

CAROL RILEY: Good afternoon. This is Carol Riley from the National Association of Elementary School Principals. And I would like to welcome you to this afternoon's webinar, Laying the Groundwork: What Principals Can Do to Support Beginning Special Education Teachers Through Induction. Just a few instructions before we begin, on your screen will be a box for questions. At any time during this presentation, you may type in a question.

The questions will be archived, and they will be answered at the conclusion of this webinar. If your question is not answered, then you will receive some response via e-mail from one of the speakers. You also can open up the webinar to full screen to maximize the view with the icon on the top right of your screen.

At this time, I would like to introduce Phoebe Gillespie. Dr. Gillespie works at the National Center to Improve Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Personnel for Children with Disabilities. Dr. Gillespie will introduce our speakers this afternoon. And I know that you will learn many new ideas and get some great information. So at this time, Phoebe, over to you.

DR. PHOEBE GILLESPIE: Thanks, Carol. Welcome to all of you to our very exciting webinar this afternoon. We are very pleased to have our experts on mentoring and induction in special education from the National Center to Inform Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development at the University of Florida Department of Special Education.

First, I'd like to present to you Dr. Paul Sindelar. After eight years at Pennsylvania State University and three years at Florida State University, Dr. Sindelar joined the special education faculty at the University of Florida in 1988. He was Department Chair through 1996 and Associate Dean for Research from 2005 to 2008. Dr. Sindelar earned his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1977. He has authored or co-authored 80 articles and refereed journals, 2 books, and 23 contributed chapters.

He has administered personnel preparation and research grants, totaling over \$16 million. He and Mary Brownell directed the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education. Currently, they direct the National Center for Informing Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development. We call them NCIPP. NCIPP is an OSEP-funded technical assistance center focused on identifying effective induction and mentoring practices for beginning special education teachers and providing technical assistance to implementing districts and states.

In other recent research, Dr. Sindelar has collaborated with colleagues and the Department of Economics at John Hopkins University in conducting an economic analysis of teacher education program design and assessing the cost effectiveness of alternative route teacher preparation.

Next, I would like to introduce to you Dr. Meg Kamman. Dr. Kamman is an assistant scholar in the special education program at the University of Florida. Currently, Meg serves as the Project Coordinator for the National Center to Inform Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development. Her research focuses on beginning teacher induction and mentoring, beginning teacher quality, and adolescent reading.

Finally, Dr. Erica McCray is an Assistant Professor in the special education program at the University of Florida. She was previously a teacher of students identified with learning disabilities and emotional behavioral disorders. Currently, Erica teaches courses that address inclusive schooling, classroom management, and literacy intervention.

Her research focuses on teacher pipeline issues and equitable schooling experiences, including teacher development and quality, the experiences of educators from diverse backgrounds, and equitable schooling experiences for typically marginalized children.

We are very, very pleased to welcome this highly qualified team of researchers and writers, scholars in the area of special education professional development. With that, I'll turn it over to Dr. Paul Sindelar.

DR. PAUL SINDELAR: Thank you, Phoebe. If I had known you were going to use those dates, I would have deleted them from the material I sent. I feel like an old goat right now. But thank you for the very kind introduction. And I'm just going to speak very briefly about the general work of the project and turn the actual content presentation over to Meg and to Erica.

As Phoebe mentioned, the three of us are affiliated with NCIPP, the National Center for to Inform Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development, an OSEP-funded TA&D Center.

Our purpose is to improve teacher quality and increase commitment to teaching students with disabilities by informing special ed policy and practice on induction and mentoring and identifying promising induction and mentoring practices. Erica, if you would go on to the second slide.

This is a schematic of our work. And the tree on, what are those things, anyway, polygons, I guess, in the center represent some of the work that we've completed to this point. We began by doing literature syntheses and a policy . . . we actually have three. All of these documents are available on our website. We have a synthesis on special education induction, collaboration in school university partnership, and policy analysis where we looked at state policies related to induction and mentoring, and the extent to which they differentiated for beginning teachers who were special education teachers.

We also had a series of policy briefs, but I'll mention those a little bit later and show you where they're available on our website. In addition to identifying the promising practices we learned about in the literature, we also did case studies of three widely recognized induction and mentoring programs for special education teachers. We're going to be talking about two of them today, Cincinnati Public Schools and the special school districts in suburban St. Louis.

The third district that we're not going to be talking about today is Olathe in Kansas, a suburban Kansas City district. And from our case studies of the effective programs and our literature syntheses, we believe we've identified promising practices related to the induction and mentoring of special education teachers.

