2009 Wisconsin Research Seminar on Improving Teacher Quality:
Improving Practice and Expanding Collaboration in Challenging Times

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Presentation Title: **PI 34 and Support for Wisconsin's Initial Educators: Data Analyses and Preliminary Findings from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.**

Abstract:

This presentation focuses on data gathered by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction over a three year period. Specifically, analyses of data gathered from initial educators and mentors from 2006-2009 will be provided. The goal of this data collection was to ascertain the types of support provided initial educators, to elicit from initial educators the topics they deemed most challenging, and further, to identify areas for improvement. This data provides a lens through which one can understand the degree to which successful PI 34 implementation, in the context of initial educator preparation, support and induction, has occurred. This qualitative trend analysis will afford people interested in the efficacy of PI 34 implementation the opportunity to ascertain the status of mandated initial educator support in Wisconsin across multiple areas: mentor support, ongoing orientation, support seminars, and the Professional Development Plan process. Further, survey data can inform educator preparation programs as they endeavor to provide performance-based preparation undergirded by the Wisconsin Educator Standards.

Context:

In 2000, the Wisconsin Legislature's education committees approved new Department of Public Instruction rules for teacher preparation and licensure. The new rule, PI 34, would have a profound effect on educator preparation and licensing in the state of Wisconsin. For the first time, initial educators (those individuals who have successfully completed an approved program after August 31, 2004 and who are issued an Initial Educator License by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction for the first time in a particular category) in their first assignments, were to receive induction support. This support was to include ongoing orientation, support seminars, and a trained mentor.

In 2006, the Teacher Education, Professional Development, and Licensing Team at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), with the technical assistance from the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Assistance Center, developed an online survey for Initial Educators and Mentors in the state of Wisconsin. Specifically, those public school Initial Educators who received the Wisconsin DPI $375.00 Mentor Grants for initial educators were surveyed. The survey, with modifications, was again administered in the 2007-2009 and 2008-2009 academic years. In total, over 5,000 initial educators and mentors throughout the state were surveyed. Participants in the survey included initial educators in all categories (teacher, pupil services, and administrators) but the focus of this research/data analysis is upon initial educator teacher and initial educator teacher-mentor responses. The goal of the research was to elicit from respondents the types of support provided initial educators and the perceptions of said support (both educator and mentor).

Additionally, information was sought to ascertain the degree to which PI 34 (Wisconsin's Quality Educator Initiative) has been successfully implemented. Are districts providing initial educator support as articulated in the new performance-based educator preparation and license renewal process? National research data indicates that support for new teachers is integral to their success and their retention in the field. Thus stated, Initial Educator support as required in PI 34, and as carried out at the local level is consistent with national efforts to support and maintain a quality teaching force.

Survey questions posed of Initial Educators/Mentors focused on:

> **The Demographics of Mentor/Initial Educator Situation –** the position held by the initial educator, the demographics of the student population, CESA in which initial educator is located, and the educator preparation program completed by initial educator.
>
> **The Mentor/Initial Educator Relationship –** the frequency of meetings, duration of meetings, similarities across mentor/initial educator

background/expertise, the training (if any) provided mentors, and the role of the mentor (e.g. observation, provision of informal or formal feedback, assistance with specific topics), assistance provided mentors (e.g. release time, compensation).

Ongoing Orientation & Support Seminars – the form initial educator support took (e.g. reduced teaching load), duration, frequency, and major foci of orientation/support seminars, personnel responsible for orientation/support seminars, sites utilized for orientation/support seminars, and primary topics addressed in support seminars.

Alignment of Support with Wisconsin Educator Standards and Challenging Topics – the types of support provided in areas related to the Wisconsin Educator Standards, identification of challenging topics, and correlation of standards as related to challenging topics.

Development of the Professional Development Plan (PDP) – the types (if any) of support provided for the writing of the PDP, mentor assistance provided for the PDP process, personnel responsible for assistance with PDP process (e.g. district, CESA, other agency), the standards most often selected by Initial Educator to guide PDP focus, the resources utilized when endeavoring to write the PDP, and the component(s) of PDP process found to be most challenging for initial educators..

