

Building a Professional Teaching Corps in Boston

**Survey of Teachers
New to the Boston Public Schools
in SY2003-2004**

A Report of the
Boston Plan for Excellence

June 2005

**Boston Plan for
EXCELLENCE**
IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Complete survey responses can be found on the web: www.bpe.org.

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Foreword

In the fall of 2002, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) and the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) received a four-year grant from the Barr Foundation to learn how to improve the support, induction, and retention of new teachers in BPS.

For its part, BPE agreed to use grant funds to track first-year teachers for four years and identify retention patterns through an annual survey, starting in SY2002-2003. The long-term study comprises two parts.

- Following for four years the cohort of teachers who were new to BPS in SY2002-2003
- Surveying each cohort of teachers new to BPS in years two, three, and four of the study

With grant funds, BPE also prepared a comprehensive database for the district of all newly hired teachers, which incorporates data from multiple sources. Each new teacher's electronic file now includes information on his or her degrees and majors, prior teaching experience, and other data that were previously kept in numerous paper files. After building the database and maintaining it for two years, BPE will soon hand it off to the district so that it can be integrated into BPS's new applicant tracking system.

In April 2004, BPE released the first report in this long-term study, "Building a Professional Teaching Corps in Boston: A Baseline Study of New Teachers in Boston's Public Schools," which analyzed the experiences of teachers who were new to BPS in SY2002-2003. These teachers will continue to be surveyed in their second, third, and fourth years of teaching in the district.

Like the baseline study, "Building a Professional Teaching Corps in Boston: Survey of Teachers New to the Boston Public Schools in SY2003-2004" seeks to inform the district's response to new teachers' needs.

This report was written by Jennifer Amigone, Erika Moldow, Ellen Guiney, and Rachel Becker. It is also available on the web at www.bpe.org.

Building a Professional Teaching Corps in Boston

Survey of Teachers New to the Boston Public Schools in SY2003-2004

Introduction

When a new teacher leaves a school district after just a few years, the investments made to induct that teacher into the culture, expectations, and instructional practices of the district and school are lost. In Boston, that investment is significant.

Since 1996, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) and the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) have been engaged in a concerted, districtwide effort to affect student performance by supporting instructional improvements in classrooms, raising over \$50 million in private funds and dedicating millions more of district monies for staff development for its 5,000 teachers. Many of these funds have been used to provide targeted professional development at the school site — Collaborative Coaching & Learning (CCL) for teams of teachers in every school — in the district’s instructional approaches and priorities.

This is the second in a series of studies funded by the Barr Foundation to identify the factors in Boston that contribute to the high attrition rate of new teachers — by BPS estimates, about half leave within three years — and to help guide the district in its efforts to stem the loss. In fact, since reviewing the draft report, Boston’s Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning has used its recommendations to craft an overall induction plan, and the Office of Human Resources (OHR) has already begun to put in place many of its recommendations.

This report is based on survey data, transcripts, and BPS-provided data on new teachers hired for SY2003-2004. Three events of that school year are worth noting.

- Budget cuts precipitated teacher layoffs in spring 2003. Although all layoff notices were ultimately rescinded, hiring for September 2003 was both delayed and disrupted.
- Because of budget cuts, the district and teachers’ union agreed that for SY2003-2004, BPS would reduce its funding for mentors for new teachers from \$500,000 to \$200,000. As a result, not all eligible new BPS teachers¹ had a mentor, and those who did had one for three months at most.
- When the teachers’ contract expired in August 2003, the union demanded that teachers “work to rule,” that is, to do no more than the contract requires, which affected participation in professional development in many schools. Work to rule ended when a new contract was signed in April 2004.

It is important to note that this report features responses of new teachers hired before the change in OHR leadership in February 2004 and the hiring of special staff for new teacher support in spring 2004.

¹ BPS’s mentoring program is designed for beginning teachers newest to the profession; new BPS teachers with one year or more teaching experience are not eligible to receive mentors.

The Keys to Retention: Whole-School Induction and Support from Other Teachers

While research indicates that teacher retention is improved by strong and well-designed induction plans at both the district and school levels, historically, few schools have developed such plans, and new teachers are often left to fend for themselves in relative isolation. The terms that researchers use to characterize the profession's handling of new teachers are indicative: "cannibalizing its young" and fostering an environment of "sink or swim," "trial by fire," or "boot camp" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Over the last two decades, mentoring has become the dominant form of teacher induction employed by districts (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999), including Boston. Here, mentors were first established in the 1989 teachers' contract, with oversight by a joint management-union committee, and BPS pledged \$500,000

"It's simple yet so profound — it is the teacher who holds the key to student achievement. Induction is a mechanism for improving the quality of teachers."

— Wong & Wong, 2003

per year to provide stipends for lead teachers, including mentors. In the last several years almost all of that allocation has gone to mentors, whose stipend is currently 7% of their annual salary — higher than mentor stipends in many other districts.

At issue is alignment: The process established originally by the joint committee to select and assign mentors has not been realigned closely with the district's current work. To be most supportive of new teachers, mentors need to be chosen based on their

demonstrated understanding of and success in using the district's instructional approaches and their active participation in coaching, as well as their content knowledge and classroom management skills.

