



ASSIST Brief

Advocating Strong Standards-based Induction Support for Teachers

June, 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 ISD/RESA Leadership Institute on Teacher Induction](#)

[Voices of beginning teachers](#)

[Using ASSIST Systemically](#)

[From the Field:](#) Vestaburg principal provides insights on using ASSIST

- [Supporting school improvement initiatives](#)
- [Benefits of organized induction programs for new teachers, veteran teachers, administrators and students](#)
- [Assessing your school's culture and its capacity for induction](#)

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 on 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>

Registration materials have been mailed to all ISDs/RESAs and are also available on the ASSIST website.

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

[Back to top](#)

Voices of beginning teachers

Jason McGhee, 1st year art teacher travels between 4 schools

As a first year teacher, my biggest challenge was that I traveled between four schools. I felt like a visitor in all of my schools with the exception of one. I taught there for 3 days in a row so I had a chance to develop relationships with staff and students. At the other schools, however, I did not have the same kind of relationships. I knew who the principal was and I saw the teachers of the students that I had but no real relationships were formed. I felt continually out of the loop on student issues and school activities. For instance, there were students in my classes that had serious emotional problems, or students who did not have their medication at a particular time and I simply assumed that these students were being defiant and disruptive when in fact there were other factors involved. It would have helped to be able to consult with others in the building. Because I did not have a continued presence in the buildings, the students tended to treat me like a substitute teacher. It took 7 to 8 months into the school year to get them to understand that I am a serious educator.

The principal of a building has a strong impact on new teachers. Taking the time to talk with new teachers and to acquaint them with the new environment is very reassuring. Oftentimes we are intimidated by the new surroundings, and that personal touch goes a long way. For traveling teachers, it would be great for the principal and teachers to find some time to acknowledge them as they come to your building. You could ask the secretary to put together schedules of events and other important information. You could invite the new hire traveler to a staff meeting to introduce them to the other teachers and staff. When I'm teaching, please come by and visit in the classroom. It is important to feel that you are a member of the team.

[Back to top](#)

On using ASSIST systemically

As we have introduced ASSIST to educators across the state, it has been frequently noted that the tools and resources on the ASSIST site are not just beneficial for creating comprehensive induction and mentoring programs, but can easily be used by all within a school to help meet specific school improvement goals. This is why the faculty who developed the tools and resources recommend their use, not only for induction and mentoring, but with whole school staffs in the context of learning communities to tackle identified school improvement needs and challenges.

Insights on using ASSIST

David Matrone, Principal
Vestaburg Elementary School
Vestaburg Community Schools

As principal of Vestaburg Elementary School I attended the ASSIST Summer Institute for Mentor Teachers along with my colleagues, the principals of Vestaburg's high school and middle school. As a result of this experience, it quickly became evident that:

- The comprehensive nature of the ASSIST website represents learning and application resources that would be valuable to use as school development tools for our entire staff.
- The ASSIST resources have equal value for application of instructional reform for our veteran teachers as well as for our new teachers.

In attempting to utilize the site with staff early in the school year, it became evident that general exploration and use of the site would not be as effective as a focused approach to seeking out and exploring resources that have immediate application for needs in the classroom. I then started to explore ways of creating activities that helped people take smaller, more focused excursions into the site to become familiar with navigating and ASSIST's many tools.

After exploring ways to apply ASSIST tools and resources over the school year I have learned some lessons I would like to share:

- Administrators should be familiar with navigating the site and should know what tools are available to teachers.
- Administrators should review the resources in reference to issues that arise in their school improvement process.

[Back to top](#)

Using ASSIST tools to support school improvement initiatives

ASSIST tools and resources can be applied “systemically” and easily **integrated with other school improvement initiatives and activities such as aligning curriculum with new standards and expectations, assessing student learning in relation to standards and designing professional development for school faculties**. Educators can draw on any number of ASSIST tools for these purposes. In addition the tools can be easily modified to address specific needs and purposes.

Scenario: Your school is in the process of aligning curriculum with new state standards and content expectations. Teachers are learning the new, more rigorous expectations and need to plan units, lessons and assessments accordingly. While the Department of Education and others continue to develop support materials to help schools and individual teachers do this, the ASSIST website has many tools that would be useful as teachers proceed with this challenging work, for example:

ASSIST tools for aligning curriculum with standards and expectations – a few examples

[Standards-based planning](#) (This tool includes a standards-based planning worksheet- scroll to the end of the page.)

