

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT for New Teachers

How to support and retain new teachers



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Introduction



In 2022, Corwin—a leading provider of K–12 professional development books, institutes, and virtual and onsite services—conducted research to learn what we could do to help schools better support and retain new teachers. We learned a lot about the challenges new teachers—those in their first three years—face and what can be done to help them successfully meet these challenges. We are making changes to our new teacher PD offerings based on what educators told us.

We know PD alone may not solve the national teacher shortage or retention problem, but it can help to provide some relief, especially to those who are new to the profession.

After compiling the data, we thought there was information that administrators might find helpful as they make decisions about how best to support new teachers in those first few critical years. In the following report, we share what more than **4,000 teachers and 250 administrators nationwide told us**.

¹American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2022. ²National Center for Education Statistics, 2021. ³Zippia.com, 2022.



Research Mandate

Corwin hired an independent contractor to conduct telephone interviews and a written survey with K-12 teachers and administrators to determine:



Interviews–Snapshot of Respondents

Corwin started the research with 15 in-depth telephone interviews, conducted and evaluated by an independent contractor. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and was recorded and transcribed.





Written Survey–Snapshot of Respondents

Corwin hired an independent contractor to create the survey and analyze the resulting data. The company emailed over 700,000 educators—new teachers, veteran teachers, principals, and district and school administrators responsible for PD—with a request that they respond to a 15-question survey.



ADMINISTRATORS (258)





Key Findings

The biggest challenges facing first-year teachers are time management and classroom management.

Teachers haven't been prepared in college for the realities of the classroom, nor do most of them receive training at the school/district level. Other significant challenges for a first-year teacher were noted by both teachers and administrators: lesson planning, learning/teaching curriculum, behavior-management, working/communicating with families, and building relationships with students and colleagues.

The biggest challenges in years 2 and 3 are still time management and classroom management.

New teachers continue to struggle with **time management**. They feel they must do it all and haven't learned how to prioritize their workload to have the greatest impact on students.

New teachers report that **learning/teaching the curriculum** is a bigger challenge than **classroom management** in years 2 and 3. They are ready to start differentiating their curriculum instruction but don't know who needs what or how best to teach to the wide variety of student learning needs.

Other significant challenges for a teacher in years 2 and 3 mentioned by both teachers and administrators include **lesson-planning and working with parents.** Teachers add work-life balance/burnout. Administrators add data analysis and differentiation.

The most widely provided and best PD for new teachers is working with a mentor.

Teachers indicate that the **best mentors** are those with **similar grade level and content responsibilities**, but administrators report that this can be challenging to achieve from the pool of available mentors. Interviewees agree that a **virtual mentor could be very valuable** especially if they better match the new teacher's needs. Teachers and administrators agree on the top five best PD offerings for new teachers.

Mentorship is the most effective PD for new teachers.

Before first day training can be very important, especially if it is directed exclusively at or differentiated for new teachers.

In-person PD can be helpful particularly if differentiated by grade level and content-area. New teachers need regular follow-up training to ensure fidelity of implementation.

Curriculum-related PD should ideally be presented by people with recent classroom experience and include strategies for what to do when the instruction isn't going to plan.

Classroom observation, both going to other classes as well as being observed, should focus on particular strategies and include best practices. New teachers also want to see when everything doesn't go according to plan, modeling how they might deal with similar challenges. Interviewees note that virtual observation can be equally effective, especially since new teachers can work around their schedules.

Most new teacher PD is for first-year teachers.

According to Corwin's research, **most educators consider teachers new for the first three years.** New teachers need ongoing support, but PD is mostly limited to the first year and largely provided at the beginning of the year. New teachers have different challenges in years two and three, but most don't receive PD geared toward these challenges. For new teachers to succeed they need PD to continue in years 2 and 3.



New teachers want a variety of PD.

Just as students learn in different ways, so do teachers. What works for one may not work for another. Interviewees feel that **combining different types of PD**—mentoring, classroom observation, video, books, in-person training, etc.—**appeals to different learning styles and preferences** and allows for collaborative training and self-paced PD.

Attributes of good PD mirror the attributes of effective teaching.

