ASSIST Brief

Advocating Strong Standards-based Induction Support for Teachers
March, 2006
http://assist.educ.msu.edu
http://www.learnport.org

This monthly electronic newsletter contains information about the ASSIST Website, highlighting web tools that address beginning and mentor teacher challenges, ideas for implementing induction programs, ways to use the tools and resources in your school(s), and current topics in induction. If you would like to submit an idea or news item, contact Marcia Leone at leonem@msu.edu – 517-353-8950.

Please forward *ASSIST Brief* to your colleagues!

Contents:

ASSIST Principals' Academy
Friday, April 21, 2006

A one-day academy to introduce principals and other administrators to the ASSIST web-based tools and resources and provide basics for planning for comprehensive induction is scheduled for **Friday, April 21, 2006, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the James B. Henry Center for Executive Development, MSU.** Visit the ASSIST website at http://assist.educ.msu.edu to see the agenda, explore the tools on the ASSIST Website, and to register. You may also register by phone at 517.353.8950.

Michigan LearnPort Launches ASSIST Instructional Modules

Michigan LearnPort, the state sponsored portal for on-line learning (www.learnport.org), has officially launched access to seven ASSIST instructional modules available for State Board CEU credit. The modules provide opportunities for collaborative, in-depth inquiry around seven critical topics in learning to teach as part of a comprehensive induction program. *For a recap of the details on how to access the modules through LearnPort see the January/February, 2006 newsletter on the ASSIST Website: http://assist.educ.msu.edu*

Suggested Organization for Module Instruction

It is our hope that veterans and beginning teachers will <u>together</u> study the module content.

Research indicates that engaging beginning teachers in collaborative work around issues of teaching and learning can be one of the most powerful components of a strong induction program. Beginning teachers who have opportunities in the school day to work with colleagues on curricular and instructional issues on a consistent basis are significantly more likely to accelerate their expertise and continue teaching than those who do not.

The ASSIST Website has many tools and resources for establishing professional learning communities which can be applied to organizing learning around work with the modules. Please explore the links to the ASSIST Web tools below.

Professional Learning Communities

Learning Together

For Principals: Beginning Teachers Offer Advice

Sarah -

One may think that by now I am in the swing of things, but listen to some wicked statistics that trail me. In four years, I have taught FOUR different grade levels: 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 6th grades. I have worked in THREE different urban schools. This year, I was moved in mid-September to a new school and a new class. Then, I was pink-slipped in mid-December, only to be called back within days. Please take careful notice that these events have been juggled alongside all of the responsibilities beginning teachers already face!

My advice to principals and mentor teachers is no epiphany. It is simply to encourage beginning teachers. Just like my students want to be noticed doing well, we want to know that you see our hard work! Small affirmations are meaningful! Beginning teachers know that you are busy, too. So, while we are running by each other in the hallway, putting out separate fires, tell us, *"I see what you are doing.*

It is making a difference!" The simplest of words can carry a new teacher through one more day!

Suzie – 2nd grade teacher

I am currently team-teaching in a second grade classroom in a rural school district. This is my first time team-teaching and it has been an incredible experience. The biggest challenge I've faced this year is learning to be a member of a team-teaching experience. My responsibilities have increased from being responsible for a classroom of learners to being responsible for a team of learners, team goals, and my role as a team teacher.

Sharing a classroom of 47 second graders and the planning for them has been a wonderful experience. My teaming partner and I have a wonderful relationship that continues to grow stronger every day. This, however, has taken a great deal of time. I have learned that teaming situations take sincere dedication, tremendous communication skills, and a willingness to try new things!

A great deal of the educational research out right now suggests that teachers who make personal connections with their students tend to have a greater impact on their students' education. I believe the same is true for principals. Principals who work to make connections with their staff members while also acting as an advocate for his/her teachers will find teachers and staff members who advocate for the principal. These relationships help create more effective and positive learning and working environments.

Megan - 1st year teacher, Special Education, 7th grade

As a special education teacher in her first year, I am responsible for helping each student meet his/her annual goals set forth by his/her Individualized Education Program. I must also prepare students for standardized tests that will assess their progress on grade-level content objectives. I have struggled to balance these two tall orders, while also developing relationships with reluctant, needy learners. The challenges of meeting academic concerns and developing classroom management skills have definitely kept me up at night on several occasions.

One of the most comforting things that mentors and other school leaders can do is show me that I am not alone in my struggles. Reading, observing and discussing methods that have been tried by other teachers gives me new tools to use while reassuring me that I am not a horrible teacher for having the issues I sometimes have. These conversations and observations are just as helpful whether they happen at lunch, on a mentor visit, during a quick chat in the hall or during a formal observation. A quick moment to let me know someone wants me to succeed and can offer suggestions for doing so is invaluable.

For Mentor Teachers: Working with beginning teachers - analyzing student work

Analyzing student work is an essential part of teaching and critical part of mentoring practice. Teachers assign, collect and examine student work all the time to assess student learning and to revise and improve teaching. Student work is the fundamental text that teachers use to understand their own work. Beginning

teachers, working collaboratively with their mentors, can alter and improve their practices in substantive ways through analyzing samples of student work.

Here are some ASSIST tools that will help:

Tool: Analysis of Student Work Samples
Tool: Analysis of Performance Tasks
Tool: Analysis of Authenticity
Tool: Analysis of Credibility
Tool: Analysis of Usability
Tool: Assessing Social Participation
Multiple Source Checklist and Analysis
List of Potential Performance Tasks
Types of Criteria
Defining Quality

Many more tools for assessing learning can be found under Assessing Learning.

I'm a beginning teacher: Talk to me.

Sandy, a beginning teacher has felt alone during her first years of teaching in an urban school in Michigan. Through access to materials on the website, Sandy is thrilled about ways she can now be supported in her learning to teach. She said, *"I want so badly to talk to someone about my teaching…the ASSIST materials give me tools for learning ways to improve my practice and ideas for ways of approaching people for help. Since I don't have an assigned mentor, I haven't had someone I can turn to or count on. I'm going to share these resources with my principal and really push for him to implement a mentoring program."* Sandy found the following links particularly helpful in learning to teach: Managing a class, Assessing learning, Tools for beginning teachers.

As a **beginning teacher**, you can find useful information directly targeted to provide both "just in time" information for immediate application, and ideas for discussion, further study, and professional development within the website. See for example, the following links:

Forming relationships **among** students
Motivating students to learn
Recording classroom interactions
Learn About Family Life
Establishing and teaching rules
What can I offer schools as a beginning teacher?
TNE - Teacher Support Network