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Making Sense, Making Do: Local District Implementation of a New State Induction Policy

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Abstract Connecticut's Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program is in its early stages of implementation. This study examined how local school districts implemented TEAM and identified factors that affected implementation. It was based on interviews with twenty-two participants at the state, district, and local school levels. The intentions of the program designers at the state level were compared to district- and school-level understandings of the program's intentions and how those understandings influenced implementation. Additionally, factors affecting local understanding and implementation of the new program were described. The findings of this study suggest that there was close alignment of understanding between the state and local implementers on the key provisions of the program related to its role as a professional development tool. The data reveal tacit rather than explicit understanding at the local level of the program's intention to improve student achievement. Variations in understanding can be attributed to other factors, including contextual, structural, cognitive, and affective elements.

Keywords: Policy implementation; Teacher induction; Mentorships; Sense making; TEAM; Connecticut

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how local school districts implemented a new state-mandated teacher induction program and to identify factors influencing their implementation. As early stages of program implementation are often periods of confusion, learning, and growth (Hall & Hord, 2006), it is important for policy-makers to examine elements that help as well as inhibit implementation. Connecticut's Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program was developed between 2008 and 2010 to replace the former induction program: the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST). Beginning in the fall of 2010, all new teachers were required to participate in the TEAM program, which involves intensive district-based mentorships, the development of professional growth and action plans, and the submission of reflection papers around a series of five learning modules related to Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2010). This study focused on three local school districts in Connecticut as they implemented the TEAM program.

The TEAM Program

In order to place this study within a broader context and to understand the particular elements of TEAM as a program, it is important to have at least a passing familiarity with TEAM's history and structure. Connecticut has had a statutory requirement for some form of beginning teacher support and accountability since the Educational Enhancement Act of 1986 (PA 86-1), which required stricter standards for teacher certification and professional practice in exchange for increased minimum salaries across the state. Initially this took the form of a check-list style observation protocol, the Connecticut Competency Instrument, which measured teacher behavior in the classroom. By the mid-1990s, the state adopted a portfolio-based accountability program, the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program. Under BEST, teachers in their first two years needed to complete a portfolio that ostensibly demonstrated their competency in key areas of pedagogy including planning, instruction, assessment, and reflective practice. BEST was designed as a summative assessment for beginning teachers, with renewal of certification contingent upon successful completion of the portfolio. BEST had been identified by some researchers as a component of successful state education policy (Pechone, Pigg, Chung, & Souviney, 2005; Wilson, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 2001; Youngs, 2002, 2007), but was widely unpopular with teachers and the Connecticut teachers' unions due to the high-stakes nature of the program and the inequities of levels of support among districts across the state (Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee, 2007). By the fall of 2007, BEST was eliminated by the state's General Assembly.

Despite the elimination of BEST, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) was charged with fulfilling the statutory requirement, but in a way that was different from the BEST program. CSDE still publicly supported the value of a mentor-based induction program and wanted mentorships to be the core of what would follow. In place of BEST, the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program was developed. TEAM represented a paradigm shift: whereas BEST was intended to serve as a high-stakes assessment and gatekeeping tool for beginning teachers, TEAM

was developed as a professional learning program. Under BEST, decisions about certification renewals had been made under the centralized authority of the Connecticut State Department of Education, whereas under TEAM, the state's role shifted to that of program manager and facilitator, leaving recommendations for certification renewal to the discretion of each district, provided beginning teachers' performance during TEAM is acceptable.

Under TEAM, each beginning teacher is given up to three years to complete a series of five modules, each aligned with Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching, the set of teaching standards that serve as the basis of teacher evaluation across the state. The modules focus on the following domains: classroom environment, planning for instruction, instruction for active learning, assessment, and professional responsibilities. Each beginning teacher is assigned a mentor, and the mentor pair is required to meet for a minimum of ten contact hours per module. Working together, the mentor and beginning teacher conduct a review of the Common Core of Teaching and complete a self-assessment of areas of strength and improvement. The pair then identifies an area for professional growth and develops a plan for learning, which they will concentrate on typically over an eight- to ten-week period.

In consultation with her or his mentor, the beginning teacher is required to develop a written Professional Growth Action Plan (PGAP) which identifies what the teacher will seek to learn along with a rationale for the choice, a list of resources she or he will use during the learning, as well as a timeline for action steps and mentor meetings. Over the course of the module cycle, the mentor pair meets and the beginning teacher implements the action plan. Mentor hours are logged through an online management system. At the end of the cycle, the teacher writes a reflective paper about the professional learning that occurred and the effects the learning had on student outcomes. The paper is then submitted for review. School districts may choose whether to develop an internal review process or they may join a regional consortium that reviews the papers. Teachers are informed of the decision after review and are allowed to revise and resubmit their paper if revisions are requested. Ultimately, the district monitors the completion of modules and may choose whether or not to renew the teacher's contract and support her or his certification renewal.

