

Economic Mobility Catalog: Case Study

New teacher induction programming: Cedar Rapids, IA



K-12 Education



Elementary & Middle School Success



High School Graduation

MORE ABOUT THE STRATEGY USED IN THIS CASE STUDY: [Educator recruitment and retention](#)

At-a-Glance



Summary

- The Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA), an intermediary educational service agency, supports 32 public school districts across seven counties in Eastern Iowa. GWAEA's constituent school districts, which are primarily small, rural districts, struggled with teacher recruitment and retention. By the mid-2000s, 41 percent of beginning teachers in GWAEA districts left the profession within five years. To better support early-career teachers, GWAEA began offering training to educators who mentor beginning teachers. However, school district and GWAEA leaders increasingly recognized the need to identify and implement a more intensive, evidence-based teacher induction program.
- In 2013, GWAEA partnered with the New Teacher Center (NTC) to launch a teacher induction consortium for its school district partners. As part of GWAEA's induction programming, new teachers in participating school districts receive two years of job-embedded professional development. At the core of these supports are induction coaches, who guide beginning teachers in improving their practice. These coaches, who are identified through a rigorous selection process, themselves receive intensive training and coaching to ensure they can effectively support new teachers.
- Keys to GWAEA's success included the longevity of its induction program staff, the support and resources it accessed through the NTC, identifying and effectively developing high-quality induction coaches, and its ability to partner with NTC to adapt the induction model to fit its local context.

- Obstacles to GWAEA's success included maintaining buy-in from school districts facing budgetary constraints, addressing school districts' concerns about releasing teachers to become full-time coaches, and navigating uncertainty around year-to-year variation in the number of beginning teachers it served.

Results and Accomplishments

<p>82%</p> <p>In school districts participating in Grant Wood Area Education Agency's (GWAEA) induction consortium, 82 percent of beginning teachers <u>remain in their roles</u> for at least five years, compared to a statewide average of 69 percent.</p>	<p>50,000</p> <p>Since launching in 2013, teachers who participated in GWAEA's induction consortium have served over 50,000 students.</p>	<p>94%</p> <p>Ninety-four percent of first- and second-year teachers participating in the induction consortium <u>reported</u> feeling quite or extremely confident in implementing effective teaching strategies for every student.</p>
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- **Supporting hundreds of new teachers each year:** In 2013, Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA), a multi-county educational services agency in Eastern Iowa, partnered with the New Teacher Center (NTC) to implement an evidence-based teacher induction program for the 32 public school districts it serves. In the ten years since its launch, GWAEA's induction program has grown to serve over 200 beginning teachers each year.
- **Strengthening teacher retention:** Teachers who are well-prepared and supported in their practice are less likely to leave the profession. By helping beginning teachers develop critical classroom management and instructional skills, GWAEA's induction program aims to improve teacher retention. It is working: beginning teachers who complete GWAEA's induction program are 13 percentage points more likely to teach for at least five years, compared to the state average.
- **Improving teacher practice:** As part of the induction program, coaches guide new teachers through learning cycles, where they work to improve their practice based on a set of core teaching standards. Data from classroom observations show this approach improves teacher practice. First- and second-year teachers in the induction program scored an average of four points higher - a 35 percent increase - in classroom observations examining their ability to apply and integrate skills from their school district's instructional framework.
- **Receiving state- and national-level recognition:** GWAEA's induction consortium has received wide-spread recognition for its impact on teacher quality and retention. This includes coverage from industry periodicals, like EducationWeek and the EdTech Digest. GWAEA program staff regularly present at state- and national-level conferences, including at NTC Symposiums, the Emerging Educators Conference, and the Iowa Economic Alliance. In 2015, two other AEAs in Iowa - the Mississippi Bend and Prairie Lakes AEAs - began replicating their own induction consortiums.



What was the challenge?

