

NOTE TO THE READER

This file contains three separate documents.

Document A is a single page summary of the Independent Evaluation of the BTSA Program.

Document B is the Final Report to the Legislature of the Independent Evaluation of the BTSA Program.

Document C is an Executive Summary of the Technical Report submitted by the contractor, WestEd.

The complete technical report is available for review. Please contact Margaret Olebe (molebe@ctc.ca.gov) or Teri Clark (tclark@ctc.ca.gov) at the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, or Jean Teiman (jtreiman@cde.ca.gov) at the California Department of Education for information on how to access the complete technical report.

Document A
***Final Report of the Independent Evaluation of the Beginning Teacher
Support and Assessment Program (BTSA)***

SUMMARY

The 1999 Budget Act provided funds for an independent comprehensive evaluation of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) System. The Commission and the Superintendent of Public Instruction contracted with WestEd to perform the following tasks: 1) design a comprehensive evaluation study; 2) examine the effects of this program on teacher retention rates; 3) measure the impact of statewide expansion on the quality; 4) measure the effect of program on increasing the knowledge and skills of beginning teachers; and 5) examine the organizational support structure of BTSA.

The complete report is available on the Commission's website at www.ctc.ca.gov. Key findings are:

- Retention in the profession for both first- and second- year BTSA teachers is approximately 93%.
- During statewide expansion the level of services remained the same or increased.
- The effectiveness of BTSA support is challenged by workplace conditions.
- BTSA has also had effects that reach beyond the program's main purpose of supporting beginning teachers.
- There are no existing methods for adequately capturing beginning teacher knowledge and skills. A series of studies incorporating two approaches is recommended.
- The organizational structures have helped teachers create intellectual communities that improve teacher practices as well as student achievement.
- Positive support structures that were identified are the BTSA Task Force, cluster structures, state-developed formative assessment system, state-developed trainings, director meetings, and formal and informal program reviews.
- **Challenges to the continuing success of BTSA remain. These challenges include:**
 - Identifying optimal strategies for selecting and assigning support providers to beginning teachers.
 - Better articulating how support and assessment are complementary.
 - Stabilizing BTSA Task Force membership.
 - Meeting the financial and structural challenges of large regional consortia
 - Competing for support providers with other programs that rely on coaches.

Despite the challenges of systemic change, quality support for beginning teachers is becoming a statewide practice. The final paragraph of the report offers this observation,

Overall... the achievement of BTSA is remarkable. The language used by [state staff] program directors, SPs, and others is the language of family and community. In a state as large and complex as California, and within the current policy environment, the importance of maintaining a sense of communities of learners cannot be overstated.

Document B

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing California Department of Education

Final Report of the Independent Evaluation of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Programs (BTSA)

KEY FINDINGS

Retention of Beginning Teachers in the Program

- **Retention in the profession for both first- and second- year teachers is approximately 93%.**

In general, retention rates in the profession were high regardless of teaching context and program characteristics. This suggests that BTSA is effective in retaining teachers across multiple contexts and regardless of program size and longevity.

It is difficult for local programs to follow teachers who leave the district and conduct longitudinal studies of the teaching workforce.

- **The contractor recommends that resources be devoted to establishing and analyzing a statewide retention database that combines elements of licensure date collected by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and job assignment data collected by the California Department of Education.**

This system would provide the state a reliable system for conducting annual retention studies, providing information on those who stay as well as information on the reasons for leaving the profession.

This system would require a change in the policy of the California Department of Education to allow the use of a teacher's Social Security Number or some other unique identifier common to both systems.

The Effect of Statewide Expansion on BTSA

- **During expansion the level of services had remained the same or increased.**

Beginning teachers in BTSA reported higher levels of service than nonparticipating teachers during the same five year time period.

One hundred percent of BTSA teachers surveyed reported support providers visiting their classrooms and talking with them about classroom observations.

The majority of principals reported that BTSA services either increased or remained the same.

- **The effectiveness of BTSA support is challenged by workplace conditions.**

These conditions include overcrowded school buildings, large and impersonal schools, difficult assignments, extra responsibilities, weak leadership, and poor compensation.