However teachers consume PD—participating in in-service days, meeting as a PLC, reading a book, attending virtual training, working with a specialist—**they are students.** What we know about good teaching applies not only to the K–12 classroom but also to PD.

Good PD features a variety of qualities.

Teachers say that PD should be **easy to implement**; differentiated for experience, grade level, and content; collaborative/interactive, classroomtested, and include classroom examples.

Administrators say PD for in-service days needs to be collaborative/interactive, focused on student learning, based on research, differentiated, and model strategies. General PD is focused on student learning, is based on research, includes classroom examples, is easy to implement, and is collaborative/interactive.

Selecting new teacher PD is a collaborative effort.

Most administrators consult several colleagues

when making decisions about PD for new teachers. School administrators typically rely on input from coaches, specialists, and teachers. District administrators consult most frequently with **Principals, Assistant Principals, and content area specialists.**

Interviewees recommend that new teachers and recently new teachers, who are rarely consulted about new teacher PD, should have a voice since they know what worked and what didn't.

The right kind of support can prevent new teachers from leaving.

Administrators and teachers agree that schools/ districts don't offer new teachers enough (or the right kind of) PD to help them meet the challenges of the first three years. In fact, teachers rank lack of support alongside salary considerations as the number one reason, new teachers leave in the first five years.



An open-ended question asked survey respondents to list the top three challenges for first-year teachers. Interviews included in-depth information about challenges new teachers face.

Top Challenges in the First Year	New Teachers	Recently New Teachers	Veteran Teachers
Time Management	1	2	1
Classroom Management	1	1	2
Lesson Planning	3	3	
Learning/Teaching Curriculum	4	4	3
Working/Communicating w/Parents	5	5	5
Behavior Management			4

What teachers said...

"Oh, classroom management for sure. Just figuring out how you deal with the kids. And wanting to make sure that everyone in the class is learning. Also feeling like I never had enough time. I didn't know what would make the most difference for my students, so I tried to do everything."

> — 6th-grade ELA Teacher (New Teacher)

Research Terms

• New Teachers: 1–3 years teaching

• Recently New Teachers: 4–7 years teaching

• Veteran Teachers: 8+ years teaching

Corwin determined early in the research process that they wanted to discover if new teachers, recently new teachers, and veteran teachers viewed the experiences of new teachers differently. The company felt it was particularly important to understand what new teachers themselves thought about the professional development schools and districts provided in their first three years.

All Teachers

- Time management and classroom management are the top challenges for a first-year teacher. New teachers don't know how to prioritize the many demands of being a teacher and often spend 2–3 hours nightly and work weekends just trying to keep up.
- Most first-year teachers are not prepared for the realities of the classroom and struggle with the practical aspects of managing a classroom— classroom set-up, start- and end-of-day activities, parent-teacher conferences, pacing, testing, grading, providing accommodation, paperwork, etc.

New Teachers and Recently New Teachers

• Lesson planning consumes significant time for new teachers since they don't have a toolkit of go-to lessons and strategies.

- New teachers struggle to learn and teach the curriculum, despite many having received curriculum training prior to the start of the new year.
- Communicating and working with parents also poses a challenge for first-year teachers as most hadn't received any training on how best to partner with families.

Veteran Teachers

• Behavior management is difficult for first-year teachers since most teacher prep programs don't include any training on behavior management and student discipline.



What administrators said...

Top Challenges in the First Year	School Administrators	District Administrators
Time Management	1	1
Classroom Management	2	3
Lesson Planning	3	2
Building Relationships (Colleagues, Students, Parents)	4	4
Behavior Management	5	5

"Classroom management is more than just setting up the physical environment, it's setting up structures and systems. That's a big challenge for my first-year teachers."

— Principal

- Administrators agree on the top challenges for first-year teachers and agree with teachers that classroom management and time management challenge firstyear teachers.
- Administrators indicate that building relationships in general, not just those with families, is a challenge for first-year teachers.
- Principals report that new teachers struggle with working as a part of a team, establishing a rapport with administration, partnering with families, and cultivating relationships with students.

Top Challenges for New Teachers–Years 2 & 3

An open-ended question asked survey respondents to list the top three challenges for teachers in years two and three. Interviews included in-depth information about challenges new teachers face.

