

## **FEATURED TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM MODELS**

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Teacher induction in agricultural education has become an integral component of many teacher preparation programs in the USA. Faced with a shortage of teachers for decades, the profession has expanded its mission by making an effort to retain the teachers. Teacher educators interviewed for this report feel that providing a means of making beginning teachers more effective and giving them personal assistance in their early years of teaching will result in teachers staying in the profession and being better prepared for the challenges teachers face today.

### Summary of Data

Some states have mandated induction programs for all beginning teachers in all subject disciplines. These programs generally involve some type of in-school mentoring and oversight by administrators. It is evident that some agricultural education induction programs do support these activities in some states (i.e., Oklahoma). In other states, the agricultural education discipline is leading the way in developing teacher induction programs (i.e., Oregon, Minnesota). The following sections feature the programming and infrastructures of several agricultural education teacher induction programs. The information from a series of questions was gathered using phone interviews to the program leaders in seven states.

### Individuals Providing Leadership to the Induction Programs

While department of education leaders and NAAE-affiliate officers and members are involved, teacher educators provide the leadership and serve as or manage the coordinators for the majority agricultural education teacher induction program.

### Entry-Level Teachers Enrolled in Teacher Induction Programs

Although some states include second and third-year teachers of agricultural education, induction programs in most states focus on entry-level or first-year agricultural education teachers.

### Primary Goals of the Induction Programs

The primary goals of most programs are the retention of teachers, providing support and assistance that leads to socialization, and improving the ability to effectively teach and advise the FFA. While it appears states differ as to the order of the goals for their programs, many seem to feel retention will occur if they are assisting teachers to be more effective teachers.

### Providers of Mentoring

The primary providers of the mentoring are experienced middle or secondary school teachers. As one teacher educator stated, "Beginning teachers want to hear from those in the real world facing the issues each day." It appears that experienced teachers serve primarily as supportive mentors along with providing ideas about sources and use of curricula, and as a source and ideas

for teaching practices. The mentors from some states are provided a small honorarium to conduct in-school and personal visits with the entry-level teachers.

Once mentors are selected, they are usually provided with some training about the roles and activities of a mentor. In nearly every state, the mentors also serve as presenters at entry-level teacher workshops or seminars. The entry-level teachers receive one to four in-school visits by teacher educators or mentors in most states. The more effective induction programs feature experienced and/or retired teachers who have frequent interactions with the entry-level teachers. Teacher educators often function as program coordinators, but involvement of experienced mentors with the entry-level teachers is key to building productive and meaningful relationships.

In most states, the beginning teacher has a voluntary opportunity to receive graduate level credit, though only a small percentage of beginning teachers actually register for credit due primarily to cost. Some states have been creative in offering unique “no tuition” costs for courses. Despite not enrolling in courses, a high percentage of the entry-level teachers in each state elect to participate in the induction programs of their state.

### Sources of Funding

The major source of funding for programs in most states comes through the agricultural education section or division of the State Department of Education. In some instances, the only funds available come from the budget of the agricultural education department at a university. The salaries and benefits of the university faculty who work on the induction programs are funded by their institution as an in-kind contribution to the program. The amount of funds available for an agricultural education teacher induction program ranges from \$3,000.00 to \$30,000.00. The greatest barrier to providing comprehensive induction programming in most states is a lack or limited funding.

### Number of Seminars or Workshops

The number of seminar or workshop sessions varies from one four-hour or half-day session to three or four three-hour sessions conducted during the summer, fall and winter terms. Most states team with the NAAE-affiliate organizations and hold sessions for entry-level teachers during their annual professional development conferences. Mentoring by local, area, or assigned emeriti faculty is a common component of the featured induction programs.

### Seminar and Workshop Topics

There seems to be commonality of topics addressed in the seminars and workshops of the featured states. The following topics are discussed (generally led by experienced teachers): managing student behavior, motivating students, securing teaching resources, strategies for gaining student support, balancing professional and personal life, implementing FFA advising strategies, implementing SAE programs, using reflection to improve teaching, creating a professional development plan, and creating units, courses and topics. Each state also has some unique topics such as using advisory councils, marketing a program, program evaluation, making

home visits, and meeting state program standards. One state (Texas), offers a website that addresses a wide range of topics.

### Successful Induction Program Practices and Activities

Open sharing of ideas, instructional resources, frustrations, joys and concerns is a highly successful activity for the entry-level teachers. Some coordinators indicated the sharing activities were the best aspects of their program. It is also evident that teacher mentors add a great deal to programs. Mentor and mentee relationships, in a non-threatening or evaluative framework, seem most effective. If anything seems to add value to these agricultural education programs, it is the use of selected agricultural education teachers who function as mentors, seminar/workshop leaders, and serve as a friend. Interviewees suggest that program outcomes are more strong when teacher educators do not serve as mentors. It seems that the agricultural education teacher induction programs are effective because they do not simply “go through the motions” of naming an in-school mentor to satisfy a state-mandated law. Feedback to the interviewed teacher educators from program participants in their programs indicate that the entry-level teachers apparently feel they are helped in a meaningful manner through the teacher induction programs.

### Entry-Level Teacher Assessments and Program Evaluation Strategies

Formative and summative assessments of the needs of the entry-level teacher are conducted in many programs. Likewise, summative annual evaluations of the features, practices, and outcomes of the induction programs are conducted by the program leaders of many induction programs. Most induction programs do assist entry-level teachers in identifying their teaching strengths and challenges. Outcomes of the assessments are kept confidential and used solely for helping the teacher become more effective in the classroom and as an FFA advisor.

Communications with the principal about the experiences of the entry-level teacher occurs but is general in nature and used to express support for the teacher. One state arranges for an in-school committee consisting of a teacher educator, an in-school mentor, and a local school administrator. Their purpose is to provide the entry-level teacher and their principal with a listing of actions that need to be addressed by the entry-level in order to continue their licensure.

### Barriers to the Success of Induction Programs

The lack of adequate and dependable annual sources of financial support is the greatest barrier to maintaining quality induction programs in this group of featured induction programs. The lack of time or personnel to carry out the plan is another barrier. Low participation rates by entry-level teachers are problematic in some states. Despite these barriers, the teacher induction programming efforts are designed to strengthen teacher effectiveness, and by most accounts, seem to be worth continuing each year.