And now we're moving into the technical assistance phase of our work, where our objectives are, simply put, to share what we've learned, both from the syntheses and the policy analysis, as well as the insights we've gained from our conversations with administrators and practitioners in the three districts where we did our case study work.

Our next steps, which I'm actually going to be describing a little bit later, involve ongoing dissemination and technical assistance to districts and university partnership that are, together, implementing induction and mentoring programs that are designed specifically for special education teachers. I'm going to turn the table over to Meg Kamman right now. Meg?

DR. MEG KAMMAN: Hi, everyone. I'm so glad to be with you today. In our first year of work, like Paul described, we completed the three research syntheses and this one policy analysis. And all of these were related to induction and mentoring. My role today is I'm going to talk to you briefly about what we found out in the research on principals in induction.

And when I talk about the research today, I'm primarily going to be talking about beginning teachers in general. I will talk a little bit about beginning special education teachers, but there's a lot less research in this population of beginners. So most of what I talk about is going to be about beginning teachers just generally.

In the research, principals have four primary roles in induction. The first is as promoters of school culture, the second as instructional leaders, the third as communicators, and the fourth as just supporters of induction and mentoring programs.

So let's talk first about the principal's role as the promoter of school culture. Principals can do this in several ways. Generally speaking, they orient beginners to policies and procedures, the expectations of the school. As you all probably know, these are going to vary by school site. And then they promote school culture more deeply by establishing a supportive school environment.

Several studies show that the more positive teachers felt about the principal and the school culture, the more likely they are to stay in their current teaching position. And one of the key characteristics of effective principals was an ability to create a

school culture that valued professional learning communities and really focused on instructional support.

This takes us to our next role of the principal as instructional leader. As you probably all know, instructional leaders take on lots of different tasks. And these include some of the things you see up on your screen, curriculum and instruction, assisting beginners with discipline and their problems with students in the classrooms, overall general management issues. They help beginners with collaborating with their colleagues and their paraprofessionals, just integrating their students with disabilities into the general population.

The principals have to balance all of this helping that I just talked about with evaluating their beginners and providing professional development. I want to talk to you a little bit about one study conducted by . . . where researchers found that principals who displayed effective leadership were most importantly knowledgeable about instruction. At the same time, these principals were described as flexible, encouraging, supportive, helpful, and very close to their staff. So you have a lot on your plate.

Unfortunately, not all the beginners in this study recorded having effective instructional leaders. In these schools, the leaders were described in one of two ways. They were either too strict, and they had too many rules, or they were described on the opposite end of the spectrum as laissez faire with kind of this limited organization and limited structure.

In contrast, the effective instructional leaders created, once again, these professional communities of . . . they encouraged their beginners to participate in the decision-making process, and they promoted shared goals. One other aspect that's important here for principals as instructional leaders was principals visiting their teachers in the classrooms on a regular basis and providing them with specific feedback.

Research also suggests that administrative communication is really important to beginning teachers. Ed Boe and his colleagues looked at beginning teachers' sense of preparedness. And here, I'm talking specifically about beginning special education teachers. This group of researchers studied several variables. They looked at administrative support, induction support, other teacher support, mentoring, and professional development.

And really importantly, what they found was that regular supportive communication with administrators was by far the most important variable and helped beginning special education teachers feel well prepared.

Now, the second part of this is research about regular meetings with beginning teachers and how important this turned out to be. These regularly scheduled meetings helped administrators to get to know their beginning teachers, to know about their needs, to share information with their beginners, and to really just provide an opportunity to share experiences.

Teachers at the schools who had regular meetings had more opportunity to address instructional issues than did their counterparts at schools where there were no such meetings.

Finally, principals serve as supporters of induction and mentoring in four different ways. First, their recruitment, and then in coordinating their mentors and mentees, for self socialization, and finally by buffering hardship.

First, most novice teachers in the research report that meeting the principal and forming that first impression they have is what mainly helped them to choose that school. The other teachers reported that if they didn't have that first impression, that it was by word of mouth. So one of their friends told them about this great principal that they wanted to work for, and so that was why they chose that school. So that part of recruitment is really important.

One topic that's frequently talked about in the literature is this issue of mentor and mentee matching and that principals often take on this role themselves. When they do take on this role, principals must consider several variables. They have to establish criteria for selecting mentors, defining mentors' roles, and providing the training to meet those role requirements.

Not all researchers agree that the mentor-mentee relationship is most important for supporting beginners. There is some research that shows that beginning teachers think that informal relationships are more important. And principals in this way can help support this self-socialization by helping to create time for teachers to have authentic relationships with their beginners and for them to have authentic relationships with the rest of their staff. This really makes the principal as a cultural builder and helps to create that community of learners.

