Longitudinal Evaluation of Ontario’s New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP)
NTIP Reflections Year 1 Final Report

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Executive Summary

Purpose of Study

The goal of this longitudinal research is to gain a deeper understanding of how the Ontario New Teachers Induction Program (NTIP) assists beginning teachers, focusing specifically on NTIP’s core goals for their development:

- Confidence
- Efficacy
- Instructional practice
- Commitment to continuous learning

This paper summarizes the findings from the first survey and focus groups with the 2012/2013 cohort. The study will follow small cohorts of teachers over multiple years.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- According to both the survey and focus groups, almost all participants see NTIP as helpful, and in many cases extremely so.
- At this time, 44% of participants perceive themselves to have gained, 50% to be the same, and 6% to be slightly worse in NTIP’s core areas of development. In the longitudinal design of this study, these findings provide a baseline for tracking change and exploring the conditions that support growth over the long term.
- Mentoring is a key component in new teacher success. The survey findings suggested that having multiple mentors helps to facilitate teacher growth. From the focus groups, we learned that experiences finding mentors varied: some teachers found their own mentor, some had a mentor assigned, and a few had no mentor. For some, finding a mentor was not easy. In addition, a mentor and mentee relationship may not always “gel.” In year 2, we suggest exploring more explicitly the range of mentoring models and the conditions that support effective mentoring.
- Many NTIP participants are experienced teachers. Our findings suggest that teachers with different levels of experience benefit from different types of NTIP supports. We suggest that the NTIP program be as flexible as possible to respond to different needs. Offering a choice of relevant learning opportunities is a key NTIP program component and a potential area for improvement in the program. We suggest exploring the idea of choice in relevant learning opportunities. For instance, how is choice made available?
- Our findings show that it is important for principals to take an interest in the growth of teachers, especially very new teachers. We suggest further exploration of how this important relationship works. For more experienced teachers, co-teaching opportunities or observation with debriefing appear to be constructive. Conditions that help these experiences be most beneficial are worth exploring.
• New teachers face challenges across all areas of teaching practice. The NTIP program is viewed as especially helpful when participants can choose how to allocate NTIP time. Therefore, school boards should continue to respond to new teachers’ needs, as they define them, at the local level.

• New teachers enter the profession believing they can influence students’ learning in spite of other influences. In the coming years, it will be important to ask for detail on how this belief may be sustained or diminished, to identify how NTIP can best support teacher development in this area.

• New teachers’ confidence increases with experience. They also rely upon support from colleagues and mentors. New teachers can also be supported and encouraged through contact with other new teachers in similar situations. It may be valuable to explore how peer support can be facilitated.
Introduction

All new teachers in Ontario (including beginning long-term occasional teachers teaching 97 or more days) participate in the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), which provides supports to enhance teaching practice and student learning. NTIP includes:

- Orientation to the school and school board
- Mentoring by experienced teachers
- Professional development and training

In addition to these induction elements there are two performance appraisals by principals within the first 12 months of teaching, for first year permanent hires.

NTIP has been evaluated annually since its inception in 2006. This year (2012/13) marks the beginning of a new research cycle focused on deriving longitudinal data about the impact of NTIP supports provided to beginning teachers. The study will follow small cohorts of teachers over multiple years. The goal of the longitudinal research is to gain a deeper understanding of how NTIP assists beginning teachers, focusing specifically on NTIP’s core goals for their development:

- Confidence
- Efficacy
- Instructional practice
- Commitment to continuous learning

This paper summarizes the findings from the first survey and focus groups with the 2012/2013 cohort.

Year 1 Survey

This section describes the following elements of the year 1 survey:

- Our sample of respondents
- The NTIP supports that they’ve accessed
- Their perceptions of their own growth, since they started teaching in Ontario, in NTIP’s core areas of development
- The impacts they think NTIP has had on them
The Survey Sample
The sample comprised 318 NTIP participants. Board NTIP coordinators spread the word about the study to the NTIP participants in their schools, and participants then volunteered for the study.

