

# A SUCCESSFUL INDUCTION INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

*FOR THE NEW CAREER  
AND TECHNICAL  
EDUCATION TEACHER,  
A TEACHER INDUCTION  
PROGRAM AND PEER  
MENTORING CAN MAKE  
THE FIRST YEAR A  
MUCH MORE POSITIVE  
EXPERIENCE.*

The teacher most likely to leave the profession is the new teacher, according to much of the latest research. A recent report on research into teacher recruitment and retention by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) notes that teacher attrition is most severe among teachers who have been in the classroom for only four to five years. Other statistics reported by ECS that are of interest to career and technical education (CTE) teachers: attrition is greater among

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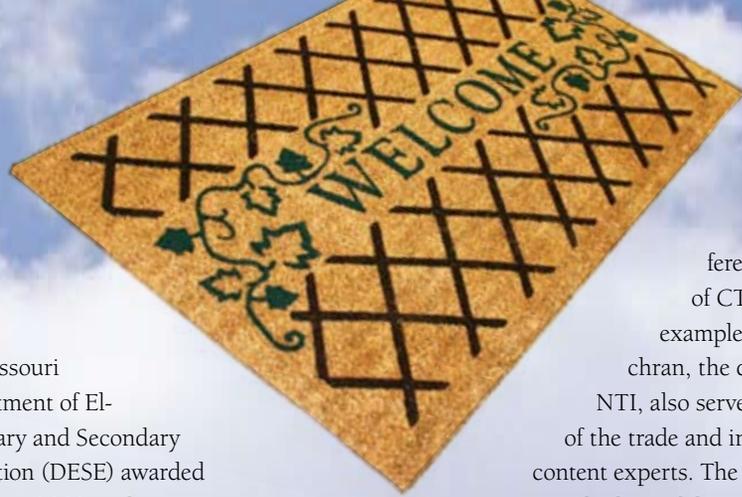
**By** Lori Cochran and Susan Reese

middle school and high school teachers than among elementary school teachers, but retention rates of alternative-route teachers are comparable to—or may even exceed—those of teachers who entered the profession through traditional preparation programs.

There is some evidence to suggest, however, that teacher induction and mentoring programs can play a role in keeping new teachers in the profession by assisting them in navigating what can sometimes be the rough waters of their first years of teaching.

## Helping New Teachers in Missouri

The Missouri Center for Career Education (MCCE) has established teacher support systems intended to help new teachers succeed. These include the New Teacher Institute (NTI) and a two-year induction program that includes mentoring for the new teacher. NTI has been in existence for more than 40 years and is designed to be a sort of teacher boot camp. It helps mostly individuals who are coming to the teaching



profession from business and industry—and do not have a BS degree in teacher education—to become better prepared to teach in the classroom.

As a yearlong comprehensive professional development program, NTI has three main goals: to develop the pedagogical skills of new CTE teachers; to identify resources to support new CTE teachers; and to establish a support network for new CTE teachers. While most of those attending NTI will be teaching health occupations or trade and industrial education, the rest may be teachers in any other CTE area. The purpose of NTI is to teach them to be better teachers—no matter what their content area.

### Support Through Mentoring

The newer element of the Missouri induction program is the mentoring aspect. It

was added when the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) awarded a grant in 2003 to the University of Central Missouri (UCM) to establish MCCE. The center is located within the College of Education, Department of Career and Technology Education at UCM in Warrensburg.

The Missouri Career Education Mentoring Program pairs experienced teachers with new teachers. The mentor and protégé work together throughout the school year. While NTI puts new teachers from various areas of CTE together, the mentoring program pairs those in the same content areas. There are also content experts for the dif-

ferent fields of CTE. For example, Lori Cochran, the director of NTI, also serves as one of the trade and industrial content experts. The content experts facilitate delivery of the program and the content, and oversee the mentors and new teachers to make sure they are successfully completing the structured experiences. The content experts also serve as liaisons between DESE and the mentoring team.

The first-year experiences focus on program standards for student achievement. A list of sample experiences is provided, but the mentor and protégé may also design their own. The mentoring team creates an action plan for the year, and the plan may be revised during the year to reflect

## SUPPORTING NEW CAREER AND TECHNICAL TEACHERS IN L.A. COUNTY

By Susan Reese

In Los Angeles County, an in-service program gives new career tech teachers a good start, and the support they need throughout the year.

The Los Angeles County Regional Occupational Program (LACOROP) is a collaborative of the Los Angeles County Office of Education and 23 member school districts that provides high school students and adults with both workforce training and preparation for post-secondary education. It is no small task; but it is being accomplished successfully. In 2005, 30,594 students completed LACOROP classes in 74 different occupational areas, and 96 percent of the students were found to be in school, the military and/or working. As another measure of its success, 96 percent of approximately 10,000 12th-grade completers also graduated from high school.