Finally, several researchers have suggested that effective principals can buffer beginning teachers from the undue stress and hardships during this induction period. The research on beginning teacher assignments is not surprising. It indicates that beginners are often placed in classrooms with the most difficult students. They're given the fewest resources and provided the least-desired school duties and schedules.

And principals can support induction by protecting beginners from these heavy workloads, reducing their duties that might interfere with teaching, and providing beginners time for planning and collaborating with mentors and other school staff. Now, I've run through this research fairly quickly, but at the end of the PowerPoint, which we will be providing you a copy of, there's a list of references if you want to delve more into this research and the particular studies.

Also, Paul is going to go through later those full reports that we completed in our company brief on administrators that are available on our website. So now I'm going to pass the floor over to Erica, where she's going to talk specifically about beginning special education teachers and what we found in the two districts that we worked with.

DR. ERICA MCCRAY: Okay. So as Paul mentioned earlier, we did site studies of three districts that were identified through the literature and pretty much through word of mouth as having really good programs that pay attention to induction and mentoring for beginning teachers and were also making special accommodations and paying attention to the unique needs of special education teachers.

So the first site, Cincinnati Public Schools, just to give you a little background on the context there, they're the third largest district in Ohio, and they're very diverse with a large population, approximately 70% of their students are African American with nearly 24% being white or Caucasian. And approximately 70% of that student population is eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. So they are a city-school system that's dealing with what many will call a pretty challenging population of learners.

Their induction and mentoring program emphasizes structured teacher evaluation. And the program is for up to one year for beginning teachers. And the evaluation process that they go through is primarily carried out by what they call consulting teachers that are hired out of the teaching ranks, and they work at the district level. Those CTs, as they're called, serve as evaluators and mentors for their teachers, and they help them through the process based on very specific criteria for teacher growth and development during that time.

In addition, they also offer opportunities for additional professional development that teachers can take advantage of that are on a range of topics that are instructional and behavioral related.

The other district we'll talk about, the special school district, is unique in that it's considered a parallel district. They're a public school system with its own tax base in the St. Louis, Missouri area, but they only serve special ed students and special ed teachers. And they work with 22 partner districts. So working within one district alone can be diverse, in terms of needs and students, but they work with 22. So they run the gamut of student diversity and SES with the different partner districts that they work with.

The State of Missouri has a two-year mandate for induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers. So that's how the SSD program was born. They decided that they really needed to pay close and careful attention to how they prepared their teachers and how they supported their growth in those first two years. So they provide professional development through what they call their Academy. And they also offer different types of support.

From the district level, they have an instructional facilitator that will work with them through the Academy, as well as provide individualized, one-on-one support for a group of teachers. And they also offer IEP partners to work with beginning special ed teachers because that's a major responsibility that they take on. And the IEP partner may be their school-based mentor, or it may be another person assigned within their building.

The people that we spoke with were in a number of roles. The people we'll talk about today primarily are teacher, the beginning special ed teachers, and some of the principals that were identified by key personnel at the induction and mentoring program level as being really successful in helping beginning special ed teachers, or are really good about thinking about the needs of including those teachers and those students.

So the beginning special education teachers' insights, we thought it would be really helpful or informative to hear what the beginning special ed teachers found as helpful in their school building.

They were very interested in having a supportive climate and context and found that to be very critical to their development and their intent to stay in the field. They found that professional and collaborative colleagues were desirable. Not only were they wanting to have special ed colleagues to work with, but also to feel that their general ed colleagues valued them and felt that they had something to contribute.

They also found that appropriate mentoring support was critical, not just having a mentor, but making sure that the mentor was providing support that was considered useful and valuable to the beginning teacher when they needed it and that their contacts and meetings with those mentors were frequent and that they had enough time to cover all of the information and topics that were of interest and of, sometimes, great need to them at the moment.

So one middle school teacher said, we meet once a week, and with the team I'm working with, there's green and gold. And for sixth grade, I work with the green team. We meet once a week, and we talk about, well, maybe a student is having an issue with things like maybe they're not taking their medicine, or it could range to many things, behavior, not turning in assignments, and we come up with a solution. What can we do to make sure it improves or making sure that we're doing the best thing for them?

So this team of general ed teachers had welcomed this middle school special ed teacher to their team and saw them as an expert that could help them work through any issues that they may be having with a student. So this teacher talks at great length about feeling like he was a part of this team and that they valued his expertise.

Beginning teachers also value principal support in a number of ways. The expressions that they gave varied from very formal interactions, very structured, very routine, to even just knowing that the principal was there and that they were accessible if they needed them. So they talked at great length about informal meetings in the hallway, where the principal just said, hey, how's it going? They talked about having very formal, structured meetings, where they set times aside to meet with them on a regular basis.