Review of the Literature:

High teacher turnover and attrition often occur in the first five years of teaching. State responses to this phenomenon have varied but most include an effort to put in place a systemic or comprehensive induction program. The form such programs take vary greatly but most include orientation sessions, professional development opportunities, and mentoring for new educators. Research indicates that successful induction programs

include several important features including: trained full-time mentors, a curriculum of structured support that includes orientation, professional development opportunities, weekly meetings with mentors, opportunities for novice teachers to observe experienced teachers, assessment tools that allow for evaluation of practice on a systemic basis, and outreach to district and school-based administrators to educate them about program objectives and to gain their support for the program (Alliance for Excellent Education 2004; Ingersoll and Smith 2004; Smith and Ingersoll 2004; Kelly 2004; Serpell and Bozeman 2000). Research as to programs that include these components is limited though emerging. Steven Glazerman, Sarah Dolfin, Martha Bleeker, Amy Johnson, Eric Isenberg, Julieta Lugo-Gil, and Mary Grider: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.; Edward Britton, WestEd; and Melanie Ali, Institute of Education Sciences (2009) "Impacts of Comprehensive Teacher Induction: Results From the First Year of a Randomized Controlled Study," provide a study that tests whether comprehensive teacher induction affects teacher retention rates, classroom practices, and student achievement, compared to the induction programs that districts normally provide. Preliminary findings indicate that participants in comprehensive teacher induction programs were most likely to have a mentor and spend significant time weekly with that mentor. Additionally, participants in comprehensive induction programs reported spending significantly more time being observed by their mentors, observing mentors modeling lessons, and meeting one-on-one with a mentor. Of seventeen areas of professional development asked about, participants in comprehensive induction programs were significantly more likely to report having attended professional development in three areas: lesson planning, analyzing student work/assessment, and differentiated instruction. Further evidence that induction is important in early years of the novice educator experience may be found in Kapadia, Kavita, Vanessa Coca, and John Q. Easton. "Keeping New Teachers: A First Look at the Influences of Induction in the Chicago Public Schools." Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago, January 2007. The authors of this study put forth findings that indicate: a welcoming faculty that assists new teachers and strength of school leadership are the two school level factors that have the greatest influence on novices' reports of good teaching experiences and intentions to continue teaching. Additionally, intensive contextual induction – which is a combination of

context-appropriate and sufficiently intensive mentoring and support – can help novice teachers have good early teaching experiences that encourage them to continue in the profession. Ironically, one of the findings of this report was that about one fifth of novice teachers reported that they did not participate in an induction program. An exploratory inquiry into the context and challenges of measuring investment in professional development in six Southwest Region school districts is documented in the 2008 report, "Examining Context and Challenges in Measuring Investment in Professional Development: A Case Study of Six School Districts in the Southwest Region" authored byJay G. Chambers, Ph.D., Irene Lam, M.A., and Kanya Mahitivanichcha, Ph.D. This analysis illustrates some of the challenges in measuring investment in professional development because of the inability to track more integrated professional development activity that is a natural (or integrated) part of a teacher's day or week. Previous literature defines two categories of professional development; traditional professional development, such as workshops, conferences, and college courses for credits, and integrated professional development, such as teacher collaboration during common planning periods, teacher mentoring, academic coaching, observation of others, and individual action research projects. Studies suggest that integrated professional development activities have a more positive impact on teacher skills and knowledge because they allow sustained, intensive, and active learning, and teachers tend to integrate such learning into their daily professional lives (Garet et al. 1999; Garet et al. 2001). In addition, several experts have suggested that integrated activities may be better suited to how teachers learn and change their teaching practices (Darling-Hammond 1996; Little 1993; Loucks-Horsley et al. 1998). Integrated models of professional development are also more likely to align with the professional goals and needs of teachers (Darling-Hammond 1997). A national survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (1999) found that many teachers believe that integrated professional development activities are more helpful than traditional forms of professional development.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. NCLB emphasized the importance of teacher quality and,

further, allowed states to use Title II Part A of ESEA monies to develop and implement teacher induction programs. As debate continues regarding the reauthorization of NCLB, the emphasis upon professional development for teachers is evident. The need for continued research on the effects of teacher induction is apparent.

