

TEACHING IN THE EARLY YEARS IN ALBERTA:

Linking Research to Practice

BC Teachers' Federation

New Teacher Mentoring Project

July, 2014



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Session Agenda



Introductions	1:30-1:35
New Teacher Simulation	1:35 -2:00
Debrief & Discussion	2:00 – 2:25
ATA Study Findings Presentation	2:25 – 3:00
Individual Reflection & Break	3:00 – 3:30
Sharing, Questions & Discussion	3:30 – 4:00

Staying Afloat

(A Beginning Teacher Simulation)



Anders Alm
Jaime Beck
Owen Chan
Nan Nassef



Simulation Rules

Welcome to Sunny-Happy-Extremely-Friendly Community School!

- You are a new teacher at our school.
 - Get your paperwork filled out...
 - Get your Staff ID taken...
 - Solve any problems that come your way...
- Your ultimate goal is to make it to our Staff Social!

Simulation Debrief

What made
this experience
hard?



What would have
made the
experience easier?



From Simulation to Real Life

- Competence as a gauntlet.
- Bureacracy: If it seems reasonable, you probably did it wrong.
- I know you said it was an “open door policy,” but...
- Acronyms are a foreign language. Literally.
- To boldly solve problems with no resources...

For Reflection

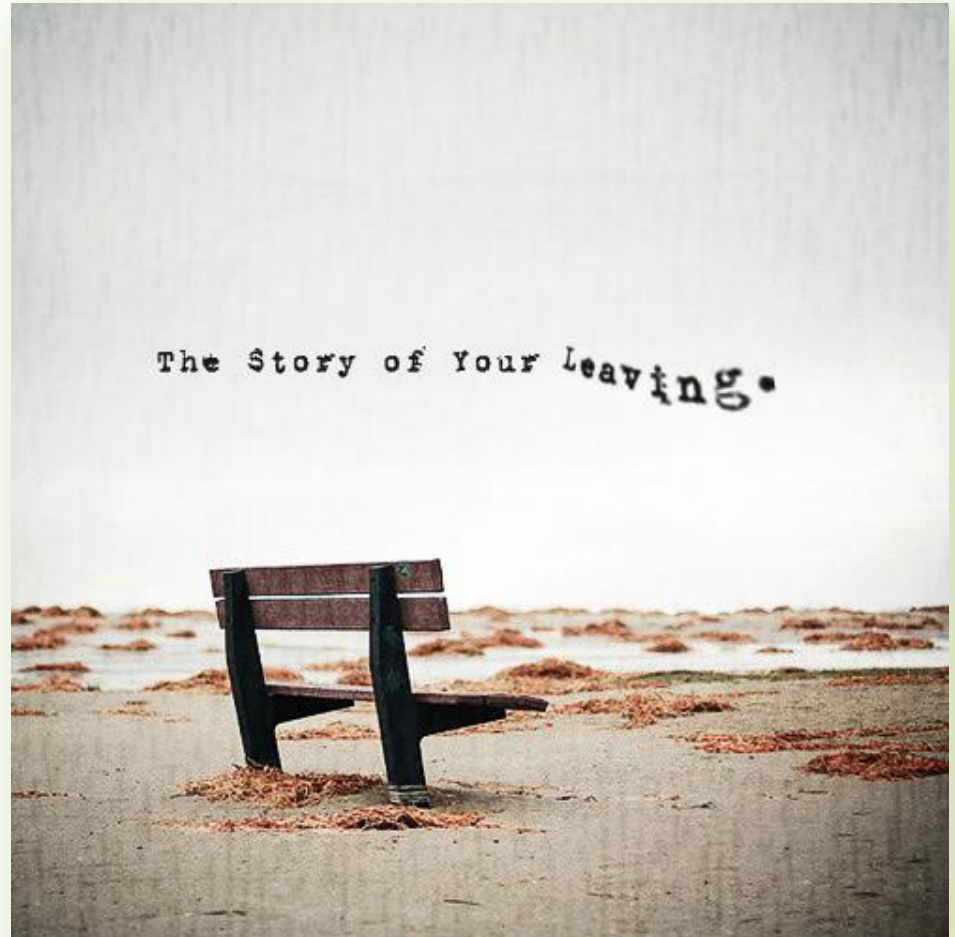
- What thoughts and feelings do you recall from your own experiences as a beginning teacher?
- What stood out for you?
- What did you notice that might apply to your own context?
- Based on your insights from this activity, what specific actions might you take in your mentoring role?
- How might you better support other mentors, or mentor/mentee pairs?

What We Already Know...

They tell us that there is more to being a teacher than just teaching: coaching, dealing with parents, being a surrogate parent in some situations.