- **Challenges with recruitment and retention:** The Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA), an intermediary educational service agency, supports 32 public school districts across seven counties in Eastern Iowa. As in other parts of the United States, these school districts struggled to hire and retain teachers. Composed primarily of rural school districts, GWAEA faced even greater staffing challenges than typical suburban or urban districts.
- **State passes new requirements for teacher induction:** In 2001, the Iowa Department of Education instituted the Iowa Mentoring and Induction program, which required school districts to provide all new teachers with two years of mentoring and induction support. While all school districts had existing practices to support new teachers, most now needed to identify a more comprehensive, long-term approach to meet the new state-level requirements.
- **School districts struggle to provide comprehensive supports:** GWAEA serves predominantly small, rural school districts, including many with fewer than 2,000 students. Often, these districts did not have the scale or resources to offer comprehensive and well-structured new teacher induction programming.
- **Searching for an evidence-based solution:** Recognizing the need for effective induction programming in many of its districts, GWAEA began offering professional development to new teacher mentors in several districts. While this approach represented a more efficient use of resources, GWAEA had limited evidence for whether its induction programming supports were effective. By the mid-2000s, 41 percent of beginning teachers in GWAEA districts were still leaving the profession within five years. As such, GWAEA began searching for an evidence-based new teacher induction model to implement for its school districts.

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“We had trouble with teacher retention and supporting new teachers. In working with the New Teacher Center, we [found]... ways to change those outcomes. In year one, we had 30 participants; in year two, around 100; and now we serve 200 beginning teachers each year.”

Kim Owen

Regional Administrator, Grant Wood AEA

What was the solution?

- **Identifying a structured, evidence-based framework:** In 2013, GWAEA partnered with New Teacher Center (NTC) to co-create a new teacher induction program. Backed by multiple program evaluations, NTC's model emphasizes high-quality coaching and professional supports. As NTC had recently won an i3 Validation Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, GWAEA would also benefit from rigorous evaluation of its replication of NTC's model.
- **Providing job-embedded supports for new teachers:** As part of GWAEA's induction programming, new teachers receive two years of intensive professional development. At the core of these supports is a coach, who meets weekly with each new teacher, and guides them through learning cycles, where they focus on improving their practice relative to a set of core teaching standards. In addition to coaching, new teachers take part in quarterly seminars, which focus on sharpening their ability to create optimal learning environments.
- **Increasing the effectiveness of coaches:** GWAEA employs a rigorous selection process, in which teachers from its constituent school districts are selected to serve four year terms as induction coaches, before rotating back into their district. Coaches receive over 100 hours of training each year, largely from NTC program staff and through in-field support from lead induction coaches. Case loads are kept low, with each induction coach supporting no more than 17 new teachers.
- **Collaborating with principals and district leaders:** NTC's model emphasizes building the capacity of principals and district-level program leaders to support new teachers. As such, GWAEA works closely with principals and program leaders to ensure that coaching is in alignment with each school building's instructional frameworks and goals.

What were the key components of the program's design?

- **Evidence-based standards for teachers and coaches:** As part of its induction model, New Teacher Center (NTC) provided Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA) with sets of evidence-based standards for both teachers and induction coaches. These standards create a unified vision of what effective teaching and coaching practice looks like across all of GWAEA's school district partners. Critically, the standards are not used to enforce teachers and coaches' compliance with a set of expectations, but instead as the basis for formative assessment and professional learning.
- **Mechanisms for continuous improvement and accountability:** NTC's induction model emphasizes the importance of conducting ongoing formative assessments of teachers and coaches' practice. Such assessments occur regularly as part of in-field learning cycles between beginning teachers and their induction coaches and between induction coaches and their lead coaches. These formative assessments enable both beginning teachers and induction coaches to monitor their progress along goals they set based on their respective standards of practice. Since these data are captured in GWAEA's data dashboards, program staff can also leverage these teacher-and coach-level insights to inform program-wide improvements.

- **Structured professional learning at all levels:** Core to the NTC induction model is providing both beginning teachers and their induction coaches with structured professional learning opportunities. These opportunities are selected so as to align with educational best practices; teaching, coaching, and content standards; school districts' instructional priorities; and beginning teachers' developmental needs. Beyond coaching, NTC's induction model emphasizes the use of both beginning teacher and induction coach learning communities to encourage peer-to-peer problem-solving and collaborative inquiry.

Who were the key stakeholders?