It was not the purpose of this study to evaluate the efficacy of the TEAM program or the theory of action on which it is based; rather, the focus of this study was on the implementation of the program and on identifying factors influencing the program's rollout. The efficacy of any program or policy is influenced by its implementation and by the fidelity of its implementation to the goals of those designing the program or policy. It is hoped that this study may provide insight for any future research into TEAM that aims to evaluate its effectiveness.

Literature review

Conceptually, this study is grounded primarily in literature from two areas. First, the literature surrounding teacher induction and mentorships establishes the importance of policy in this area and the potential not only for retaining teachers but for helping to shape their learning and practice. Second, since a policy is only as good as its im-

plementation, the literature related to factors affecting policy implementation provides insight and a conceptual base for analysis.

Teacher induction and mentorships

In general, studies of teacher induction programs have demonstrated positive outcomes for the teachers involved and their students. The research into teacher induction and mentorships has focused largely on one or more of the following: the effects of induction programs on teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 1997, 2001; Johnson, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), educational equity (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a, 2003b; Johnson, Kardos, Kauffmain, Liu, & Donaldson, 2004; Kardos & Johnson, 2010), student achievement (Fletcher, Strong, & Villar, 2008), and professional learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2012).

During the mid-1990s, the national teaching force was aging, and a large number of teachers would reach retirement age over the following decade. This led to concerns about teacher supply and the ability to attract, train, and retain qualified individuals to fill those looming vacancies (Murphy, DeArmond & Guin, 2003). Induction supports and mentorships became a focus of study as a means to address the needs of beginning teachers (Ingersoll, 1997, 2001; Johnson, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Using data from the School and Staffing Survey (SASS), Ingersoll (1997, 2001) and Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that teachers who experienced some type of induction program were more likely to stay employed, as teachers, than those that did not. Of the various forms of induction supports, the researchers found that mentorships in particular had the strongest influence on teacher retention (Ingersoll, 1997, 2001; Johnson, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Strong, 2005).

Although the retention of teachers has implications across all types of school districts, of particular concern are attrition rates in hard-to-staff urban and rural districts. Concerns about educational equity arise when examining patterns of teachers' experience and years of teaching between urban schools with their suburban counterparts, with students in urban and rural schools more likely to have an inexperienced or uncertified teacher in the classroom. Johnson and Birkeland (2003a, 2003b) studied the movement of beginning teachers from urban to suburban school districts within the first five years of their careers. They found that teachers leaving their positions in urban schools cited a lack of support and resources as the primary driver for their decision to leave; however, those teachers that chose to stay were more likely to report a supportive induction and mentoring experience than those that left. In addition, Kardos and Johnson (2010) found that teachers in high-poverty schools were less likely to be paired with a mentor in their discipline and that teachers in science, mathematics, and technology education were least likely to be matched with a mentor in their content area.

In addition to teacher retention, other researchers have attempted to link participation in teacher induction programs with increased student achievement. Fletcher, Strong, and Villar (2008) conducted a regression analysis accounting for the intensity of induction supports as measured by the number of contact hours beginning teachers experienced. Although the researchers concluded that there was some link between induction supports and student achievement, the greatest predictor of future

student achievement was previous student achievement. Attempts to link induction supports with student achievement are difficult. In a recent literature review, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) observed that few empirical studies have been able to establish truly scientific designs with random assignment to control groups, that many studies have suffered from small sample size, and that none were able to control for intra-district variations in the quality of induction from school to school.

Finally, the induction stage of a teacher's career has been identified as an important time in shaping the professional learning and future practice of beginning teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2012). Professional learning for in-service teachers is often relegated to professional development programs provided at various times throughout the school year. Traditional professional development programs have largely been identified as ineffective, due to a number of factors including disconnection from classroom practice and the absence of follow up (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1998). More effective professional development that leads to professional learning is situated within the context of actual problems of practice, is collaborative in nature, and focuses on professional inquiry (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

Beginning teachers have a lot to learn as they transition from being traditional learners themselves to being teachers in charge of a classroom. The learning needs of beginning teachers range from navigating the procedural elements of how schools and classrooms work, to basic pedagogical practices and professional responsibilities (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2012; Shulman, 1987; Shulman & Shulman, 2004). It is with this in mind that the TEAM program focuses on the induction stage as a time of professional learning, requiring beginning teachers to engage in self-directed learning in each of the five domains of Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching. In order to promote professional learning, TEAM's design supports a social learning approach by pairing teachers with mentors and situating learning within actual classroom needs.

Though the TEAM program was established to support the induction needs of beginning teachers, the efficacy of any policy or program is often most dependent on how it is implemented. There are a variety of factors that influence the fidelity of policy implementation to its stated goals. These general factors are discussed next.

