Abstract: Participants in the Novice Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), a system-wide initiative supporting 320 teachers across 6 universities in the Texas State University System (TSUS) and 30 campuses, build threaded conversations around their self-identified classroom challenges. They describe the steps they are taking to address those challenges, read each other’s entries and suggest strategies and offer encouragement. The online conferencing structure promotes proactive problem solving and reduces isolation. This presentation includes the online conferencing tool, structure, and preliminary results of analysis of teachers stages of concern throughout their induction year.

Introduction

It has been widely reported that nearly one out of every five beginning teachers leaves the teaching profession after only one year and that within five years up to fifty percent will have left the profession. In fact some studies suggest that teacher retention is a bigger problem than is the looming teacher shortage. Induction and mentoring of novice teachers is crucial to retaining teachers in the profession if students are to receive the quality of instruction necessary for them to succeed in the 21st century global economy.

Recognizing the dire consequences of a 20% novice teacher attrition rate, the Texas State University System (TSUS) was awarded a $2.75 million grant from the Houston Endowment to implement a Novice Teacher Induction program (NTIP) at each of the six TSUS institutions designed to support development of new teachers and to promote their retention in the profession. Each university established partnerships with area school districts and hired retired educators to mentor their new teachers.

The Study

Novice teacher participants from over thirty public school campuses were supported by site visits from their NTIP mentor, bi-weekly university face-to-face graduate seminars and through their ongoing online learning community of novice teachers. Transcripts were collected from online conferences of new teacher participants at two-week intervals over the course of the academic year for each of two cohorts. Transcripts were analyzed using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM).

Findings
Preliminary findings indicate that:

- Online conferencing structures help build and reinforce group cohesion and trust
- For many participants, online conferencing offers the best avenue for accessible and sustained support
- Well-timed instructor online interventions and support help the novice teachers in addressing critical problems and helping them to refocus their current instructional strategies
- Graduate seminars could be designed to meet the needs of new teachers based upon their online conversations
- Management concerns were most often discussed, followed by personal concerns, and informational concerns.
- New teachers demonstrated proactive problem-solving abilities
- Intensive induction support including online conferencing correlated positively with teacher retention