- **New Teacher Center:** New Teacher Center is a national nonprofit organization that specializes in co-creating new teacher induction and coaching programs with school districts and other local area agencies. As an issue-area expert, NTC provided the framework off of which GWAEA's induction program was based, and has continued to support GWAEA's efforts by providing ongoing professional development and technical assistance.
- **GWAEA Induction Program Staff:** GWAEA employs dedicated program staff, led by Kim Owen, to coordinate the day-to-day operations of the consortium's induction programming. These staff hold responsibility for setting the program's strategic direction, ensuring open lines of communication with each participating school district, collecting and analyzing programmatic data, among other key functions.
- **Induction Coaches:** GWAEA's induction coaches serve as new teachers' primary touch point for professional development. In addition, induction coaches hold "triad" meetings with the new teachers they support and their principals. Through these meetings, induction coaches ensure that their coaching aligns with the needs of each school building, and serve as the primary point of contact between principals and the induction program.
- **School Leaders:** GWAEA works with dozens of school building and district level leaders through its induction programming. At a high level, school leaders serve as key sources of direction and feedback, enabling induction coaches and program staff to better tailor the supports they provide to the needs and priorities of each district and school. Additionally, principals connect GWAEA staff with new teachers and ensure that new teachers' schedules allow them to fully engage with the induction programming.

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“New teachers tell us how flexible and supportive their induction coaches have been. This is why we continue working with GWAEA on induction programming.”

Anna Selk

Associate Superintendent, Benton Community School District

- **Induction Consortium Steering Committee:** GWAEA established an induction consortium steering committee, which includes district-level program leaders, principals, induction coaches, and early-career teachers from multiple participating school districts. The committee functions bi-directionally, educating school district leadership teams on aspects of the induction consortium and providing feedback to induction program staff on behalf of districts.

What factors drove success?

- **Sustaining a strong core team:** Over the course of its relationship with NTC, GWAEA built out an in-house induction programming team, consisting of a program lead, two lead coaches, a program associate, and part-time data analyst. These positions provided GWAEA with the local capacity necessary to independently sustain their induction programming. The low turnover in these positions has also meant that the team has retained a high degree of expertise and institutional knowledge, which has been especially valuable given GWAEA's consortium structure, in which key district-level leaders are often changing.
- **Leveraging NTC's resources:** Leveraging its access to NTC's library of evidence-based tools and resources, GWAEA provides the educators it supports with high-quality materials, saving on capacity it otherwise would have to dedicate to resource development. For example, NTC's Continuum of Teaching Practice provides school districts with common language and shared approaches to measuring teacher effectiveness.
- **Identifying and supporting high-quality coaches:** GWAEA has consistently selected and retained induction coaches with strong organizational skills, high-level content area expertise, and a deep commitment to their own professional growth. The high quality of GWAEA's induction coaches is the result of its rigorous selection process and the training and support induction coaches receive from both NTC and GWAEA's internal lead coaches.
- **Tailoring NTC's model to the local context:** Over its ten years working with NTC, GWAEA has adapted its approach to new teacher induction based on the needs expressed by the participating school districts. For example, with the recruitment and retention of special education teachers being an especially acute issue, GWAEA hired five dedicated special education induction coaches, ensuring all new special education teachers would not only receive coaching, but have access to a coach with experience in their content area.

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The GWAEA team aims to foster a positive mindset in our coaches and a sense of collective efficacy. We want to support them to be agents of the induction consortium and to be advocates for their teachers.”

Jennifer Hamos-Miller

Lead Induction Coach, Grant Wood AEA

What were the major obstacles?

- **Maintaining district buy-in through transitions:** While NTC's induction model is typically implemented at the district level, GWAEA operates as a consortium, providing induction programming for 14 school districts. When leadership changes occur at one of these districts, there is a risk that the incoming leader may choose to discontinue their district's relationship with the induction consortium. As such, GWAEA proactively communicates with new district level leaders about what the induction consortium includes and the benefits it can provide. Including the perspectives of key stakeholders, like principals, helps make the case for the induction program to new district leaders.
- **Challenges predicting demand for programming:** Each year, many teaching positions in GWAEA districts are still being filled during the summer months. Without clarity on how many new teachers will be hired, it can be challenging for GWAEA to budget and staff up properly. While this remains an issue, GWAEA regularly communicates with district staff on their hiring plans and uses historical data to project the number of new teachers to expect each year.
- **Addressing concerns about “losing” teachers:** Teachers who are selected as GWAEA induction coaches are released from teaching to coach full-time. As coaches are typically among a district's strongest teachers, school district leaders can be reluctant to release a teacher to coach. To mitigate this concern, induction coaches are limited to four year terms, after which they may return to their previous role. Some school districts have also limited the number of their teachers who may serve as induction coaches at a given time.
- **Communicating the consortium's value:** GWAEA's induction program is primarily funded by contributions from participating school districts. As these districts face budgetary constraints, GWAEA continually uses data on the program's impact and personal testimony from teachers, coaches, and principals to demonstrate the value that each district receives. Additionally, as costs have risen, GWAEA has increased its financial commitment to the program, keeping the cost for districts to participate level in recent years.