Policy implementation and the role of "sense-making"

Policymakers and those tasked with implementing policy are beset by numerous problems. Policymakers face the dilemma of crafting policy, developing instruments, and communicating their expectations to implementers in ways that will result in policy being carried out as intended (Hall & McGinty, 1997; Placier, Hall, McKendall, & Cockrell, 2000). Implementers face the problem of enacting policy within their local contexts, often without clear direction from policymakers or without the resources necessary to carry out policy as intended (Berman, 1978; Lipsky, 1980; Placier, Hall, McKendall, & Cockrell, 2000; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Timar, 1989). These disconnects often result in a transformation of intentions from policymakers to implementers, potentially leading to outcomes that are very different from those intended by policymakers (Berman, 1978; Hall & McGinty, 1997; Placier, Hall, McKendall, & Cockrell, 2000).

Those tasked with implementing policy are buffeted by local contextual factors that may help or hinder their implementation efforts. Resource availability, local political pressures, and the capacity of district and school leaders are among the factors affecting implementation at the local level (Berman, 1978; Lipsky, 1980; Weiss, 1995). Where some implementers may be willing and able to aggressively pursue new policy initiatives and to change existing behaviors, others might struggle to try to fit new policy requirements into existing structures. The definitions of successful implementation in these two hypothetical districts would look very different.

Cognitive and affective factors also play a role in the implementation of a policy or program. How local policy agents frame an issue or policy, or how they define problems, influences how they proceed with implementation (Coburn, 2001, 2006). Furthermore, the ways in which policy agents make sense of a policy and how they define, understand, and see their role in the policy all influence their implementation efforts (Ali, 2006; Coburn, 2001, 2006; Spillane, 2004; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). An agent's personal history and previous experience (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002) can influence how a policy resonates with him or her (Coburn, 2006), and resonance plays a role in both cognitive and affective processing of a policy (Coburn, 2006; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). To effect substantive change in behaviors, a policy must create sufficient cognitive dissonance that the policy agents engage with it, but not so much that it creates a negative affective response and a rejection of the policy (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002).

The ways in which policymakers communicate to implementers the substance and intent of their policies can be referred to as policy messages. When determining how to act on policy messages, implementers rely on previously established cognitive frames, or *schema,* to understand and develop actionable steps (Ali, 2006; Coburn, 2001; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). These frames are based largely on implementers' previous experience with other policies and programs. Implementers often seek to define new policies in terms of old ones with which they are familiar (Spillane, 2004; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). This can pose a problem for implementation when new policies or programs seek significant or even radical change to existing practice. It can also pose a problem for policies that shift the focus of previously well-established programs. TEAM not only replaced a previously well-established program but also represented a major conceptual shift in the nature and purpose of Connecticut's state-level induction policy.

Methodology

This study sought to answer two overarching questions: how did local school districts implement a new state-mandated teacher induction program, and what factors affected their implementation efforts? This study falls within the category of a general interpretivist design employing methods consistent with other policy analysis and implementation research (Hall & McGinty, 1997; Placier, Hall, McKendall, & Cockrell, 2000; Timar, 1989).

Participant selection and data collection

This study is based on semi-structured interviews with twenty-two participants:

seven at the state level, three district-level participants, and six dyads of beginning teachers and their mentors. At the state level, I interviewed a total of seven individuals involved with the development and implementation of the TEAM program: five program consultants at the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and two program contacts from separate Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) that served the districts included in this study.

Three school districts (referred to here as Sunnydale, Foreston, and Quaker Hill) were selected based on comparable socioeconomic profiles. In an attempt to mute the confounding influence of extremes of poverty or wealth, the districts that participated in this study represent a "middle of the road," with student performance levels, economic, and demographic indicators close to the state median. Seven potential participating districts were initially contacted in the spring of 2011. Of that seven, one declined to participate outright and the other six agreed to participate. Of the remaining six, one district agreed but was unable to provide access to all of the required participants, which excluded it from the study. Another district superintendent initially agreed but failed to return follow-up phone calls, removing that district from the pool. A fourth agreed to participate in the spring of 2011 but over the summer experienced a change of administration in central office as well as at the high school and middle school. The new administration withdrew from the participant pool. The remaining three districts agreed and participants were recruited successfully from the available beginning teachers and mentors.

In each district, I interviewed the TEAM District Facilitator (DF) who is tasked with overseeing implementation for that district. At the school level, two dyads of beginning teachers and their mentors were interviewed from each district. The beginning teachers who participated in the study worked as either middle or high school teachers and were either actively involved with TEAM or completed their involvement within the six months prior to the interviews. Participants in this study were all volunteers, recruited through a blanket invitation to all beginning teachers and mentors in the participating districts, which was followed up with personal phone calls.

Data analysis

All interviews were conducted in person and were digitally recorded, each lasting between 45 minutes to an hour. The interviews were then transcribed for analysis. Interview transcripts were manually coded on two levels (Basit, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first level of coding was based on an initial list developed from relevant literature related to the areas of policy implementation, induction, and professional learning. During the analysis, additional codes were developed as needed. For example, one theme that emerged from the interviews was related to the role played by the affective dispositions of the beginning teachers in implementing the program. This was not initially anticipated based on the literature review, but may be considered an example of emergent code (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After a first round of coding, a second round of pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to condense the initial data into categories for analysis. The resulting categories became the themes presented in the findings.

