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## The COVID-19 Impact on Induction Support

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# THE COVID-19 IMPACT ON INDUCTION SUPPORT

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*Abstract: For beginning teachers, Fall 2020 provided an unforgettable first year. The previous spring had brought abrupt and unexpected changes to teaching. Schools closed without notice, student teaching experiences stopped midway through, and teachers were thrown into situations they had never been trained to address. This led to difficult decisions and new obstacles as the world fought to manage COVID-19 and the associated fallout. Teacher candidates graduated with incomplete student teaching experiences and gaps in understanding. Induction programs support beginning teachers as they transition into their own classroom and provide guidance in meeting performance standards. As a result, seven local school districts and one metropolitan university induction program partnered to support high-intensity induction in the midst of the pandemic. This raised the question: What impact, if any, did COVID-19 have on beginning teachers and the induction support provided? This paper outlines the changes in targeted mentoring and coaching actions, the actions most affected by COVID-19, and the implications moving forward.*

For beginning teachers, Fall 2020 provided an unforgettable first year. The previous spring had brought abrupt and unexpected changes to teaching. Schools closed without notice, student teaching experiences stopped midway through the semester, and teachers were thrown into situations they had never been trained to address. This led to difficult decisions and new obstacles as the world fought to manage COVID-19 and the associated fallout. Teacher candidates graduated with incomplete student teaching experiences and gaps in understanding. Teaching in general is challenging and unpredictable, but also a highly context-dependent process (Henning, et al., 2012; Kennedy, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). One of the most difficult aspects for beginning teachers is the ability to transfer the knowledge from teacher preparation to their personal contexts (Whitney, et al., 2013). The pandemic made these connections harder to find and introduced scenarios never experienced by veteran teachers.

Often districts turn to induction to support and guide beginning teachers in the early stages of their careers. Induction programs support beginning teachers as they transition into their own classrooms and provide guidance in meeting performance standards. First year teachers experience varying degrees of concern, and effective induction programs bridge the gap between university teacher preparation and professional teacher practice (Wexler, 2019). Typical obstacles for beginning teachers include feelings of isolation (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Davidson & Dwyer, 2014; Nehmeh & Kelly, 2018) and lack of support (Dunn et al., 2017; Wexler, 2019). Both negatively impact retention (Clandinin, et al, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Teacher stress is often associated with job demands, discipline concerns, emotional exhaustion, time constraints, and low self-efficacy (Betoret and Artiga, 2010; Collie et al., 2015; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2018). The pandemic added the need to assess student reactions behind masks, manage socially distant student interactions, and engage both face-to-face and online environments. These obstacles only further promoted the need for high-intensity induction support.

In the fall of 2020, seven local school districts and one metropolitan university induction program partnered to support high-intensity induction in the midst of the pandemic. This raised the question: What impact, if any, did COVID-19 have on beginning teachers and the induction support provided? This paper outlines the changes in targeted mentoring and coaching actions, the actions most affected by COVID-19, and the implications moving forward.

## High Intensity Induction During the COVID-19 Pandemic

An induction program provides support to beginning teachers as they transition into their own classroom. This is often the first time teachers independently take on all the tasks of teaching in a self-created context. Induction has three goals: improvement of teacher effectiveness, increased retention, and student achievement

(Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Comprehensive induction programs provide both mentoring and coaching. This strengthens teachers' resiliency in the profession (Kutsyuruba et al., 2014), provides support to increase retention (Boreen, et al., 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015), and positively impacts student achievement (Allen, 2013).