Representativeness of the sample
Our sample seems to be fairly representative of the population of NTIP teachers, based on region (see Figure 1), position type, and panel (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Regional distribution of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population estimates</th>
<th>Cohort 1 sample (N=319)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French Boards</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunder Bay</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Bay/Sudbury</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrie</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by position type and panel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panel</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Both elementary and secondary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position type</th>
<th>Permanent position</th>
<th>Both permanent and LTO position</th>
<th>LTO position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following groups are likely underrepresented:

- Teachers in the Ottawa and London regions, and
- Secondary teachers (only 21% of teachers in our sample were in the secondary panel, whereas 35% of the NTIP teachers who declined to participate in the study were in the secondary panel).

The 124 NTIP teachers who declined to participate were asked to indicate their reasons for declining. The most common reasons were:

- I don’t have time to participate (39%),
- A 3-year involvement is too long for me (27%), and
- I’m not interested in the study (15%).

**Background characteristics**

The majority of the participants are women (85%), and most are between the ages of 25 and 35 (see Figure 3). About 10% self-identified as Francophone.

![Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by age and gender](image)

Most (82%) of the teachers in the sample had completed their teacher education in Ontario. Only 3% had completed it elsewhere in Canada. The remaining 15% had completed their teacher education outside of Canada.

**Exposure to NTIP**

Most (80%) of the participants in our sample were new to NTIP (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4: Distribution of respondents by experience with NTIP](image)
Year 1 Key Survey Findings

This section summarizes the findings related to closed-ended questions on the survey. Respondents could also provide explanatory comments, which are summarized in Appendix 1.

1. Many of the study participants are experienced teachers

A majority of the respondents (63%) had held an LTO position in Ontario prior to this year. Only about a third had come straight out of school. Almost half had 2-4 years of Ontario experience, and a fifth had 5 or more years of Ontario experience (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Distribution of respondents by years of teaching experience in Ontario

2. NTIP supports were available to, and accessed by, most of the participants

Participants accessed a variety of NTIP supports, (on average participants had accessed about 4-6 NTIP supports). Indeed, 99% of participants received at least 1 NTIP support.

As shown in Figure 6, the most common supports accessed by participants were learning opportunities (e.g., workshops, courses, seminars, school-based learning opportunities), mentorship, and feedback from the principal. Opportunities for observation of/by colleagues were less common. It is noteworthy that some NTIP teachers reported that they had not had access to relevant learning opportunities or formal mentors.
We also asked participants to rate certain qualities of NTIP supports that were thought to be important to the development of a new teacher (e.g., how available their mentors were, how interested their colleagues were in seeing them grow as teachers and whether there was a satisfactory range of supports available for them to choose from). Participants’ ratings of these qualities were quite high (the average was around 4, on a 5-point scale, for each of the items – see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Qualities of NTIP supports accessed by participants
3. About half of the participants perceived they had grown in NTIP’s core areas of development

To assess growth in three of NTIP’s core areas of development, we asked participants to reflect on a set of statements and indicate how true each statement was for them a) in the past month, and b) when they first started teaching in Ontario. The items for each subscale are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Subscale items: Confidence, self-efficacy, and commitment to ongoing learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>(Reverse scored) I am not sure teaching is the right career for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I expect to be teaching in 5 years’ time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
<td>When I encounter students who are really struggling to learn I know I can find a way to help them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Reverse scored) Some students are going to do poorly no matter what I do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With effort I can engage even the most unmotivated students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can make a difference in the lives of every single one of my students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to ongoing learning</td>
<td>I reflect on my teaching every day to figure out what’s working well and what I need to do differently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I talk with my colleagues about challenges that I’m facing in my teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I use a wide variety of effective instructional strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To assess growth in instructional practice (the fourth core area of development), we asked participants to rate the strength of their repertoire of teaching strategies a) now, and b) when they first started teaching in Ontario. The subscale items are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Subscale items: Instructional practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional practice</td>
<td>... maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... building students’ confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... getting students motivated / excited to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... helping students master new concepts/skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... responding to students’ diverse learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... assessing students’ learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... helping families support their children’s learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subscale scores were calculated by averaging across the subscale items, and a total score was calculated using a weighted average of all 16 items.

