



Rhode Island Induction News

Spring 2014

Commissioner Gist testifies in Congress on the teaching profession

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to testify before a Congressional committee on the vital topic of “strengthening the teaching profession.” Much of the hearing, and of my testimony, concerned the improvement of educator-preparation programs. Because you have recently graduated from or completed one of our preparation programs, I would like to share with you some of my testimony – particularly regarding support for teachers new to the profession.

Though we have high-quality preparation programs in Rhode Island and in many states, I’m sure we all agree that we can do more than we are doing today to ensure that our teachers are better prepared and ready from the first day of school to serve our children well.

In my testimony, I told the committee members how we have set forth our mission, our goals,

and our priorities in our 5-year strategic plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*. Because the single most important school-based factor in student success is the quality of the classroom teacher, the first priority in our strategic plan is ensuring that we have an effective teacher in every classroom.

I expressed to the committee members how ensuring that we have effective teachers in every classroom and effective leaders in every school encompasses the entire span of an educator’s career. Our responsibility begins with recruiting great teachers into the profession, and the process includes supporting excellent programs of educator preparation, providing support and guidance for new teachers as they enter the profession, providing continuous feedback and support for teachers throughout their careers, and opening opportunities for teach-

ers to enter positions of school leadership, if that is their desire.

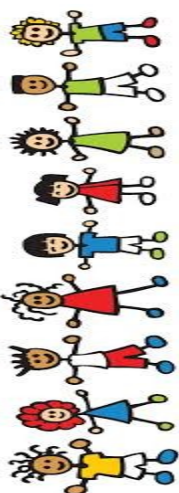
I also told them about the initiatives we have launched to improve teacher effectiveness. For example, we have begun a statewide induction program for first-year teachers. Under this program, each new teacher is linked with an “induction coach,” an experienced educator who is relieved of teaching duties and is working full time to help new teachers transition successfully to this challenging profession.

I explained that, as part of our program approval process, we expect our programs to continue to gather information about the performance of their graduates through at least their first year of teaching. We expect our programs to use feedback from their graduates and data from employers to determine how well their graduates are improving student learning and achievement. We expect all

programs to use this information to continuously improve the quality of instruction, the efficacy of field placements, and the outcomes for their graduates.

In summary, I told the committee members that, during our teacher-preparation program quality work in Rhode Island, we have focused on student learning and program improvement. Through it all, we have strived to keep in mind what matters most—our students and their learning.

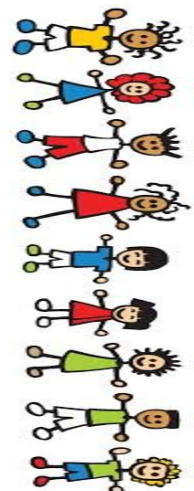
I hope that, as one of our new teachers in Rhode Island, you had an excellent experience in one of our teacher-preparation programs as well as during your first year in the classroom. I also hope you will share with me your thoughts and ideas as to how we can continue to make our preparation programs even better.



March Academy: Reaching All Students

Induction Coaches recently attended a New Teacher Center training with consultants Clarissa Williams and Fred Williams. The specific focus of this training was *Reaching All Students*. Professional Development for Induction Coaches ultimately benefits the Beginning Teachers they support. Coaches share new strategies with their Beginning Teachers and support them with implementation.

Some of the topics included in the three day training sessions were: *Multiple Intelligences, Differentiated Instruction, Social/Emotional Learning, and Flexible Grouping*. Coaches learned ways to help their Beginning Teachers recognize and assess the optimum learning style of each of their students. What motivates your students? Which of the Multiple Intelligences best describes each or your students? Does your classroom environment support their social and emotional needs? Is enough choice provided for your students? In order for rich learning to take place in our classrooms we really need to know our students, and we must do our very best to meet their needs. You may have gone into teaching with a desire to teach Science, Literature, or Math. No matter what your subject, your curriculum is very important. But what is truly *most* important is your desire to reach *all* students.



Meet Donald Chilton

Retired Navy Senior Chief Musician to Middle School music teacher... and oh, what a journey it's been! Don Chilton is enjoying his first year as a music teacher and band director at Thompson Middle School in Newport. He came to Thompson after a 26 year Navy career that gave him the opportunity to travel to 42 countries as a trumpet instrumentalist, vocalist, band leader, conductor, drum major and administrator. Don has had the honor of performing for 4 U.S. Presidents and countless foreign dignitaries, and has performed with many great musicians including the Temptations. Don proudly continues to serve his nation as a bugler with the RI Military Funeral Honors.



