

*From the Guest Editor:*

Examining Reflective Practice  
in California's Beginning Teacher  
Support and Assessment Program

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This theme issue on reflective practice in California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program was developed from a set of papers presented at a symposium entitled "Supporting Inquiry and Reflective Practice in Beginning Teaching: What We Have Learned from the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers" during the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in April 2001. These papers presented analyses of quantitative and qualitative data collected during evaluation studies of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program and its California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST) component. Also included is an article developed from a separately presented paper at the same meeting on the role of institutions of higher education in promoting reflective practice in induction programs.

At the time of the original decision to focus on this theme, California educators were deeply engaged in a statewide field review of proposed new program standards of quality and effectiveness for professional teacher preparation. These standards, generally referred to as the "SB 2042 Reforms," not only embraced new ideas on high quality teacher preparation for California's public schools, but also included a new architecture for credentialing. Unlike current practice, SB 2042 calls for a true tiered system of professional education for prospective and practicing teachers. This system, known colloquially as "the learning to teach continuum," includes four distinct phases: subject matter preparation; initial teacher preparation leading to a preliminary credential;

beginning teacher induction leading to a professional credential; and ongoing cycles of professional development for credential renewal. Of these, only the inclusion of a two-year induction program in teacher credentialing is an innovation and not an extension or modification of existing policies.

As with all large-scale systemic change, the inclusion of induction in the credentialing system provoked heightened sensibilities and concerns among teacher educators and professional developers about the authenticity and viability of the proposed changes. Set against the background of a decade of steadily increasing statewide capacity to design and deliver effective induction programs for beginning teachers through BTSA, the concerns that emerged during the field review were primarily focused on potential threats to the quality and nature of induction programs.

For professional developers in local education agencies who had had critical roles in creating programs of support and formative assessment based on a confidential trust relationship between beginning and experienced teachers, moving from a voluntary professional development to a licensing environment could compromise the developmental nature of the work as well as their ability to reflect local contexts in program design and delivery. For teacher educators based in institutions of higher education, many of whom had limited experience in BTSA or similar induction activities, questions arose about quality assurance absent the more familiar coursework and grading systems associated with current professional clear credential requirements, and about the ability of local education agencies to mount and sustain teacher education programs over time.

One central theme emerged from local BTSA program directors. Would the inclusion of subject matter and individual program completion requirements destroy or compromise essential components of the program that had supported the development of reflective practitioners? Would the intense professional relationships between beginning teachers and their support providers, based on trust and confidentiality, be compatible with a need to make a credential recommendation? What would such a decision-making process look like, and how would it function in relation to decision-making for employment?

Against this background, it seemed prudent to explore and present to a wider audience some of the findings that have emerged from the BTSA and CFASST evaluation studies on what participating teachers think are essential ingredients of induction programs, and on what outside evaluators found to be compelling evidence of program impact. Although the studies represented here examined a broad array of induction program attributes, the articles themselves focus on one key outcome, the

development of reflective practitioners. This outcome was selected because there is a widely accepted theory base supporting the notion that teachers who individually reflect on and collectively examine their teaching in professional conversations with colleagues will have a greater impact on student learning than those who do not, and because there is a strong belief structure among teacher educators that these theories are borne out in classroom practice.

Readers should note that although these articles all focus on aspects of BTSA and CFASST, the editor made a deliberate decision to include essential descriptive information on selected characteristics of the evaluation studies examined in each article. This strategy allows each article to stand alone as well as function as a member of the larger set. A complete description of the CFASST evaluation study is found in "CFASST Implementation and Reflective Practice: The Interplay of Structures and Perceptions" by Barbara A. Storms and Ginny Lee.

The issue opens with "Can State Policy Mandate Teacher Reflection?" by Margaret G. Olebe, an analysis of some of the data collected over three years from statewide surveys administered to beginning teachers, support providers, site administrators, and program staff in local BTSA programs. Culling from technical reports, Olebe analyzes beginning teacher and support provider perceptions of the effectiveness of various program elements in eliciting and fostering reflective teaching practices, and then uses this information as a lens to examine the intersection of policy intents, program goals and teachers' understandings of their work.

Storms and Lee follow with "CFASST Implementation and Reflective Practice: The Interplay of Structures and Perceptions." In this article the authors look at the implementation of CFASST within local BTSA programs by drawing on data collected from six case studies conducted during 1999-2000 as a part of the overall CFASST program evaluation. Their extensive examination of how program goals and intents are interpreted in local organizational settings by administrators and teachers alike presents a rich tapestry of thought-provoking findings. Unique to this article is a close examination of how local BTSA program directors thought about and acted to implement CFASST. What these cases reveal about how individual understandings mediate organizational intent can be instructive to all those in California engaged in beginning teacher induction regardless of their organizational affiliations or individual roles.

Support provider interpretations and understandings of their work with beginning teachers is the central theme of Jean Yonemura Wing and Theresa Jinks' article "What Skills, Beliefs and Practices Enable Experienced Teachers to Promote Reflective Practice in New Teachers?" These two authors, drawing from the same case studies, look at how experi-

enced teachers are trained to carry out their roles as support providers, the understandings they glean from the training, and how they interpret and present them during interactions with the beginning teachers with whom they have been paired. The link between support providers and beginning teachers is the core of the induction process. Wing and Jinks illustrate how support providers influence outcomes for beginning teachers as they enact their roles and reflect on their experiences. This article also delves into the question of how support providers themselves are influenced by their experiences in the program, and how these experiences have changed their own professional practices.

Rae S. McCormick takes readers to the crux of our theme in her article "Is it Just Natural? Beginning Teachers' Growth in Reflective Practice." Here the voices of beginning teachers predominate. Following the insights that emerge from carefully listening to these voices, she urges well-intentioned teacher educators, local BTSA program directors, CFASST designers, and state policymakers also to listen very carefully as they build new structures and environments for teacher learning. McCormick examines beginning teachers' thinking during their initial year of teaching, and how it is influenced by participation in the formative assessment and support process.

The article by Ann L. Wood, "IHE/LEA Collaborative Teacher Induction Programs," closes this set of papers by framing California's induction programs in a broader look at induction programs nationally. The formal inclusion of induction in teacher education is of vital interest to teacher educators today as we struggle to understand how colleges and universities can and will contribute to this phase of learning to teach. This article provides a useful examination of the shape and nature of induction within and beyond state borders, and points to vital areas of potential collaboration for our consideration.

The controversy over induction in California continues at the time of publication of this issue. Although other elements of the new teacher preparation system have been adopted by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, induction remains in pause. Issues of *how* induction programs will function in local education agencies have outstripped any concerns about the *efficacy* of the program itself. While this pause is disconcerting to those of us who have worked over time to build a body of practice in beginning teacher induction, it does allow time for us to consider our practice in light of new findings such as those presented here. This time of reflection can be of benefit as we consider what teacher education is becoming as it embraces broader understandings of learning to teach, and of how California's recently reconfigured professional preparation sequence will include induction in its fundamental mission.

I hope that the content of these articles will contribute to ongoing professional dialogue and enhanced understandings of the structural configurations that have sometimes stymied reform, and of the critical role of teacher thinking in shaping outcomes for students.