About half of the participants perceived an improvement in their development (across all areas) since they had started teaching in Ontario (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Changes in total scores since the participants started teaching in Ontario

Not surprisingly, those with more Ontario teaching experience reported greater improvement, on average\(^1\). These teachers would have had more time to develop skills and gain confidence than teachers who were newer to the role.

Looking at the subscales, the most noticeable improvements were in instructional practice and commitment to ongoing learning (see Figure 9). Smaller improvements were seen in confidence and efficacy. All of the improvements were statistically significant\(^2\).

\(^1\) F=5.718; 2, 281 df; p=.004
\(^2\) Self-efficacy: t=2.159; 304 df; p=.032
Commitment to ongoing learning: t=8.344; 309 df; p<.001
Confidence: t=2.905; 311 df; p=.004
Instructional practice: t=19.469; 304 df; p<.001
Total: t=11.196; 285 df; p<.001
“I think that there should be two different streams of NTIP: one for truly new teachers and another for experienced teachers who have received a contract after 2+ years (or a different threshold) of teaching. The needs of these two groups are very different.”

**NTIP Survey Participant, Cohort 1**

### 4. Teachers may benefit from certain types of supports at specific stages of their career

We suspected that teachers may benefit from certain types of supports at different times in their careers. For example, being observed by another teacher might be extremely valuable to a teacher with a couple of years of experience, while some newer teachers might not feel as comfortable with this experience. We explored the data to see what trends emerged. These findings still need to be tested in future years of the evaluation, but they provide some intriguing food for thought.

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**Figure 9: Teachers’ self-assessment in NTIP’s core areas of development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Average Outcome Scale Score</th>
<th>When They Started Teaching in Ontario</th>
<th>In the Past Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total score (weighted average of all 16 items)</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to ongoing learning subscale*</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence subscale*</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional practice subscale</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy subscale</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The measures for the confidence and commitment to ongoing learning subscale are not as reliable as the others.
Teachers with 2 or fewer years’ experience reported more improvement when:

- They had multiple mentors
- They had a choice of learning opportunities
- Their principal took an interest in their growth

Teachers with 2 to 4 years’ experience reported more improvement when:

- They had accessed 5 or more NTIP supports
- They had multiple mentors
- They had a choice of learning opportunities
- A colleague watched them teach, followed by discussion
- They perceived their NTIP supports to have depth of quality

Teachers with 5+ years’ experience reported more improvement when they had been observed by a colleague, followed by discussion.

5. Participants believe NTIP helps them become a better teacher
Almost all participants (96%) indicated that NTIP had been at least somewhat helpful. For about a quarter of the participants, the program seemed to be very helpful. The average impact rating was 4.5 on the 7-point scale (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Perceived overall program impact
Year 1 Focus Groups

The Focus Groups Sample
Among the NTIP participants in the Reflections study, over half (174) offered to take part in teleconference focus groups. From this pool, we identified a sample of 49 NTIP teachers who represented a diverse range of new teachers. From the 49 who were invited, a total of 27 NTIP participants were able to join the discussions. Included in the mix were participants in their first year of teaching as well as experienced teachers. Some taught in rural areas, others in urban environments. Participants were also selected to obtain broad representation based on the following characteristics: elementary / secondary panel, gender, number of mentors, area of Ontario, and size of board.

Four focus groups were held between April 18 and 25, 2013, three in English and one in French. One of our goals was to detect differences between participants who experienced, according to their self-assessment, high and low levels of growth in the core areas of teacher development. Growth scores of those who agreed to participate in focus groups ranged from +3.21 to -1.21. Participants were grouped according to growth scores: one group with high growth (> .5), one group with low growth (score <-.5) or no growth (score -.5 to 0), and two groups with a mix of the two types. Table 3 lists the number of participants who took part in each of the discussions.