I just don't think people see it. I didn't see it. I do now.

Teaching—what you are paid to do—is only about half of where you spend your time.



Study Rationale

- Track patterns of beginning teacher attrition and mobility
 - ▣ Literature widely states that 25-30% of new teachers will leave the profession within their first five years
 - ▣ High costs of turnover
- Explore range of induction practices across the province
 - ▣ Mentorship programs in place, but no sense of their quality or efficacy.
 - ▣ Examine the effect of induction practices on professional identity and professional growth over time.

Uncharted waters...

- Alberta's student population should grow by 112,000 students over the next 10 years
- The increase in student population over the next 10 years means that the K-12 education sector is expected to require over an additional 6,500 Full-Time Equivalent certified staff.
- Alberta is experiencing high birth rates so the number of students in grade K-3 will increase by over 20% during the next ten years.
- Using a projected student-to certified-staff ratio, (17.2:1) approximately 2,000 new hires will be needed in 2012/2013. This number is expected to increase to 2,500 new hires in 2022.
- Approximately 25% of teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years of teaching.
- Retirement rates for Alberta's teachers is expected to remain around 1,000 per year until 2016, after which time it will decrease slightly.



Source: Mark Bevan
Presentation, April, 2013
<http://www.uleth.ca/education/news/3965>

Contexts for Workforce Planning

- Shortages in specialization areas
- Shortages in rural/remote areas
- Declining enrolments in secondary education teacher education programs
- Increasing number of students with more complex needs
- Lack of needed data

Education Sector Workforce Planning Framework for Action

*Helping to place the right people
with the right skills in the right places
at the right times to meet the needs of Alberta's learners.*



explore

Alberta
Freedom To Create. Right To Achieve.

A Five Year Plan
2008/09-2013/14

Government of Alberta
Education

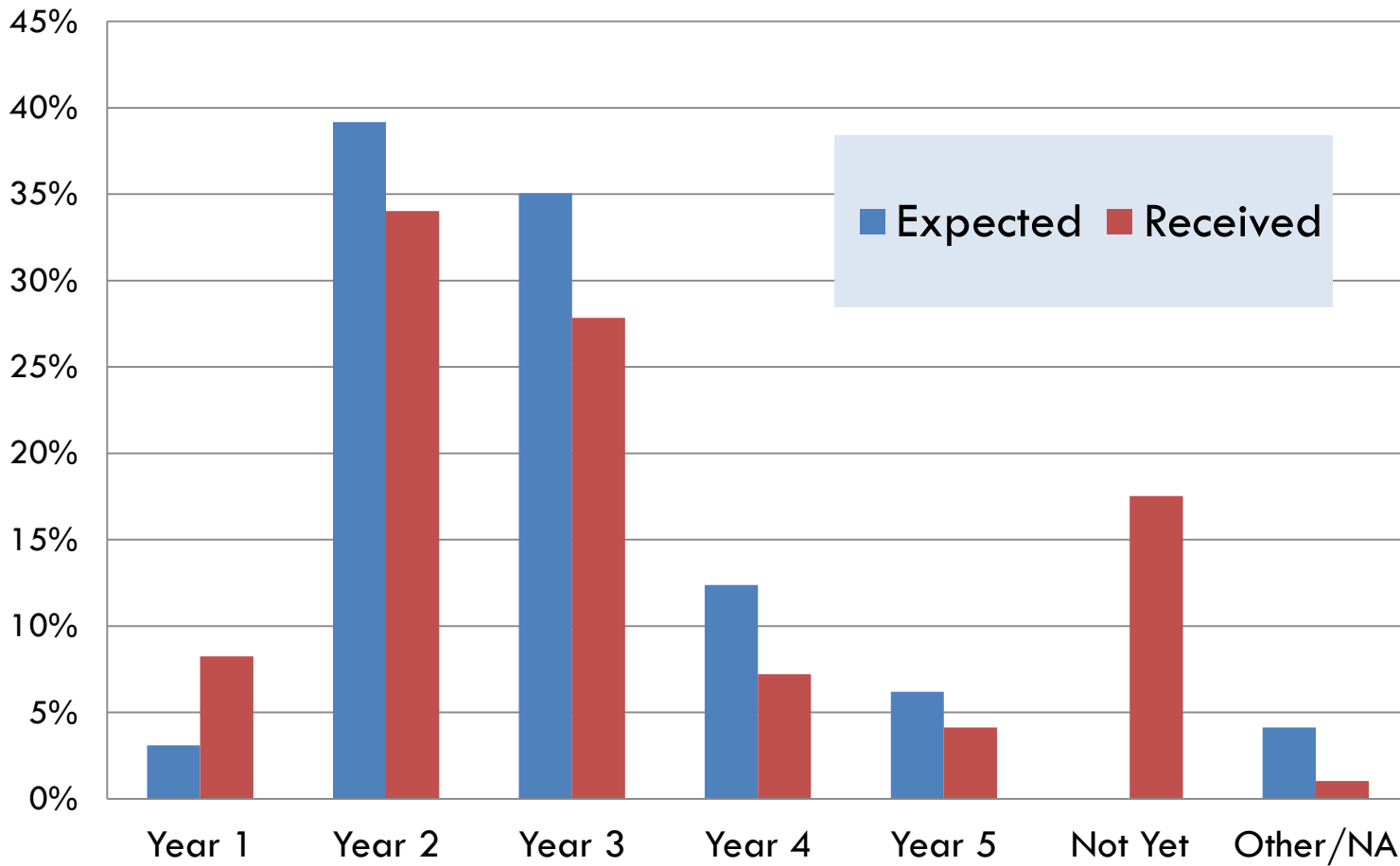
The Study...