Given the challenges new teachers face, expecting them to "sink or swim" makes little sense. At both the district and school levels, BPS must develop a coordinated, comprehensive model for making a teacher's first few years a positive experience so they stay and learn to become the strong teachers the city needs.

Elements of a Successful Induction Program

from *How to Retain New Teachers* (Wong & Wong, 2003)

- Begin with an initial four or five days of training (in classroom management and effective teaching techniques) before school begins.
- Offer a continuum of professional development through systematic training over a period of two or three years.
- Provide study groups where new teachers can network and build support, commitment, and leadership in a learning community.
- Incorporate a strong sense of administrative support.
- Integrate a mentoring component into the induction process.
- Present a structure for modeling effective teaching during in-services and mentoring.
- Provide opportunities for inductees to visit demonstration classrooms.

Key Findings and Recommendations

In May 2004, BPE mailed surveys to each of Boston's 332 teachers who were new to BPS in September 2003 and still teaching in BPS in spring 2004; 181 teachers completed the survey, yielding a response rate² of 55%. Survey questions addressed the following: their perception of the district's recruitment and hiring practices; their education, training, and background; their experience with professional development, including CCL; mentoring and other sources of support they received; their perceptions of their school and of their first-year teaching experience; and their future plans to remain in BPS and/or in teaching.

In general, findings from the survey are consistent with the research literature, highlighting the critical role school leadership plays in teachers' experiences and the importance of collegial support in the first year. The findings point to the need for improving school-based induction and creating a plan in which the whole school assumes responsibility for every new teacher. Effectively addressing this requires more thinking on the part of schools and the district. Some fixes are relatively quick and involve little financial investment; others require contractual changes.

Finding

The greatest challenges teachers faced in their first year were twofold: insufficient communication, direction, and support from principals-headmasters and other administrators and lack of clarity about the norms and expectations in their school for teachers.

Those teachers still teaching in BPS in September 2004 felt they received better support from their principals-headmasters than those who left after their first year. According to one teacher, "BPS is a big system and there aren't enough (or weren't enough) supports in my building. I felt isolated in a position to sink or swim."

Recommendations

- Evaluate principals-headmasters on their ability to provide useful feedback to teachers from their classroom observations.** Fifty-four percent of respondents observed by their principal-headmaster indicated receiving helpful or very helpful feedback, and 10% reported receiving no feedback at all. Teachers viewed their principal's-headmaster's feedback as being the least helpful source of feedback received in their first year. Though principals-headmasters have had professional development on evaluating and providing feedback to teachers, it remains insufficient.

"[My greatest challenge is the] lack of support. I have no clue how I am doing in the classroom except I think I am doing well based on general feedback. I know the principal thinks I am a good teacher, but this does nothing to reassure me when every day I fight/argue with my students."

— New BPS Teacher

² In general, survey respondents were found to be similar to non-respondents on most known characteristics. Female and white teachers were significantly more likely to respond to the survey, and Hispanic and high school teachers were significantly less likely to respond. Additionally, survey respondents were more likely to still be teaching in BPS by the 2004-2005 school year. Therefore, survey responses may be somewhat skewed toward teachers with a more positive experience in the district. A more complete summary detailing the characteristics of survey respondents versus non-respondents can be found at www.bpe.org.

“[My biggest challenge was the school’s] lack of a clear disciplinary plan and a poor administrative response to disciplinary problems.”

— New BPS Teacher

- ▶ **Require each school to plan a formal orientation for new teachers and prepare a written handbook with school procedures, norms, important dates, evaluation protocols, and other relevant information.** The OHR has recently created a template that principals-headmasters can customize to their school.
- ▶ **Expect that principals-headmasters will support teachers in managing disciplinary issues.** Teachers still teaching in BPS in September 2004 were more likely to agree that they could get help if a problem arose in their classroom than those who left.

Finding

New teachers found their colleagues to be their most valued resource. The district and schools should create more opportunities for teachers to meet with and learn from one another.

“What keeps good teachers are structured, sustained, intensive professional development programs that allow new teachers to observe others, to be observed by others, and to be part of networks or study groups where all teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect each other’s work” (Wong & Wong, 2003).

Recommendations

“[My biggest source of support has been] my colleagues and the teachers around me. Without them, I wouldn’t have made it.”

— New BPS Teacher

- ▶ **Provide new teachers with more opportunities to learn from their colleagues through CCL and other school-based professional development.** Ninety percent of new teachers reported training from other colleagues as being helpful, higher than any other type of training they received in their first year.³ CCL was judged useful by the majority of participating respondents, and those who engaged in it were more likely to continue teaching in BPS than those who did not. In addition to CCL, other school-based professional development opportunities encouraging collegial learning should be developed and supported.
- ▶ **Require that schools increase opportunities for new teachers to be observed by and to observe their colleagues and ensure that feedback is provided.** Of new teachers who observed a colleague’s teaching, almost 80% viewed it as a helpful experience.

