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Maryland Focuses on Teaching Conditions to Drive School Improvement

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In **April 2010** the Maryland State Board of Education approved regulations that establish a **comprehensive teacher induction program**, making the state **one of only six** that requires more than two years of induction support for beginning teachers. Specifically, Maryland requires three years of support for new teachers and one year for veteran teachers new to the district. This change in state policy was prompted by an NTC-led initiative and survey, which revealed discrepancies between policy requirements and actual assistance provided to new teachers.

TELL Survey

NTC has worked with the Office of Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley since 2009 on the TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) Maryland Initiative. The initiative consists of a statewide teaching and learning conditions survey that has been administered twice, in 2009 and again in 2011, with excellent response rates and data. In support of Governor O'Malley's interest in hearing from those on the front line, his office has provided staff and financial support to the statewide administration of the TELL Maryland survey which gathers information and informs the induction support program in addition to other critical areas.

NTC's TELL **survey** is an online, anonymous tool that collects the views of teachers, principals and other licensed educators on critical teaching and learning conditions. Respondents share perceptions on questions focused on: time, facilities and resources, community engagement and support, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support. NTC provides TELL survey results **online** at the state, district, and school level.

Research shows a positive relationship between supportive teaching conditions and increased student achievement and teacher retention.

Statewide Achievements

As a result of stronger state policy, notable improvements in the receipt of induction assistance and mentoring support was reported by beginning educators in the 2011 TELL Maryland Survey. The following increases are noteworthy:

- Access to professional learning communities where new teachers can discuss concerns with other teacher(s) increased by 29%
- Regular communication with principals, other administrators or department chairs increased by 20%
- Formal time to meet with mentor during school hours went up by 17%
- Common planning time with other teachers went up by 15%

In August 2010, Maryland was awarded a **Race To The Top** (RTTT) grant that includes

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NTC Reflections Newsletter



The **summer 2012 edition** of *Reflections* focuses on how districts can ensure the success and sustainability

of their teacher induction program. Key articles explore how the most successful programs are based on a systemic approach that includes: rigorous program design, evaluation for continuous improvement and engaged school leaders who can provide supportive context and conditions.

a focus on data-driven professional development, coaching, and teacher induction. This focus has provided Maryland school districts an additional impetus to deepen the support provided to beginning teachers.

Governor O'Malley's Special Assistant for Education Policy, Pat Foerster, stated, "These increases show that we are making strides in providing new teachers the supports they need to be successful. And, to continue our improvement, the 2011 TELL results are already being utilized as part of our RTTT training of mentors and district leaders across the state. We are really looking forward to the 2013 TELL Maryland Survey! "

District Level

TELL survey data has been used in different ways across districts. Baltimore County uses TELL data as one of its multiple measures of progress and effectiveness. TELL data provide consistent measures of progress and impact of the induction program, provides comparable data across districts, and informs support and intervention decisions. In Montgomery County, survey data is used to inform action research among principals, teacher and supporting services staff; serves as the foundation for a longitudinal study on best practices and school leadership capacity; informs the ongoing conversation of professional growth; and provides feedback to teachers, particularly new teachers, to reflect on their craft. Finally, in Charles County, survey follow-up by district administrators included: integration of school results in school improvement plans, mid-year and year-end principals' improvement planning conferences, and weekly updates and information reports to the superintendent and school board.

*This work was presented at the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality's **What Works Conference** held in Washington, DC on September 5-7, 2012. The conference presentation can be viewed [online](#).*

<http://www.tqsource.org/whatworks/wwc12systemsthatlast/Plenary%20Session%20III.pdf>

The Struggles of First-Year Teachers

NTC CEO Ellen Moir and Associate Program Consultant Leslie Baldacci write about the effects of new teachers who are left to 'sink or swim' on [Take Part's Education page](#).

Moir writes about the fact that as the school year begins, many students will be taught by an inexperienced novice teacher. These new teachers, without proper support, are less likely to become effective and stay in the profession. "We are not setting up most new teachers to make a difference, and their students pay the price," Moir writes. At NTC, we call the system of support **comprehensive new teacher mentoring and induction** and "it involves the guidance of successful, experienced teachers who have been trained to mentor new teachers and create relevant, timely opportunities for groups of new teachers to learn together."