Timeline



1998

New Teacher Center Launches

Leveraging funding from the Walter S. Johnson and Noyce Foundations, the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project reorganizes as New Teacher Center (NTC). NTC begins offering its induction and mentoring services to school districts nation-wide.

2001**Iowa DOE Institutes the Iowa Mentoring and Induction Program**

The Iowa Department of Education institutes the Iowa Mentoring and Induction program, which requires school districts to provide all new teachers with two years of mentoring and induction support. School districts throughout the state begin strengthening their programming for beginning teachers, often in collaboration with their Area Education Agencies.

2001-2005**GWAEA Partners with School Districts on Mentor Training**

In response to the new Mentoring and Induction program requirements, the Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA) begins partnering with school districts to improve training for new teacher mentors.

2006**Continued Retention Issues Spur Search for Solution**

While GWAEA had expanded its support for new teachers, it had limited evidence for whether its induction programming supports were effective. By 2006, nearly 40 percent of beginning teachers in GWAEA districts were still leaving the profession within five years. GWAEA leaders begin searching for an evidence-based new teacher induction model.

2006-2012**Initial Partnership between GWAEA and NTC Forms**

As a result of their search for an evidence-based new teacher induction model, GWAEA staff enter into a partnership with NTC. The partnership allows GWAEA to launch a more robust training program for new teacher mentors for 15 school districts. As school district leaders notice the program's impact on the preparedness of their mentors, interest in a more intensive, full-release new teacher mentoring program increases.

2012**NTC and GWAEA Apply for i3 Validation Grant**

NTC, GWAEA, and two additional school district partners jointly apply for and win an i3 Validation grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant will fund the replication and evaluation of NTC's induction model in the three school district and AEA partners.

AUGUST 2013**GWAEA Launches Induction Program with NTC**

GWAEA partners with NTC to launch a full-release regional induction consortium based on NTC's Theory of Action and Program and Mentor Standards.

2013

Induction Consortium Steering Committee Launched

GWAEA establishes an induction consortium steering committee composed of district and AEA-level stakeholders. The committee educates school district leaders on aspects of the induction consortium and provides feedback to induction program staff on behalf of districts

2014

Beginning Teacher Network Begins

GWAEA launches its Beginning Teacher Network, providing an opportunity for new teachers to access additional professional development and networking opportunities across the consortium..

2015

Iowa AEAs Start Development of Induction Consortiums

Recognizing the impact of GWAEA's induction consortium, two other AEAs in Iowa -Mississippi Bend and Prairie Lakes begin the development of their own induction consortiums.

DECEMBER 2017

Evaluation Released for i3 Validation Grant

SRI International issues its evaluation of NTC's teacher induction model, as it was implemented in GWAEA and two other partner school districts. While the study found that GWAEA implemented the model with a high degree of fidelity, the analysis was inconclusive on its impact on students and teachers, largely due to the very small sample size of new teachers available during the study period.

2022

GWAEA Expands Focus on Special Education

GWAEA expands its induction programming for special education teachers in response to high turnover rates and challenges filling special education positions. GWAEA hires a lead coach focused on special education, along with five induction coaches with special education backgrounds.

2023

GWAEA Induction Program Serves 275+ Beginning Teachers

GWAEA's induction consortium serves over 275 new teachers in its 2023 cohort - the highest number of educators since the program began ten years earlier.



How were community members engaged?