LACOROP is in its 33rd year of existence, and for the past 15 years it has had a teacher in-service program to provide the support that can help make a difference in the success of new teachers. Rebecca Seher, who is a LACOROP coordinator, says that they manage to cover a great deal in the four-day program. The first day is “Nuts and Bolts” and covers topics such as attendance procedures. Seher says they also introduce the teachers to the staff, go over courses and talk about advisory meetings with business and industry.

LACOROP is accredited by the Western Association of Schools

and Colleges (WASC), so on the second day, the teachers learn about WASC and review standards. They also learn about discipline, developing a lesson plan and, as Seher puts it, “how to be an effective teacher.”

Between day two and day three, the teachers go back to the schools where they will be teaching and participate in a scavenger hunt. They have to locate supplies and identify specific staff, such as the person to contact in an emergency. Day three is spent “Teaching for Success,” and the new teachers learn about teaching special needs students, strategies for different learning styles, engaging instructional strategies, grading and rubrics.

Day four covers employability skills and career essentials all students need to know about, such as safety, ethics, resumes and completing applications. New teachers also learn how to prepare their students for paid and unpaid job training experiences, and how to find business and industry partners to host and work with the students.

### Consultants, Coordinators, Coaches

LACOROP has subject-area consultants in trade and industry, health, family and consumer sciences, business, marketing and creative arts. There are also coordinators who work directly with

the new teacher's progress and growth, but the changes must be shared with the content expert. A checklist is made at the first meeting of the mentoring team to help establish structure. A planning calendar is also provided to the mentoring team to help them keep track of their target dates and work to be completed during the year.

An on-site visit may be made during the school year, with a report completed by the person making the visit. In the spring, an online evaluation form is sent to all participants, and this form is completed and submitted to MCCE.

The second year of the program focuses more on improving instruction, enhancing professionalism, and refining activities begun in the first year. The second year also includes independent experiences that relate to the new teacher's content area program standards.

## Helping Ease the Burden

For teachers coming to the classroom from industry, the first few years can be an overwhelming experience. Missouri is one of the states that has made the teaching certification requirements much more rigorous. Changes made two years ago mean these teachers may have to take six college courses during their first three years of teaching. Rather than making a mentoring program seem like just one more thing to add to their workload, MCCE tries to integrate it with their college courses in the hopes that the support and guidance the new teachers receive will make it easier for them and not add to their burden.

While MCCE provides the materials and the support staff, the true success of the mentoring program depends upon the relationship between the new teacher and the mentor. There must be open, continu-

ous two-way communication between the pair, and they must both be completely invested in the success of the new teacher. The mentor provides the advice, information and emotional support, but the new teacher must play an active role in ensuring his or her own growth and future success in the classroom.

While teaching may be a new career and a whole new experience for these business and industry transplants, many of them have been a source of amazement for the MCCE staff. When the experienced educators see a new teacher with a natural ability for teaching and a dedication to the success of the students, they know they must do everything they can to keep that teacher in the classroom. NTI and the Career Education Mentoring Program are two of the ways they are working to do just that. **I**

the district personnel on issues such as budgeting. The consultants are required to contact the new teachers in their area once a month throughout the year—either through a phone call, an e-mail, a letter or by meeting in the classroom.

"The consultants are there to help the new teachers," explains Seher. "They are like coaches and work directly with the teachers on the curriculum and course outlines."

They are also available if the new teacher is having a problem such as discipline involving a particular student.

"In all aspects of what goes on in a classroom, all new teachers have access to a consultant," notes Seher.

Coordinators observe the new teachers in the classroom as well; if they see a problem, they will contact the consultant and ask him or her to provide help. Sometimes, Seher says, a coordinator will see a new teacher doing a great job and will suggest the consultant go in to see what can be learned to help someone else.

According to Seher, the LACOROP consultants have been through the Making Standards Work training program of the Leadership and Learning Center in Denver, Colorado, which was formerly the Center for Performance Assessment. So they are now certified to present a workshop that takes new teachers through the process of using standards and assessment throughout the teaching process.

## An Ongoing Process

In addition to the initial in-service training, during the year new teachers are encouraged to attend workshops that pertain to their subject area as well as business and advisory meetings. While many

of the new teachers have come from traditional teacher preparation programs, some have come from business and industry and have to go through designated subject credentialing.

"We help them, though," says Seher. "We have a credentialing unit to help the teachers complete the paperwork correctly."

The new teachers coming from business and industry must have at least five years of related job experience in the field they are teaching—and at least one year of that experience has to have been within the past three years.

Seher notes that teachers coming from business and industry have relevant knowledge along with recent skills, and they can apply all that they know in the classroom and share it with their students. And at LACOROP, if they have any problems, a safety net of consultants and coordinators is there to help.

"Our new teachers have a lot of assistance available to them," Seher says.

And that can be what makes the difference in keeping those new teachers in the career and technical education classroom. **I**

## Further Preparation

To learn more about the Los Angeles County Regional Occupational Program, visit [www.lacorop.org](http://www.lacorop.org). For more information about the Leadership and Learning Center (formerly the Center for Performance Assessment), visit [www.makingstandardswork.com](http://www.makingstandardswork.com).