They also appreciated the principal coming through. A lot of principals now do walk-throughs. And they appreciated those because the principal was able to give them feedback, and it may not just be the time that they needed a formal observation, that was required by the district, but also just to let them know that they saw some things that they could provide support for, or that the principal was there interacting with their kids.

And especially for beginning special education teachers, it's important to feel like you're a part of that school community. And knowing that the principal is coming in and is visible is really, really helpful for that.

They also wanted principals to be able to provide resources and appropriate professional development. Again, beginning special ed teachers have a lot of role responsibilities. And knowing that their principal, even if they can't provide direct support, that they can direct them to the person or to the place that they need to get the information and support for their students.

So one elementary school teacher says, the assistant principal is absolutely wonderful. She did it more through modeling, how to work with the kids. I learned a lot in behavior support just by seeing the way that she worked with the kids and would talk through problems, rather than trying to be punitive or give consequences. So depending on the level, the assistant principal or principal may be just as active in providing walk-throughs and providing support to the beginning teachers.

But the teachers talked at great length about knowing that the assistant principal was there and was willing to support, as well as the principal, that they were making those connections with those teachers, which was very important. In addition, they wanted the principal to be visible and accessible, even if they didn't have regular meetings, even if they didn't have regular contact with their principal. They wanted to be able to say, my principal is in the building, or, I know where my principal is, and if at any time, I don't have to have a hesitation about going to them.

They also appreciated, as Meg mentioned, scheduling. They like to have support, knowing that their schedule is going to be manageable and that if they needed time, either with a principal or with their mentor, that the principal would be sure to make sure that that happened for them.

Also in working with a number of teachers, the beginning special ed teachers talked about working with teams of general education and feeling responsible for meeting their students' needs in conjunction with another person. That doesn't always come without conflict, and they felt like the principal could be a mediator and help them think through how to best meet their kids' needs by setting up situations where they could work with those teachers more effectively.

One teacher said, he's not a micromanager. If you're doing your job, he respects that. You can take ideas to him and tell him what you're doing with your class. He gives you the information you need. He's always present in the building, makes an effort to know what's going on in the classroom, asks what's going on in your classroom. When I try to integrate my kids into things or get them hooked up in another class, he's always supportive of me doing those things.

So this principal was making sure that inclusion was happening the way this special ed teacher thought it should happen and was providing those supports. Another teacher, who is not quoted on this slide, mentioned having a conflict with a general

education teacher. She mentioned it to her principal. And she said she didn't hear anything else about it, but the situation was resolved. And she felt like that was a major part of her principal's role, to make her job doable.

And by working with the other teacher, even though they didn't have a direct meeting, the situation was resolved, and she felt better able to do what she needed to do.

So now we'll transition to the principals' insights. There were a lot of overlaps in what the beginning teachers said that their principals were doing for them and what the principals actually said that they felt like was critical for them to do to support those beginning special education teachers.

Principals talked at great length about building the building climate and capacity. And when we talk about capacity, we talk about things like team-based school situations. We talked about inclusive context. They talked at great length about incorporating RTI and PBIS into their buildings and how using teachers as teacher leaders and dividing up that responsibility, sharing the leadership, was critical to their success.

They talked about having clear expectations and orienting their teachers to the building, orienting their teachers to the expectations of the ethos, the philosophy of the building, as well as just the district policies that the teachers knew completely.

They talked about student-focused instruction and how all of the conversations that the teachers on their teams should be having, should be talking about what's best for the students, and those conversations should be based on data. The one principal says, I really do an orientation at the beginning of the school year with a group of new teachers, separate from the whole staff, and that really gives you the opportunity to share the mission of the building, so to speak.

Then expectations with how we work with our kids, the idea of being team based, can be kind of challenging at the high school level for some people, anything from administration details to what's the follow-up that you're expected to do in a team meeting. I'm huge on the IEP documentation piece and getting things in on time. So this principal really gave an idea of what he saw as the vision for teachers working together to meet the needs of students, whether they were general ed or special ed, in his building.

The role of the leader as a principal or an administrator at the elementary or secondary level is multifaceted. The principals that we spoke with saw their role as to facilitate access to resources, again, whether that's physical, tangible resources or people who they have expertise that the beginning teachers needed, to provide instructional leadership, giving the vision and mission of the school, letting everyone know what was expected and when and how to go about making those things happen, to empower teachers and share responsibility and accountability.

The principals talked at great length about having teachers share in the decision-making process and to feel that they had a say in what was going on and how things were to happen. Also, having meetings with their team leaders and with their department heads so that they were all on the same page and they were given responsibility for teachers.