- **Ensuring regular contact with principals:** GWAEA induction coaches hold “triad” meetings, where the coach, the teacher they are supporting, and the principal discuss the new teacher’s goals and progress. These meetings serve as the main contact point between principals and the induction program, ensuring that the supports that coaches provide align with each school’s priorities and are not duplicative of any services teachers are already receiving from their schools.
- **Conducting outreach at the school district level:** GWAEA staff meet with senior leaders at each participating school district at least once per year. These meetings serve as an opportunity for district leaders to ask questions and share feedback with GWAEA staff. Additionally, GWAEA provides these leaders with data on the induction program’s performance in their district.
- **Establishing a steering committee:** GWAEA established an induction program steering committee, which includes district-level program leaders, principals, induction coaches, and early-career teachers from multiple participating school districts. The committee serves as a vehicle for school districts to provide feedback to GWAEA on the induction program, and for GWAEA to build institutional knowledge about the induction program among school district staff.

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“GWAEA’s steering committee brought together representatives from multiple levels... This helped make the induction consortium sustainable by building buy-in among key stakeholders.”

Victoria Hom

Director of Partnerships and Development, NTC

How did this program consideration racial disparities?

- **Narrowing gaps in teacher quality:** Teaching experience is positively correlated with student achievement, yet beginning teachers tend to be overrepresented in high-needs schools. By creating a formalized new teacher induction program, GWAEA aims to narrow the skills gap between beginning and more experienced teachers, ultimately creating more consistent educational experience for students across participating districts.
- **Reducing bias through professional learning:** The professional learning and associated resources provided to coaches through NTC are designed to center the needs of systemically underserved student populations. As part of their standard training, induction coaches learn to identify biases in themselves and in classrooms, as well as practical strategies they can share with beginning teachers on how to address those biases. For example, coaches learn how to assess student work more objectively, leaving less room for biases in grading.

- **Minimizing disparities across districts:** As a regional intermediary organization, GWAEA serves school districts with varying levels of resources. By providing a consistent and high-quality induction experience, GWAEA reduces the differences in the supports available to new teachers across these districts. For small, rural districts in particular, the induction program provides a service that they would struggle to replicate on their own.

What were the key activities leading up to and following launch?

- **Building awareness and support for change:** Recognizing the challenges its school districts faced in recruiting and retaining new teachers, GWAEA staff began attending events sponsored by the New Teacher Center (NTC). Through these events, leaders at GWAEA learned about NTC's structured model for new teacher induction and connected with school districts that had implemented it. As their familiarity with NTC's model grew, leaders at GWAEA became increasingly interested in implementing systemic changes to their new teacher induction programming.
- **Securing funding for implementation and evaluation:** In 2013, NTC, GWAEA, and two additional school district partners jointly applied for and won an i3 Validation grant from the U.S. Department of Education. As part of the grant, GWAEA received funding to cover half of the induction program's cost for each participating school district for five years. The subsidy, paired with funding to support a rigorous evaluation of the program, represented an attractive opportunity for GWAEA's school district partners.
- **Standing up the induction program:** GWAEA hired a full-time program lead to coordinate the implementation of the new teacher induction program. With the support of a part-time lead coach, the program lead developed the policies and processes necessary to adapt NTC's model for the local context. Key deliverables at this stage included setting job descriptions for induction coaches and lead coaches, designing a hiring process for these staff, and agreeing with participating districts on how teachers would be released for coaching responsibilities.
- **Collaborating with New Teacher Center:** NTC provided critical direct support as GWAEA implemented the induction program. GWAEA's program lead received in-person professional learning at NTC's national office, which was followed up by training opportunities for school district leaders, lead coaches, and induction coaches. In addition, NTC provided oversight of the program evaluation work, and consulted with GWAEA on how to implement key elements of the induction program model.

How was the approach funded?

- **Leveraging federal funding:** As part of NTC's i3 Validation Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, GWAEA received \$2.3M to support the implementation of the induction program over a five-year period. GWAEA used the grant to cover half of the program's costs for a larger number of school districts, as opposed to fully funding a smaller set of school districts. This decision made the transition easier for districts when the grant ran out, as they had already been paying a portion of the costs for five years.