Table 3: Focus Group Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group type</th>
<th>Number invited to participate</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High growth</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low growth</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed (low and high)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French mixed (low and high)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written responses to FG questions</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Structuring the Focus Group Data
We asked teachers about their journey from the first day of teaching until now, including the influence of the NTIP program and also other influences that affected them. The focus group format gave participants the opportunity to share their stories in their own words, yielding a rich picture of new teachers’ experiences. Themes that emerged from the focus groups and from the open-ended survey responses are presented below, in order of relative strength. It is important to note that focus group discussions do not yield exact frequencies of themes; ordering of themes merely provides a rough indication of relative importance. Direct quotes illustrating the themes are shown in italics.
Year 1 Key Focus Group Findings

Findings are grouped according to the guiding questions asked in the focus groups.

1. Teaching Practice: What factors contribute to success in new teachers’ daily work?

We asked focus group participants what factors contributed to success in aspects of daily work such as lesson planning, classroom management, assessment, and communicating with parents. Here’s what they said:

- **Help from colleagues** is an important factor in success across all areas of daily work. New teachers spoke very positively about the support they received from their teaching colleagues: “In terms of what has contributed to my success, the credit does not come back to me but goes to my colleagues and the support they provide.” Other school staff can play a key role in supporting new teachers and may be very actively involved: “We co-teach; there is really good constant feedback daily with my ECE [Early Childhood Educator].” They help with tasks such as preparing assessment tools: “The librarian helped me with a rubric.” Sharing resources is common: “We share a lot; we’re a small school. I can go to anybody and somebody will help.” Colleagues also offer guidance on how to use resources: “She showed me how to set up the materials, how to set up literacy centres.” It is worth noting that members of one focus group wanted to stay in touch afterward because peer support is valuable to them.

- **Mentorship** is another key factor in success. New teachers expressed deep gratitude for guidance and advice they received from NTIP mentors. Mentors act as “a great sounding board for ideas.” They also give invaluable support to teachers in their daily work. “[My mentor] was able to point me in the right direction: who to contact, who to talk to. She helped me meet more people in the school to share resources and bounce ideas.” Mentors provide direct instruction on aspects of teachers’ daily work: “My mentor taught me the IEP [Individual Education Plan] process,” and “My mentor has given me a lot of strategies to use in the classroom.” They also share resources, “She provided me with so many valuable resources to allow me to prepare my week schedule.” Development of long-range plans can also be guided by mentors: “We went through how each subject area is going to flow into another and ways that you can combine different subject matters so it allowed me to be a step ahead of the game before even starting.” In general, new teachers depend upon mentors to share their “wealth of knowledge.”

- **Observing others** is a useful way for new teachers to see teaching strategies in action: “I took an NTIP day and watched some of my colleagues in the gym, and that was extremely helpful for me.”
to gain classroom management strategies.” New teachers learn a lot through observation: “I saw the classroom routine, units she started with and some she left for later, techniques used in math.” They can see first-hand which approaches are effective: “The biggest influence was from watching other teachers in a classroom situation and seeing what works and what doesn’t work.” Also, some who were observed and received feedback found that being observed was helpful: “I have had some of the corresponding teachers within that program come and observe me and give me guidelines on how to [use iPads in the classroom] and that has been very beneficial.”

- Other factors also contribute to success. Within the school, principals can be instrumental in supporting success in early teaching experiences: “I found the principal is incredibly supportive and knowledgeable.” Life experience can also make a difference: “Being a parent helps with communicating with parents, I really get what parents want to see.” Flexibility in the NTIP program is valued by new teachers who use NTIP time in a variety of ways most suited to their needs. For example, one participant used NTIP release time to learn from technical support staff how to program assistive software that was necessary for a student. Organized NTIP workshops can also support new teacher growth, especially when tailored to meet local needs. Self-directed Internet research can be helpful.

2. Teaching Practice: What tasks do new teachers most struggle with?

When we asked participants what they most struggled with, we heard that new teachers encounter challenges across all areas of teaching practice. Classroom management can be “a big struggle,” and even after teaching for a number of years, participants told us that students can give them “a run for my money.” A mix of students’ needs in the classroom adds to the difficulty of classroom management: “I have 11 IEPs out of my 24 students.” Split grade classes can be challenging too: “My experience at the rural school with the five-grade split was less successful.”