- Longitudinal study, 5 years
- Pilot study (2007), 100 beginning teachers
- Year 1 (2008) 135 beginning teachers
 - ▣ 83% female
 - ▣ 53% elementary grades; 47% middle school and high school
- Year 2 (2009) 117 interviews (83% of original sample)
- Year 3 (2010) 106 telephone interviews
- Years 4 (2011) 98 telephone interviews, 4 focus groups
- Year 5 (2012) 90 telephone interviews, 2 focus groups, 10 individual extended interviews

Sample & Attrition

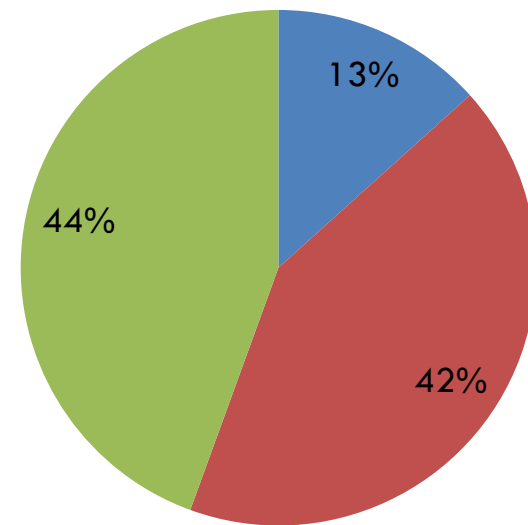
- Representation across districts, regions, and population density
- Equally divided re: primary and secondary specialization areas
- Initial sample: 135 teachers
- Active sample by Year 5: 90 teachers
 - ▣ “Active sample” are those we contacted every year.
- Attrition and mobility sample: 125 teachers
 - ▣ We were able to contact a number of teachers we’d lost along the way and confirm their location and contract status.

Continuing Contracts



Change and Stability (Years 1-5)

- Only 13% had not experienced a major change during the study (n=90)
- Major changes included changing schools and/or teaching assignments
- 92% believe three or more consecutive years in same position is required to achieve proficiency.
- Multiple changes: New teachers are always re-learning “the basics:” → Survival, not growth.



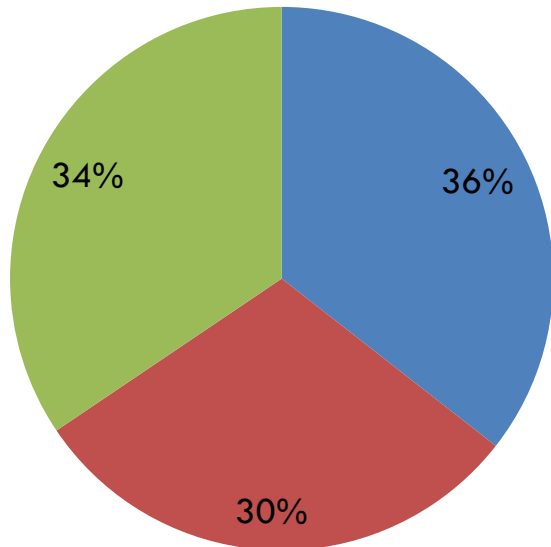
- No major changes
- 1-2 major changes
- 3 or more major changes

Employment Outcomes

N=135 (Entire original sample), Year 5

Securely Employed	98	73%
Insecurely Employed	15	11%
Left Province	6	4%
Left Profession	6	4%
Lost Contact	10	7%