³ Based on professional development opportunities in which more than 10 teachers participated.

- ▶ **Ask schools to offer candidates opportunities to interview with other teachers during the hiring process and to invite serious candidates to shadow a teacher for a day.** Only 43% of teachers reported interviewing with another teacher in the school, a lost opportunity for candidates to meet those with whom they may be working. Respondents identified wanting to spend more time in a school while in session, participating in classroom observations, shadowing teachers, and sitting in on meetings during the hiring process. This would allow candidates to gain a more accurate perception of the school and help to better align expectations with reality. [It is important to note that if there are layoffs, the hiring process is delayed, often past the end of the school year, preventing teacher applicants from observing classes and meeting with staff.]

“Through speaking with teachers during my interview and prior to accepting my position, I gained an accurate perception of my school and position.”

— New BPS Teacher

- ▶ **Improve mentoring.**

- **Assign all new teachers a mentor in the same school, grade, and/or subject and provide formal release time to support this relationship.** Though teachers with mentors were no more likely to stay in BPS than those without, teachers with a better mentor match were more likely to continue teaching in BPS; ensuring the best match possible is a key component of the mentor relationship. Additionally, only 22% of new teachers with mentors characterized the amount of release time for working with their mentors as at least adequate.
 - **Provide training for all new mentors and support for all mentors.** Every beginning mentor needs to be trained, and all mentors need to be provided with greater oversight and support from their principals-headmasters. Since accountability for mentors rests with them, principals-headmasters must ensure that mentors not only fulfill their time commitment but also serve as an instructional resource to their mentee — and do so within the district’s blueprint for reform, Whole-School Improvement.

“My mentor [was the most helpful support to me this year] but why did I have a mentor for two months only? I wish I could have been observed more often and given the opportunity/time to observe other teachers in my content area. Poor choice on BPS’s part to offer mentors for so little a period of time. I can understand why so many new teachers leave!”

— New BPS Teacher

Conclusion

This second report on the experiences of new teachers in BPS continues to build on and confirm data from the baseline year: Teachers find their colleagues their most critical resource, and their greatest challenge is the often unsupportive environment in which they work.

To adequately address attrition, BPS must support schools in developing induction approaches that leverage collegial learning and mitigate negative school climate issues. The strongest induction programs go beyond one-to-one mentoring and include whole-school efforts connected to the school's overall plan, thus offering new teachers access to the expertise that resides in every school.

BPS must better support schools toward this end, and do so within its own reform framework, Whole-School Improvement. Retaining good teachers will lead to less discouraged teachers and ultimately to better student outcomes.

References

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- Fideler, E. & Haselkorn, D. (1999). *Learning the ropes: Urban teacher induction programs and practices in the United States*. Belmont, MA: Recruiting New Teachers.
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Additional Findings

Profile of All New Teachers in SY2003-2004⁴

- BPS hired 332 new teachers, 138 fewer teachers than the prior year.** Most new teachers were white (61%), female (74%), and in regular education (48%).

Figure 1: New Teachers' Race/Ethnicity

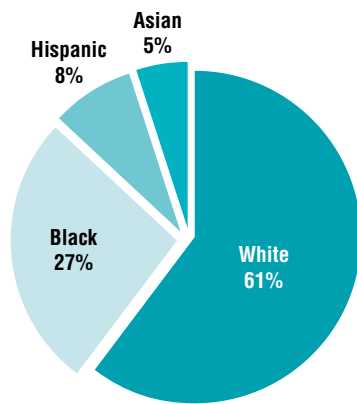
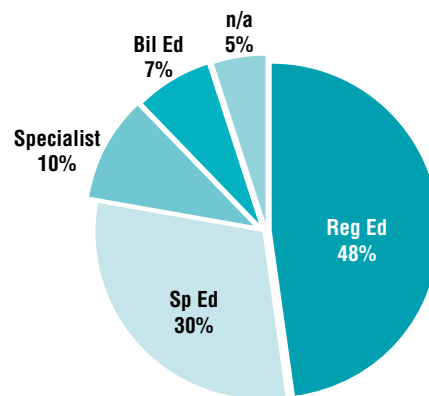


Figure 2: New Teachers' Programmatic Placement



- Efforts to diversify the teaching force are being seen.** Thirty-five percent of new teachers were black or Hispanic compared to 29% the year before. Efforts to come closer to the percentage of black and Hispanic students (77%) in BPS⁵ are still needed.
- Teachers were hired at all school levels, with the highest percentage in elementary schools (33%).** Although teachers were hired in 108 of the 139 schools, two new schools⁶, Orchard Gardens School (K-8) and New Boston Pilot Middle School, comprised 13% of all new hires.
- More special education teachers were hired than the prior year.** Thirty percent of new teachers were hired in special education, compared to 18% the year before.
- No content area had a particularly high concentration of new hires.** The highest percentage in one content area was in science (7%). Of the 12 areas hiring at least 10 teachers, three were special education areas: speech and language (20 teachers), generic/resource room (16), and learning adaptive behavior (10).

“I was hired as an inclusion teacher although uncertified in special education. The behavioral and academic issues of students were severely understated.”

