



New York  
Early Childhood  
Professional  
Development  
Institute

## Building the Pipeline for a Successful Early Childhood Workforce in New York

### A NEW POLICY AGENDA: INDUCTION

Unlike any other profession, early childhood education presents a unique context full of opportunity. Every single day early childhood educators engage with dozens of children with independent, developing minds, each shaped by a home life that their educators may know little about. Layer on that the task of imparting new foundational knowledge and skills to impressionable young children within a complex work environment and it is easy to see that effective early educators must be highly skilled and dynamic. In this environment, several questions arise for the field. How do we support educators to be flexible and focused? How do we help educators confidently navigate uncertainty to make the most of the unexpected teachable moments that take place every day, especially in this era of standardized testing and scripted instruction? How do we establish and retain a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse workforce skilled in working with children and their families? One answer is with comprehensive induction.

Induction is a process to support and retain educators as they transition into new roles. When done correctly, induction provides comprehensive, coherent, and sustained guidance from dedicated mentors, along with key resources to bolster educators' success. Studies show that a comprehensive approach to induction that lasts at least two years can boost student achievement.<sup>i</sup> Despite its promise, there is no systematic approach to induction for the early childhood workforce in New York. In our work to prepare and retain a highly effective and diverse early childhood workforce, induction is a critical yet missing piece in the pipeline.

### WHAT WE KNOW

- Comprehensive and sustained induction programs have been found to improve teacher retention and student achievement.<sup>ii</sup>
- Effective induction strategies yield \$1.66 for every dollar invested.<sup>iii</sup>
- Many early childhood educators, including those who have participated in preparation programs, lack the skills or knowledge to successfully engage young children and their families.<sup>iv</sup>
- New York has no systematic approach to induction for the early childhood workforce.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The Institute has identified the following recommendations to develop a comprehensive approach to induction that will enhance the early childhood workforce. These recommendations address early childhood educators' need for guidance as they apply developmentally appropriate practice in action, continue their professional growth, and solidify their commitment to the field.

1. ***Pilot an Induction Coaching Program:*** An early childhood induction coaching program in New York would scaffold educators' development as they begin their careers in all types of early childhood programs (e.g., EarlyLearn, universal prekindergarten, special education, private early childhood centers). This pilot would build on existing efforts, such as the Institute's strengths-based coaching for new early childhood educators in New York City's prekindergarten programs.
2. ***Establish an Induction Resource Center:*** A resource center staffed with pedagogical experts can provide regular assistance to new teachers through face-to-face meetings, email support, and phone consultation.
3. ***Develop a Beginning Teacher Online Community:*** An online forum would provide a space for beginning teachers to share their experiences, challenges, and successes. A forum for peer support can accommodate the dispersed nature of the early childhood education field.
4. ***Form New Induction Partnerships:*** Two- and four-year institutions of higher education, the NYC Department of Education, the Administration for Children's Services, QUALITYstarsNY, and other entities focused on workforce development have a stake in supporting early childhood educators as they navigate new teaching contexts. An Induction Partnership can create opportunities for these entities to collaborate and share best practices to implement a coherent and comprehensive induction strategy.
5. ***Create a Program for Induction Coaching Specialists:*** Effective induction coaches have a complex set of skills and knowledge related to early childhood practice, adult learning, and a deep understanding of the local context. Creating a program in which master educators are trained to develop the skills outlined in the state's coaching competencies will increase the cadre of professionals needed to meet demand. It would provide new educators with coaches who have experience that is grounded in the current early childhood policy

context, it would recognize master educators and create opportunity for career growth, and it would build the field's capacity.

6. ***Evaluate Induction Approaches:*** New induction efforts should be evaluated. As we launch innovative efforts to support early educators, it is critical to understand the factors that contribute to the successful implementation of those efforts. Although induction coaching will be individualized, data are needed to inform efforts to replicate and scale up successful implementation throughout New York.