And to serve as a mentor and coach. And this varied based on the size of the school. Some of the smaller schools, the principals were the mentor, and they were the instructional coach for some of their teachers, whereas, in some larger schools, the principals were the coach's coach. They worked with their team leaders to provide that support to the beginning teachers.

The one principal says, the team leaders were able to take back this information once I coached them, what kinds of conversations you could have in your team. They were able to take it back, so the newer teachers were able to hear that information as well as teachers who have had more experience.

They, the team leaders, said themselves that they want to go into each other's classrooms and observe each other. So they were talking at this point about how do we have critical conversations about our teaching? Even once we've gotten to a team-leader level, how do we still improve upon our practice? And how do we provide feedback in a way to each other that may translate into better conversations with our beginning teachers?

So we asked principals about beginning-teacher needs. What do they see as common needs of beginning teachers coming into the building? They talked a lot about acclimating them to the environment. Again, what is it that we do here? How do we go about our business? Who is responsible for what, and who do you need to see to get this form signed, so on and forth.

So acclimation to the environment was important. Having the tools for collaboration. Many beginning teachers come in, and they're working with a number of people with different personalities who may or may not have been in the building for a while. And giving them the tools that they need to talk with those teachers, to be productive, to be able to support their students in the most effective way was important.

Also providing opportunities for instructional and sometimes behavioral professional development. Some principals talked about finding money, grant money, to support their teachers' professional development and to bring in innovation so that not only would teachers go to professional development outside of the building, but they found grant money to support ongoing coaching within the building.

And also, some talked at great length about providing social and emotional support. Some principals felt that this was very much a part of their role, and they felt like if teachers needed to come to their office to vent, that that was what they were there for. Others, on the other hand, felt like that wasn't a part of their makeup. That wasn't their thing, one principal said. He said, that's just not my thing, but I have someone in place for her to go to when they is a social need that she has.

So even if they're not providing the direct support, they're making sure that support is in place. So one principal says, making sure that they have support from a variety of sources, and I think that the strength is using the expertise and knowledge that someone has and helping a new teacher to, there's so many things to learn, you know, the management piece, the communication with parents, different strategies for students, that whole differentiation piece, helping learn the curriculum.

So I think that's really overwhelming to a new person, so having a support system in place is really helpful. It's overwhelming just listening to that list of roles that a new teacher has to take on. So this principal really thought very clearly about what supports might need to be put in place for the beginner.

So then we asked them to think specifically about beginning special education teacher needs. In addition to general ed beginning teacher needs, they talked about time and organizational support. So not only does the teacher, this beginning special education teacher, have all of the responsibilities that a new teacher has and all of the leaps of learning, the learning curves that they have to adjust to, but they also have IEPs and paperwork to take care of. They also have parents to manage and deal with on a more consistent basis.

And they need time, and they need support to organize their work so that they're efficient and they're getting everything done in terms of the compliance. Providing compliance-related support, not only is the new teacher trying to figure out how to write an IEP based on that district's standards, but thinking about how to get it in on time. Where does it need to go? How far in advance do I need to plan these meetings so that it will happen?

And then managing relationships with other professionals and families. These beginning special ed teachers were on teams with general education teachers. Many of them managed paraprofessionals. And in a lot of instances, they were younger than the paraprofessionals that they were working with, younger in age and younger to the school system, so trying to figure out how to manage that. And then also working with a number of families that may be coming from a very different perspective than their own.

The one middle school principal says, I think they're similar in every way, except for that they have to be knowledgeable of the intervention process, time management, how to balance their time. And I think there's more pressure on the intervention specialist teachers, especially in co-teaching models, to really know how to co-teach, how to plan, and then go into a classroom where there are two educators. And usually, their partner in that classroom has been around longer. So know how to value themselves so that they just don't become kind of the assistant.

So this principal really was big on advocacy. How could that beginning special ed teacher go in, be an expert, be a contributing partner, and feel really good about the work that they were doing, alongside that general education teacher?

So what can principals do? From all of the people that we spoke to, it boiled down to five major things. They need to create, or be willing to create, an inclusive and

equitable environment, not only for the students, but also for the teachers, where teachers are general ed and special ed working for the benefit of all students.

Be visible, accessible, and communicative. So principals who are in the building who are doing walk-throughs, who are talking to their teachers formally and informally, providing information when it's needed, being sure that special ed teachers and general ed teachers are prepared to work together and that they're to mediate any situations that arrive.

Also connecting beginners with resources, again, this can be human resources or intangible resources. But a lot of times, beginners might not know what they need until they're without it. And the principal can be there, proactively providing those supports.