Effective induction supports a new teacher's transition into their new environment and bridges gaps in understanding (Kearney, 2017; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Jensen, 2010). Although varying degrees of induction support have proved successful, high-intensity induction activities have been more effective than low-intensity activities (Dishena & Mokoena, 2016; Moore & Swan, 2008). High-intensity activities affect teacher quality and positively impact student learning (Aaronson, et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Madda, et.al., 2012). Low-intensity activities force engagement at a surface level, such as school tours or sharing information or resources, whereas high-intensity activities shift the focus to action. Glazerman et. al. (2006) highlighted high-intensity induction program components: 1) orientation, 2) assessment, 3) professional development workshops, 4) mentoring and peer coaching, 5) small group activities, and 6) observation. A decade later, Dishena & Mokoena (2016) further refined the definition of high-intensity induction by outlining the structures associated with the induction components previously identified: 1) intensity/duration, 2) resources offered, 3) format or structure of support used, 4) content, and 5) mentoring. High-intensity induction includes modeling, resources, and guidance through both mentoring and coaching over a sustained duration. Conversations and reflection convey active listening and are based on trust and an openness to new ideas in a non-evaluative relationship. The structure of the induction program impacts the outcomes.

Effective teachers manage behaviors, organize classrooms, instruct, and assess - all while supporting the social-emotional needs of their students. This is why teacher preparation programs require teacher candidates to spend extensive time in the field practicing skills related to coursework (Darling-Hammond, 2010; American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2018). These experiences are structured to developmentally build upon and integrate previous theory and practice (Zeichner, 2012) to provide opportunities for reflection and professional growth. Teacher candidates can practice strategies discussed in coursework, apply feedback, and refine teaching skills. This ability to practice strategies in advance with the support of an experienced teacher provides context that teacher candidates can call upon when in their own classrooms. High-intensity induction leverages this background knowledge to help teachers improve and transition faster.

## Stages of a First Year Teacher

High-intensity induction support also considers the stages of a first-year teacher. Empowering first-year teachers requires an understanding of their social-emotional and instructional needs. Acknowledging and supporting via the stages of a first-year teacher provides a more productive experience (Moir, 1999) and drives the subsequent mentoring and coaching. The five stages described by Moir (1999) include the following:

1. During *anticipation* teachers are excited and idealistic as they begin the year. They plan to have the perfect classroom; the one they always imagined.
2. In *survival* teachers are overwhelmed as they begin to understand the hours outside of the school day that go into teaching. The ideal classroom they imagined looks a little different and feels exhausting.
3. While in *disillusionment*, teachers begin to question their commitment and competence. The accumulated stress may put a physical and emotional strain on teachers. The ideal classroom once imagined feels as if it is crumbling around them.
4. In *rejuvenation* teachers begin to find positives in their practice and start to feel they can catch up. They begin to feel in control again and are able to determine their wants and needs associated with classroom structures.
5. During *reflection* teachers can step back and recognize successes and obstacles. They can celebrate, analyze, and plan ahead.

Beginning teachers develop at varying rates and emotions ebb and flow. Teachers may move in and out of the stages at various times and may even slide back into a stage previously experienced (Wilcoxen, Bell, & Steiner, 2020). New teachers make mistakes and may even recognize needs, but do not always have the tools or skills needed to implement change. This can impact confidence and self-efficacy. High-intensity induction support calls upon knowledge of the stages in tandem with high-intensity structures to guide and ground new teachers.

### Context and Methodology

The Career Advancement and Development for Recruits and Experienced teachers project (CADRE Project) is a 14-month graduate induction program for beginning teachers designed to assist with challenges unique to entry into the profession of education. The acronym epitomizes the heart of the project in that it offers multiple opportunities for both new and experienced teachers. This collaboration between the CADRE Project and seven local school districts assigns each beginning teacher an *associate* during their induction year. Associates are veteran teachers who provide support in the classroom through targeted mentoring and coaching practices. Actions include: co-planning, co-teaching, observation, analyzing data, managing behaviors, problem-solving, modeling, professional guidance, and social emotional support for their assigned teachers. Associates provide a minimum of five hours of induction support each week per teacher. Additionally, they engage in weekly professional development opportunities to address mentoring and coaching strategies, engage in problem-solving, and serve as a support network for each other.