Parenting and Maternity Leaves



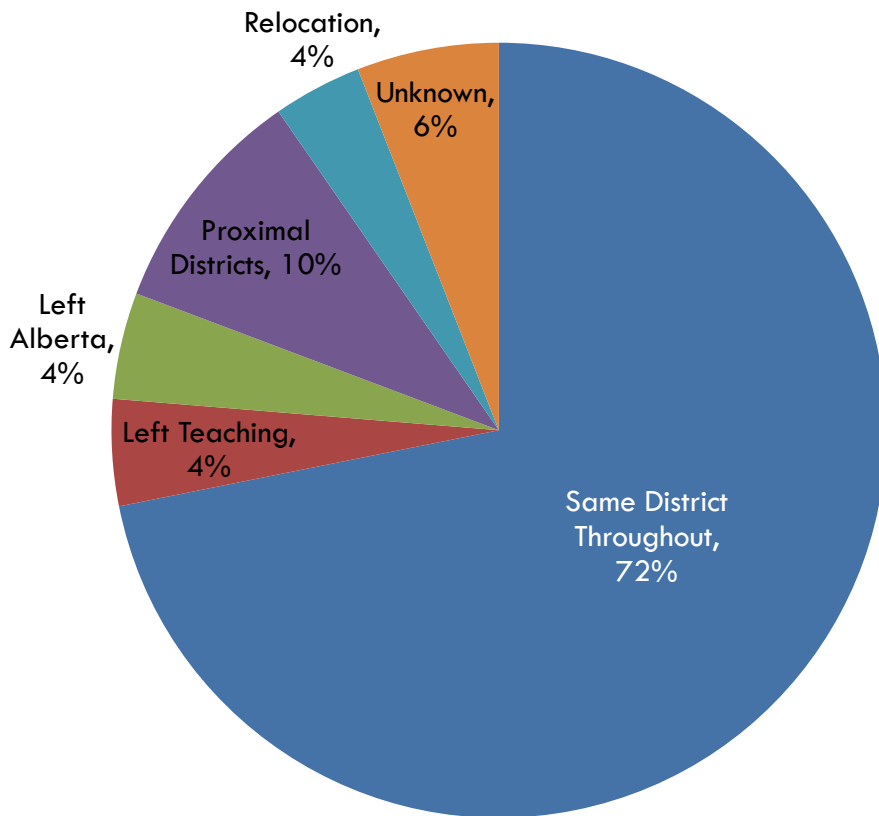
■ No/No plans

■ Not yet

■ Parents

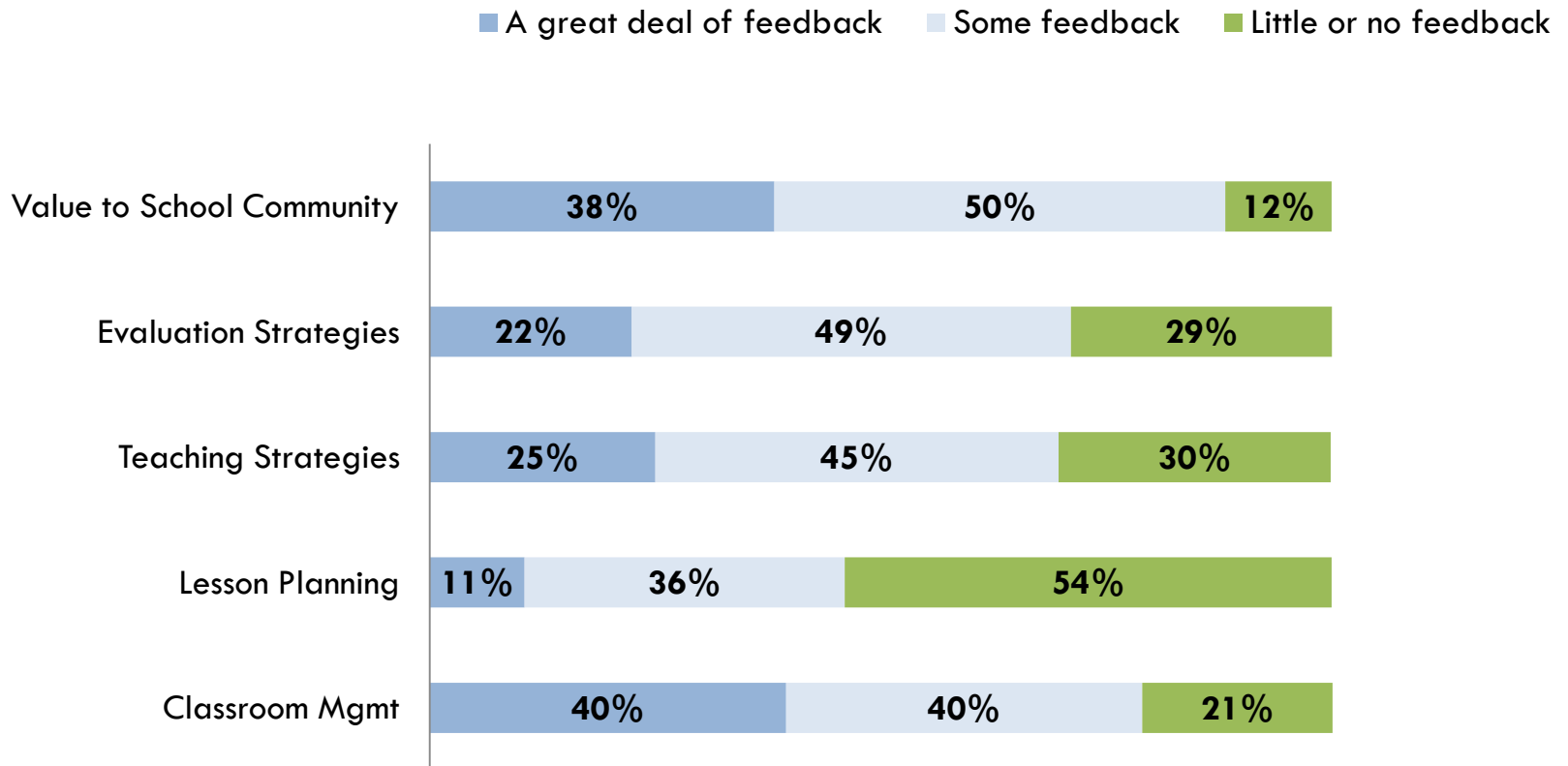
- 34% of participants have had children or are expecting some time in Y6 (n=90)
- No males in our study took parental leave, but a number had young children at home
- Parenting greatly influences teachers' concerns about work/life balance.