— New BPS Teacher

⁴ The data in this section were provided by OHR and are reflective of all of the district's 332 new teachers as of January 2004.

⁵ Data source: Boston Public Schools, March 2004.

⁶ Mildred Avenue Middle School also was new in SY2003-2004, but hired only five new-to-Boston teachers.

“My degrees and training are for high school history and social studies. I currently teach 6th grade math, ELA, and science.”

— New BPS Teacher

“Nothing can prepare you for a school environment more than student teaching.”

— New BPS Teacher

Education, Training, and Background⁷

- ▶ **Teachers received their undergraduate degrees from 156 different colleges and universities.** Five institutions graduated 10 or more new BPS teachers:

University of Massachusetts ⁸	37
Northeastern University	17
Boston College	15
Boston University	11
State University of New York ⁹	10

- ▶ **Teachers’ undergraduate degrees were in over 60 academic areas, largely in the liberal arts.** One in four new teachers held a bachelor’s degree in education, the most common major, followed by degrees in psychology (9%) and English (8%).

- ▶ **The median year new teachers received their undergraduate degree was 1998.** Only 7% were hired in their first year out of college.

- ▶ **Seventy-eight percent either held a graduate degree or were enrolled in a graduate program; 81% of those degrees (or anticipated degrees) were in education or teaching.**

- ▶ **Ten schools accounted for two-thirds of new teachers’ graduate degrees, and all are located in Massachusetts.** The top schools include:

University of Massachusetts	15%
Boston College	8%
Harvard University	8%
Wheelock College	8%
Cambridge College	7%
Lesley University	7%

- ▶ **Nearly 70% of the 317 new teachers had student teaching experience; 106 new teachers had student taught in the BPS, including 35 who had student taught at the same school where they taught their first year.**

- ▶ **Fifty-four percent of the district’s new teachers reported having formally taught prior to SY2003-2004, the largest percentage of whom (28%) taught in a public school outside BPS.**

⁷ The data in this section are on 317 of the 332 new teachers in SY2003-2004. Data for the remaining 15 teachers could not be located. For the 181 teachers responding to the survey, the data in this section were collected through questions on these topics in the survey. For teachers not responding to the survey, BPE staff collected these data by individually reviewing teachers’ resumes and employment application forms in OHR personnel files.

⁸ References to the University of Massachusetts include all campuses in the system.

⁹ References to the State University of New York include all campuses in the system.

Recruitment and Hiring¹⁰

- ▶ **Approximately 1,250 individuals applied for the 332 teaching positions in BPS open to external applicants, according to OHR estimates.¹¹**
- ▶ **Almost half of new teachers were hired on or after September 1, 2003, and only 11% were hired prior to August 1, 2003, based on BPE’s review of 246 records.¹²** Budget cuts and layoffs for SY2003-2004 contributed to late hiring.
- ▶ **Many applicants were anxious to teach in the district; half of all respondents indicated they only applied to schools within BPS.** The leading reasons for wanting to work in BPS were salary/benefits, location, and actual fit of the position by grade-level or subject.

“I am from Boston and wanted to teach in Boston.”

— New BPS Teacher

Table 1. Most Important Factors for New Teachers in Deciding to Accept a Position in BPS¹³

Salary/benefits	46
Commute/location	41
Fit of position	31
Already knew the school and district through student teaching	25
School environment/supports	21
Urban district/inner-city school	18
Principal/administration of school	17
No other options/needed a job	15
Mission of school/philosophy	14
Student population	13
Teaching staff	11

Numbers correspond to the number of times topic was cited by teachers.

- ▶ **Respondents found their jobs most often through being contacted by the principal-headmaster (32%) or learning about it from a personal contact (28%).**
- ▶ **Teachers found contacting the principal-headmaster directly (31%) or sending a resume to the principal-headmaster (21%) most effective in moving them through the hiring process.** Just 13% cited contacting OHR, either by phone or by sending a resume and application, as the most effective approach.

¹⁰ The data in this section are from the 181 teachers who responded to the survey, unless indicated otherwise.

¹¹ OHR estimates they received 11,500 applications for teaching positions in SY2003-2004, although the number of applicants is smaller since many apply for several vacancies. Of the 636 open positions, 332 were filled by external applicants and 304 by internal applicants (transfers).

¹² The date of hire is from BPE’s review of PS03 forms. As a reminder, these data pre-date the inroads the new director of OHR has been able to make around hiring.

¹³ Responses are from an open-ended question in the survey; only top responses listed.

“A faculty ‘meet and greet’ (informal) [would have been helpful during the hiring process], affording an opportunity to assess what kinds of professional support and resources I might expect.”