- **Setting fees for participating districts:** School districts pay a \$6,500 fee for each of their new teachers participating in GWAEA's induction program. By scaling the cost by the number of teachers participating, GWAEA has made the program more accessible for smaller school districts. Typically, school districts pay their fees using state dollars targeted toward teacher leadership and professional development. As of 2023, these fees represent approximately 85 percent of the budget for the induction consortium.
- **Reducing costs for school districts:** To offset the cost of the program for school districts, GWAEA covers the cost of a part-time data analyst, who provides the induction program with measurement and evaluation expertise. In addition, GWAEA directly contributes to the induction consortium's special education efforts, covering approximately 10 percent of the consortium's total budget.

How was the approach measured and refined?

- **Leveraging external evaluation support:** As part of NTC's i3 Validation Grant, SRI International, a non-profit research organization, conducted a quasi-experimental evaluation of GWAEA's implementation of NTC's induction model. The study assessed the fidelity with which GWAEA implemented NTC's model, as well as the induction program's impact on student achievement and new teacher practice and retention. While the study found that GWAEA implemented the model with a high degree of fidelity, the analysis was inconclusive on its impact on students and teachers, largely due to the very small sample size of new teachers available during the study period.
- **Setting goals and measuring teachers' progress:** Each new teacher works with their induction coach to develop an individual learning plan, which describes their goals for improving their teaching practice. These goals are based on a set of core teaching standards provided by NTC. To measure progress along these domains, induction coaches lead their teachers through learning cycles, which include pre- and post-observational assessments. All of these data are aggregated at the coach, school, and district level to enable GWAEA and school district leaders to understand the induction program's impact on teacher practice.

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“My Induction Coach has been incredibly supportive... He has really helped me to dive deep into standards driven assessment and data collection. It has allowed me to exponentially improve [as an educator].”

Beginning Teacher

Grant Wood AEA Induction Consortium

- **Informing coaching with data:** With access to dashboards showing the progress made by each of their teachers, induction coaches are able to differentiate the supports they provide to each teacher. Much like teachers, induction coaches also participate in learning cycles, where lead coaches help them reflect on their practice and focus on improving along a set of specific coaching standards. During these learning cycles, lead coaches conduct pre- and post-observational assessments, which provide GWAEA with data on the professional growth of their induction coaches.
- **Assessing the program's impact on student achievement:** Without the ongoing support of an external evaluation partner, rigorously assessing the impact of the induction program on student achievement is challenging. However, GWAEA has begun conducting pre- and post-assessments of student work to estimate the impact of new instructional techniques employed by beginning teachers as a result of coaching. While student performance is impacted by many factors, this approach provides GWAEA with a window into the induction program's impact on student achievement.

Next Steps



Assess the need

Implementing effective educator recruitment and retention interventions has been shown to improve outcomes predictive of upward mobility. These outcomes, identified by the Urban Institute, are effective public education, preparation for college, employment opportunities, opportunities for income, financial security, and social capital. City, county, and school district leaders can assess local conditions for each of these outcomes using the metrics on the Economic Mobility Catalog's educator recruitment and retention page. All cities and counties with populations over 75,000 can also receive a customized data sheet with these metrics here.

Engage stakeholders

Implementing the New Teacher Center's induction model requires collaboration between multiple stakeholders at the school building and district level. When designing an induction program, program leads should consult with early-career and experienced teachers, instructional coaches, and both building- and district-level administrators.

Additionally, ongoing engagement is important to ensure an induction program's continued relevance over time. As seen in Grant Wood Area Education Agency's replication of the NTC model, a steering committee can be an effective tool for stakeholder engagement and investment. In addition to providing program leads with feedback on the induction program, steering committee members can also serve as ambassadors, educating their colleagues on aspects of the induction program.

Make the case

Since NTC's full-release induction model requires a school district to commit significant resources, program leads may encounter opposition to investing in the program. To help persuade skeptics of the model's value, program leads should familiarize themselves with the evidence behind the model. Identifying peer school districts that have partnered with NTC can also help build support.

Access tools

To support the implementation of this strategy, a selection of resources are included below:

- [NTC's Mentor Practice Standards](#)
- [NTC's Continuum of Instructional Coaching Practice](#)
- [NTC's Teacher Induction Program Standards](#)
- [NTC's Optimal Learning Environment Overview](#)
- [NTC's Effective Schools Framework Overview](#)

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