role as support providers offers.

Having mentor teachers participate in the evaluation of new teachers challenges well established roles and norms. Whether they have the time or the skills, principals are responsible for teacher evaluation. But serious mentoring of new teachers by experienced teachers opens up the possibility of sharing responsibility for this critical function. After working closely with new teachers over time to develop their teaching practice, mentors with appropriate training and support from a strong professional community are well positioned to determine whether novices have what it takes to become responsible and effective teachers. It seems short-sighted to ignore their professional judgments or to give greater weight to the evaluations of administrators which are often based on isolated observations and limited evidence. The cases presented here illustrate promising ways to define and combine assistance and assessment in the mentoring of new teachers and, in the process, to mobilize and recognize the expertise of accomplished veteran teachers.

Notes

1 We want to thank the program directors for giving us permission to use the names of their programs and for their cooperation in helping us carry out this study. All other names in this paper are pseudonyms.

2 We also studied Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST), where assistance and assessment were completely separated. Local mentors provided assistance, and state evaluators assessed new teachers. Ironically, mentors in this program appeared to be the least accountable. We observed some fine mentoring, but the quality and extent of the mentoring was based primarily on the goodwill and commitment of the mentor, not on programmatic structures.

3 Since the time of the study, each of these programs has continued to progress and change. Rather than attempting to track each program's shifting landscape of policy and practice, we treat our case studies as historical artifacts, or "snapshots," that shed light on the ongoing debate about the combination of assistance and assessment in new teacher induction.

4 For mentors in Cincinnati, this consisted primarily of six formal write-ups of observations and conferences with new teachers. For mentors in Santa Cruz, the written record consisted of Individual Learning Plans, collaborative assessment logs filled out for every visit, written reflections by mentors about new teachers' progress in analyzing student work, lesson plans, and other records of practice.

5 This number was reduced to ten in the last year of our study due to budget reductions.

6 CTs also work with new teachers in their second year in the program, as well as veteran teachers who have been referred by principals for problems with their teaching.

7 Since the time of our study, the PAEP—like other induction programs in Ohio—has adopted a Teacher Evaluation System consisting of district-wide standards and rubrics aligned with the "Praxis" framework (Danielson, 1996), which is used by state evaluators to determine whether new teachers earn a professional teaching license. CTs are now trained to use these rubrics to assess areas of new teachers' deficiency and target areas for improvement, and CTs make recommendations using rubric language.

8 BTSA projects must either use the assessment package developed by the state, called the California Formative Assessment Support System for Teachers (CFASST), or develop their own version which the state must approve.

9 The NTP began developing the Continuum in 1992 to support the reflective practice of new teachers. It has been updated several times, and most recently was aligned with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (Santa Cruz New Teacher Project, 2004).

10 These two programs contrast with our third site where mentors were not released from classroom duties but mentored around the edges of full-time teaching and had no responsibility for formative or summative assessment. The

mentoring we observed in this site was generally limited to advice-giving and support, and the quality depended on the mentor's individual skills and the principal's commitment to arrange schedules to enable time for mentors to meet with new teachers.

11 These conditions reflect current thinking about quality mentoring (Achinstein & Athaneses, 2005; Odell & Huling, 2000) and professional development (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Little, 1993)

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