— New BPS Teacher

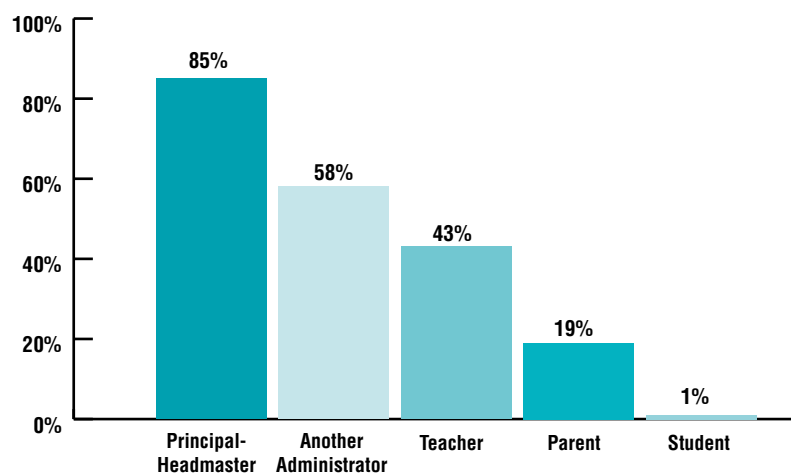
“There was limited training available about readers’ and writers’ workshop methodology and implementation.”

— New BPS Teacher

Recruitment and Hiring (continued)

- Principals-headmasters and school administrators were primarily responsible for hiring.** Although the BPS hiring process encourages collaborative school-based interviewing and the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) contract requires input from a school’s personnel subcommittee, only 22% reported being interviewed by the school’s personnel subcommittee, and 43% reported meeting with another teacher during the interview process.

Figure 3. Percentage of Respondents Reporting Being Interviewed by the Following Parties



- Respondents wanted more opportunities during the hiring process to meet with potential colleagues and to visit schools in session.** When asked what would have been helpful in the hiring process, the response cited most often was meeting and talking with staff, followed by spending more time in the school and participating in classroom observations. [See Table 2.]
- Respondents also wanted to find out more about supports, particularly informal supports, before they took a position.** Ninety-two percent of those learning about informal supports such as collegiality said this factored into their decision, as did 70% of those finding out about formal supports.
- Respondents felt least prepared for using the literacy approaches at the school, for teaching students with behavior problems, and for teaching students who are below grade level.** They felt most prepared in knowing content, in working with the age groups they’re teaching, and in knowing about useful instructional strategies.

Table 2. The Following Would Have Been Helpful in the Hiring Process¹⁴

More opportunities to speak with staff	27
More time in the school	19
Classroom observations/shadowing a teacher	14
A realistic and honest view of the school's problems	13
Communication about expectations, procedures, and norms	12
More information about students	10
Earlier hiring	5
Better orientation	5
More information about the school	5
Job description	5
More support	5

Numbers correspond to the number of times topic was cited by teachers.

- Forty-six percent of respondents reported feeling especially unprepared for some aspect of their position.** School culture, special education, their workload, and classroom management were the leading areas in which respondents reported feeling especially unprepared, when asked in an open-ended question.

Table 3. Areas in Which New Teachers Felt Especially Unprepared¹⁵

School culture: unclear expectations and norms, poor organization, support, communication	23
Working with special education students, paperwork and processes, high number of special education students	12
Workload, demanding schedule, keeping up with paperwork	12
Classroom management	11
Workshop and literacy approaches	9
Lack of materials, supplies, resources	8
Teaching a subject/grade unprepared to teach	7
Inner-city experience	3
Creating curriculum from scratch	2
Lack of job security	2
Hired late and didn't have time to set up classroom or know the school	2
Working with students at different levels	2
Teaching a broad curriculum level	2

Numbers correspond to the number of times topic was cited by teachers.

¹⁴ Responses are from an open-ended question in the survey; only top responses listed.

¹⁵ Responses are from an open-ended question in the survey; only top responses listed.

“Informal support from colleagues and the literacy coach were critical to my success this year. Once I knew what kind of support I needed and who I could go to for it, I could improve.”

— New BPS Teacher

“My literacy CCL helped me a great deal.”

— New BPS Teacher

Professional Development¹⁶

- ▶ **Fifty-nine percent of respondents reported receiving professional development in literacy and 50% in math.** While almost two-thirds viewed their training in literacy as helpful or very helpful, only half gave math the two higher ratings.
- ▶ **Ninety percent of new teachers reported training from other colleagues as being helpful, higher than any other type of training they received in their first year.¹⁷**
- ▶ **Seventy-five percent of respondents who worked with a literacy and/or math coach viewed the support they received as good or excellent.**
- ▶ **Many new teachers did not participate in CCL.** Only half of all respondents participated in CCL in literacy, and 27% participated in CCL in math.
- ▶ **CCL continues to be a valuable tool for those engaging in it.** Almost 90% of participants felt that CCL in literacy helped them to reflect critically on their instructional practices and to try different instructional approaches.

¹⁶ The data in this section are from the 181 teachers who responded to the survey.

¹⁷ Based on professional development opportunities in which more than 10 teachers participated.

Mentoring¹⁸

BPS's mentoring program is designed for beginning teachers newest to the profession; new BPS teachers with one year or more teaching experience are not eligible to receive mentors. Mentoring funds covered stipends for no more than three months in SY2003-2004.