To answer: *What impact, if any, did COVID have on beginning teachers and the induction support provided?* the researcher compared both quantitative and qualitative data from Fall 2019 and Fall 2020. Associates track the targeted mentoring and coaching actions used to support their teachers weekly via electronic forms. The actions have been identified through research (Aguilar, 2013; Costa & Garmston, 2015; Hall & Simeral, 2015; Knight, 2016; Sweeney, 2010) and past associate data collection. The actions are reviewed for content validity each May. August forms are analyzed for inter-rater reliability to ensure actions are recorded consistently amongst associates upon the start of the year. Forms for this study were collected between August and November in 2019 and 2020.

Analysis utilized descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts to note the mentoring and coaching actions each week. Such acts were ‘tallied’ utilizing pivot tables, then converted to percentages for comparison. Additionally, teachers had opportunities to reflect each week via an electronic log. Quotes from the Fall 2020 reflection logs provided context for the descriptive statistics.

### Participants

In 2019, 36 beginning teachers participated in the program throughout 8 districts. In 2020, 31 teachers participated throughout 7 districts. Teachers spanned PK-12 to include special education. With fewer teachers in 2020, the number of associates decreased from 18 to 14 people. Data for each cohort can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Data for Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 Cohorts*

	2019	2020
Districts Participating	8 Districts	7 Districts
Number of associates	18 associates	14 associates
Number of CADRE Teachers	36 Teachers	31 Teachers
Endorsement Areas	Special Education -- 4 Middle & High School -- 4 PK - 2nd Grade -- 14 3rd Grade - 6th Grade -- 14	Special Education -- 4 Middle & High School -- 3 PK - 2nd Grade -- 9 3rd Grade - 6th Grade -- 15

### Results

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of COVID-19 on induction support. Results indicated targeted mentoring and coaching actions changed to meet the needs of beginning teachers. Associates noticed changes in targeted actions throughout the fall semester as well as their alignment to the stages of a first year teacher (Moir, 1999).

The Fall 2019 data tracked 1, 206 targeted mentoring and coaching actions compared to the Fall 2020 data which tracked 1,029 targeted mentoring and coaching actions. The percent signifies the total interactions with the

beginning teacher that focused on each identified targeted mentoring or coaching action. See Table 2 for a comparison of the two years.

**Table 2**  
*Percent of Total Interactions with Beginning Teachers focused on the Actions Utilized*

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Difference
Co-Planning	13%	13%	0%
Co-Teaching	7%	8%	+1%
Collecting Evidence Through Observation	8%	16%	+8%
Jointly Analyzing Work/Data	7%	9%	+2%
Managing Behaviors & Problem-Solving Classroom Management Concerns	18%	14%	-4%
Modeling Effective Teaching Practices	8%	6%	-2%
Planning for Routines and Procedures	16%	8%	-8%
Professional Discussions and/or Guidance	9%	14%	+5%
Social Emotional Support	12%	9%	-3%
Other	3%	2%	-1%
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	

*Note. The category 'Other' includes IEP writing, preparations for conferences, professional development, SPED paperwork support, and substituting (2020 only).*

Activities showing the most change between 2019 and 2020 included: 1) Planning for routines and procedures, 2) Managing behaviors and problem-solving classroom management concerns, 3) Collecting evidence through observation, and 4) Professional discussion and/or guidance. See Table 3 for descriptions of the targeted mentoring and coaching actions.