Preliminary Findings:

Data yielded from the Wisconsin Initial Educator Surveys are consistent with the emerging literature. Specifically, differentiation of instruction was highlighted both by initial educators and initial educator mentors as one of the most challenging topics for novice teachers. Additionally, survey respondents within the teacher category and teacher mentor category consistently cite classroom management as a challenging topic for initial educators. This is further evidenced in the Wisconsin Educator Standards most often selected for initial educators' professional development plans (PDP). Consistently, standard #3 (The teacher understands how pupils differ in their approaches to learning and the barriers that impede learning and can adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of pupils, including those with disabilities and exceptionalities) and standard #5 (The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-motivation) are selected to guide initial educator PDP's. While the PDP process is not based on a deficit model, the analysis of standards selected can be instructive both for induction programs and for educator preparation programs. Another area cited as a challenge for initial educators was differentiation of instruction for English language learners. Mentor responses indicate that this area was one area most often not addressed in the provision of initial educator support.

Mentor support can take many forms. Survey data indicates that, overwhelmingly, mentors for initial educators are trained. The form this training takes varies but most often is provided by the employing district and, further, is provided over a series of workshops rather than a one time workshop. Topics most often cited as very helpful in mentor training include training in: the fundamentals of mentoring and coaching,

district-specific mentor responsibilities, the Wisconsin Educator Standards, effective communication skills, the provision of constructive feedback. Interestingly, two areas cited in the trainings as either "not very helpful" or "not addressed" include: differentiation of instruction for diverse learners and conflict resolution. This is informative in that initial educators cite these two areas as challenging topics thus there is a disconnect between initial educators' perceived needs and the provision of mentor training to assist with those needs. Mentor perceptions as to the preparation of initial educators vary. Areas where mentors believe initial educators are least prepared include: the development of content knowledge, differentiation of instruction for diverse learners, classroom management, and the fostering of relationships with colleagues, parents, and the community to support learning.

Research as to effective induction most often focuses on the teacher category. Discerning the types and effectiveness of induction for administrators and pupil services professionals can be elusive. One insight from this process of data collection may be that for those initial educators who are within the pupil services or administrator category, data is somewhat sparse. Additionally, the data indicate that support for individuals within these categories is neither as systemic nor consistent. It will be imperative for the next surveys that meaningful data be gathered on these initial educators especially given the research indicating the importance of school leadership in the induction process for teachers.

Preliminary Recommendations for Stakeholders:

Professional Organizations and Cooperative Educational Service Agencies

Much can be discerned from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Initial Educator Surveys. The results of the most recent surveys (2008-2009) will surely supplement the aforementioned preliminary findings. As regards stakeholders, Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA's) will be able to utilize the results to inform services provided districts – specifically, topics found to be most challenging for initial educators and topics found to be by mentors as those for which initial educators are

least prepared for could become the focus of workshops and seminars. CESA's often provide support for initial educators in their efforts to complete their professional development plans (PDP's). Consistently, initial educators felt unprepared for the PDP process. CESA's could use data to inform practice as to the ways they provide services in this area.

Institutions of Higher Education

Institutions of higher education (IHE's) may take the data collected as to the Wisconsin Educator Standards selected for initial educator PDP's to inform their practice. Specifically, Wisconsin Teacher Standard #3 is overwhelmingly selected by initial educators when writing PDP goals. IHE's could begin to utilize this data to reflect on the degree to which they adequately prepare educators to teach the diverse populations with whom they will work. Consistent with this is the need for initial educators to be prepared to work with English language learners. Cited by initial educators as a very challenging area and, further, by mentors, as an area for which initial educators are least prepared, IHE's can utilize the data to inform programming in this area. Additionally, despite PI 34 requirements that IHE's "develop a plan for assisting graduates and to demonstrate how this plan has contributed to initial educator success" evidence gathered from the initial educator surveys indicates that initial educators perceive preparation in this area as lacking.

Wisconsin School Districts

At the district level, data from these surveys may inform ongoing orientation and support seminar topics. As the literature indicates, induction is most helpful when it systemic, integrated, and research-based. Districts can review data and analyze areas most identified by educators as challenging and support said initial educators in their efforts to best serve students by providing guidance in those areas. Links between districts and IHE's could provide the seamless process by which educators transition from pre-service preparation to in-service support – especially when guided by data gathered from graduates of IHE programs.

As stated earlier, the data gathered from the 2008-2009 Initial Educator Survey will inform further this presentation. Said data has just been collected with an impressive return rate of over 30%. Additionally, the data has been broken out to allow for specific analysis of Milwaukee's initial educators and mentors. Analyses of this data (and data from previous initial educator surveys) will be shared at the "2009 Wisconsin Research Seminar on Improving Educator Quality: Improving Practice and Expanding Collaboration in Challenging Times," and will, most certainly, provoke a meaningful dialogue across all stakeholders involved.

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