Findings

In general, the three school districts that participated in this study implemented the *procedural* elements of TEAM as described by the state. Each district named a District facilitator, each developed a TEAM action plan, and each trained and paired mentors with beginning teachers. Additionally, each district expressed sincere desire to implement the program with fidelity; however, there were variations in how they implemented the program. Where districts differed was in the *substantive* implementation: that is, in the ways their implementation aligned with the stated intentions behind the program. Variation in the way that the districts implemented the program was due largely to resource availability, in-district structures, and cognitive and affective factors. The remainder of this section examines variations in implementation. First, I discuss the intentions behind the program as articulated by state-level participants, and I compare those intentions against the implementation efforts of the districts. I then discuss factors that influenced the districts' implementation efforts.

Making sense: State level intentions and local level implementation

Through interviews with state-level participants and a review of state documentation available through the TEAM website, four major themes were identified as key intentions and components for the program: (1) improved student achievement, (2) teachers' professional learning and reflection, (3) centrality of mentorships, and (4) decentralization of authority. Each of these themes is developed below.

Theme 1: Improved student achievement

In explaining the purpose of TEAM, state level officials were clear that the ultimate goal of TEAM was to improve student achievement by improving teachers' professional practice. In a particularly cogent review of the intentions and theory of action behind TEAM, Faith, a RESC program contact responsible for serving as the state-level liaison with local districts, explained:

> The purpose of TEAM is to improve student achievement through impacting a teacher's daily practice. … We ask our beginning teachers to go deep and analyze their practice in terms of classroom management, in terms of teaching, in terms of planning, in terms of assessing and then, finally, taking a look at their own professional responsibilities … about how they might improve their practice in any one of those areas and … how their work with those modules would, indeed, impact student learning.

Faith's summary of the process encapsulates the principles underlying the program's design. It also provides a clear description of the theory of action behind the program.

When compared to the state-level explanation of the intention behind TEAM, local level implementers were less explicit about their understanding of this goal. Of all of the district facilitators, mentors, and beginning teachers that participated in the study, only one listed increased student achievement as a goal when asked about their understanding of the purpose of TEAM. Typical responses from the remaining participants cited teacher-level outcomes such as "refining their skills," "honing their craft," and "develop[ing] a repertoire of what they can use."

Teacher and mentor interviews revealed more of a tacit rather than explicit understanding of the intended connection between participation in TEAM and increasing student achievement. When prompted about whether or not they saw a connection between participation in TEAM and increased student achievement, all said yes; however, when asked to provide examples of how they "knew" student outcomes were improved, most answered in terms of teacher-level improvement such as improved lesson planning or learning new instructional strategies. The closest response linking learning through TEAM to improved student outcomes was provided by Monica, an English teacher who focused on reading differentiation for one of her modules:

> Last year I definitely felt like, at the end, my students had improved a lot in the areas that I chose. The first [module] focused on reading differentiation, and I felt like they definitely got better at it. For the second one, I did lit[erature] circles and they got better at discussing literature and noticing things in literature. I think before I was spoonfeeding them more.

With the exception of Monica, all other participants at the school level did not articulate their understanding of the connection between their participation in TEAM and increased student achievement unless prompted directly; then, they explained their understanding of the connection vaguely, with no direct examples.

Theme 2: Teacher professional learning and reflection

If improved student achievement is the ultimate goal of TEAM, then the intervention point for trying to realize that goal is improving teacher professional practice (CSDE, 2010). The goal of professional learning and reflection is prominent in the documents produced by the state and shared through the program website. Additionally, the module process was designed to reinforce a mode of thinking or thought process for beginning teachers that program designers hope will remain with beginning teachers over the course of their careers. Liz, a RESC program contact, explained, "It is meant to help beginning teachers. What we have now—learn about, develop, internalize a process [of] looking at your practice with an eye to improvement."

All of the local-level implementers expressed their understanding that, at some level, the TEAM program was intended to improve the teaching of beginning teachers by requiring them to learn and reflect on practice. At the district level, Donna, the district facilitator in Sunnydale, explained that she saw the purpose of TEAM as one of reflection and the development of metacognitive skills:

> It's really to instill the importance of self-reflection, really building those metacognitive skills in teachers that none of us really have time for unless we have to, and understanding the whole recursive teaching/assessment cycle that we all need to engage in.

Cassie, a beginning English teacher in Quaker Hill, emphasized the reflective component of the program:

> From what I gather and from what I'm experiencing, it's a very reflective process. I feel like it's very geared toward what I'm actually

doing with the kids at the moment and having me reflect back on what I'm actually doing … and then the other part of it that I think of is collaborating with my mentor quite a bit.

Taken together, all of the participants described the role of professional learning and reflection on practice as a major part of TEAM. Many of the comments related to the learning that took place were in the context of the mentor relationship. For the beginning teachers and mentors, the professional learning process occurred individually through reflection, but also collaboratively through discussion with their mentor or other colleagues. Several mentors also noted that they learned through the process and that working with their beginning teacher forced them to reflect on their practice.