Developing long term plans can be difficult. Sometimes new teachers feel at a loss: “I felt I had no idea where to start, how to develop my unit plans and long-range plans, how am I supposed to know when to teach?” Even when working with existing resources, new teachers may feel conflicted about how to implement long-range plans: “Our board is leaning towards not following text books, doing more hands on problem solving, getting away from following a text book. I’ve got a text book, but I’ve got pressure to not follow it. That’s a confusing message.”
New teachers can find communicating with parents “incredibly hard.” Organizing competing priorities presents another challenge: “I felt overwhelmed...I needed to prioritise the students, figure out which needs are greater.” Other struggles include assessment, doing report cards for the first time, and accommodating multiple needs within the classroom.

3. Efficacy: How much influence do new teachers feel they have on students’ learning?

Focus group participants felt strongly that they have a “tremendous” influence on students’ learning. They believe in bringing their passion and enthusiasm into the classroom: “What I found helped was introducing games that were fun; the more enthusiastic I was, the more the kids were on board.” “I work in the class to excite them, make the material relevant to them and their daily lives.” Participants spoke about the importance of respect as the basis for meaningful relationships within the classroom. A high school teacher put it this way: “If I have an interest in my students, try and connect with them on a personal level, they are more receptive.” A teacher working with younger students reflected: “If you yourself are excited about the material, it really gets them excited about learning.” These teachers feel that their influence extends outside school, for example one participant spoke about providing support to a grieving student, another spoke about supporting students from low literacy families. “Teachers have a huge impact on students’ learning, but also on how they cope with outside situations.” Teachers feel they can guide students towards ideals beyond the classroom walls: “We help them value their education and aspire to be more, that is, to be something that they want to be.”

4. Confidence: How does it change?

We asked focus group participants how confident they felt when they began, how they feel now, and what influenced their confidence. Participants who felt more confident over time admitted to feeling nervous at first: “I was being paid to do something I wasn’t sure I was qualified to do.” However, with experience their confidence increased: “I feel my confidence is growing more now as a teacher as I get through it.” Some participants felt their confidence wavering as they struggled with challenges along the way: “At the beginning my confidence was high and it really dropped as I felt I wasn’t meeting the needs of all my students.” For some, confidence levels can vary daily: “Confidence can change from day to day though – if there are days that I am not confident I try to figure out why and address it.”

Teachers seek to build up their confidence through reflection and professional development: “There are days where I have no idea what I am doing, yet I always try to seek help and go to the [professional development sessions] as much as I can so I am in the loop of what is happening.” A few participants felt less confident over time: “It has just humbled me knowing the challenges that teaching presents and it has been overwhelming.” However, lost confidence can be restored, particularly with support from others: “Confidence is nurtured by the network of support that we find.” Others spoke of the importance of maintaining confidence through work-life balance: “Our confidence is deeply rooted in the balance that we have, you know, we can only give to our students the best that we give to ourselves and the best that we are.”
5. Commitment to ongoing professional development: What are teachers’ views on mentoring?

Reflecting the primary strategy of NTIP, we asked participants how they feel about mentoring and what role they see it playing in their future, either as a learner or a mentor. Four main themes emerged.

- **Mentoring as a positive experience.** The strongest themes to emerge among teachers’ comments about mentoring were that mentoring was a positive experience, and that it is an essential component for teaching success. Some teachers felt that “everyone should have a mentor as a new teacher.” Mentorship emerged as a strong contributor to teaching success and a key to growth as a teacher: “Effective mentoring is essential to the teaching/learning process.” New teachers see great value in mentoring, both as mentor and mentee, and look forward to acting in a mentor role: “I look at it as pay it forward strategy.” One participant put it this way: “In the classroom, you feel very alone, by yourself, the only adult in the room. It’s nice to know there’s another adult to talk to about issues, this person has your back and your best interests in mind when they a providing advice.” Some participants said they now mentor others: “I really enjoy the mentorship ... A new teacher came in, I’m going to give her resources, we have the same prep and we talk, share the knowledge my mentor has given me with somebody who can use it.

