New Teacher Initiatives Teacher Support and Retention Program: 2003-2004

At a Glance

New Teacher Initiatives’ goal is to design and implement high quality teacher preparation, support, and retention programs. New Teacher Initiatives includes: the New Teacher Support and Development Program (NTSD) and the Alternative Certification Program (AC).

Increasing Accountability and Improving Support for New Teachers

New Teacher Initiatives sought to increase the accountability of New Teacher Support Teams and campus mentors to better ensure that beginning teachers received the support they needed to acclimate to the responsibilities of the campus and classroom. Mentors and New Teacher Support Teams were required to submit documentation that tracked meetings and attendance at required training. Compliance was directly tied to receiving stipends. NTSD also provided New Teacher Support Teams with a rubric of desirable activities and support offerings they could introduce as part of the campus-based support for beginning teachers. NTSD strongly encouraged campuses to train as many mentors as possible, to ensure that new teachers hired after the beginning of the school year would have trained mentors available.

The Alternative Certification Department expanded its recruiting efforts internationally in order to meet the district need for highly qualified, Bilingual teachers. Over 75% of all active AC Interns taught in “critical needs” subject areas, including 35% in Bilingual classrooms.

Alternative Certification also began a new initiative geared to improve customer satisfaction with its department and AC Teacher Interns. Principals were encouraged to provide input into the process, and asked to gauge satisfaction with the quality of the department’s services. Principals gave the department an overall 85% customer service satisfaction rating.

Instructional Coaches more than doubled the number of campus contacts they made in 2002-2003. Instructional Coaches met with campus administrators, mentors, and teachers 6,179 times, and filled 279 intensive mentoring requests. Instructional Coaches received a 99.9% positive response from campuses, based upon feedback forms submitted by principals, mentors, and teachers. Beginning teachers strongly valued the in-class observations that Instructional Coaches made. Beginning teachers who received intensive mentoring earlier in the school year scored higher on the Classroom Effectiveness Indices (CEI) than beginning teachers who received intensive services late in the school year.

Campuses assigned over 1,000 mentors to roughly 1,200 beginning teachers. The ratio of mentors to beginning teachers dramatically improved from 2002-2003. Last year, campuses overall produced one mentor for every 2.3 beginning teachers. This year, the ratio dropped to one mentor for every 1.2 beginning teachers. Middle schools showed the greatest improvement.

Beginning teachers were pleased with the quality of mentoring at the campuses. Meetings with the mentor continued to be sporadic, although they occurred at a higher frequency than in 2002-2003. Beginning teachers who taught students with special needs desired better mentor matching by subject area. AC Teacher Interns desired better mentor matching by grade level.

Student teachers strongly recommended the Student Teacher Program administered by
The percentage of student teachers who intended to seek employment with the district rose from 2002-2003, to 79%. Since Spring 2003, 100% of student teachers have agreed that the program effectively prepared them for a full-time teaching position with DISD.

**Program Additions**

New Teacher Initiatives opened the New Teacher Center in Nolan Estes Plaza, with the assistance of the Meadows Foundation. The purpose of the center was to provide new teachers with the equipment and advice they needed to enhance their classrooms and lessons. The center had a number of workstations, including: arts and crafts, binding machines, copiers, die cut machines, poster makers, Internet-accessible computers, laminating machines, and a media center. In addition, the center regularly hosted workshop seminars of interest to new teachers, including classroom management, lesson cycles, and parent communication. Instructional Coaches led all seminars.

New Teacher Initiatives also created a website accessible through DISD’s intranet. Links to Alternative Certification, New Teacher Support and Development, the New Teacher Center, various extra-district educational websites, and monthly events for both departments offered another source for beginning teacher support. The Principal’s Resource Page also made downloadable forms accessible for New Teacher Support Team designations, ideas for campus-based new teacher orientation, and mentor/new teacher profiles. The website was updated periodically, including any changes to the proposed scheduling of meetings and workshops.

**Effectiveness of DISD Alternative Certification Teacher Interns**

Traditionally certified beginning teachers scored higher on CEI mean scores than DISD Alternative Certification Interns in 2002-2003. Traditionally certified reading teachers also scored higher on CEI mean scores than their DISD AC Intern counterparts. The differences for both were statistically significant. No significant differences in mean scores were found among mathematics, science, foreign language, computer science, or social studies teachers.

Principal assessment of AC Interns, through Mid-Year and Final Assessments, suggested principals were pleased with intern classroom performance. Active AC Interns averaged slightly higher than “Meets expectations” on the Mid-Year and Final Assessments. Of the Interns who were eligible for certification, 94% received recommendations for certification by their principals; 5% were recommended to seek an additional year of training, and only 1% were recommended for termination from the program.

**Role of the School Environment in Retaining Beginning Teachers**

The “support factor” – whether departmental meetings were viewed as collaborative, if principals met one-to-one with respondents at least once each month, and whether respondents had anyone they could seek advice from had a strong effect on intended retention. 100% of respondents who claimed not to have any of the elements of the support factor intended to leave at the end of the current school year. Providing just one support element decreased the likelihood of leaving at the end of the school year by 1/3. 100% of respondents with all three elements of the support factor intended to remain with the district for an extended period.

Overall, beginning teachers expressed their intentions to remain teaching with DISD for a longer tenure than reported last year. In particular, a significantly higher percentage of teachers intended to remain longer than 10 years, as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Intended Length of Tenure for Beginning Teachers, 2003-2004](image-url)