**Table 3**  
*Examples of Activities Showing the Most Change Between 2019 and 2020*

Planning for routines and procedures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reminders to revisit their plan</li> <li>● Provide examples</li> <li>● Helping define expectations</li> <li>● Co-planning</li> <li>● Video reflection on routines and procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Visual rubrics</li> <li>● Positive reinforcement</li> <li>● 1st day scripts, building in brain breaks</li> <li>● How to celebrate/reinforce routines/procedures</li> </ul>
Managing behaviors and problem-solving classroom management concerns	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take a break with a student</li> <li>● Processing of tiers/systems of support modeling</li> <li>● Helping students stay on task</li> <li>● 5:1 interactions, planning for 2x10</li> <li>● Analyze why a student is misbehaving</li> <li>● Student motivation lists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Co-planning/analyzing routines and procedures</li> <li>● Video of targeted/identified management problems</li> <li>● Transitions</li> <li>● Creating reinforcement systems</li> </ul>

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 Collecting evidence through observation
 

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- Videos
  - Collecting times for pacing/transitions
  - Use of communication logs for data collection
  - Using checklist/observation tools to track specific areas (eg. TAG, I notice/I wonder, Watch My Students, etc.)
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 Professional discussion and/or guidance
 

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- Working with colleagues, PLCs, teams, difficult situations, etc.
  - Helping prepare for formal observations, conferences, parent interactions, IEPs, SATs, etc.
  - Networking within district
  - Prioritizing, managing competing priorities, professionalism 101, email etiquette, etc.
- 

Associates also noted that there was no *anticipation stage* for any of the 31 participants in 2020. Teacher behaviors indicated they started the year in the *survival stage* and moved directly into the *disillusionment stage* faster than normal. This was in contrast to past years where the majority started in the *anticipation stage* and did not fall into the *disillusion stage* until late September or October.

## Changes in Support in Response to Pandemic Needs

At the core of the CADRE Project is a focus on reflective practice, including weekly one-on-one consultations with associates, monthly meetings with the teacher cohort, and weekly independent reflections and goal setting. The associate-teacher relationship allows for tailored mentoring and coaching to support immediate needs and guide actions. The areas above sparked much conversation as to how the support shifted in response to pandemic needs and the stage each teacher was experiencing.

### *Link Between High-Intensity Induction Support and the Stages of a First Year Teacher*

#### **Planning for Routines and Procedures, Managing Behaviors and Problem-Solving Classroom**

**Management Concerns.** Planning for routines and procedures saw a substantial decrease from 16% to 8%. A drop was also noticeable in managing behaviors and problem-solving classroom management concerns; this decreased from 18% to 14%. Classroom management and the associated structures (routines and procedures) and behavior management are often one of the biggest challenges for first year teachers (Nagro, et. al., 2020). Reasons for the outcome highlighted the upfront work that had to be done to address COVID-19 needs. One teacher reflected:

*“As I move into having 100% of students in the classroom next week, I know that I will have to teach the routines and procedures of being in the classroom. I am going to have to find the balance between reinforcing the COVID procedures that all groups learned and teaching ... I need to do a better job at thinking more in advance and adjusting those future plans based on what has happened on that day.”*

Unlike in previous years, teachers had to have routines and procedures in place per school and district requirements such as desk positioning, movement throughout the hallways and/or classrooms prior to starting. Safety was of utmost importance and initial structures laid the foundation. This also limited autonomy amongst classroom environments and restricted movement.

Teacher behaviors indicated they skipped the *anticipation stage* entirely and started in the *survival stage*. One reason for this may have been the inability to plan ahead due to COVID-19 implications. One first year teacher commented on the changing calendars and the need to pivot and replan at a moment’s notice. *“I planned for the first week, but now need to adjust it to be teaching every day online and with a new schedule.”* Another addressed the emotional highs and lows as decisions were made to increase safety for students:

*“We got the news that we would be going 100% virtual [online] learning for the first quarter. I had just finished getting my room set up, supplies in the students’ desks, and mentally prepared to have half [of my students] in my classroom per day. Last night, I met each one of my students and their excitement to return to school was life changing. It finally felt real. After hearing the news today that we are going 100% virtual [online], it crushed me because I know how crushed my students are.”*

For face-to-face environments, masks and social distancing initially limited conversations and interactions amongst students, which can be directly related to behavior and classroom management. Classrooms were overall quieter as the year started, as masks served as a non-verbal reminder for students. With reduced class sizes, management was easier and the one-on-one connections with students to address concerns happened more quickly.