Mobility



- About 4% of our sample left the province or country
- Moves between proximate districts for contingent workers
- 82% stayed in same district and/or geographical area.

Feedback

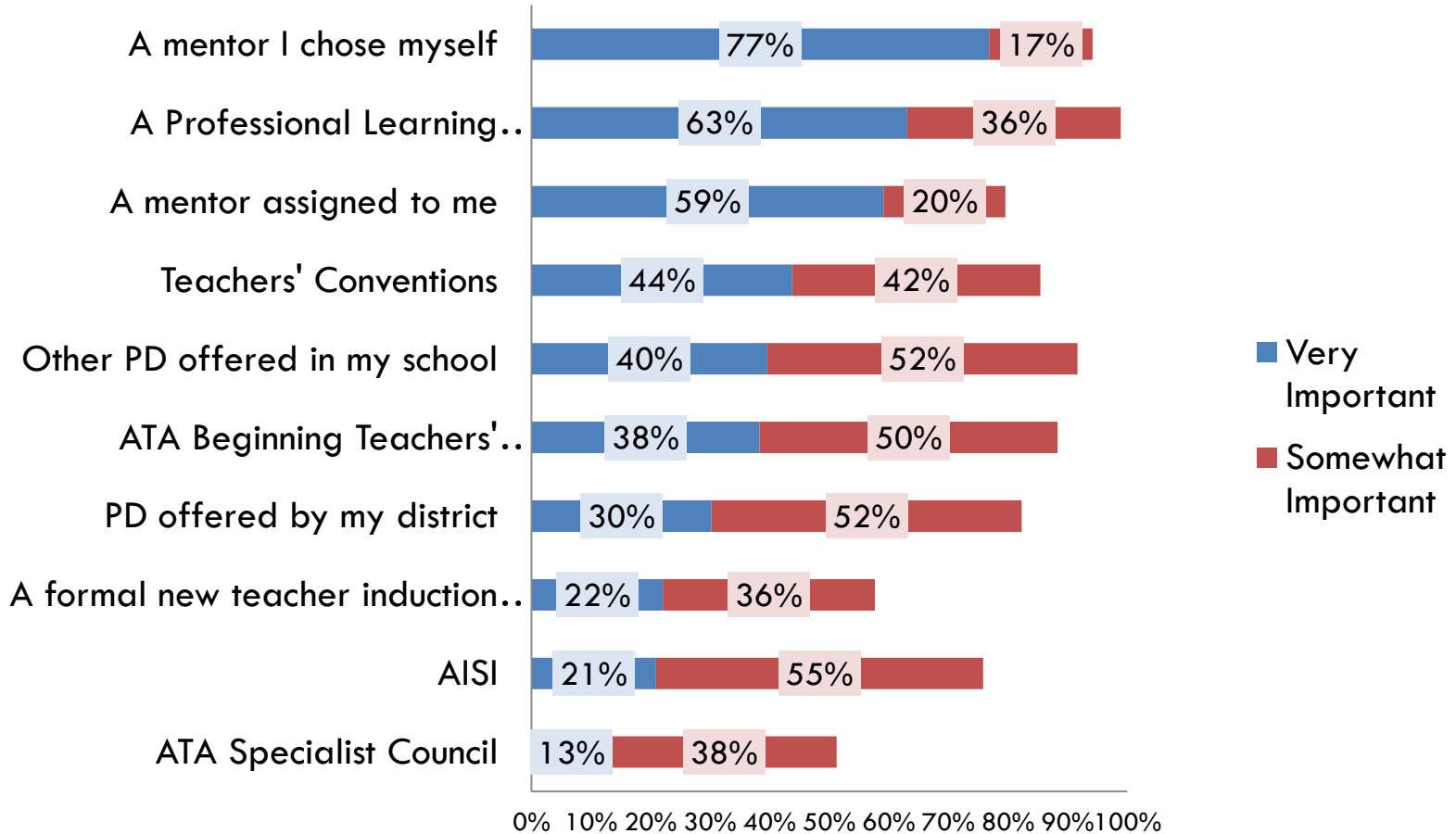


“Paying Your Dues”

- Split grades and “dog’s breakfast” teaching assignments
- High expectations re: extra-curricular activities
- Last in, first out
- Withdrawal and burnout in later years
- Repeating the pattern



Early Career Learning Resources



Mentorship

- Only half of Year One teachers had mentors
 - ▣ Only half of these teachers were satisfied with mentorship
- Critical success factors
 - ▣ Proximity and availability of mentor
 - ▣ Mentor in same subject area/grade level
 - ▣ Mentor committed to the role
 - ▣ Assigned time to meet. (Mentoring relationships without release time to meet tended to wane quickly.)
- Grade level partners and “learning communities” served significant mentoring functions.

Induction \neq Mentorship

- **Reduce complexity**
 - ▣ Special needs students
 - ▣ Multiple class/subject preps
 - ▣ Extra-curricular activities
- **Just-in-time supports**
 - ▣ School orientation and classroom set up
 - ▣ Report cards, reporting systems
 - ▣ Discipline and interactions with parents
- **Maximize loosely structured collaboration opportunities**
 - ▣ Network with other new teachers and with veteran colleagues
 - ▣ Classroom observations and assessments
 - ▣ Professional learning communities
 - ▣ Distance collaboration (grade level and subject specializations)

Meeting New Teachers' Needs

BASIC NEEDS...

- ✓ Contract security
- ✓ Access to resources
- ✓ Lesson and unit plans
- ✓ Orientation
- ✓ Classroom organization
- ✓ Affective support