- ▶ **Overall, 36% of all new teachers were assigned mentors; among the respondents to the survey, however, 43% were provided mentors.** Eighty-six percent of respondents with mentors reported same-school mentors; just over half had mentors who taught the same subject.
- ▶ **For the 76 respondents with mentors**
 - **Only one-third were matched with their mentors prior to the start of school (8%) or within the first few weeks of school (25%).** Twenty-seven percent of respondents were not assigned a mentor until three-six months into the school year.
 - **Eight out of every 10 teachers reported that their mentor match was good or excellent.**

“The mentoring program [was most helpful to me this year]. I met almost every day with my mentor, [who] helped with everything from classroom management to curriculum implementation to helping me just find my way around school.”

— New BPS Teacher

Figure 4: Quality of Mentor Match



- ▶ **Though more than three-quarters viewed their mentor as readily accessible, new teachers wanted more formal release time with their mentors.** Only 22% indicated the amount of release time as plenty or adequate.
- ▶ **Respondents most often sought advice from their mentors on classroom management and subject matter information.** Eighty-five percent reported that classroom management was sometimes or often the content of their discussions with mentors.

¹⁸ Official figures provided by the Center for Leadership Development (CLD), the BPS department overseeing mentoring, indicate 120 new teachers received a mentor in SY2003-2004. The section on mentoring is based on the 76 teachers indicating in the survey that they had a formally assigned mentor.

Mentoring *(continued)*

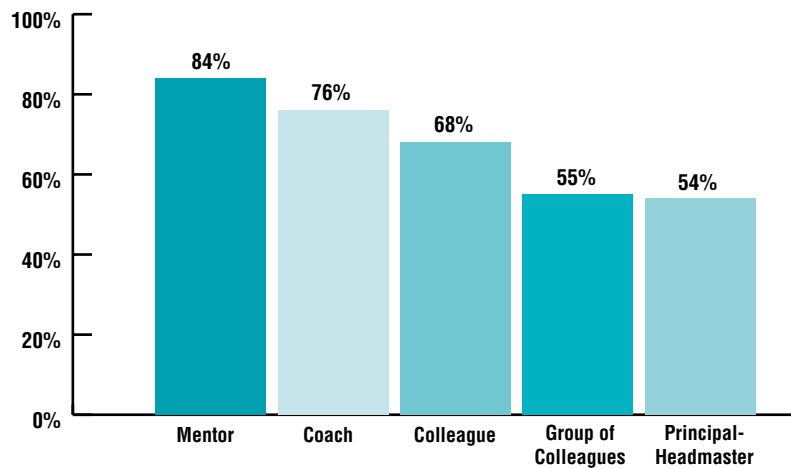
- ▶ **Teachers communicated with their mentors most frequently through regular, informal conversations.** Almost three-quarters conversed with their mentors daily (33%) or weekly (41%).
- ▶ **Eighty-six percent of respondents who observed their mentor teachers' classrooms found it very helpful or helpful, but less than half reported observing a mentor's classroom.**

Other Sources of Support¹⁹

- Overall, one-third of respondents were not observed by their principals-headmasters. Forty-two percent of middle and high school teachers and 18% of K-8 and elementary school teachers reported never being observed.²⁰
- Those who were observed by their principal-headmaster reported mixed impressions of the helpfulness of principal-headmaster feedback. Of those who were observed by their principal-headmaster, 54% found the feedback helpful or very helpful, while 10% reported receiving no feedback.

“Support from my colleagues – especially informally – has helped inform my practice.”
— New BPS Teacher

Figure 5. Percentage of Respondents Indicating That Feedback from the Following Parties Was Helpful or Very Helpful



- Over half of all respondents were not observed in the classroom by a colleague, but almost three-quarters observed a colleague's teaching. Of those who observed, almost 80% indicated that it was very helpful or helpful.
- Eighty-four percent of respondents felt they received good or excellent support from their colleagues. Roughly 60% viewed support from the principal-headmaster and other administrators as good or excellent.

¹⁹ The data in this section are from the 181 teachers who responded to the survey.

²⁰ At the middle and high school levels, it is common for an administrator other than the principal-headmaster to observe teachers.

Other Sources of Support (continued)

- ▶ **Respondents gave mixed reviews to central office-based supports.** One-third indicated receiving good or excellent support from OHR, with 16% not sure about its helpfulness. Thirty-one percent reported good or excellent support from the Center for Leadership Development, while 42% were unsure. The majority of respondents were unsure about the support they received from other BPS departments: School-to-Career (73%), Language Learning and Support (68%), and Unified Student Services (64%).
- ▶ **Although more than half report that they often felt overwhelmed by their work, 82% agreed that they generally felt successful in reaching their students.**
- ▶ **Only 17% of respondents strongly agreed that they could get immediate help if a problem arose in their classroom.**
- ▶ **Less than half of all respondents characterized as good or excellent their school’s balance between autonomy and support (41%), attention to the needs and contribution of new teachers (44%), and common planning time (49%).** Despite this, almost two-thirds felt positively about their school’s cultivating opportunities for new teachers to assume leadership roles.
- ▶ **Respondents identified myriad challenges in their first year, especially the lack of organization, communication, and support from the school’s administration and the challenges of understanding the norms and expectations of the school and their position.** Classroom management was seen as the next greatest challenge.