Provide support and empower other capable teacher leaders to provide additional support. Many of the principals talked about having teacher-leadership teams, where they have team leaders. They have department heads. They have specific people that the beginning teacher can go to for support, even if the principal is there. They know that the first line of defense . . . empowered.

They also have to be in a position to observe, evaluate, and provide feedback, both informally and formally, and provide clear goals and objectives. So when providing feedback, it needs to be concrete for the beginning teachers to be able to determine what needs to happen next.

And also, going back to the resources, once objectives and goals have been set, to be sure that the professional development is available whether they're going to provide the mentoring and coaching, teachers in their building are going to provide those supports, or they're going to have to go outside to also provide that support.

So Paul will talk about our next step. We did speak with all of those people. We developed a lot of materials, hopefully, that principals will find useful. And so he'll tell you a little bit more about what we're doing now.

DR. PAUL SINDELAR: And as I do, be formulating your questions. We've gone through a lot of information quite quickly. And if we've left something unsaid or unexplained or unclear, please send us a question. We'd be happy to address them in just a moment.

These next steps actually refer back to the work of the center. And I wanted to mention, I think I did mention in my introduction, that we've now entered the TA&D phase of our work, and we're developing some tools that, taken together, we hope will enable school districts to conduct a self-assessment and to adapt their induction and mentoring program for beginning special education teachers.

Those three tools are, number one, the implementation matrix, which is, in fact, a self-assessment tool that I mentioned. It's a guide to developing a differentiated special education induction and mentoring program. In effect, what we ask districts to do who are using it is to rate themselves on seven components, things like your state and

district policy, the goals you have for your induction program, the program elements itself, and various kinds of resources, including fiscal, physical, and human resources.

And once those ratings are done, they're keyed to information that we're providing in a mentoring handbook so that districts conducting the self-assessment will be directed to information that will help them develop whatever components they feel are currently inadequate.

The third tool that's under development right now is the handbook, or excuse me, the, I think I screwed that up. I think we have, the mentoring is the handbook, and the district manual, yeah, I was speaking of the district manual and referring to it as the handbook. But we have a handbook that's specific to the work of the mentor that provides some guidance on the nature of their work with their mentees and how to do that work well.

The other element of our technical assistance and dissemination plan has to do with providing intensive support for school districts and university teams in developing and implementing induction and mentoring for beginning special education teachers. And we're working with a set of OSEP-funded projects. They're called the 325T projects. Some of you may know about those projects. But in effect, what OSEP has done is to support universities and colleges in their efforts to reform their special education teacher preparation programs.

And often, those reforms involve close collaborative work with districts that the universities serve. And many of these projects are developing collaborative induction and mentoring programs. And we'll be providing intensive technical assistance to those groups.

Now, I did want to mention, and I'm going to put in a little bit of a plug here, for those of you who might be interested in working with us and who do work closely with a local university, that we may not get the 10 325T projects that we need in this phase of our work. And if we don't, we'll be opening involvement in the process to other schools and universities who together are engaged in the work of developing induction and mentoring programs that are differentiated for special education teachers.

All of that, by the way, is going to begin in the spring of 2001, and you can keep yourself apprised of where we are in this process by looking at our website, which Erica is now showing you on the screen. That's our home page. And the arrow in the lower left-hand corner is pointing to one of four portals. And that portal is for district and building administrators, for you folks. And when you click on that portal, right now what you'll find are policy briefs, and specifically the ones that are geared to district and building administrators.

But as we move into the technical assistance and dissemination phase, we'll also put information there about our intensive work with the university and district collaborative. So if you are interested in following up, keep an eye on that part of our website. And you can reach our website at www.ncipp.org. So that's it as far as the formal presentation goes. Carol has been aggregating the questions, and we are open to conversation at this point.

CAROL RILEY: Thank you, Paul. And a special thank you to not only you, Paul, but to Meg and Erica. I think your research synthesis and the work that you've done is absolutely tremendous and certainly gives us a lot to think about. And I also think that the tools that you're developing, NAESP certainly can be a resource for principals out there in accessing those tools, because it's just so critical for professional learning teams that the special education teachers do take leads as school teams are being developed and built.

I just wanted to mention, before I go into the questions that were asked, that at the NAESP convention, which is going to be held in Tampa in April of 2011, this is a year that we are encouraging school teams and have built our program around building teacher leaders so that principals can bring teachers, and especially teachers like special education teachers, who are accountable for not only their special education students, but are accountable for communicating the needs of their special education students to the regular education staff.

