



ASSIST Brief

Advocating Strong Standards-based Induction Support for Teachers

May, 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!

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State Board of Education leaders provide ASSISTance for beginning teachers, experienced teachers, and administrators!

Investment in quality teachers yields high returns in student success. Michigan's State Board of Education members are pleased to make the ASSIST web site available to Michigan educators in line with the educational initiatives proposed in its Ensuring Excellent Educators Task Force report.

These resources provide an innovative means of transforming teacher induction and mentoring program standards into realistic materials through an on-demand, 24/7 delivery approach. Within the ASSIST resources are professional tools for peer assisted learning, observation tools, and documentation systems that promote performance-based learning. The ASSIST materials also provide tools that strengthen high quality instructional leaders to better motivate and work with high quality teachers.

Please forward this newsletter to your colleagues.

ASSIST ISD/RESA Leadership Institute for Teacher Induction

**Wednesday (evening), August 9 – Friday, August 11, 2006
The Homestead, Glen Arbor, Michigan**

Sponsored by the ASSIST project, this two and one-half day institute is intended to provide tools and training **for ISD and RESA administrators who would like to enhance the quality of services to their constituent school districts for new teacher induction and mentoring.**

ASSIST (*Advocating Strong Standards-based Induction Support for Teachers*) is a unique resource designed by faculty at Michigan State University intended to provide meaningful professional development for new teachers during their induction years, and tools and resources for both new and experienced teachers to use as they work together in mentoring-learning relationships and for administrators responsible for implementing induction programs. ASSIST is a free web-based resource available to all educators in Michigan.

Institute Objectives:

1. Learn the elements of effective induction programs and quality instructional mentoring.
2. Learn how to use the on-line induction and mentoring tools, resources and instructional modules located on the ASSIST Website to work with constituents.
3. Develop or improve upon a plan to support new teachers and new teacher induction in constituent districts
4. Develop or improve upon a plan to support mentor teacher skills and learning in constituent districts.

Cost: \$150 per person (covers hotel, meals and materials)

Visit the ASSIST website at <http://assist.educ.msu.edu>

Look for further details and registration materials coming to your ISD/RESA soon.

Mark your calendars and plan to come and collaborate with fellow ISD/RESA, MDE and MSU colleagues!

Supported by a grant to MSU by MDE with funds provided by the U.S. Department of Education

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From the Field: ASSIST helping hundreds in Macomb County

Macomb ISD's Mentoring and Induction Program

When an ISD takes on the tasks of supporting 800 new teachers and mentors with a comprehensive induction program, that is no small order! Macomb Intermediate School District is in its second year of doing just that. Under the leadership of Laurie VanSteenkiste the ISD created, implemented and continues to provide services to support mentors and new teachers throughout the county.

Laurie VanSteenkiste explains that the ASSIST website is, "A major resource in our program." The website is a regular component of the summer and monthly sessions held to strengthen the 450 new teachers as they go through the challenges of their first years of teaching and the ISD's commitment to help the 350 mentors sharpen their skills in becoming strong, reliable resources for their mentees. As an early part of the program, new teachers and mentors receive training in a technology lab so they can experience the ease of using the over 1000 tools and resources contained on ASSIST website.

"We are trying to get away from the 'drive by' staff development practice. We encourage our new teachers and mentors to go to the ASSIST website when they have a need or an issue to explore." Laurie VanSteenkiste continues, "This is a vast resource that they can count on." She tells mentors, "If you need an idea to help your mentee, go to the ASSIST website.

It is also a regular resource for her as she plans training sessions. She explains, "I could name 20 tools and resources for each of the following areas, however these are examples of what we regularly use during the new teacher and mentoring monthly New Teacher Academy presentations."

When focusing on contacting and conferencing with parents, an example tool is:

[Learn About Family Life](#)

When the topic is motivating students the following tool is one of many we use:

[Motivating Students to Learn](#)

As the topic of classroom management for new teachers, and tips for mentors as well as building principals becomes the focus, this is an example of an ASSIST resource we suggest:

[Tools for Classroom Management](#)

Laurie states, "For sessions on reflective practice, such as classroom management, I like to use these questions (found on the site below) with the new teachers in a reflective session after their first month, first semester and first year of school."

[Establishing and Teaching Rules for a Classroom Learning Community](#)

As Macomb provides these important services to the districts and teachers of the county Laurie reports, "ASSIST is helping by providing excellent best practices resources."

Macomb ISD is providing a major service to hundreds of educators. ASSIST is helping them to meet the challenge they face.