Table 4. New Teachers’ Greatest Challenges²¹

Lack of organization, communication, support of school administration	42
Navigating bureaucracy, understanding expectations and policies	33
Classroom management	30
Curriculum and teaching strategies	24
Lack of resources and supplies	22
Time management, long hours	18
Challenges of student population	9
Lack of parental support and involvement	5
Working in a new grade/content area	5
Low staff morale	4
Assessments	4
Special education processes, expectations	4

Numbers correspond to the number of times topic was cited by teachers.

²¹ Responses are from an open-ended question in the survey; only top responses listed.

- When asked in an open-ended question about their greatest supports, the majority of respondents cited school-based staff as being most helpful in their first year.

Table 5. New Teachers' Greatest Resources and Supports²²

Colleagues	99
Mentor	32
Coaches	30
Principal-headmaster/administration	29
Professional development offerings	17
Had no support, relied on prior training	15
Grade-level team, cluster	9
CCL	7
MyBPS	5
BPS's OIT department, technical training	5
Books, internet	5

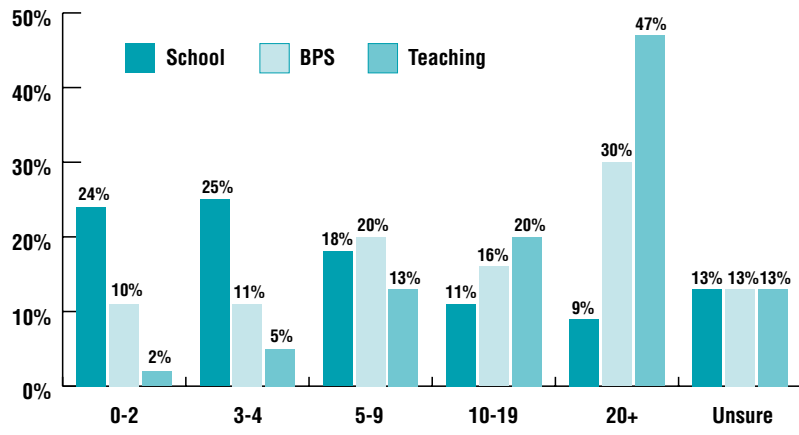
Numbers correspond to the number of times topic was cited by teachers.

²² Responses are from an open-ended question in the survey; only top responses listed.

Retention and Future Plans²³

- ▶ **Many respondents do not have long-term plans to remain in BPS, although they expect to stay in teaching.** Nearly half stated a life-long commitment to teaching, but only 30% felt the same toward BPS; just 9% were committed to staying the duration in their current school.

Figure 6. Number of Years New Teachers Anticipate Remaining in their School, BPS, and Teaching

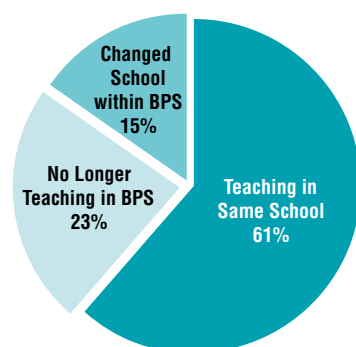


- ▶ **More respondents lengthened the amount of time they expect to remain teaching in BPS than shortened it by the end of their first year.** Twenty percent reported wanting to continue teaching in BPS for more time than originally intended, while 13% indicated less time.
- ▶ **Nine out of 10 respondents reported intentions of continuing to teach in BPS in SY2004-2005.** For those planning to leave, personal reasons were the driving factor, not dissatisfaction with their experience.
- ▶ **According to BPS, 254 (76%) of the 332 teachers new to Boston in SY2003-2004 were still teaching in BPS in spring 2005.** This represents an increase from the retention rate of 68% for teachers new to Boston in SY2002-2003. It is not known whether the 76 teachers²⁴ who left did so voluntarily or were not asked back.
- ▶ **Eighty percent of the 254 teachers who have stayed remain in the same school.**

²³ The data in this section are from the 181 teachers who responded to the survey, unless indicated otherwise.

²⁴ According to OHR records, one teacher is on long-term leave and one teacher is deceased.

Figure 7. Spring 2005 Status of Teachers New to Boston in SY2003-2004



Profile of Retention

Of the 332 teachers new to BPS in SY2003-2004, 76 teachers²⁵ left after their first year teaching, while 254 continued for a second year. Analyses were conducted to understand the similarities and differences between these two groups. This section highlights which teacher characteristics and perceptions are related to teacher retention. Although these relationships are significant, they should not be interpreted as causal.²⁶

► **Significant differences were found between new teachers who remain teaching in BPS and those who left on the following factors:**²⁷

- **Race (Hispanic and Black Teachers)**
Racial differences were found between teachers who stayed and teachers who left. Compared to other racial groups, Hispanic teachers were less likely to remain in BPS, while black teachers were more likely to remain. Although only 25 first-year teachers were Hispanic, half of these teachers did not continue in the district for a second year. No differences in retention rates were found for Asian and white teachers.
- **Undergraduate Degree in Education**
Teachers with undergraduate degrees in education were less likely to remain in BPS than teachers with a degree in another field.
- **Education-Related Experience**
Teachers who had experience related to teaching, such as a substitute or summer school teacher, were more likely to stay than teachers without this experience.