Baldacci writes about her experience as an NTC mentor for "Miss S", a new fifth-grade teacher in a high-need school on Chicago's South Side, who was overwhelmed and ready to quit during her first semester of teaching. After some careful coaching and mentoring, Miss S survived those hard months and made it through her first year showing much improvement. "The data tell us that what we are asking of beginning teachers is not sustainable because we too often do not allow them the grace of time and the supports they need to grow," Baldacci writes.

[Read Ellen Moir's Op Ed](#) and [Leslie Baldacci's Op Ed](#)

Policy News

Rethinking Principal Evaluation

The National Association of Elementary School Principals ([NAESP](#)) and the National

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Association of Secondary School Principals (**NASSP**) publicly released a report, *Rethinking Principal Evaluation: A New Paradigm Informed by Research and Practice* in Washington D.C. on September 13th. It identifies six domains of school leadership that should be addressed within principal evaluation systems including: professional growth and learning; student growth and achievement; school planning and progress; school culture; professional qualities and instructional leadership; and stakeholder support and engagement.

The report cites seminal 2004 research from The Wallace Foundation (***How Leadership Influences Student Learning***) demonstrating that "leadership is second only to teaching among school influences on student success." That recognition looms large in this call to strengthen the usefulness of principal evaluations for informing improvements in the leadership of school principals and superintendents.

Through our **Teaching and Learning Conditions Initiative** and **School Leadership Development** work, NTC acts upon this call to support school leaders in creating supportive school conditions for teachers and students. Principals need more support from the get-go as well. NTC policy analysis also shows that **existing state policies on new principal induction and mentoring** do a woefully insufficient job at accelerating the development of beginning school leaders. A 2007 Wallace report recommended the NTC's approach to **coaching and training school principals** as one answer to this challenge.

[Read The Report](#)

Oregon Seeds New Teacher Support in Portland Public Schools

Portland (Oregon) Public Schools has initiated a new-educator mentoring program, in partnership with NTC. The *Portland Tribune* reported that a major impetus behind the district's initiative was the attrition of one third of last year's first-year teachers. In 2012-13, the 120 new Portland teachers and 12 new principals are participating in the program, all paired with full-time mentors. Portland is funding the \$1 million program with \$383,694 in local dollars, plus a \$659,980 grant from the Oregon Department of Education. It is **one of six** district recipients of the state grant this school year. Since 2007, the state legislature has provided funding for competitive grants through the **Beginning Teacher and Beginning Administrator Mentoring Program**.

[Read the Article](#)

Good Reads

In Search of Excellent Teaching

The *New York Times*, in a recent editorial, bemoaned traditionally "cursory" and "slipshod" teacher evaluations. But the *Times* also recognized that existing systems fail to give "promising, but struggling, young teachers ... the help they need to master the job." That's critical - and is central to **NTC's work**. As we have written previously ([here](#) and [here](#)), the promise of evaluation systems is not performance rankings or the use of student test scores, but regular, actionable feedback on classroom instruction and individualized support to help new and struggling teachers improve.

[Read the Editorial](#)

D.C. Teacher and U.S. Teaching Ambassador Fellow Talks about What Makes a Great Teacher

Dan Brown, a 2012-13 U.S. Department of Education Teaching Ambassador Fellow and Washington D.C. SEED Public Charter School teacher, talks about his start in the

classroom -- and questions whether teachers are made or born. Like many new teachers, Brown was left alone in his classroom, unprepared to lead his class of 26 fourth-grade students at the Bronx's P.S. 85. He quickly realized that it would take more time, dedication and continuous improvement to get it right -- and now knew that great teachers are definitely not born. Brown identifies several important components of how great teachers are "made," including a preparation program that provides a clinical residency experience, a supportive school environment and school leadership, and opportunities to engage in the community outside of school to gain leadership opportunities.

[Read the Article](#)

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