Submitted by Jerry Jennings

Macomb ISD's New Teacher Academy Course Descriptions

[New Teacher Academy 2005-06 and 2006-07](#)

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For Principals:

End of the first year of teaching a time for reflecting

First-year teaching is a difficult challenge. Equally challenging is figuring out ways to support and assist beginning teachers as they enter the profession. Since 1988 the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project has been working to support the efforts of new teachers. After supporting nearly 1,500 new teachers, a number of developmental phases have been noted. While not every new teacher goes through this exact sequence, these phases are very useful in helping everyone involved -- administrators, other support personnel, and teacher education faculty-- in the process of supporting new teachers. These teachers move through several phases from anticipation, to survival, to disillusionment, to rejuvenation, to reflection; then back to anticipation. Here's a look at the stages through which new teachers move during that crucial first year. New teacher quotations are taken from journal entries and end-of-the-year program evaluations.

[Phases of New Teachers](#)

The reflection phase beginning in May is a particularly invigorating time for first-year teachers. Reflecting back over the year, they highlight events that were successful and those that were not. They think about the various changes that they plan to make the following year in management, curriculum, and teaching strategies. The end is in sight, and they have almost made it; but more importantly, a vision emerges as to what their second year will look like, which brings them to a new phase of **anticipation**. *"I think that for next year I'd like to start the letter puppets earlier in the year to introduce the kids to more letters."* -Ellen Moir, New Teacher Center, UCSC

Voices of Beginning Teachers

Lauren Wexler, First Year Teacher, 3rd grade

After four years of college and an intense year of student teaching, one might think that I had seen it all. Hours of classroom observations coupled with reflective writings, unit plans, and presentations centered around philosophy and strategy...I was ready...right? I had been in the trenches! I was prepared!

Well...not exactly. One thing that you realize in your first year of teaching is that all of the time that you spent being educated never quite prepares you to take on the role of the educator. There isn't exactly a college course entitled "Everything You Will Ever Need to Know to be an Extraordinary Teacher!" And, even if there was, speculation about what "could" be can never equal what "will" be. Each day brings with it a new adventure, and these adventures are what make the job what it is. The spontaneity and chaos can be bittersweet, but you never really know what you are in for until you find yourself being watched by twenty-five sets of eyes!

As a first year teacher in a small, community-centered school district, I have found myself tested both physically and emotionally. Yet, I have learned that I am motivated by the same reinforcement and feedback as my students. Just as I work to affirm their efforts, similar words from my principal are what push me forward. Knowing that she "sees" what I am doing and that she understands my struggles as well as my successes makes each battle easier to overcome. My principal's willingness to act as an administrator as well as a peer, someone who has been there too and can relate to what I am going through makes the days seem more manageable. A positive voice of reason, a kind word, a simple reminder -- "I see all of the wonderful things that you are doing!" These words not only allow principals to make meaningful contact with staff members, but they remind teachers that their hard work is being noticed by the students as well as their colleagues and supervisors.

Here are some responses from beginning teachers to questions regarding their first year of teaching:

What supported you?

- I was assigned a mentor before school started.
- I met with my mentor in an “official meeting” once per week.
- My mentor helped acclimate me to the district (I’m in four schools)
- MSU’s beginning teacher workshops
- My mentor helped me set goals and we had regular meetings to focus on curriculum.

What would have helped you get through your first year?

- Using ASSIST tools from the start, especially the management tools.
- Having organized forums (regular meetings) for new teachers, or grade level/subject area meetings with topics that are focused and timely.
- We need veteran teachers to anticipate our needs and offer their help. Sometimes it’s hard to approach veterans for help.
- Time with and recognition (even if just in passing) by the principal.
- Observation by and debriefing with the principal.
- More information about how things work in the district (i.e., union dues).
- Grade level meetings, especially in regards to curriculum and materials.

What thoughts would you like to share with principals?

- Invite our input from the beginning. We are excited about implementing some of the great ideas and technology skills we learned in our teacher preparation program.
- Provide a safe environment.
- Encourage sharing among all veteran and beginning teachers. Invite voluntary sharing at staff meetings.
- Principals need to know the specialists who work in the building part time.

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For Mentor Teachers: End of the year a time for reflecting

As mentors examine their own practice and collaborate with beginning teachers, the mentors have opportunities to learn as well.

Charlotte Danielson writes, “...the ability to reflect on teaching is the mark of a true professional. Through reflection, real growth and therefore excellence are possible.” Just as effective teaching is a set of learned skills, so is mentoring. And, just as professional reflection is how teachers grow, it is also true for mentors.

[The Active Mentor Rubric tool](#) (Developed by Dick Willabee, Grand Rapids Public Schools) is designed for self-reflection on the part of the mentor. It delineates many of the expectations and skills needed by mentors who wish to be most effective in providing support for beginning teachers.

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For Beginning Teachers: Teachers for a New Era (TNE) Support Network for New Teachers and Their Mentors

The TNE site contains discussion forums where you can pose questions and discuss dilemmas and communicate with other beginning teachers or receive advice online from experienced teachers or from content experts.

[Continue to the forums](#)

Reflecting on your first year and anticipating the second:

[What makes a highly qualified teacher?](#)

[How can I make the most of my second and third years of teaching?](#)

[How can I plan for my professional growth?](#)

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