Don earned his BA in Music while serving in the Navy and completed his music teacher certification at URI. When asked why he decided to go into teaching after his Navy career, Don answered, "My experience as a performer and my love of music has led me to a strong desire to teach music. In part, to learn more about music for my own development, and also to give back and share what I have learned over the years". He said that his greatest joy as a teacher so far has been building relationships with students and seeing the joy and satisfaction they get out of playing music. By sharing his passion for music, Don hopes to inspire his students just as his former music teachers have inspired him.

Participating in the Induction Program has been a very positive experience for Don. "Having a coach gives me a chance to discuss freely the challenges of being a teacher. My Induction Coach has given me constructive feedback and encouragement every step of the way. The routine classroom observations by my coach provide a level of direct feedback that has been revealing and validating". Because of the support that Don has received from his Induction Coach and his fellow teachers at Thompson, he could not be more excited and confident as he continues his journey as a music teacher. The advice that he would give new teachers entering the profession is, "Always be patient with your students, never give up on your students, and teach your students with passion". Don Chilton certainly practices what he preaches.

Inquiry Cycle Action Plan Tool

In order to provide support to Beginning Teachers and to help accelerate their growth, Induction Coaches use many formative assessment tools to collect data for review and reflection. One of the valuable tools provided by the New Teacher Center is the Inquiry Cycle Action Plan (ICAP). This tool accelerates a teacher's ability to effectively use knowledge of students' learning strengths and needs to plan instruction accordingly.

An ICAP is a professional inquiry process that incorporates the following seven steps: analyze student work (pre-instruction), create a student-focused inquiry question that measures the effectiveness of a targeted instructional strategy, plan instruction and formative assessments, engage students in instruction and learning, observation and conference with Induction Coach, analyze student work (post-instruction), and reflect and plan next steps.

This inquiry process may focus on an individual student, a small group of students, or a whole class. This cycle begins with questions about student learning and performance, and results in better curricular and instructional differentiation as well as professional growth... a very valuable tool indeed!

Meet Danielle Hilliard

Danielle is a first-year special educator in the Bristol/Warren school system.

Danielle grew up in South Kingstown, RI and attended school there. She knew that she wanted to become a teacher when she was in the 6th grade, and had the opportunity to help with some Kindergarten students. Danielle loved working with the students so much that she volunteered to help during her own recess!

Danielle went to the University of Rhode Island and received her Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and Psychology. She substitute taught for a year throughout RI. Danielle then became a teacher assistant at a South Kingstown charter school. She found that she particularly enjoyed working with students who had special needs. Danielle knew that she wanted to get her Master's Degree in Special Education, which she accomplished in 2012. Getting the job, as an Intensive Intervention teacher at Colt Andrews School, made her dream to become a full time special education teacher come true!

Danielle spends her teaching day between assisting students in their grade-level classrooms and teaching small groups of students in her own colorful and exciting room.



“One of the challenges of being a special education teacher is learning the best ways to work with students with behavioral needs.” Danielle’s found that the first step is to help a student calm down and refocus. Then, once a student is calm, she can give the needed educational support.

One of her biggest joys has been helping students become successful in

areas where they have had difficulty. “It is wonderful to see my students’ faces light up when they are able to understand a certain concept or are able to solve a problem that they previously did not understand”

“My best advice to a new special education teacher would be to take things one day at a time. Also, I think it’s important to focus and reflect on what’s working well.”

Speaking of reflection...“Weekly reflection with my Induction Coach has helped me become a better teacher.” Working together, Danielle and her Coach have modeled and planned lessons, shared educational games and activities, researched math and literacy resources, worked on SLO’s and components for evaluation. They’ve also collaborated to implement successful behavioral strategies and social/emotional learning techniques.

“Any time I had questions or concerns, I could call or email my coach and she would get back to me right away. I don’t know how I would have survived my first year of teaching without my Induction Coach!”

Simple Ways to Get to Know Your Students

For Elementary Students:

1. Have your students’ parents complete a “Tell Me About Your Child” survey
2. Provide opportunities for your students to individually share their “Me Box,” a box they filled with items that best describe them
3. Have students complete a simple interest survey

For Secondary Students:

1. At the beginning of the year ask each student to write information on an index card. Include birthday, hobbies, interests, school activities, out of school activities i.e., jobs or volunteer work and other pertinent information. Each day focus on a particular student’s card
2. Read “Bio Poems” written by your students
3. Learn which of the Multiple Intelligences or learning styles that best suits your students

Asking Deeper Questions

On March 4 and 5, 2014 the second Beginning Teacher Seminar was held at North Kingstown High School. Beginning teachers from across the state attended. One session focused on Component 3b: *Questioning and Discussion Techniques*, for both the elementary and secondary levels.