Top Challenges in Years 2–3	New Teachers	Recently New Teachers	Veteran Teachers
Time Management	1	1	1
Classroom Management	3	3	2
Lesson Planning	4	4	4
Learning/Teaching Curriculum	2	2	3
Working/Communicating w/Parents			5
Work–Life Balance/Burnout	5	5	

What teachers said...

"Differentiation was challenging for sure. Not just meeting the needs of the low students, but the high ones, too. I was always ready to have further learning activities and extra learning activities for students, but I didn't always take time to say, 'Hey, we've got to slow down, we need to catch up today.'"

> — 8th-Grade Teacher (New Teacher)

Research Terms

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• New Teachers: 1–3 years teaching

• Recently New Teachers: 4–7 years teaching

• Veteran Teachers: 8+ years teaching



Time management remains a significant challenge for new teachers in years 2–3. New teachers continue to have difficulties prioritizing their workload and may spend time on less important tasks trying to do everything. New teachers still work every school night and over the weekend on finding or creating resources, planning lessons, and keeping up with paperwork.

New Teachers and Recently New Teachers

- Mastering the curriculum supplants classroom management as the #2 challenge in years 2–3. New teachers continue to struggle with teaching all content and keeping to pacing guidelines.
- New teachers feel a bit more comfortable with the basics of classroom management but still find it a difficult to keep all students on task and motivated.
- Work-life balance/burnout is a major challenge. New teachers indicate that they were underprepared and didn't feel that they had the support of administrators and parents. They felt that it would help if new teachers didn't have to juggle as many tasks but were able to concentrate on the work that was most important to being an effective teacher.

Veteran Teachers

- New teachers are still struggling with classroom management, especially how to differentiate instruction. New teachers often can't find time to attend to every student's instructional needs and may not have the skills to determine who needs what.
- New teachers feel more confident with the basics of classroom management but now struggle with keeping all students engaged.
- New teachers are still figuring out how best to effectively work with parents.

Top Challenges in Years 2–3	School Administrators	District Administrators
Time Management	1	1
Classroom Management	2	3
Lesson Planning	5	2
Parent Communication	4	
Data Analysis	3	5
Differentiation		4

What administrators said...

- Time management remains the number one challenge for new teachers in years 2 and 3.
 Principals report that new teachers still have trouble getting everything done, especially as they are expected to take on additional responsibilities after the first year.
- Most teachers have mastered the basics of classroom management and are now ready to dig into assessment data to inform differentiated instruction. However, new teachers may not know how to interpret the data, how best to structure small groups, and how to truly individualize instruction to meet the needs of all students.



New Teacher PD Provided vs. Best

We asked teachers who had been teaching for 1–7 years what PD was provided during their first three years. They were given a list of 15 choices and asked to check all that applied. In a separate question, they were asked to rank their top three choices from the same list. Teachers interviewed were asked to detail the PD they received and the PD they thought would be most effective.

	Provided	Preferred
Mentor	16 %	16 %
Before-first-day Training	15%	13%
In-Person	11%	13%
Curriculum-related	10%	13%
Classroom Observation	9 %	12%

What new teachers and recently new teachers said . . .

"The ideal PD for me would be to have an expert come in and model new strategies and then come into my class to observe me and give me feedback."

Responses from 1,291 teachers.

New Teachers Want Choices

New teachers, like the students they teach, learn in different ways. There is no one type of PD that will meet the learning needs of all new teachers. As a result, teachers surveyed and interviewed indicate that they want a choice of PD so they can select those that best match their learning preferences and provide actionable solutions for the challenges they are facing.

The survey included 16 options for preferred PD for new teachers. Although five choices statistically topped the list, there were teachers who said they benefited most from reading books, working with outside experts, attending conferences, talking to peers online, participating in a PLC, and watching instructive videos.