Theme 3: Centrality of mentorships
The defining component of TEAM is that the process is built around a mentoring relationship between a beginning teacher and an experienced trained mentor. The structure of the program establishes a minimum of fifty contact hours between the beginning teacher and mentor over the course of the five modules. This is a shift from previous practice where mentoring was required but with fewer guidelines.

Most of the beginning teachers and mentors discussed professional learning within the context of mentoring. Structurally, it was evident that the participants at the district and school levels understood that the mentor relationship was the center around which the program was built. In all three districts, each beginning teacher was assigned a formal mentor; however, not all beginning teachers were assigned a mentor in their content area. Mentor assignment in each district was based primarily on availability and depended on the pool of available trained mentors.

In describing the purpose of the mentorships, the participants viewed the mentoring component as the fundamental trait of the program. Cassie's mentor, Louise, explained that she believed "the purpose is to link a beginning teacher to a teacher who is more experienced and has run the [gamut] of all the things, and to actually go through the different process of everyday teaching elements."

Allison, a mentor from Sunnydale, described her understanding of the role of the mentor relationship:

> That the mentor process, and the learning process, and the new teacher experience would be more meaningful, and would be better for the new teacher if they had a real person to kind of work through these situations. … I think the intention is to help new teachers hone their craft and, through the mentor process, gain perspective and experience that they might not be able to have the same insight if they were more independent.

Despite a consistent overall understanding of the role of mentorships, there was variation in how the mentoring relationship was carried out. The amount of time that beginning teachers and their mentors spent together varied and was determined largely by individual choice as well as by the strength of personal connection between the mentor and beginning teacher. For example, Monica, a beginning teacher in Foreston, explained that she did not spend the full amount of time with her mentor:

> For the first module, we met pretty regularly, once a week, or every other week. But then for the second one, I was much more independent, and we would really only touch base 'cause we had the same lunch together. So that was 20 minutes.

Monica's mentor was not from the same content area, and Monica reported going to others in her department for additional help. Although this time was not specifically spent with her formal assigned mentor, Monica worked with other teachers informally. In contrast, Cassie, a beginning teacher in Quaker Hill, explained that she had "such a close relationship" with her mentor that they met daily.

Additionally, personal beliefs about the required contact hours influenced implementation. For example, Rosette, a mentor from Sunnydale, expressed her belief the TEAM program required too much mentoring time:

> They require you to have 50 hours of contact time, and I think that that's a lot. I think that it might be too much. That's asking for an hour a week, and I think that even, sometimes we'll meet together, and we'll get our conversations through in 30 to 45 minutes, but we feel like we have to keep going to make sure we get that hour. I think that that's a lot of time.

Rosette's perspective on the time requirement was not shared by all the mentors. Barbara, a mentor from Foreston, explained that she believed the required hours were not enough: "She could probably use double. … We don't even keep track of them all. But she needs that talking. So you, you know, you do what you've got to do."

Taken together, the implementation of the mentoring relationship was the largest source of variation among the three districts. Personal beliefs as well as mentor pairings influenced the amount of time the dyads spent together, which ranged from below the required contact time to well above.

Theme 4: Decentralization of authority

Under the BEST program, the state was responsible for every aspect of the program, including program development, developing training for mentors, creating and running seminars for beginning teachers, serving as the contact for problem solving, and collecting and assessing the portfolios. Unlike BEST, the design of TEAM shifts program control from the state to districts. Districts are responsible for structuring their TEAM Action Plans, for determining levels of acceptable performance, for providing mentors, and for providing professional development. This has been a significant change for many districts, as Liz, one of the RESC staff, noted:

> [T]hat's a shift in thinking. … It's no longer the responsibility of the state. The state has oversight. The state is there definitely. They are trying to support the districts in as many ways as they can. But it's really a district program. It's what your district wants to do.

The beginning teachers and mentors did not explicitly discuss decentralization of authority; however, their description of where and to whom they went when they had problems or questions supports the theme. The beginning teachers and mentors all stated that they consulted their district facilitators with any programmatic ques-

tions or questions related to certification. None of the beginning teachers or mentors said that they contacted anyone at the state level during the module process. All of the beginning teachers and mentors said that they were satisfied with the responsiveness of their district facilitator and stated that their questions were resolved promptly. When looking at the pattern of responses from implementers at the district and school levels, there is ample evidence to indicate that TEAM is being implemented locally with minimal direction or direct involvement from the state.

Making do: Factors influencing implementation

Several elements affected how the local-level participants understood and acted on the TEAM program, some based on policy messages and message pathways—what information was provided and how it was received from the state—some due to district structures and supports and mentor availability, and others due to cognitive factors such as previous experience and affective dispositions. These factors are discussed below.

Message pathways: Dissemination of information from the state

One of the factors affecting how TEAM was understood was the delivery of policy messages from the state—namely, what was communicated and how it was communicated. There were several avenues through which the state communicated its intentions: state-level trainings, the TEAM website, and direct contact with district facilitators (DFs). All of the DFs were required to attend multiple trainings and meetings over the course of the year. Additionally, all of the mentors were required to attend training under TEAM. New mentors were required to attend a three-day training session in which the purpose and structure of TEAM program was reviewed. Mentors who had been previously trained under BEST were required to attend a one-day update training. These trainings were held regionally through the RESCs and no one could serve as a mentor or district facilitator without attending these meetings.