## A NEW APPROACH TO INDUCTION

As noted by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, "teachers are not 'finished products' when they complete a teacher preparation program."<sup>v</sup> A beginning educator's first few years on the job present a unique window of opportunity. During these foundational years, educators establish the professional norms and attitudes that will guide their career and gain the tools they will rely on throughout their careers. An educator's commitment to the field and success with young children depends on the effectiveness of his or her repertoire. However, few early childhood educators receive support during this transition, when they need to integrate their academic learning with the realities of teaching. Furthermore, the social and emotional needs of new educators who may face challenging work conditions are often totally overlooked. During this period most early childhood educators are left to "sink or swim in the isolation of their own classroom."<sup>vi</sup>

Studies of the early childhood workforce agree: teacher preparation programs do not always prepare educators for the challenges they encounter on the job. A 2007 study

### Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8

The National Academies of Science recent report has elevated the importance of early childhood educators in young children's lives. The report's third recommendation addresses induction and calls for states and localities to "strengthen practice-based qualification requirements, including a supervised induction period, for all lead educators working with children from birth through age 8."<sup>vii</sup>

of New York City's early childhood workforce found that three quarters of directors, 70% of community-based teachers, and almost half of school-based teachers reported the need for additional professional development upon completing their degrees.<sup>viii</sup> Analyses of early childhood teacher preparation programs reveal that field placements are not of sufficient duration and quality to provide candidates with the exposure needed to acquire the skills to lead a classroom. Also, few programs offer coursework or guidance in working with adults, a much-needed skill as new educators join new work environments and collaborate with a variety of colleagues.<sup>ix</sup> In short, early childhood professionals need support as they leave their preparation programs and assume responsibility to care for and educate a group of dynamic young children.

A comprehensive induction program can ensure that new educators are matched with appropriate resources and mentors so they receive guidance that will set them up for success. A comprehensive induction program would be responsive to new educators and include the following features:

### ***1. Provide Individualized Support***

We cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to induction. Because early childhood educators come to the field with a wide range of backgrounds and experience, differentiated approaches are needed to recognize educators' strengths and scaffold new educators' development. Just as importantly, there is great variation in the work environments and communities where new educators will begin their careers. Depending on the program, resources to equip new educators for success vary widely. Many early childhood programs are severely underfunded, lacking money for educators to develop even the most basic materials for their classrooms. This level of variability points to the need for induction supports to be highly contextualized and individualized. The Institute has extensive experience offering individualized coaching to meet the specific needs identified by teachers and their supervisors. This experience informed the development of New York State's coaching competencies and the policy shift that recognizes coaching as an approved form of professional development, allowing centers to use public funds available through the Office of Child and Family Services. This body of work will inform how we tailor supports for new educators entering the field. Individualized induction coaching is needed to build an equitable and effective early childhood system.

### ***2. Adopt a Multi-faceted Approach***

Induction needs are highly varied because there are many

entry points to the profession: some educators enter the field with minimal or no formal preparation, others have completed preparation programs but have little experience leading a classroom, and still others are experienced educators who are working in a new program. In addition to the individualized and intensive coaching described above, an early childhood induction program may also include professional learning opportunities focused on developmentally appropriate practice, on-site support for enacting effective teaching practices in the classroom, peer support networks, and orientation navigating the work environment. As we pursue a multi-faceted approach, the Institute will build on its experience with the QUALITYstarsNY initiative in which we have seen that coupling coaching with other supportive quality improvement activities and resources yields greater results than stand-alone efforts can produce on their own.

### ***3. Build Capacity for Instructional Leadership***

A new induction paradigm would overcome the field's shortage of experienced mentors. Educators entering the field need guidance from mentors who possess a special combination of wisdom, knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice, and the skills to activate adult learning. Unfortunately, too many new educators do not have appropriate mentors to offer constructive and responsive support. Research has shown that new educators have greater retention and performance with the support of mentor teachers who model, co-plan, and provide frequent feedback and repeated opportunities to practice strategies.<sup>x</sup> Some new educators work in community-based early childhood programs that are small and lack sufficient numbers of experienced teachers. At school-based sites, prekindergarten programs are relatively new additions to the schools and as a result, the veteran teachers may not have knowledge of and experience with the unique needs of younger children and the challenges faced by new early childhood educators.

