

Preface

Dear Educator,

We are happy to have this opportunity to share some wonderful success stories with you regarding working with new teachers. Whether you are a new teacher yourself or soon to be a new teacher, a **mentor** or master teacher, a school-site or central office administrator, a professional developer, an **instructional coach** or other school-site support personnel, or a university professor, you will gain practical knowledge linked to research and real-life stories that will positively impact the way you do business. Whether your area of expertise is early childhood, elementary, secondary, general education, special education, literacy, content, the arts, technical, foreign languages, or any other field of education, you will see a connecting thread in the lessons to be learned from stories shared, successes experienced, and struggles conquered in this book.

We also extend an invitation to you to replicate our work with new teachers—to add to your existing knowledge of induction, thereby expanding your own professional and personal growth and development.

As fellow colleagues and educators, we are excited to share great things about working with new teachers with you:

Chapter 1 provides you with an insight of our *mentoring experiences* and how mentoring positively affected our own personal and professional growth, which will help you in making the connections of successful mentoring. We will also reflect upon the characteristics of high-quality mentors.

Chapter 2 opens the door for you to get an insight on what a new teacher feels—and we will share with you the *voice of the struggling teacher*. We have much to learn from new teachers, if only we listen, really listen, to what they are and are not saying, and if we ask the right questions and provide the right level of support.

Chapter 3 delves into the concept of *teachers as leaders*, looking at personal experiences and characteristics, then taking us into *the role of the mentor*, and what we, as exemplary teachers, should do and how we should do it, with practical research and ideas that really work.

Chapter 4 provides you with the *characteristics of effective coaching*, with awareness of age, cultural, and linguistic differences as one of the highlights.

Chapter 5 shares the ins and outs of effective **communication** and its importance in working with new teachers.

Chapter 6 provides you a glimpse of an actual **case study**, featuring one particular program that excelled in supporting new teachers, with a 97% retention rate. This particular case study focused primarily on special education teachers with a small percentage of general education teachers. However, the content and concepts can be transferred easily to any group of teachers. It is not meant to be inclusive for only special education teachers, as that type of labeling would limit the readers' opportunities for replicating in any locale. The key? The commitment and passion apparent in the case study are woven into the necessary components of a highly successful program. We also discuss effective **induction programs** in general and what they should look like.

Chapter 7 focuses on quality **professional development** and how it can impact teachers, whether they are new to the field or seasoned mentors.

Chapter 8 enlightens you with *lessons learned* through the mentoring process, including tips on how to replicate one example of a successful program, as well as personal experiences shared by two new teachers.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) populations in most American schools are increasing—children from CLD heritages attend public school all over the United States, with an estimated 4.1 million students (8.5%) as English language learners (ELL) (Paige, 2004, p. 4). In Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), our district and the fourth largest school district in the nation, the ELL population is 52.5%. That's quite a difference from the 8.5% nationally! Our district has the largest minority student population in the state and is the only district in Florida where there are more minority teachers than white, non-Hispanic teachers (Florida Department of Education, 2007). The student population of this particular school system is composed of 9.6% white, non-Hispanic; 27.6% black, non-Hispanic; 60.4% Hispanic; and 2.4% other. The top ten foreign languages spoken by students in this school district are Spanish, Haitian Creole, French, Portuguese, Zhongwen (Chinese), Arabic, Russian, Urdu, Hebrew, and Vietnamese (Miami-Dade County Public Schools [M-DCPS], 2006b). Teachers face many challenges in teaching, but add to that the CLD factors, and the challenges can be overwhelming to a beginning teacher, especially when dealing with the barrier of communication of both students and parents.

Additionally, all teachers have new challenges, as children with disabilities are now receiving more and more instruction in general education classrooms due to current legislation, which requires them to have access to the general education curriculum, as well as students of diverse backgrounds. Added to the increased **diversity** of the children attending school is the continuing problem of lack of diversity in the current generation of teachers nationwide. Furthermore, in a summary of Pugach (2005), in Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), "Despite the trend toward preparing prospective teachers to work with students with disabilities, few studies of program effects have been studied" (p. 25). Retention of beginning teachers and prevention of burnout continue to challenge public school personnel. A study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics

(2005) shows that approximately 27.7% of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years, and in urban districts the attrition rate can jump to an alarming 30% to 50% in the first year. In the state of Florida, 11% of new graduates who taught in Florida public schools left the classroom after one year (Florida Department of Education, 2003). In M-DCPS (M-DCPS, 2006b), 17.3% of the teachers were new to the district; however, the teacher turnover rate in M-DCPS in 2005–2006 was 4.65%.

Increasing presence of mentoring programs for beginning teachers has resulted in an increase of teacher retention. In the past five years, M-DCPS has successfully implemented a beginning teacher program that has shown promising results in terms of retention. Our district sponsors numerous comprehensive teacher induction programs, one of which is a systematic structure of support for new and early-career special education teachers to assist them in becoming competent and effective professionals, focusing on mentor **teacher leader** partnerships and professional development for both the mentor teacher leaders and the new and early-career teachers. This particular program, Project GATE, a successful mentoring teacher induction program that was specifically designed for a particular group of teachers, in collaboration with a local state university and an urban school district, resulted in 97% retention of new and early-career special education teachers at the end of their first year, and is highlighted in Chapter 6. Brock and Grady (2007) suggest that such programs expect multiple outcomes such as retention of qualified teachers and enhanced professional growth.

Based upon both our personal and professional experiences, we anticipate sharing the successes of the new and early-career teachers and their mentors, despite the numerous challenges. We have effectively impacted their teaching practices, thereby creating a community of diverse learners that supported one another through various mentoring components. But besides all of that, something else occurred . . . there was a community formed, a family was established. As one new teacher reflects,

It provided me a family of support; it was OK to cry, OK to get up one more day and do what I do. . . . I felt there was a sense of community; I had a sense of belonging. I didn't feel like a fish in a big ocean with nowhere to go. It felt like my family, that I was not alone.

We hope to share with you, the reader, that this is about the teachers, the new ones and the veterans, it is about real teachers from whom we can learn great things.