According to the local implementers, the most effective tool that the state used to disseminate information was the TEAM website. The website served as a clearinghouse of information, providing a history of induction in Connecticut, an overview of the TEAM program, and specific information and help for each module. Despite some initial technical glitches, the website became the key source of information for most of the local implementers. Steve, the district facilitator for Foreston, described his use of the website:

> I thought the website was excellent. And they also had a log of communications that had gone out. So I could go back if I had questions. … [I]f you go on there, all those letters are archived. So, if you lose something, or can't remember [what] was in your email, you know, letter templates and things like that, it's nice to have that archive of information. I've used it a couple of times.

Rosette, a mentor in Sunnydale, also expressed satisfaction with the website:

> The website is the most helpful tool. You have to put everything on the website, and it spells out for you what you have to do. They also send us emails pretty frequently, reminders as to where you should be, and that type of thing. It's pretty helpful.

Cassie, a beginning teacher in Quaker Hill, also described her reliance on the website for information: "I've used the website a lot for help. I've been kind of just resourcing, using resources online, but I did talk to a few of the teachers that have gone through parts of it already that are here."

A related factor was the implementers' perceptions of the clarity of policy messages from the state. When asked about how clearly the state communicated their intention for TEAM, there was a wide range of perspectives, from participants who said that they thought the state was very clear to those that said they thought it was not clear at all. District facilitators were most likely to say that after some initial questions about the structure and function of TEAM, they were satisfied with the clarity of the state's communication.

Least likely to say that the state's intentions for the program were clear were beginning teachers and mentors. None of the mentors or beginning teachers reported having any direct contact with the state. Instead, they all identified their district facilitator as their contact person. For example, when asked how responsive she believed the state had been to her, Rosette, a mentor in Sunnydale, answered, "I haven't worked with them directly, but Donna [the DF] said during that meeting that she got responses back pretty quickly, especially from people who are high up in the chain of command, I guess."

When considering the decentralized nature of program management and implementation of the TEAM program, it makes sense that beginning teachers and mentors would not have direct knowledge of the state's intentions for the program beyond what is presented on the website. The structure of TEAM places the onus of information dissemination, local training, and professional development on the districts and the district facilitators.

In-district structures and supports

One of the most influential components of how the districts participating in this study implemented TEAM was the way they structured lines of responsibility, in particular who they chose as DF. Each of the district facilitators that participated held other positions within the district. Donna, the DF for Sunnydale, was principal of one of the district's twelve schools. Steve, DF of Foreston, also served as his school's assistant principal and as the district's Director of Special Education. Ruben, DF in Quaker Hill, was also assistant superintendent for his district. Of the three, Ruben's role as DF was most closely embedded in his day-to-day work. He frequently checked the TEAM website and discussed the progress of beginning teachers at district administrative meetings. He followed up as needed with phone calls and personal visits to principals as well as beginning teachers and mentors. His oversight of TEAM implementation was most closely aligned with what the participants at the state level described as their ideal district monitoring.

Of the three, Donna was clearly frazzled and apologized multiple times during her interview for being less prepared than she felt she should have been. As a building principal, her first job was to be the educational leader for the school and, having no assistant principal, managing the day-to-day operations. Her comments frequently cited a lack of time as a reason that she was not fulfilling her role as DF in

a way that she thought she should. For example, when asked, "How directly involved are you with beginning teachers and mentors?" she responded, "Honestly, very little." She described how she spent her time trying to untangle the "logistical nightmare" of who belonged in TEAM, at what stage, how many modules they needed to complete, and how to work with the certification office when the teachers were done.

She later commented on her "envy" of DFs in other districts whose sole role was to co-ordinate TEAM:

> I was always envious … there are a number of districts … [that] have a retired teacher who's the DF. So when I hear about people like that or even central office people, I think those are the people who should be doing this, not a building principal. I feel badly that I can't. … I'm an overachiever so I feel badly that I'm not doing more than I'm doing.

Mentor availability

Another factor influencing the experience and perception of TEAM for beginning teachers and their mentors was the availability of trained mentors within the same content area. Of the six mentorship dyads in this study, three did not have mentors and beginning teachers in the same content area. This seemed especially true for teachers in elective areas such as world language and technology education. In particular, Foreston was unable to match Monica, a beginning English teacher, with a trained mentor in English. Instead, she was matched with a science teacher. World Language teacher Anna was matched with Barbara, a special education teacher. Barbara explained that Foreston was affected by frequent turnover in staff and that trained mentors were not always available: "Initially we didn't have very many mentors. Then we got pretty good. And then we had a big turnover in staff again and lost probably about half of them. Right now we're in pretty good shape." Additionally, in Quaker Hill, beginning technology education teacher Scott was matched with Eva, an English teacher.