Working With a Mentor

- Working with a mentor is both the PD most provided to new teachers as well as the support they believe is most helpful. However, as the chart shows only 16% of new teachers had a mentor at some point during their first three years.
- Mentors were typically only provided for first-year teachers, although some new teachers continued an informal relationship with their mentors throughout their first three years. Educators interviewed feel strongly that formal mentorship should continue for two years.
- New teachers indicate that the best mentors are those who share similar grade-level and content responsibilities.
- The mentor relationship works best when teachers have weekly one-on-one time with mentors. This time should address both challenges new teachers are currently experiencing as well as those they are likely to experience.
- Group meetings with all mentors and new teachers cut into planning time and new teachers say they didn't get much from these meetings.
- Teachers without mentors (or those who had a mentor with whom they didn't click) thought that a virtual mentor relationship would be beneficial.



[—] Reading Specialist (Recently New Teacher)

Before-First-Day Training

- Those new teachers who had before-school training for the most part found it helpful.
- Before-school training for first-year teachers should concentrate on basic classroom management and time management that would allow them to better acclimate to the classroom and could help them feel less overwhelmed.
- Before-school training should be different for firstyear teachers and those in years 2–3.

In-Person PD

- Teachers feel that in-person PD is most successful when presented by in-school personnel as this provides them with more opportunity for ongoing follow-up.
- In-person PD, whether provided by in-school or outside experts, should be focused on a few strategies, include time to work with colleagues, and provide participants with ideas they can use immediately in the classroom.

Curriculum-Related PD

• Teachers feel that there should be more curriculum training that what is currently provided.

- Curriculum training should be provided throughout the year, not just before school starts.
- Curriculum training can include strategies to enhance the curriculum or cover topics not well presented by curriculum materials.

Classroom Observation

- Teachers want more time to observe colleagues' classes, although this can be done in-person or virtually.
- Teachers feel they learn more by seeing "real classrooms" where not everything goes according to plan, as this models how they might deal with similar challenges.
- Teachers recommend classroom observation be planned around certain strategies so there are specific learning opportunities.

Differences by Grade Level & School Size

- PLCs rank in the top five best new-teacher PD options among new teachers in schools with more than1,500 students (ranked #3).
- New elementary teachers don't find before-school training (#5) as effective as middle and high school teachers who rank it #2.



Best PD for New Teachers

Teachers with 8+ years of experience and administrators were asked to select their top three choices, from a list of 15 choices. Administrators and veteran teachers interviewed detailed why they preferred certain PD for new teachers.

Best PD for New Teachers	Veteran Teachers	Administrators
Mentor	22%	20%
Before-first-day Training	14%	20%
In-Person PD	13%	19 %
Classroom Observation	13%	16%
Curriculum-related	13%	11%

What veteran teachers and administrators said . . .

"You know, a lot of stuff just happens naturally, in between classes, or before school or after school. My mentor was in the same building so I could talk with her daily in needed and ask quick questions. I also felt safe asking her all kinds of questions. New teachers feel like they're supposed to know this stuff so asking questions requires trust."

> — Instructional Coach (Veteran Teacher)

Veteran teachers and administrators agree with new teachers and recently new teachers on the top five most effective PD options for new teachers.

Working With a Mentor

- New teachers benefit most from having a mentor responsible for similar grade level and content. However, administrators report that this is often difficult to achieve.
- Administrators think teachers could benefit from an additional year of mentoring but may not have enough mentors to provide support for both firstand second-year teachers.
- Veteran teachers think new teachers need more mentoring than they receive and that a lot of the support new teachers need can be addressed in 10-minute sessions.

Before-School Training

- Administrators think that before-school PD is more effective than teachers do.
- Administrators report that new teachers benefit from being in the same training as veteran teachers as they can learn from them and start to form relationships.
- Veteran teachers report that too often before-school training groups all teachers together and that new teachers might benefit more from training targeted specifically to them.

In-Person PD

- Administrators think that in-person PD is significantly more important for new teachers than veteran teachers do.
- Administrators report that new teacher PD conducted by both school/district personnel and outside experts is important, although they prefer using school/district personnel.
- Administrators interviewed noted they would like PD provided by outside experts to be scalable with school/district experts providing more of the ongoing training to new teachers.
- Veteran teachers think training with school/district experts is more beneficial for new teachers, although they see value in having outside experts if the PD is specifically directed at new teachers.