MUST BE MET TO FACILITATE

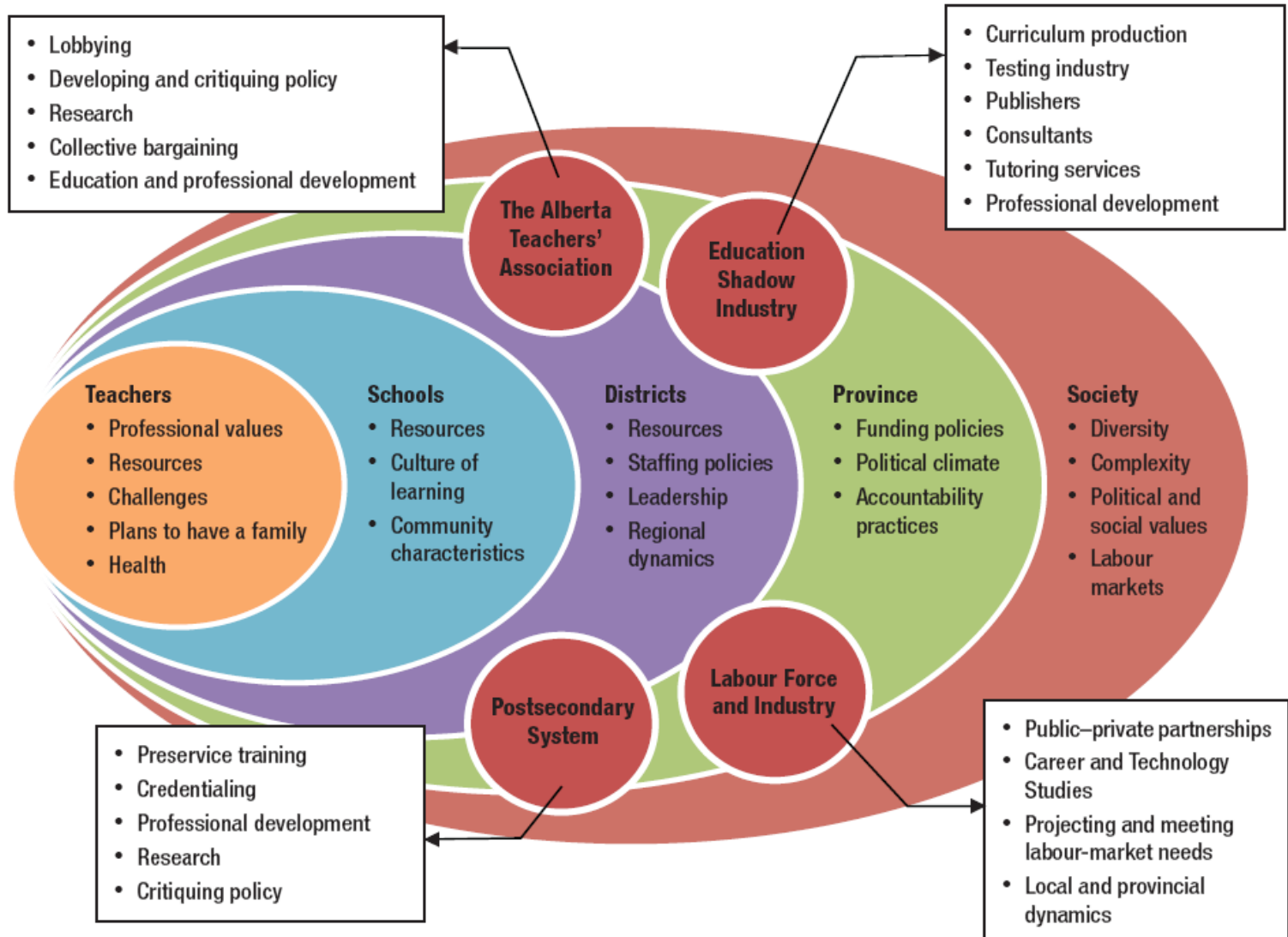
LONG TERM PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

- ✓ Honing pedagogy, assessment and classroom management skills
- ✓ Becoming a lifelong learner
- ✓ Leadership: contributing to peer learning and school culture
- ✓ Engaging students, parents and community
- ✓ Reflecting on and refining practice