So we're trying to support all of that and certainly want to support the work that you're doing. The questions that came in, I think you've touched on all of them, but maybe some individuals just wanted a little bit more clarification. So I have about five questions here, and I'll just kind of throw them out to you. And any of you who would like to answer, please feel free to do so.

One question was around evaluation. And how do you, in your research, how would you define the balance between the mentoring-coaching role of a principal, which is based on a trusting and confidential relationship, versus the principal as the ultimate evaluator of that teacher's work?

DR. PAUL SINDELAR: Well, that's kind of the \$64,000 question. Oftentimes, when there's a formal mentor who's not a principal, who's assigned to work with the special education teacher, or a general education for that matter as well, many state policies will explicitly forbid them from also doing evaluation, I think in recognition of the difficulty that principals and others would have when they're cast in the role of both evaluator and mentor.

But one of the districts we worked with, Cincinnati specifically, has a very heavy emphasis on assessment. The mentors, not so much the, well, I'm going to ask for Erica and Meg to fill in the gaps here that I leave in my response, but it's a very explicit element of their program. In fact, it kind of drives their program. And yet, when we talked to the mentors and the mentees, they both felt like it was a valuable process that allowed them to grow as young professionals.

And I don't remember, so I'm going to ask you two if you could comment on the principal's role in that model, in whether they also did evaluations above and beyond what the mentors did.

DR. MEG KAMMAN: Well, a couple of the principals talked about that very issue, how some beginning teachers would be wary of them coming to a classroom, even for informal observations, and to give them feedback, because they felt like they were evaluative, even though that wasn't their primary role.

So one principal mentioned that if there were issues, a lot of times they would take what they call the backdoor approach. They would have another teacher that was trusted by the beginner to go in and give the feedback, even though it was something the principal had seen, just so the beginning teacher would take it and not see it as evaluative but as a form of support.

But the principals in Cincinnati did not do the evaluation piece, but they were there as a kind of liaison to say these are the four main categories that you're going to be evaluated on, and this is what this really means and what it should look like. So they were able to provide support when the beginning teachers were open to it and were very clear about the principals not being the evaluator. But that can be a very difficult thing for a principal to have to provide both supports, which is when other teachers can really be valuable.

DR. ERICA MCCRAY: And I think only to add to that, in Cincinnati, because the mentors were all, served as a role as a mentor and as an evaluator, that's probably similar to what the question was about. Can the principal serve as both a mentor-coach and an evaluator. In Cincinnati, we got a lot of positive responses from beginning teachers about their mentors being the evaluator. I know in the field, it's kind of looked on in a negative light, to hold both those roles, but in this district, it seems to be working for them.

And the beginning teachers see the evaluation as really providing a focus for their improvement and that the mentors can really provide the support with the evaluation as the focus. So I would think of that as applying to principals in many other places.

DR. MEG KAMMAN: And just to add to that, it's a matter of knowing that the support is there all along and that evaluation is coming, but it's been supported all along. It's not just this evaluation that comes at the end, and it can be punitive, but that the support has been derived, what needs were identified because of the ongoing evaluation and support.

DR. PAUL SINDELAR: I want to, now I'm going to add. We're just going to go around adding to one another's comments. The Cincinnati program is very explicit about the criteria that the beginning teachers are evaluated on. They know them from the beginning. Every observation and all the feedback they receive are pegged to those criteria. And there is a consistency and explicitness that I think is very important to the success of that program.

And to the one principal that had asked the question, I would suggest that, to the extent that you too could make your interactions with your novice teachers explicit and predictable, it really will go a long way toward the success of you serving in both of those roles if they know what you're looking for, if when you observe them, your feedback is key to those criteria. I think that's going to take away a lot of what might be construed as kind of arbitrary judgments about my teaching. I think we're done with that one.

CAROL RILEY: Thank you. I think so too, but what wonderful answers and insight you just gave. I think in education, we look at evaluation as being a scary thing. I think what you were saying, that it really needs to be a growth model, that it's not just evaluation. It's a way to identify areas of strengths and areas of need. So that certainly makes sense. And I think in many schools, the balance between those two things has to be something that a principal needs to face and make decisions about.

Here's another question that came through. And this is more about organizational structure. It's what are some specific collaborative organizational structures in building teams that would integrate the special education teacher and a regular classroom teacher? So are there some organizational things that a principal needs to do in their team building to integrate all teachers?

DR. ERICA MCCRAY: Well, some of the principals we talked with spoke very clearly about having a special ed teacher, because typically, there are only a few special ed teachers in a building if there's more than one. They talked about giving them opportunities to meet with the other special ed teachers as a team or as a program, but also having time for them to meet with a grade level team or a subject area team, depending on how their work was organized.