[How do I make sense of the content standards in the Michigan Curriculum Framework? Standard Diagrams](#)

[Unit planning: Exploring content expectations](#)

[Curriculum mapping](#)

ASSIST tools for assessing student learning – a few examples

[Analyzing Student Work](#)

[Teachers must know what their students are learning](#) (assessment guides planning and instruction)

[Assessment used to provide information and feedback](#)

ASSIST tools for designing professional development – Professional development can be designed around any number of tools and resources within the topic areas on the ASSIST site. For example, *Managing your classroom*, *Engaging communities*, *Planning instruction*, *Assessing learning*, *Teaching content*, *Aligning curriculum* might be areas for professional development supported by information and tools on the ASSIST site. The following examples provide guidance for organizing professional learning:

[Professional learning communities](#)

[Organizing time and resources for professional learning](#)

[Finding time to support professional learning](#)

[Components of professional practice](#)

Benefits of strong induction programs

Research increasingly documents the benefits of organized induction programs to new and veteran teachers, principals and students. Studies show that strong induction programs significantly increase the retention rates of new teachers. Some studies also indicate that beginning teachers involved in induction programs had fewer discipline problems and engaged their students in more complex learning than did their peers who were not provided a comprehensive program.

<i>Benefits for Beginning Teachers</i>	<i>Benefits for Mentor Teachers</i>	<i>Benefits for Principals</i>	<i>Benefits for Students</i>
Improved knowledge and classroom performance	Renewed commitment to their own teaching and learning	Decrease in student discipline problems	More equitable distribution of learning opportunities
Enhanced competence in managing discipline problems	Renewed commitment to their students' learning	Improved teacher morale and collegiality	Opportunities for racially and ethnically diverse students
Increased awareness of state and local curriculum standards	Renewed commitment to their colleagues' learning	Increased staff stability	Higher learning expectations for all students
Improved ability to relate to parents.	Increased job satisfaction	Strengthening of teacher leadership for school improvement	Higher order instruction and more complex learning tasks for all students
More academically effective use of classroom time	Adoption of school and professional leadership roles	Improvements in student learning	
Enhanced feelings of competency, support and motivation			

[Back to top](#)

Assessing your schools' culture and its capacity for induction

Teacher induction is very much a part of comprehensive school improvement, thereby serving as a catalyst for whole school efforts.

[School culture and induction assessment](#): This ASSIST tool will help you specifically analyze your school's culture and its capacity for induction and school improvement.

School Culture and Induction: What the Research Says.

Research shows that new teachers benefit from and stay teaching in schools that:

- Offer new teachers novice status;
- Provide new teachers curricular guidance and resources;
- Create **school-wide** conditions that support student learning, and
- Create a supportive professional culture.

These schools share an integrated culture and provide beginning teachers:

- Structured, on-site professional development that involves beginning and experienced teachers,

- Both formal and informal interactions with principals and veteran teachers focused on teaching and learning
- Opportunities to prioritize their professional learning, observe expert teaching, and work collaboratively on problems of practice with colleagues across experience levels.

Researchers at Harvard's Project on the Next Generation of Teachers have identified **three types of school cultures** that affect beginning teachers' learning and effectiveness.

Veteran-oriented culture:

- High proportion of veteran teachers who set the norms and modes of interaction and teaching
- Teachers value independence.
- Collegial interactions are cordial, but do not engage teachers in sharing and working collaboratively to address the problems of practice
- Beginning teachers receive little support, encouragement or guidance. The school does not provide them with any way to access the expertise of highly skilled veteran teachers.
- The mentoring that does occur seldom provides beginning teachers with the instructional support they need.
- The interactions with mentors were limited to occasional meetings and with offers to share materials. Mentors do not have the time or take the time to observe beginning teachers or to talk with them about their teaching and their learning.

Novice-oriented culture:

- High proportion of beginning teachers.
- Teaching staff is highly energetic and committed to their students
- Due to having few highly skilled, veteran teachers, beginning teachers lack guidance
- Little mentoring or organized professional development
- Beginning teachers do work together, but they remain uncertain about their development as teachers

Integrated Professional Culture:

- Teamwork and collaboration
- Veteran and beginning teachers work together across experience levels in on-going professional development activities.
- Interactions among teachers are frequently open and reciprocal, and focus on sharing and jointly addressing problems of practice.
- Both beginning and veteran teachers view mentoring as a site for their learning.
- Most veteran teachers act as mentors, whether or not they were officially assigned.