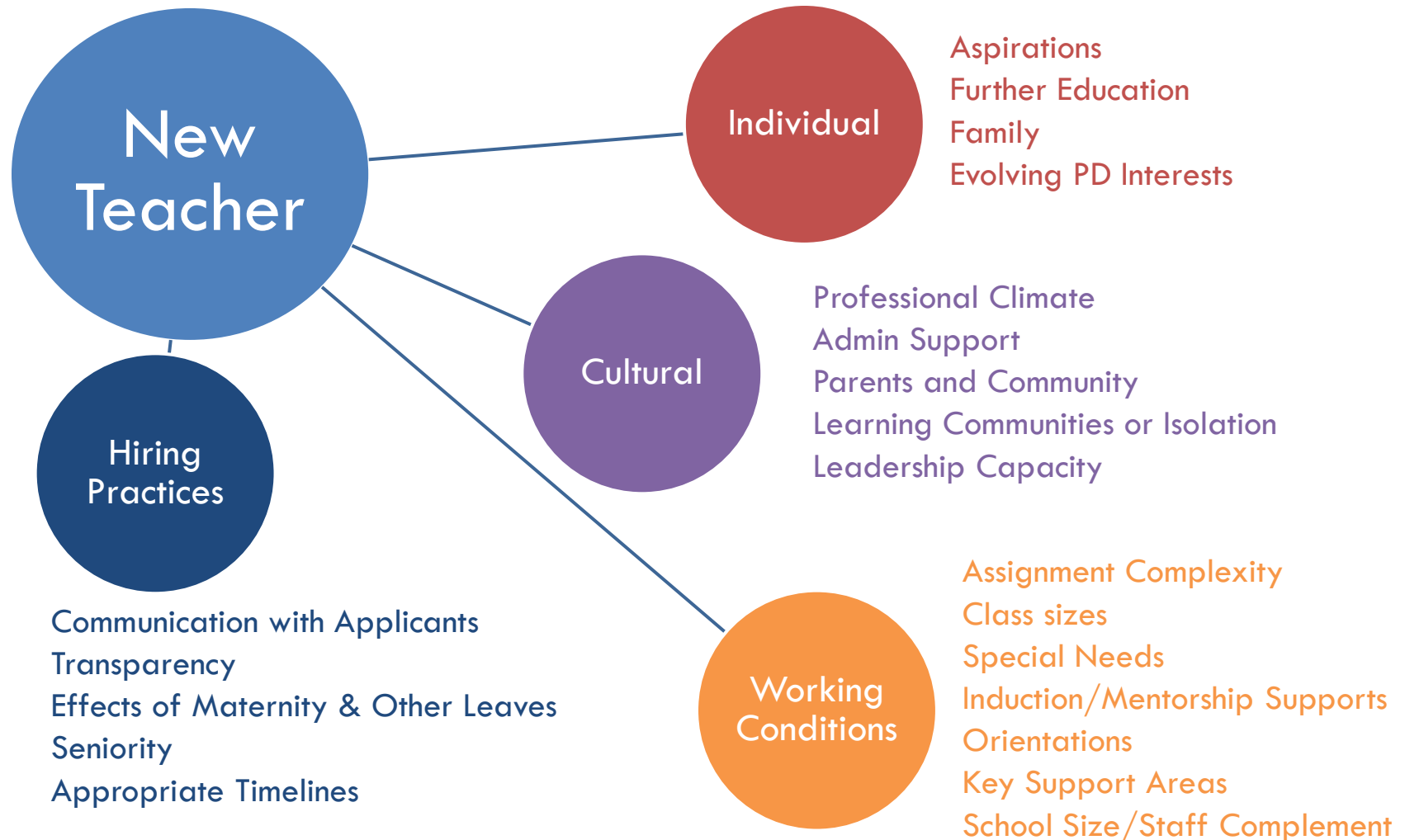
Professional Learning

- Year One: “Overwhelmed”
- Years Two and Three: Increasing discernment
 - ▣ Focus areas based on perceived student needs
 - ▣ Identifying and pursuing areas of interest
 - ▣ Collaborative learning with peers in shared areas preferred
 - ▣ “I can use it in my classroom the next day”
 - ▣ Enjoy leadership opportunities (legitimacy, recognition)
- “Foreclosure” on beginning teacher identity?

Teacher Induction: Systems Thinking



Immediate Conditions Affecting Early Career Teachers



Workforce Planning Considerations

- **Our data suggests that:**
 - ▣ After 5 years, up to 15% of teachers remain insecurely employed or underemployed
 - ▣ Hiring practices lack transparency and consistency
 - ▣ Secure part-time positions and job sharing are attractive alternatives for teachers with young families, yet few such positions are available
 - ▣ Isolation and difficult working conditions contribute to attrition in remote/rural areas
 - ▣ Older teachers, parents, and contingent workers may be discriminated against in favour of newer, younger teachers.

An Untenured Teacher Gives Up...

- Y1: subbing Sept-Apr, 0.5 May/June, discontinued
- Y2: AISI funded 0.25
- Y3: Subbing and a 6 month FT temp
- Y4: Subbing and a 2 month FT temp position
- Y4: Home with baby; returned to subbing.
- Y5: Subbing

“I would have liked to have had a full-time contract right from the start, but it never happened. I've applied for hundreds (literally) of positions, and I've not been offered a job, I'm fed up, but also at this stage, with 2 young children I wouldn't return now.”

Implications for Future Research

- Cooperative partnerships to conduct ongoing, large-scale attrition and mobility research
- Are contingent labour pools an untapped/neglected resource?