For those who started in online situations, the routines and procedures looked very different than the ones utilized face-to-face. The same guidelines needed for face-to-face environments did not apply to online environments in the same way. As for the online classroom instruction, it was noted that teachers did not recognize needed reminders that would be addressed when face to face. Aspects impacting their lack of identification included camera angles, cameras being off, weak Wifi connections, and microphones being muted. This made it difficult for new teachers to gauge engagement to sustain routines and procedures that would have been recognized face-to-face.

Initially, teachers found difficulty rebuilding stamina when students had been away from classrooms for so long.

*“I have to keep reminding myself that they haven't been in school for 5 months and many of them without any structure or things to do. They are trying to build their school stamina and if I am tired and it's hard for me as an adult to focus, they are feeling that too.”*

Some teachers encountered difficulties with online learning, *“Last week was a hot mess. So many of my ideas failed miserably ... [from face-to-face] to remote they didn't transition well. I came to realize quickly that my students can't follow directions without seeing it themselves.”* Teachers also did not have control of the online and remote environments. Some students were in quiet, independent environments for learning. Others had an adult present to prompt and guide from the other side of the camera. Yet others were learning in the midst of environments with multiple distractions. The lack of structure on the other side of the camera made it difficult for teachers to know what was needed and when to address it. Teachers began the year in the *survival stage* and some fought to find consistency. *“I want to create some normalcy in the middle of this circumstance that is anything but normal.”*

Since teachers had to transition back and forth between face-to-face and online environments, they were actually double planning or replanning for most lessons. Having to engage in this practice twice forced more time to think through decisions. Additionally, with the increased concern for health and safety, teachers may have been more methodical about the decisions they made which decreased the need for routine and procedure support. Structures limiting student interactions, decreased class sizes, and having students on the other side of a screen led to the decrease in classroom management support as well.

**Collecting Evidence Through Observation.** When considering the stages of a first year teacher, it is important to recognize that in the *survival stage* and *disillusionment stage*, the focus is on self and how the actions are impacting the teacher's ability to do what they want or need to do. Therefore, although teachers may have recognized concerns, if it did not blatantly interfere with their teaching, it was not prioritized. As a result, collecting evidence through observation increased from 8% to 16%.

With the teachers moving into the *disillusionment stage* more quickly, it was important to support growth and self-reflection to increase and sustain teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy is the confidence teachers have in their ability to positively impact learning. Teachers struggled with emotional and physical exhaustion earlier and felt they were failing before providing themselves an opportunity to begin. The teacher below was managing both online learning and face-to-face learning simultaneously.

*“I have never been more physically and mentally exhausted. I feel a bit defeated too ... After last week, I feel as though I am neglecting students who are virtual [online]. I know it is unrealistic that I hope I catch everything in the chat or that I call on every hand, but I hold myself to a very high standard.”*

Specifically, teachers struggled to see student growth. Therefore, associates focused on actions to empower each teacher based on both strengths and needs. This allowed for teachers to see more growth in themselves and their students. Teachers also questioned if students were learning. With transitions between face-to-face and online learning shifting based on need, beginning teachers found it difficult to see student progress. Questions arose such as, *“How do I know if they are doing the work or someone else is?”* *“What do I do if they aren't turning anything in online?”* Teachers also battled technology issues. *“This week was a little rough for me. I found that the technology issues are getting worse and they are beginning to frustrate me.”* This teacher went on to note the system had gone down; therefore, teaching could not begin until the end of the day. There was concern with the inability to check in with students.