In schools and districts with weak internal leadership or capacity for support, the BTSA program can serve as an important source of support, but only if it is well run.

Scaling up the program proved to be a great challenge in districts where a relatively large proportion of the workforce is hired each year. In these districts, there is both a shortage of veteran teachers available to serve as support providers and a larger number of under-prepared teachers (i.e., teachers on emergency permits, pre-interns, interns.) as compared to districts with low workforce turnover.

- **BTSA has also had effects that reach beyond the program's main purpose of supporting beginning teachers**

Many support providers report that BTSA was the best professional development they have ever had.

BTSA has contributed to a consensus among educators on the importance of support during the early years of teaching and on viewing preparation and induction as part of a continuum of learning to teach.

The Effect of BTSA on Beginning Teacher Knowledge and Skills

- **There are no existing methods for adequately capturing and characterizing teacher knowledge.**
- **The contractor recommended the development of a multi-method approach to capture the complex demands of teaching.**

A series of studies incorporating two approaches was recommended. The first approach is a longitudinal study of a small group of beginning teachers through multiple measures. This is complemented by a larger study of a representative sample of teachers to gather data on the breadth of their knowledge, their perceptions of their own skill level, and beliefs and values. This design provides a cost-effective way of producing results that are generalizable to the population of BTSA teachers.

The Effectiveness of the Organizational Structure of BTSA

- **The contractor recommended that the organizational structures and other supporting mechanisms be continued as they have helped build a high-quality program throughout the state.**

The contractor reviewed the BTSA Task Force and regional cluster structures, the state-developed formative assessment system, state-developed trainings, cluster and program director meetings, and formal and informal program reviews.

BTSA has developed a compelling model of program quality, as represented in the new Induction program standards.

The organizational structures have helped teachers create intellectual communities which share successful practices and help improve the profession as well as student achievement.

- **Challenges to the continuing success of BTSA remain**

Some continuing issues have not been sufficiently addressed within the existing organizational structure. They include:

- Identifying optimal strategies for selecting and assigning support providers to beginning teachers.
- Better articulating how support and assessment are complimentary.
- Stabilizing BTSA Task Force membership.
- Meeting the financial and structural challenges of large regional consortia.
- Competing for support providers from other programs that rely on coaches.

Document C

Independent Evaluation of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (BTSA) Naida Tushnet, WestEd, Principal Investigator

Executive Summary of Technical Report Tasks 1-5

The 1999 Budget Act provided funds for an independent comprehensive evaluation of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) System. This evaluation consisted of five tasks. The first two tasks, addressing the evaluation design and teacher retention, were originally transmitted to the legislature in April 2001. The remaining three tasks address the effects of expansion on BTSA services, the investigation of program effects upon beginning teacher knowledge and skills, and the effectiveness of state and local organizational structures in BTSA, are described below. Findings from all five tasks are described below.

Task 1: Literature review and evaluation methodology. This task called for a review of the existing research literature related to teacher retention, teacher induction, teacher quality, and other appropriate topics, and completing a detailed methodology for the comprehensive evaluation study. This detailed methodology addressed subsequent tasks, which are discussed more thoroughly below. The methodology was informed by the review of the literature.

Task 2A: The effect of BTSA on employment retention of participating teachers.

The research questions guiding this task were:

- What is the effect of BTSA on employment retention rates of participating teachers?
- Does the effect of BTSA on employment retention differ in different local contexts, particularly with regard to schools serving high numbers of students in poverty or in urban or rural districts?
- Does the effect of BTSA on employment retention differ based on key programs characteristics, specifically the support received by beginning teachers, the maturity of the project, or the size of the project?
- What promising practices can BTSA projects use to enhance their efforts collect and analyze data related to retention of participating new teachers?

The contractor used a quantitative analysis of existing data to explore these questions. Data sources included information from the California Basic Education Data System (CBEDS), the Ed-Data website, and the Annual BTSA Program Evaluation Survey conducted by the California Educational Research Cooperative (CERC).