Skilled teachers, who promote discussion with a higher level of questioning, encourage students to think, reflect and deepen their understanding of subjects. This can be achieved across all grade levels. Asking higher level questions and providing ample time for students' responses fosters an exchange of ideas, justification for a point of view and opportunity to build on student responses.

One way to achieve higher level thinking in students, is for teachers to formulate questions that inspire *comparison, inference and evaluation*, rather than simple recall. Some examples are:

- *How would you compare the character at the beginning of the story and at the end?*
- *How do you know that the story took place in the city?*
- *What would you have done in a similar situation? Why?*

Coupling these kinds of questions with student-to-student conversations increases divergent thinking and gives voice to all students.

Activities such as *Think-Pair-Share, Four Corners* and *Jigsaw*, as well as many other cooperative learning techniques can maximize student interaction. These strategies help students analyze important concepts, learn and respect other perspectives, validate individual thinking and reach informed conclusions.

Empowering students to be active learners will serve them well during their school years...and beyond!

Time for Reflection

It's time to reflect! What were your successes this year? What are you most proud of? What was a challenge for you? How did you overcome this challenge? Who helped you along the way? Is there a particular student in whose life you made a difference? It's so important to take time to reflect upon these questions, as your experiences this year have greatly contributed to your growth process.

Based on this year's experiences, what changes do you plan to make next year? What lessons do you want to keep as they are? Which lessons need drastic changes? What classroom management strategies worked this year? Which ones didn't work as well? Be sure to celebrate this year's successes and learn from the challenges. We tell our students that it's okay to make mistakes and to learn from them. Use the lessons learned from this year's challenges to make you an even better teacher next year. Reflection is crucial to the process of professional growth.

In anticipation for next year carry these learning experiences with you. Whether you'll be in the same classroom next year or in another school teaching another grade... whether you plan on serving in another role in education, or have plans to move on to another profession altogether... the experiences you've had this year have helped you to grow both professionally and personally. Be sure to recognize and take pride in this growth. It's time to pat yourself on the back and breathe a sigh of relief... The end of the year has arrived and you've made it! Enjoy your well deserved summer!

Contacts

Hilda Potrzeba
Hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov
(401) 222-8891

Melissa Denton
Melissa.denton@ride.ri.gov
(401) 222-8982

Office of Educator Quality

"When veterans and novices work together in a nurturing relationship, each gets something of real value from the other. Veterans gain energy; novices gain inspiration. Isolation fades, connection flourishes, pain turns into wisdom—a joyful wisdom that makes the difficulties in our work endurable and keeps both veteran and novice coming back for more."

"A tale of two children" David Shoemaker, Phi Delta Kappan, February 2003

Thank you to all who completed the February, 2014 Induction Program survey. Your feedback is crucial in fueling the success of the Induction program. Just as Administrators and teachers use data to plan instruction, your data helps us to reflect on and enhance our practice. Below are some of your insightful comments.

"The teachers who benefit from Induction coaching are better planned and more confident in their role as a classroom teacher."

"As an extremely busy building principal it is wonderful to know that my beginning teachers receive excellent support on a routine basis."

"My Induction Coach is always there for me, providing amazing support and feedback to help me become the best teacher I can be."

"I was in a position where I had to make a decision on a teacher hire. I was either going to hire someone with seven years experience or a first-year teacher. I ran into our induction coach at a retirement party and asked if she had been hired for another year. When she told me that, in fact, she would be back for another year I immediately called the first-year teacher and offered him the job. That says everything about my faith in the induction process!"

"Supporting new teachers with programs that make them better faster, represents one of the greatest opportunities for change in education today."

Ellen Moir, NTC Chief Executive Officer

Induction Coaches

2013-2014

Alicia Proulx	Lillian Turnipseed
Connie McCarthy	Lisa Peterson
Elisabeth Ridder	Martha Dion
Jennifer Jendzejec	Mia Goodbout
Kathleen Fleenor	Michaela Ware
Kristin Polseno	Michelle Livsey
	Nicole Rattay

Mid-Year Beginning Teacher Survey Data