Focusing on growth rather than accountability leads to a sense of empowerment and increases resiliency (Huisman et al., 2010; Le Cornu, 2009). The use of specific tools (i.e., video, reflective frameworks, planning forms, evidence trackers) to support teachers' growth helped teachers see their impact on students in both online and face-to-face settings. For example, one teacher spoke of how the associate tracked student interactions in reading:

*“I kept [interactions] brief and I could see my students at home improving in their ability to talk with their peers on Zoom right away ... students, both in person and at home, became more prepared to answer a question with a partner immediately.”*

Additionally, associates helped teachers model the use of tools with students as well.

*“We specifically modeled this strategy during my writing block, and students were practicing giving feedback to each other ... I can use [the partner talk rubric] in every subject area and it easily can be a part and small group and whole group discussion.”*

Using explicit tools (i.e., video, reflective frameworks, planning forms, evidence trackers) to show teachers the impact of their actions. supports movement through the more difficult stages (e.g., *survival, disillusionment*). This helps teachers understand the cause (teacher action) and effect (student response) of their actions, behaviors, and decisions. The ability to narrow the focus helped teachers see incremental progress along the way, rather than focusing on the obstacles that are too large to work through quickly.

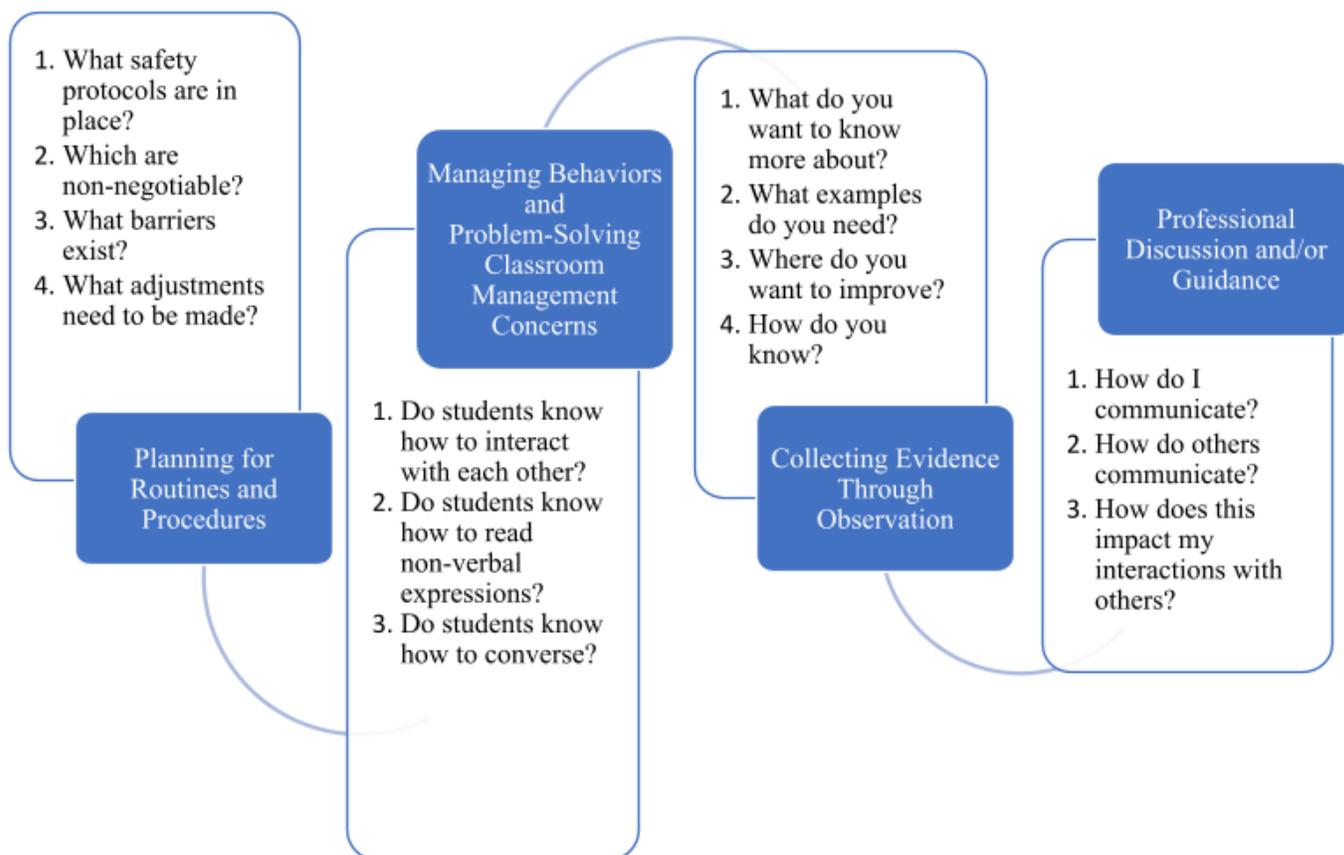
**Professional Discussions and/or Guidance.** Professional discussions and/or guidance focused on two elements. The first was guidance navigating professionalism within the school culture and the second was guidance in maintaining a professional reputation in and out of the classroom. The first was more prevalent in the data collection. This addressed helping teachers manage difficult teams, colleagues, and/or families.