In general, retention rates in the profession were high regardless of teaching context and program characteristics. Retention in the profession for both first-

and second-year teachers is approximately 93%. First year teachers in programs with districts serving large numbers of students from poverty backgrounds were more likely to remain in teaching than were their peers who taught in more economically advantaged settings (94.94% and 89.69% respectively.) Rates were also very high for programs serving schools primarily in large cities and their fringes, large metropolitan areas and rural areas. No differences were found related to program characteristics and type of services provided. This suggests that BTSA is effective in retaining teachers across multiple contexts and regardless of program size and longevity.

Programs that were more successful at collecting retention data forged strong relationships with human resources departments and understood when and how such data was collected at the district level. Programs that were successful at more fully exploring the reasons that teachers left most often relied on evaluation resources, e.g. studies by an evaluation contractor or an institution of higher education, that were external to BTSA.

The contractor also determined the most effective elements of local retention procedures and identified the elements of reliable retention procedures that could be used statewide. BTSA programs experience great difficulty in following teachers who leave the district and in conducting longitudinal studies.

Task 2B: A proposed system for studying teacher retention.

In Task2B the contractor offers a proposed system for studying teacher retention statewide developed from its analysis of the most effective local retention procedures and practices. Therefore, the contractor recommends that resources be devoted to establishing and analyzing a statewide retention database that combines elements of licensure data collected by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and job assignment data collected by the California Department of Education. This would require a change in the policy of the California Department of Education to allow the use of a teacher's Social Security Number or some other unique identifier common to both systems.

The proposed procedures would allow the state to annually complete a rigorously designed statewide retention study that includes data on the number of first and second year teachers that continue teaching at the same site, in the same school district, or in some other district. It also provides the capacity to ascertain the reasons some teachers were not retained or left teaching. Such a system would provide the state a reliable system for conducting annual retention studies.

Task 3: Statewide Expansion of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Program

Research questions guiding this task were:

- What are the effects of the statewide expansion of BTSA on the quality of the program as experienced by participants?
- What are the effects of the expansion of BTSA outside the program itself?

A stratified, random survey of teachers with less than five years of experience and principals provided information about the quality of the BTSA program. BTSA teachers from the past five years reported more frequent receipt of various forms of support from veteran teachers than non-participants from the same time period. 100 % of BTSA teachers with 1-2 years of experience reported having their support providers visit their classrooms and talking with them about classroom observations. Over 90 % of principals surveyed reported an increase or no change as a result of BTSA expansion in each of the following areas: the amount of support provider and beginning teacher training, release time for support providers, the length of orientation for beginning teachers, stipends for support providers, and money to buy materials. Almost 90 percent of principals reported that the BTSA expansion resulted in an increase or no change in the amount of release time for beginning teachers, and 85 % reported a resulting increase or no change in the number of beginning teachers assigned to support providers.

An analysis of case studies of seven BTSA programs suggested that new teachers are more likely to get better induction experiences (including mentoring) in schools where district and school leaders value new teacher support and have some capacity to provide that support. BTSA is challenged by workplace conditions such as overcrowded school buildings, large and impersonal schools, difficult assignments, extra responsibilities, weak leadership, and poor compensation. In schools and districts with weak internal leadership or capacity for support, the BTSA program can serve as an important source of support, but only if it is well run.

The supply of support providers is dwindling due to three factors: 1) the maldistribution of veteran teachers willing to serve as support providers; 2) the increasing rates of retirement among the teaching workforce; and 3) the increasing demands for the skills of veteran teachers by other programs using them as coaches or instructors.

Scaling up has proved to be a great challenge for districts where a relatively large proportion of the workforce is hired each year. This disproportionately affects schools serving a high percentage of students in poverty. An extremely limited supply of veteran teachers to serve as support providers can result in either lowering standards or making trade-offs in criteria for assigning support providers to new teachers (e.g., proximity vs. grade-level match).