- Strategies to integrate subs/temps who have “done their time.”
- How can untenured teachers get “the real deal” when it comes to evaluations and employment prospects?
- Are half-time/job sharing strategies feasible?
- Focus on solutions, not needs assessment. Needs are clear!

Implications for Induction Strategies

“We advocate for students and great environments for them, but what about advocating for the people who are supposed to provide that?”

- Mentorship is critical, but must be effectively structured
- Orientation
- Mentors cannot be “assigned.”
- Districts step in to help new teachers in isolated settings to build relationships with teachers at other schools.
- Orientation/welcoming strategies.
- Do new teachers have to “pay their dues?”
- Address norms that new teachers should have the toughest assignments and the greatest burden of extra-curricular expectations
- Resentment and burnout when workloads seem unfairly distributed
- Critical role of school leadership
- Setting clear norms and expectations
- Being visible, open and approachable
- Visiting the classroom and offering ongoing, informal support and feedback

Overview: Implications for Informed Transformation

The most effective school cultures for beginning teachers are the sorts of environments that help all teachers to thrive: those that maximize opportunities for professional collaboration, and encourage school staff to assume a collective responsibility for students' learning, and for one another's professional learning.



Future Directions

Teaching in the
Early Years of Practice:
A Five-Year Longitudinal Study



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ATA Research
<http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Publications/ResearchUpdates/Pages/Current.aspx>