While the beginning teachers and mentors did not express dissatisfaction with out-of-content matches, they expressed the feeling that it would have been helpful to work with someone in their area. Instead of content-specific work, these dyads focused on general topics and working on the modules. Still, the beginning teachers did find value in the mentor match with someone outside their content area. As Scott from Quaker Hill explained:

> For me it would've been particularly helpful if I could have another mentor that was in my content area. Although I will say that I think I did benefit from having someone that was outside of my content area because I was able to see a whole different view—because English class is a lot different than Tech Ed, and she was able to give me a lot of pointers on some things that I wouldn't necessarily thought of, or [that] I have seen used in these types of classes.

The beginning teachers in these out-of-area dyads also reported seeking help from someone in their content area in addition to their mentor. In regards to her

mentor, Monica said that her mentor "wasn't really my go-to person for English-y kinds of stuff." She sought out additional help from her department head. Scott explained that he went to a veteran technology education teacher for help as well. The primary role fulfilled by mentors in these out-of-content dyads was to provide logistical help. As Anna explained:

> She helps me with the reflection paper, making sure that I'm not getting too technical … or, you know, explaining things so that no one else can understand me. … I ask her about ideas that I want to put in it … and also [she helps] with more technical stuff, like she'll tell me if the sentence just doesn't make sense, or something I wrote is too confusing.

While the beginning teachers expressed appreciation for the help they received from their mentors, it was clear that they would have preferred to be matched with someone in their discipline.

Affective dispositions among beginning teachers participating in TEAM

One of the factors affecting local implementation of TEAM at the classroom level was the affective disposition of the beginning teachers—in particular, their individual attitude toward the process. The mentors who participated in this study were candid when discussing their experiences with their beginning teachers, as well as with others they worked with in the past. As might be expected, the mentors described a continuum of beginning teacher attitudes toward TEAM, ranging from those who were very conscientious and anxious about the program to those for whom, as one mentor put it, "the only reflection he was interested in was the one he saw in the mirror."

During the interviews, several mentors drew comparisons between past and present beginning teachers and their attitudes toward the process. In each case, the mentors contrasted a conscientious beginning teacher with one that required more monitoring. For example, Rosette a mentor in Sunnydale, compared her beginning teacher with one she worked with the previous year:

> My mentee last year was surprised by how simple it was. She always kept saying, "Isn't there more that we should be doing?" I think it was also easy for her because she was a very conscientious person, so she took it seriously and did exactly what she was supposed to do. This year I feel like I have to do more prodding and mentoring then I had to do last year. I guess maybe he's just waiting for me to guide the process until he's gone through one module. I guess we'll see how it goes.

Additionally, Barbara, a mentor from Foreston, described how in the previous year she ended up mentoring three beginning teachers because one of them was so difficult that he had exhausted all his other mentor options:

> The year I had three, I got the third one because the beginning teacher was having difficulty getting along with anybody who was a mentor. So, I was asked by administration to please do it, because the mentor who was working with him couldn't stand him anymore,

and he was very difficult, and there was no one else who adminis-
tration thought would cope with him.

Of the beginning teachers that participated in this study, one provided a valuable
example of the role attitude and disposition played in the implementation of TEAM.
Tim, a beginning teacher from Sunnydale, discussed how he waited until after foot-
ball season to begin his work on TEAM, placing his involvement in extra-curricular
coaching ahead of the work required to maintain his certification. He also explained
that he did not attend any orientation meetings offered by the district because they
conflicted with his coaching. Tim's mentor expressed frustration with his commit-
ment and her attempts to work with him. She mentioned how the teacher she
worked with previously was conscientious and reflective, whereas Tim was not.
When asked if she believed the experience of TEAM would affect the practices of
her beginning teachers, she answered, "Yes for one, and no for the other." When
asked why she thought there would be a difference, she answered, "Personality." In
comparing the two, she said "one [of the beginning teachers] is just more reflective
than the other."

Tim's example is instructive. It provides a glimpse into how the implementation
of a policy or program can be affected by attitude. Although he did not express any
resentment toward TEAM, he believed it was simply a "hoop to jump through" and
he did not engage fully with the program. Tim's understanding of the purpose of
TEAM and the process was the most unclear of the beginning teachers that were in-
terviewed. Tim demonstrated that even in cases where supports and information
may be readily available, the individual may choose not to access those tools. In the
case of Tim, the results of his disengagement from the program were misunderstand-
ing and a limited influence on his practice.