- **Finding a mentor.** Participants spoke about the ease or difficulty of finding a mentor. Experiences varied among new teachers: some found their own mentor, some had a mentor assigned, a few had no mentor. Comments from the survey refer to misalignment by subject and grades, lack of administrative assistance to find a mentor, and an “intimidating and mysterious” process of finding a mentor. Teachers agreed upon the importance of finding a good fit between mentor and mentee. Some suggested that “you should be given the option to change your mentor if that relationship is not working in the beginning.”

- **Mentoring as an unhelpful experience.** A few participants spoke about challenges they faced in their mentoring relationships stemming from reluctance on the mentor’s part to take on the mentoring role. “I have to say I didn’t enjoy my mentoring experience. I felt my mentor didn’t really want to do it.” Some problems with mentorship related to poor fit: “I am assigned to this person that I might not gel with.” Time constraints and geographical distance were also mentioned as difficulties.

- **Characteristics of great mentoring.** Participants spoke positively about mentors who shared their knowledge and experience. Great mentors are generous with their time and resources: “She would give suggestions, strategies, let me use her room as a place to send the student if they weren’t listening.”
6. Differences among Groups
For the most part, the focus groups did not reveal a strong pattern of differences between the low and high growth groups. However, we found that unhelpful experiences with mentoring were usually described by participants in the low growth group: “We could have met more, talked more. I didn’t feel comfortable going to her; I feel like I was a nuisance going to her.”

7. Keys to Growth
At the end of the focus groups, participants were asked to sum up the most important factor in their growth. In agreement with the main themes already discussed, many cited relationships with colleagues (including mentors, principals, other teachers and staff). However, approximately the same proportion concluded that their own efforts and attitudes had been the key to growth.

Some keys to growth were...

“... building relationships with colleagues to figure out how to find resources, colleagues within the school or school board.”

“...encouragement and support from my former administrator and mentor to persevere.”

“... accepting the fact that it is okay to mess up.”

“...taking one day at a time and doing your best every day”

NTIP Focus Group Participants, Cohort 1

A personal struggle:
Some teachers face significant challenges during their early teaching careers. In instances where the teaching assignment is particularly difficult, new teachers may question whether teaching is the right career for them. Support is particularly critical for struggling teachers: “I started the year totally confident, ready to go, I can do this and I can be awesome. Now I’m devastated every day, crying every day, I have zero confidence in myself. If it weren’t for my staff I would have given up on teaching...I’m still contemplating giving up teaching.”

“I can categorically state that without mentoring from both my NTIP mentor and my former administrator, I would have absolutely quit the teaching profession this year.”
Merging the Survey and Focus Group Findings: Contributors to Growth

In this section we connect the survey findings with the focus group findings to elucidate what contributed to growth in each of the four core NTIP areas. Areas are discussed in order of where the most growth was reported on the survey.

Teaching Practice

Our survey findings revealed that new teachers experienced strong growth in the area of instructional practice (see Figure 9), gaining almost a full point on the self-assessment scale (from 4.11 to 5.09) since they started teaching in Ontario. At the same time, they showed room for growth in this area. Focus group participants told us they rely mainly on help from colleagues and formal mentors to develop their teaching practice. They also felt their own attitude and efforts were instrumental in their success.

Teachers actively seek out opportunities to develop their teaching practice: “I took several workshops last year about class management and cooperative learning. ...the class climate is positive and visitors to my class are always impressed with the level of student engagement in cooperative activities.” Growth in this area flows from the time and effort new teachers dedicate to developing their teaching skills: “My greatest success this year has been developing teaching strategies ... I put in a lot of effort outside the classroom.”

Commitment to Continuous Learning

The survey results show a strong initial commitment to continuous learning and an increase since beginning teaching in Ontario (see Figure 9). Professional learning occurs in a variety of ways, for example through daily reflection, talking with colleagues, workshops and observation. Both individual learning and supporting the learning of others are important to these teachers, many of whom expressed a desire to act in a mentoring role in the future. “I see myself as a mentor in the future because I see the value in it.” Participants may take the lead in seeking out new learning: “[The key to my growth is] professional development on my own time, taking home professional reading for example.” Teachers’ enthusiastic reception of opportunities for formal professional development reflects their commitment to learning: “My Board has been really great at facilitating workshops.” NTIP fosters new teachers’ commitment to continuous learning by supporting a variety of professional development options.