²⁵ This figure does not include one teacher who is on long-term leave and one teacher who is deceased.

²⁶ Chi-square tests and *t* tests were conducted for these analyses.

²⁷ In all of these cases, there was a statistically significant relationship.

Profile of Retention *(continued)*

- **Student Teaching Experience in Same School as First-Year Placement**

Although teachers with student teaching experience were no more likely to remain in BPS than teachers without it, teachers who student taught in the same school as their first year of teaching were far more likely to remain teaching in BPS than teachers who had not. Ninety-four percent of teachers who student taught at the same school where they taught their first year stayed in the district. The vast majority of these teachers returned to the same school in SY2004-2005.

- **Formal Classroom Teaching Experience in Another District**

Teachers who had prior teaching experience in another public school system were less likely to stay than teachers without this experience.

- **Applying only to BPS**

Teachers who applied only to BPS were more likely to remain than teachers who also applied to other districts.

- **Participation in CCL**

Teachers who stayed were more likely to have participated in CCL in literacy and/or in math.

- **Level of Principal-Headmaster Support**

Teachers who stayed in BPS felt they received better support from their principals-headmasters than teachers who left. In addition, teachers who stayed were more likely to believe that they could get help if a problem arose in their classroom.

- ▶ **No significant differences were found between new teachers who remain teaching in BPS and those who left on the following factors:²⁸**

- **Gender**

Gender was not a factor in teacher retention.

- **School level**

Elementary, middle, and high school teachers were equally likely to stay or leave BPS.

- **Program**

Teachers in special education and bilingual education were no more likely to leave than regular education teachers.

- **Year of Graduation from College**

The year teachers received their undergraduate degree was unrelated to teacher retention.

²⁸ In all of these cases, no statistically significant relationship was found.

Profile of Retention *(continued)*

- **Graduate Degree**
Teachers with master's degrees were no more likely to stay than teachers without an advanced degree.
- **Having a Mentor**
Teachers who stayed were no more likely to have received a mentor than teachers who left the system. However, although 43% indicated that they received a mentor, teachers who stayed were more likely to report that the mentor was a better match and more accessible than those who had a mentor and left.
- **Feeling Overwhelmed**
Teachers who left were no more likely to express that they felt overwhelmed by their work or that their job was unmanageable.
- **Level of Collegial Support**
Teachers reported having strong support from their colleagues, regardless of whether they stayed or left BPS.

Profile of New Teachers Made Permanent

Thirty-four new teachers (13%) were made permanent after only one year in the system. These teachers were dispersed throughout the district. While Boston Latin School gave permanent status to three new teachers (30% of its new teachers), Charlestown High School to two teachers (33% of its new teachers), and McCormack Middle School to two teachers (22% of its new teachers), no other schools gave permanent status to more than one new teacher.

BPE has background information on 32 of the 34 teachers with permanent status and survey data for 24. The following analyses²⁹ examine which characteristics and perceptions were different for new teachers given permanent status from those who were not.

- ▶ **Significant differences were found between new teachers given permanent status and new teachers not given permanent status on the following factors:**
 - **Program**
Permanent teachers were more likely to teach regular education.
 - **Gender**
Permanent teachers were more likely to be female. While 26% of all new teachers were male, just 9% of male teachers were given permanent status.

²⁹ Chi-square tests and *t* tests were conducted to determine if the relationships were statistically significant.

Profile of New Teachers Made Permanent *(continued)*

- **Graduate Degree**
Permanent teachers were more likely to have master's degrees.
 - **Any Student Teaching Experience**
Permanent teachers were more likely to have had student teaching experience. Nearly all (94%) new teachers given permanent status had student teaching experience.
 - **Formal Teaching Experience**
Permanent teachers were more likely to have had prior classroom teaching experience.
 - **Substitute Teaching Experience**
Permanent teachers were more likely to have had substitute teaching experience.
- ▶ **No significant differences were found between new teachers given permanent status and new teachers not given permanent status on the following factors:**
- **Race**
Teachers made permanent were no more likely to be of any one race/ethnicity than non-permanent teachers.
 - **School level**
Teachers made permanent were equally likely to teach at the elementary, middle, or high school levels.
 - **Student Teaching Experience in Same School as First-Year Placement**
Although teachers given permanent status were more likely to have had student teaching experience, prior student teaching experience at the same school was not related to teachers' permanent status.
 - **Participation in CCL**
CCL participation in literacy and/or math was not related to permanent status.
 - **Having a Mentor**
Permanent teachers were no more likely to have had a formal mentor.
 - **Level of Principal-Headmaster Support**
New teachers made permanent were no more likely to feel they received strong support from their principals-headmasters.



**Boston Plan for
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The Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools is a local education foundation established in 1984 to support the city's schools in raising student achievement.

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