Classroom Observation

- Administrators rank classroom observation as more effective than veteran teachers who think that classroom observation, in-person PD, and curriculum training are all equally important for new teachers.
- Administrators interviewed note that classroom observation can be done in focused sessions of 15 minutes or less.
- Administrators and veteran teachers think that classroom observation for new teachers is beneficial but say that it's difficult to work into a busy school day.
- Virtual classroom visits can be as effective as in-person classroom visits.

Curriculum Training

- Administrators and veteran teachers agree that training on how best to teach the curriculum is important for new teachers.
- Administrators interviewed want curriculum training to be provided by people with recent classroom experience.
- Veteran teachers report that curriculum training is often conducted before the start of school and that new teachers need refreshers throughout the year.

Book Studies: Effective PD

Nearly all teachers and administrators interviewed brought up book studies without prompting. They note that book studies can be highly effective for new teachers as they allow them to learn alongside veteran teachers. However, they also note that book studies require a lot of time outside of the school day since participants may have to read large volumes of information. Teachers, particularly new teachers, are time-challenged and if a book study requires too much work outside of the school day, participants may simply not read assigned pages. Both teachers and administrators agreed that a good book study would respect teachers' time and allow for collaboration, classroom practice, and debriefing with ideas for improvement. Teachers recommend any planning for classroom implementation take place during the time allotted for the book study.



Attributes of Effective PD

Survey respondents were asked to select the three most important attributes for good PD (this was for all PD, not just that for new teachers) from a set list. Administrators provided separate responses for in-service PD and general PD. Interviewees were asked to describe what they thought were the most important attributes of good PD for new teachers and for more experienced teachers.



What teachers said...

Most Important Attributes of Good PD

"I loved finding out about different classroom strategies to improve learning, especially in a group setting. They taught us new strategies and modeled them. That was helpful for me to be able to see it in action, and say, 'Oh, I could do that in my classroom.'"

— 8th-Grade Teacher (New Teacher)

"Don't give me concepts that sound great intellectually and academically and then I have to figure out how to apply those concepts. Give me something that I can take away and use with very little additional prep or research."

-4th-Grade Teacher (Recently New Teacher)



- Teachers value PD that is **easy-to-implement.** Teachers interviewed emphasize that good PD must translate seamlessly into the classroom as they don't have the time to figure how to implement strategies. They report that all too often PD, particularly inservice days, don't provide time for planning how best to apply recommendations to the classroom.
- Teachers want PD that is **differentiated**, and interviewees note that this particularly important for new teachers. Just like their students, teachers learn in different ways and bring different levels of experience to PD, but all to often they feel they sit through training that is not geared toward their needs, grade level, or content area.
- Teachers value **classroom experience** and materials that are **classroom-tested**. Teachers interviewed mention that they trust resources created by experts who continue to spend time in classrooms.
- Teachers want PD that is **interactive and collaborative** as they report that this replicates the teaching they do in the classroom. Interviewees say that most PD isn't interactive. They want time to work with colleagues using, not just hearing about, ideas and strategies.
- The top five best attributes were the same regardless of the grade level or school size of the respondent.



What administrators said . . .



Most Important Attributes of Good PD Administrators Respond

- PD that focuses on student learning, is researchbased, and involves collaboration and interactivity appear in the top five attributes for both general PD and in-service days. However, collaboration/ interactivity is the most important attribute for inservice days by almost 3%.
- Administrators interviewed stress that teachers attending in-service days need to work collaboratively on the ideas presented during the session. They say in-service days, all too often, involve too much talking by the presenter and not enough doing by the attendees.
- Interviewees note that the best PD relies on current research and report that too much PD is based on dated research that doesn't reflect the newest thinking.
- Classroom examples and ease of implementation are more important for general PD.
- Differentiated PD and modeling strategies are more important for in-service days.
- Interviewees stress the importance of focused PD, especially for in-service days, noting that too much PD tries to cover too many topics/strategies and doesn't reflect participants wide range of experience. It's very important that PD for new teachers doesn't assume knowledge they don't have.

"I think we go to these PD sessions and they're giving you 10 ideas to use in your classroom right now. And I think it's just too much. Focus on one or two quality topics and model what to do. Then give them planning time. I want teachers to walk away and say 'Tomorrow I'm going to try this. I've planned for it, now I'm going to do it.""