Associates noted increased stress with COVID-19 protocols and how *“everyone felt like a first year teacher.”* They noted increased time demands outside of the school day and multiple ways schools were managing the obstacles the pandemic presented. The lack of substitutes forced creative solutions to immediate online and face-to-face needs. Specialists, district representatives, and principals covered classes, professional development and curriculum planning were moved outside of student hours, and classes were combined to accommodate multiple needs throughout the day. Associates noted this increased stress may have impacted professionalism as the increased need for flexibility became the norm as time demands increased. This only validated the need for high-intensity induction support. Guidance in handling difficult conversations and sustaining self-efficacy through these arduous times proved necessary to support the *survival* and *disillusionment* stages.

## Planning for the Fall 2021 School Year

As COVID-19 recovery efforts continue, associates addressed the following questions to determine future action (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
*Key Questions to Consider Moving Forward*



The school years that follow will continue to see the repercussions of COVID-19, and what the Delta variant will bring is still unknown. In planning for routines and procedures, special consideration must be given to safety protocols. Teachers will need to weigh teaching philosophies with what is possible. For example, in face-to-face environments, students may not be able to sit at tables. Online learning may still be needed. Beginning teachers will need to consider the non-negotiables connected to district and building needs in relation to the barriers. What adjustments teachers have the autonomy to make has yet to be seen.

In considering managing behaviors and problem-solving classroom management concerns, the focus will be on identifying skills that may need to be re-taught and practiced. For example, a student who spent a year online may need more support in developing social skills. This includes addressing how to interact and converse when both face-to-face and online. Continued use of explicit tools to support and strengthen teacher efficacy will be essential to guide beginning teachers throughout the phases. Three questions will drive data collection. What do you want to know more about? What examples do you need? Where do you want to improve? One question will rationalize the need: how do you know?

Communication will include how to communicate with each other, colleagues, and families. Specifically, strengths, generational differences, and communication styles will be addressed to help teachers see the various ways people convey information and support professional needs. Additionally, various technological resources will be utilized to help teachers understand how communication varies from verbal, written, or via an online resource to include when to use each.

## Conclusion

As next year begins, recovery support will be needed for all educators and students. Last year, an investment in teaching and a focus on strategic guidance supported the shifts that were needed. Moving forward, this will be just as important. Additional questions warranting further study include looking at trend data over the next three years for this cohort. How do the areas of need change over time? What educational practices will be sustained? What educational practice will be suspended or discontinued as a result of what we have learned from COVID-19?

Now more than ever, there is a need for all institutions to focus on continuous learning to improve teaching practices. Darby (2020) advocates, “without this will to change, we will waste this crisis.” (p. 19). What has been learned from this year is that a focus on students, support for each other, and collaboration has sustained the resiliency needed to move forward.

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