### ***4. Include Multiple Stakeholders***

Two- and four-year institutions of higher education, QUALITYstarsNY, government agencies, and small and large early childhood providers all have a stake in supporting early childhood educators to successfully navigate new teaching contexts. When developing an induction program for New York's early childhood workforce, it will be critical to share best practices. Most significantly, it will be crucial that experienced master educators as well as new educators from communities throughout New York play a leading role in designing induction approaches.

## Making Progress: New York State Coach Competencies

The New York State Association for the Education of Young Children released coach competencies in 2016, in collaboration with the Institute and the workforce work group of the NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council. The competencies identify five content areas that are necessary for coaches to possess as they provide individualized support to educators: (1) relationship building and communication; (2) adult learning theory; (3) professionalism; (4) facilitating learning and results; and (5) assessing the success of the coaching partnership. These competencies are the foundation for a new coaching credential that is a critical step to building the field's capacity for instructional leadership. Thanks to this work to elevate coaching, New York State now allows coaching that meets specified criteria to count as an approved form of professional development. These promising developments will inform the design the New York's new approach to induction.

## CONCLUSION

Induction is the bridge we need to shore up our investments in early childhood educators' professional development and program quality. Supporting new educators as they enter the field and retaining highly effective teachers is essential. As the early childhood field looks for answers to ensure our workforce is diverse, dedicated, and competent, we can no longer afford to neglect induction. Comprehensive, multi-faceted, and sustained support for early childhood educators is crucial to provide children and their families with high quality early learning.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This research was done with teachers working in K-12 context. Schmidt, R., Young, V., Cassidy, L., Wang, H., & Lagurada, K. (2017). Impact of the New Teacher Center's new teacher induction model on teachers and students. SRI Education. Retrieved from: [https://newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/NTC\\_13-Validation-eval-brief\\_062017\\_final.pdf](https://newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/NTC_13-Validation-eval-brief_062017_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Smith, T. & Ingersoll, R. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal* 41(3): 681-714; Fletcher, S., Strong, M., & Villar, A. (2005). An investigation of the effects of variations in mentor-based induction on the performance of students in California. Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center.

<sup>3</sup>Villar, A., & M. Strong. (2007). *Is mentoring worth the money? A benefit-cost analysis and five-year rate of return of a comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers*. Santa Cruz, CA: The New Teacher Center.

<sup>4</sup>Early, D., Maxwell, K.L., Burchinal, M., Alva, S., Bender, R.H., Bryant, D., et al. (2007). Teachers' education, classroom quality, and young children's academic skills: Results from seven studies of preschool programs. *Child Development*, (78), 558-580.

<sup>5</sup>National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (2003). *No dream denied*. Washington, DC: Author. pg. 20

<sup>6</sup>Goldrick, L. (2009). A teacher development continuum: The role of policy in creating a supportive pathway into the profession (policy brief). New Teacher Center: Santa Cruz, CA.

<sup>7</sup>Oschorn, S., Garcia, M, Cleary, S.M. (2007). Learning about the workforce: A Profile of Early Childhood Educators in New York City's community- and school based centers. New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, CUNY.

<sup>8</sup>Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/19401>.

<sup>9</sup>NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (2007). *New York City's Early Childhood Workforce: The Foundation for Quality*. CUNY: New York.

<sup>10</sup>Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, with Child Trends (2015). *Teaching the teachers of our youngest children: The state of early childhood higher education in New York*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from [http://csce.berkeley.edu/files/2015/HEI-Narrative-Report-NY\\_FINAL.pdf](http://csce.berkeley.edu/files/2015/HEI-Narrative-Report-NY_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>11</sup>Ingersoll, R., & Kralik, J. M. (2004). The impact of mentoring on teacher retention: What the research says. Research Review: Teaching Quality. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/50/36/5036.htm>; Fletcher, S., Strong, M. & Villar, A. (2005).

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The New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute is a public/private partnership that brings together a range of public agencies, a consortium of private funders, and the nation's largest urban university to build a comprehensive system of workforce development for individuals who work with young children in New York.

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