— Principal



Administrators & Teachers: Snapshot of the Best PD



Why Do New Teachers Leave?

Teachers and administrators interviewed were asked why teachers left in the first five years and if they thought that quality PD could help retain new teachers.

Salary is the number one reason cited by administrators as to why new teachers leave. Teachers also indicate that salary is an issue and that they know colleagues who left due to pay considerations.

Lack of support is also a significant contributing factor for new teachers leaving. In fact, the teachers interviewed all report that a lack of support was just as frequently cited as salary as a reason new teachers decided to leave K–12 education. They note that although teachers are not paid adequately, people enter the profession knowing their pay will not equal that of most of their friends in other professions. Furthermore, they think that if new teachers had enough support and ongoing training that fewer would leave even if they had salary concerns. Lack of preparation is a contributing reason why teachers leave in the first five years. All respondents note that new teachers just aren't prepared for the realities of the classroom and that teacherprep programs don't offer any instruction on time management or the basics of classroom management. For instance, pre-service teachers may learn the theory behind learning differences, but not how to set up and manage teaching to a wide range of learners in the classroom. New teachers say that even though they spent a semester student-teaching it was typically with a master teacher who didn't have the types of issues most new teachers encounter in their first three years.

"New teachers need lots of support—you need to know someone is listening to you and will provide what you need to be successful. I had a great mentor, who really helped me. She got me through my first year and continued to help me in my second year. A friend at a different school didn't have any new teacher support. She left after the second year."

- Reading Specialist (Recently New Teacher)



APPENDIX | Research Methodology

Corwin used a combination of 40-minute telephone interviews and a written survey to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. Corwin began the research process with an email to 180,000 K–12 educators with a request that they respond if they were willing to be interviewed about professional development for new teachers. Respondents were randomly selected from different states and across grade ranges to include:

- 3 teachers with 1–3 years teaching
- 3 Principals
- 3 teachers with 4–7 years teaching
- 3 School PD Administrators
- 3 teachers with 8+ years teaching

An independent contractor contacted 34 educators by email and conducted 15 in-depth telephone interviews. Each interview consisted of 10 open-ended questions and lasted approximately 40 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The findings from the research were compiled into a report and were used to write questions for a written survey. Corwin thanked interviewees with a \$100 Amazon gift card.

Following the interviews, Corwin used the independent contractor to prepare a 15-question written survey. Corwin emailed more than 700,000 educators—new teachers, veteran teachers, principals, and district and school administrators responsible for PD. Corwin incentivized response by entering respondents in a drawing for fifteen \$25 Amazon gift cards.

To obtain demographic data, each respondent was asked about their age group, grade level, school/district size, title, and length of time in the education profession. All respondents answered eight multiple choice questions about new teacher PD (teachers and administrators were asked slightly different questions) and two open-ended questions about the challenges new teachers face in the first year and in years 2 and 3. The independent contractor compiled and analyzed the data. A word cloud generator, that also provided data on the most frequently occurring phrases, was used to analyze the two open-ended questions. The contractor submitted a written report summarizing the data from the surveys.

List of PD Provided to Survey Participants

New teachers were asked to (1) select all the PD they received in their first three years and (2) choose the three best PD types. All other teachers and administrators were asked to select the three best types of PD from the list. Respondents could also write in responses.

Before-First-Day Training	Curriculum Related Training	Podcast
Book	In-Person With School/	Trade Association
Book With Video	District Coach/Specialist	Membership
Classroom Observation/ Lesson Study	In-Person With Outside Consultant	Virtual Peer-to-Peer Observation/Discussion
Classroom Videos	Mentor at School	Webinar
Conference	PLC	Other





Administrators were asked who they consult about new teacher PD. Most respondents indicate that they talk with three or more colleagues.

- When looking at responses exclusively from school personnel, the people consulted about new teacher PD are:
 - Principal (1) Director of Curriculum (2) School Coach/Specialist (3) Teacher (4) District Content-Area Specialist (5)
- When looking at responses exclusively from district personnel, the people consulted about new teacher PD are:
 - Principal (1) Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent (2) Teacher (3) Assistant Principal (4) Director of Curriculum (4)