Discussion and implications

Taken together, the findings from this study provide a glimpse into the structural
and cognitive factors affecting implementation of TEAM. Consistent with previous
studies on factors affecting policy implementation (Berman, 1978; Lipsky, 1980;
Timar, 1989), resource availability played a role in the oversight of TEAM in the dis-
tricts studied. In particular, TEAM implementation was affected by the ways in which
each district leveraged available personnel. Of the three districts, Quaker Hill seemed
to have best structured the role of district facilitator by embedding it within the pri-
mary job function of the person filling the role. Although Quaker Hill's DF was the
assistant superintendent, he was able to structure his own time and set his own pri-
orities whereas the DFs in Sunnydale and Foreston needed to manage their role as
DF in addition to their full time jobs as building or district administrators—positions
that carried a great degree of challenge and demanded a lot of time. In both cases,
the DFs from Sunnydale and Foreston had less discretionary time and were more
sensitive to the shifting daily demands of their primary positions than the DF from
Quaker Hill. The net result of this arrangement was a sense on the part of the
Sunnydale and Foreston DFs that they were not as effective as they could be in their
role. Despite the frustration expressed by these DFs, the limitations that they ex-
pressed seemed not to be noted by the teachers and mentors. On the contrary, each

of the mentors and beginning teachers cited their DF as the most helpful resource next to the TEAM program website. The DFs' perspectives on their roles and responsibilities seemed more a matter of their personal expectations for the position than a substantive influence on the TEAM experience for beginning teachers.

A factor that aided in the implementation was the degree to which the TEAM program was understood across state, district, and teacher levels. In general, there was alignment of understanding about the program's purpose among those involved from the state level to beginning teachers and mentors. The difference in the ability of beginning teachers to articulate the goal of increased student achievement can be explained in part by recognizing their perspective and role in the program. Considering the focus on and process surrounding professional learning, it makes sense that the teachers would view the program as primarily about them rather than directly about students. They viewed it as something they needed to complete as a professional obligation, and as a result, their perspectives were more self-focused. Still, most teachers in the study expressed a tacit understanding that the end goal was improved student achievement even if they did not articulate that understanding clearly or directly.

An explanation for the alignment of understanding may be due in part to the message pathways used and the use of technology as a tool for information dissemination. Although the State Department of Education ultimately framed expectations for the TEAM program, oversight was handled locally. Messages from the state were disseminated through the TEAM website and were shared with all teachers involved in TEAM across the state. The website was identified by the beginning teachers and mentors as the most helpful tool they accessed. In addition, the district facilitators, as local agents of the program, were able to convey other messages from the state to their beginning teachers and mentors clearly and quickly. These tools helped in the sense-making process for beginning teachers and mentors and led to common understandings.

Another element that likely contributed to the degree of understanding is the decentralized nature of TEAM and the absence of strong accountability measures. Because it was structured to be overseen locally, and because the pressure of a high-stakes assessment of competency was removed, beginning teachers and their mentors were more receptive to the program; however, the decentralized nature of TEAM may be a two-edged sword. On the one hand, the decentralization seems to have contributed positively to teachers' and mentors' comfort level with the program. On the other, the absence of strong accountability measures did not create a sense of urgency or importance among the beginning teachers who were not by nature more reflective or conscientious.

Perhaps the most influential factor in the implementation of TEAM was found at the level of the individual attitude of the beginning teachers themselves—something which is difficult to motivate or control externally without greater accountability. This finding is in keeping with previous studies on the role of cognitive and affective factors in policy implementation (Ali, 2006; Coburn, 2001, 2006; Spillane, 2004; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002) but also expands that work to address the role played by individual attitudes and motivation. In many ways, the beginning teachers and mentors in this study behaved like the "street level bureaucrats" de-

scribed by Lipsky (1980). They implemented TEAM as they saw fit, with a high degree of individual discretion and making use of the resources available to them. The degree to which the beginning teachers expressed seeing value in the process seemed due more to their personality and individual work rather than to any element of TEAM itself.

Given the research on the effects of induction on teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 1997, 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), student achievement (Fletcher, Strong, & Villar, 2008), and professional learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2012), inquiry into the effects of induction programs remains a topic of interest. As a state-mandated program designed to address each of the three elements just described, TEAM is worthy of study. Although it may be too early to assess the efficacy of the program in achieving these goals, an investigation of how it is being implemented, and the factors influencing that implementation, may aid in the interpretation of results data when they are collected.

In addition to providing support for earlier research, this study makes several new contributions both to researchers interested in policy implementation and to practitioners interested in induction policy. First, this study identifies ways in which message pathways, or the means by which a policy message is communicated, can directly influence how a policy is understood. In this case, technology proved to be an important tool for communicating policy intent. The role of the TEAM website, its content and structure, was an important and positive tool in the sense-making of local actors seeking to understand the procedures and intentions behind the program. In addition, this study expands the research on cognitive and affective factors influencing policy implementation by identifying the role of individual teacher motivation and attitude in carrying out TEAM.

For practitioners, this study provides an initial look at implementation efforts related to TEAM. From a local school-district level, the experiences of the three districts participating in this study provide examples of structures and practices that both enhance and inhibit the TEAM experience for beginning teachers and their mentors. Districts seeking to adjust their own induction practices or to anticipate potential obstacles to new programs may find the discussion useful, particularly as it relates to the structural factors influencing implementation. On a larger scale, state-level policymakers and planners seeking to develop or refine an induction model may find this study useful in attempting to anticipate challenges faced at the local level.

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