They also talked about meeting before the school year started. They said, if my general ed teachers are meeting and planning, my special ed teacher needs to be there as well. That way, the special ed teacher could provide support from the beginning, and they could begin to integrate that expertise so that it naturally filtered into the school year, and it was a natural process for them to work together.

Also just the culture of the school, making everyone aware that all of us are here to work for all students, and it's not us against them. It's not the gen ed teachers and then, oh, by the way, here's a special ed teacher for you to figure out how to work with, that everyone was solving problems and making decisions together.

One of the things that they did in the special school district, which kind of alleviated a little bit of the stress for the principal, is there's multilayered mentors there. There's a district-based instructional facilitator, but there's also a school-based mentor.

And that school-based person really helps the beginning teacher kind of navigate that school closer and helps to make those connections with the general ed staff. Because that person had already been there and had already established those relationships with the general ed staff. And so they just kind of helped that beginning special education teacher make those connections. So that was really helpful to the principals there as well.

CAROL RILEY: Okay. Thank you. Another question was around professional development. And how would the professional development be different for a novice special ed teacher versus the special ed teacher who's experienced but working at marginal levels?

DR. PAUL SINDELAR: Another good question. I'm not sure how you could answer that without knowing more about both what the novice knows and what the marginal experienced teacher knows. It's very difficult to say even what beginners, say, leaving here from the University of Florida are going to be able to know and what to do.

It's one of the, I think the difficulties of a place like this, where our students leave and they go to 35 or 40 different districts every year. And so we can't guarantee that they're going to know the curriculum that's implemented in that district or the assessment procedures or policies that govern identification and placement. And so they come away with a general understanding of the field.

The problems that an experienced but marginal special education teacher is likely to have are going to be different, I think, because they do have that information about how the school and the district operate that a novice might not have.

And so the needs, I think, of a novice coming into a district may be quite different, particularly if they're from a program with which the district has no explicit link in training or mentoring, because they may not be prepared for the basic knowledge of how to operate within that district, whereas, the more experienced teacher would, and might have more serious kinds of needs regarding their instructional and management skills. That's not to say that a novice won't have those things, but they have more basic needs, I think, coming out of the gate than those experienced teachers would.

CAROL RILEY: I think that's pretty relevant, Paul. It just reminded me of I work with our national principals in their certification program, and as we're mentoring, as we're working with principals who mentor novice principals, one of the issues of real concern is that a new principal, just like a new special education teacher, needs to have an awareness of generational issues because we're finding that in schools, there are at least four generations of staffing.

So to understand a 20-year-old staff member versus a 55-year-old staff member takes a lot of understanding of various issues. And I hadn't thought of it before, but I think a special education teacher kind of falls into that realm of needing this greater base of understanding.

I'm just going to hit you with one more question because we're getting close to the end. There were a number of resources that were on the slides, and I just want to remind our participants that they will be getting copies of the PowerPoint and actually a link to the recorded webinar, so they can listen to it again or view it again.

But one question was are there a few just specific resources for a novice special education teacher who must lead an RIT team that includes veteran teachers and parents and possibly other staff? So are there any specific resources for a novice special ed teacher in leading teams?

DR. ERICA MCCRAY: There are some resources that are out of OSEP, a couple of nationally funded centers for technical assistance and dissemination. And one of them is the National Center on RTI, and their website is rti4success.org. And they provide a wealth of information, from thinking about how to get started to figuring out what the pyramid actually is, and even resources to determine what programs or models to use given different contexts. So that's one.

Also, the Iris Center at Peabody has a number of professional development online modules that cover a range of topics, and RTI is one of them. And it can take beginning teachers or in-service teachers or anyone, really, who's interested in it through steps of question-asking and thinking about, from the ground up, how do I structure this, what are the goals, and how do I make sure that we're implementing with fidelity and thinking about the integrity of the program for the students that we're serving in particular? So those are a couple of good starting points, I would say.

DR. PAUL SINDELAR: Do we have those links on our website?

DR. ERICA MCCRAY: I think we might have those as partner center links on our website as well, Carol.

CAROL RILEY: Well, thank you. Thank you for sharing your outstanding knowledge and leadership and guidance through this. I believe this webinar really raised some provocative questions for administrators and those of us who are trying to lead and provide support for school leaders really in our country and the world. Again, thank you, Paul, Meg, Erica. A special thank you to Phoebe for coordinating this webinar. Are there any final thoughts before we close?

DR. PAUL SINDELAR: Well, thank you, Carol, for inviting us. It was fun, and we hope the audience appreciated what we had to say.

DR. ERICA MCCRAY: And visit our website because we'd like to hear from you.