BTSA has also had effects that reach beyond the program's main purpose of supporting beginning teachers. It is not unusual for support providers to report that BTSA was the best professional development they have ever had. Also, BTSA has probably contributed to a consensus among educators on the importance of support during the early years of teaching and on viewing preparation and induction as part of a continuum of learning to teach

Due to the growth of underprepared teachers (teachers on emergency permits, pre-interns, and interns), BTSA serves an estimated 4 out of 10 teachers in their

first or second year as teacher-of-record. BTSA-eligible teachers who have been in the classroom for many years before earning a preliminary credential are often reluctant to participate in a program for beginning teachers. Although there are elements of BTSA that can benefit all teachers, a modified program design meeting the needs of underprepared teachers, out-of-state veteran teachers who need to complete BTSA to earn a California credential, and teachers with three or more years of experience in the classroom before earning a credential should be considered.

Task 4: Methodologies for Studying Program Effects on Increased Knowledge and Skills of Beginning Teachers

The original research question for this task was “What is the effect of the program on participants’ knowledge and skills?” An extensive literature review revealed that no methodology to answer this question with any degree of generalizability has been fully developed or validated; therefore, this question remains unanswered. The development of a research design in California is further complicated by the success of the BTSA expansion that has resulted in the loss of a comparable control group of nonparticipating beginning teachers. Given the methodological uncertainty, the focus of this task shifted to reviewing methodologies whose further development seemed most likely to provide insights into the extent to which the BTSA program increases the knowledge and skills of beginning teachers.

A multi-method approach should be developed to capture the complex demands of teaching, using the California Standards for the Teaching Profession as the target knowledge base. One such mixture of methodologies was piloted on a small scale. To more fully address this question, a series of studies incorporating two approaches is recommended. The first approach is a longitudinal study of a small group of beginning teachers through multiple measures that reflect complex conceptions of teaching. The data gathered is to include the depth of knowledge, teaching skill as applied in the classroom, beliefs, and reasoning processes. This study is to be conducted alongside a larger study of a representative sample of teachers to gather data on the breadth of their knowledge, their perceptions of their own skill level, and beliefs and values. Working over time in concert, the two approaches would create a general portrait of changes in the BTSA teacher population, along with rich descriptive data to provide evidence of changes in more complex aspects of teaching. The results of the two studies could be used to inform each other to provide the most cost-effective way of producing results that are generalizable to the population of BTSA teachers.

Task 5: Organizational Structure of BTSA at State and Local Levels

The research question guiding the investigation of this task was:

- How does the organizational structure of BTSA influence its implementation and quality? How might it be improved?

To investigate these questions, case studies were conducted in nine BTSA programs, interviewing representatives of role groups from all levels of the BTSA organization, ranging from support providers through the state agency liaisons assigned to that cluster. The organizational structures studied included the BTSA Task Force and cluster structures, the state-developed formative assessment system, state-developed trainings, cluster and program director meetings, and formal and informal program reviews.

The inter-organizational structure of BTSA and other supporting mechanisms should be continued as they have helped build a high-quality program throughout the state. This achievement is remarkable due to the complexity of California as well as the challenges that stem from demographic and policy changes such as coordination with pre-intern and intern programs, Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) support for and competition with BTSA, and SB 2042 which changes BTSA to a credentialing program. BTSA has developed a compelling conceptual base, documented through the program quality standards for induction programs (*Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Teacher Induction Programs*). Through assistance from BTSA organizational structures, teachers have created intellectual communities, which help improve the profession as well as student achievement. While the growth of BTSA challenges this sense of community, BTSA participants throughout the state are seeking ways to maintain the personal interactions that nurture successful practices while adapting to the current policy environment.

Some continuing issues that have not been sufficiently addressed within the existing organizational structures include:

- Issues of how to best identify and assign support providers to beginning teachers, with a continuing and unresolved debate over optimal strategies;
- A perceived conflict between support and assessment expressed by all role groups except Task Force members;
- Instability in the Task Force membership at a time of expansion of BTSA, resulting in reduced institutional memory and ability to provide guidance and help to cluster staff;
- Financial and structural challenges of consortia, especially consortia serving large geographic areas as larger districts form their own programs;
- The rise of other programs relying on experienced teachers, which affects BTSA's ability to recruit and retain support providers.