Confidence

On the survey, participants reported strong initial confidence and an overall improvement since they began teaching in Ontario (see Figure 9). Through the focus groups, we learned that time and experience contribute to confidence: “I feel my confidence is growing more now as a teacher as I get through it.” In addition, support from others is a key factor in developing and maintaining confidence. In fact, support can be critical in maintaining a new teacher’s confidence to persevere on the most challenging days. Professional development and maintaining appropriate work-life balance are also contributing factors.
Efficacy

In this study, efficacy reflects the extent to which teachers feel they can make a difference in the lives of their students. On the survey, teachers gave a comparatively moderate self-rating in this core area and perceived a slight improvement since they started teaching (see Figure 9). In the focus groups, new teachers asserted that they feel they have a positive impact on their student’s learning. Moreover, they feel able to support students beyond the classroom in their personal and home life situations. “I’ve had students and parents say, ‘you’ve made a big difference’.” Teachers make a difference by building relationships with their students and with the students’ families: “I think that having a good rapport with my students is very beneficial in their learning in my classroom.” Positive feedback provides important reinforcement to teachers about feelings of efficacy: “I realize how much influence I have when their parents come and tell me what I’m doing [right]” and “I do get appreciation and praise from parents and the principal.” For some, a confident approach to teaching is the key factor in making a difference: “If you do not believe in what you’re doing, if you do not believe in them and if you do not believe in yourself, they will not be engaged and no one will be learning.”
Conclusions and Recommendations

- According to both the survey and focus groups, almost all participants see NTIP as helpful, and in many cases extremely so.
- At this time, 44% of participants perceive themselves to have gained, 50% to be the same, and 6% to be slightly worse in NTIP's core areas of development. In the longitudinal design of this study, these findings provide a baseline for tracking change and exploring the conditions that support growth over the long term.
- Mentoring is a key component in new teacher success. The survey findings suggested that having multiple mentors helps to facilitate teacher growth. From the focus groups, we learned that experiences finding mentors varied: some teachers found their own mentor, some had a mentor assigned, and a few had no mentor. For some, finding a mentor was not easy. In addition, a mentor and mentee relationship may not always “gel.” In year 2, we suggest exploring more explicitly the range of mentoring models and the conditions that support effective mentoring.
- Many NTIP participants are experienced teachers. Our findings suggest that teachers with different levels of experience benefit from different types of NTIP supports. We suggest that the NTIP program be as flexible as possible to respond to different needs. Offering a choice of relevant learning opportunities is a key NTIP program component and a potential area for improvement in the program. We suggest exploring the idea of choice in relevant learning opportunities. For instance, how is choice made available?
- Our findings show that it is important for principals to take an interest in the growth of teachers, especially very new teachers. We suggest further exploration of how this important relationship works. For more experienced teachers, co-teaching opportunities or observation with debriefing appear to be constructive. Conditions that help these experiences be most beneficial are worth exploring.
- New teachers face challenges across all areas of teaching practice. The NTIP program is viewed as especially helpful when participants can choose how to allocate NTIP time. Therefore, school boards should continue to respond to new teachers’ needs, as they define them, at the local level.
- New teachers enter the profession believing they can influence students’ learning in spite of other influences. In the coming years, it will be important to ask for detail on how this belief may be sustained or diminished, to identify how NTIP can best support teacher development in this area.
- New teachers’ confidence increases with experience. They also rely upon support from colleagues and mentors. New teachers can also be supported and encouraged through contact with other new teachers in similar situations. It may be valuable to explore how peer support can be facilitated.
Appendix A: Summary of open-ended answers

The following are the most common themes summarized from the answers to the open-ended survey questions on the Year 1 NTIP Survey.

Each finding is summarized in a short phrase at the beginning of each bullet point, and then illustrated by a quotation from the findings to provide some depth to the finding.

Mentorship

What was useful?

- **Direct knowledge transfer**: “I have been given opportunities to meet with my mentor and learn from her experience. We were given time to go over long range plans and she helped my organize my year, as well as taught me how to properly complete my report cards.”

- **Provides resources**: “It was also very helpful to have a mentor who was willing to give me MANY resources, as that is a big struggle as a new teacher - to find resources that work.”

- **Supportive coaching**: “Having a formal mentor has been extremely helpful because I know exactly who I can go to if I have questions without feeling that I am taking up someone’s time.”

What was NOT useful?

- **Misalignment between mentor and respondent**: “I was assigned a mentor but …we didn’t teach any of the same subject matter or grades. I have not really spoken to my mentor about any school related matter.”

- **Lack of administration buy-In**: “I was also not provided a mentor and discouraged from taking a mentor in my school so that has been a bit challenging for me.”

- **Unclear process of mentor selection**: “The process [of finding a mentor] was initially very intimidating and mysterious.”

Learning Opportunities

What was useful?

- **High quality content and presentation**: “NTIP PD Meetings are run by approachable and knowledgeable professionals; topic areas have covered a wide range of pertinent matters related to teaching appropriate to various grade levels.”

- **Provided funding**: “NTIP provided funding so I could attend conferences, such as the GLACIE (cooperative education) conference, where I learned valuable strategies that I use every day. NTIP workshops and book clubs in class management have helped me improve my class management skills.”

- **Opportunities for networking**: “Participating in workshops has given me the opportunity to connect with other new teachers and to learn new strategies I can use in the classroom.”

What was NOT useful?

- **Lack of diversity of content and more targeted content**: 
a) “I do wish however, that the NTIP workshops were a little more diverse. I feel like many of the days are similar.”

AND

b) “As a first year teacher in an autism community class, I have had to go outside of the structured NTIP resources. Luckily our board has supports for community classroom teachers. Unfortunately, NTIP is geared towards mainstream classrooms and is more general in terms of supports offered. I have needed to find more specific learning opportunities for myself.”

- **Scheduling conflicts**: “The dates for workshops for the induction program often conflicted with school events, making it difficult to attend the induction program events. I would like to see more events/workshops organized by the new teacher induction program”

- **Lecture-structure and style of workshop**: “The workshops themselves are not hands on but lecture style and I do not like to be told what to do but shown”

### Feedback and TPA’s

#### What was useful?

- **Formal evaluations create reflective practice**: “The TPA’s force me to plan well for each day and to reflect on my teaching practices, therefore ensuring that I become a better teacher.”

- **TPA’s instill confidence**: “Having my vice principal observe and provide feedback reassured me that I was doing a good job which gave me confidence.”

#### What was NOT useful?

- **TPA’s are a tedious process**: “The appraisal process seemed tedious and difficult to schedule with my principal's hectic schedule.”

- **Feedback not timely**: “I requested to have my observation in December, but the principal explained that appraisals of experienced teachers were being conducted first. My appraisal was in February and I have not yet received the evaluation and feedback (other than oral) that I expected.”

- **Wanted more targeted feedback**: “I have found that I have received very little targeted guidance and feedback on my teaching. While everything I have heard from my colleagues, mentor and principal has been positive, having specific feedback about things to work on or strategies that could help improve my teaching practice would be appreciated.”

- **Creates anxiety over performance**: “I believe it should be based on numerous informal observations because one observation isn't reflective of my teaching practice and sometimes it might be a bad day with the kids.”

### Observations

- **Co-teaching increases learning**: “In my afternoon job (phys ed), I co-teach with my colleague every day (2 classes in a double gym). This has allowed me to learn an IMMENSE amount and is an amazing way to learn the job.”
- **Effective as a learning technique:** “NTIP has given me an opportunity to observe other teachers to see effective teaching strategies and then I was able to practice and try to implement the strategies into my daily teaching.”

**Other noteworthy findings:**

- **Program content needs adjustment based on experience:** “I think that there should be two different streams of NTIP: one for truly NEW teachers and another for experienced teachers who have received a contract after 2+ years (or a different threshold) of teaching. The needs of these two groups are very different.”

- **Program can be daunting:** “The NTIP program is time consuming and stressful because as first year teacher it is hard to be relaxed and feel confident in your ability when you know you are constantly being evaluated.”