



AAPT Summer Meeting  
Edmonton, CA  
Monday, July 21, 2008

# Leaky Bucket or Revolving Door: Why Don't We Support Our Novice Teachers?

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*The conventional wisdom holds that teachers typically improve their instruction a great deal during their first few years of teaching.*

Anderson & Pellicer, 2001

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*Experts claim that induction programs can accelerate the process, if such programs provide training targeted to beginning teachers' needs and pair new teachers with carefully selected mentors who are given the necessary time and training.*

Shields et al., 2004

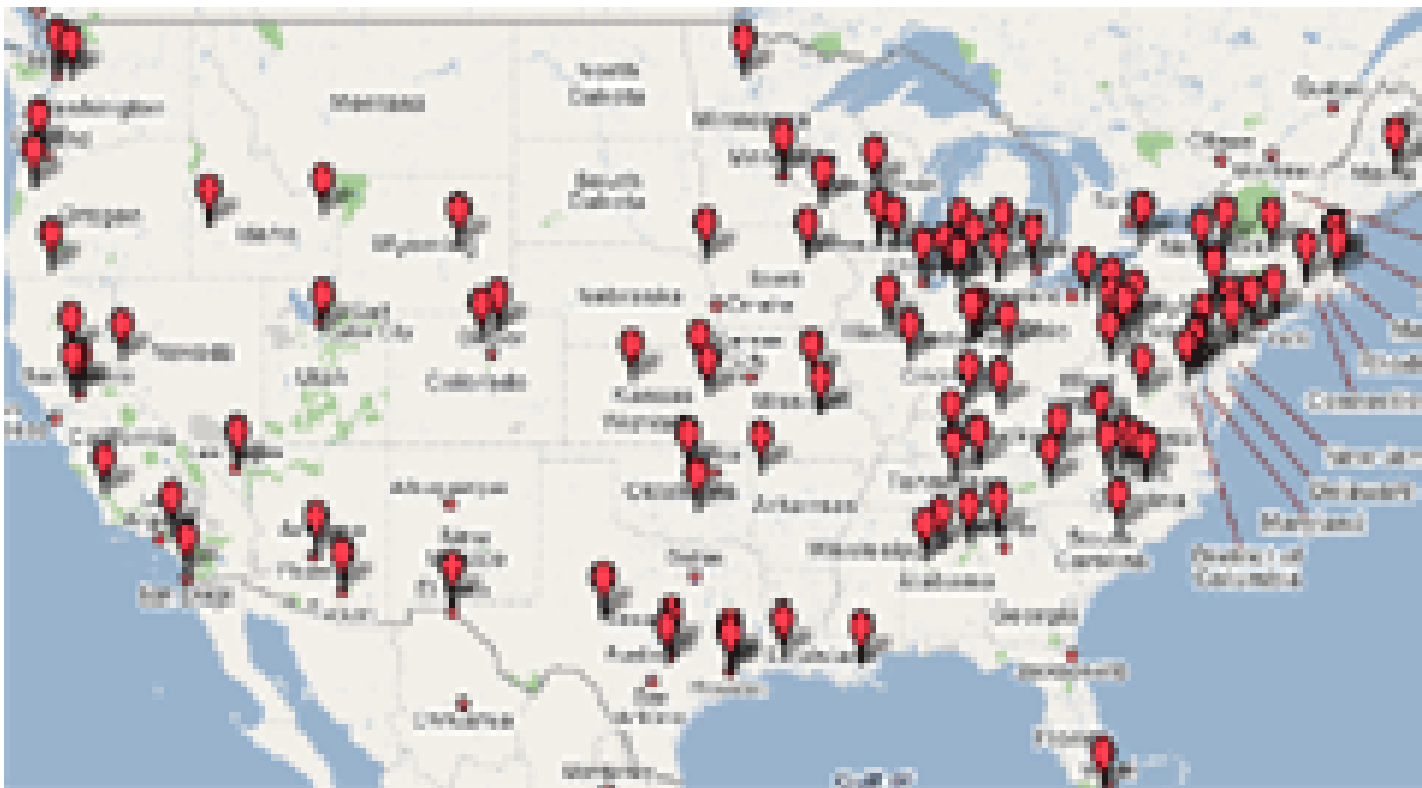
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## PTEC: Over 100 institutions!



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## **Problem: New Teachers are Isolated and Presumed to be Expert**

*Most novices are unwilling to reveal just how little they know about the content they are asked to teach and how to teach it well.*

*Many do not realize that they have only a basic understanding of the content.*

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## **Problem: New Teachers are Isolated and Presumed to be Expert**

*Mentoring is usually superficial and does not focus on classroom practice and student learning.*

*Mentoring often focuses only on classroom management issues.*

*Ironically many novice teachers will avoid any help that a skilled mentor could offer, fearing they will be judged negatively if they seek support.*

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## **Solution: Professional Learning Communities**

- AAPT
- AAPT Local Sections
- Society of Physics Students Chapters
- Teacher Groups at PTEC sites
- NSTA
- NSTA Student Chapters
- State/regional Science Teacher Groups
- Local Physics Alliances and Regional Groups

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## **Problem: No Lifeline for Novice Teachers**

*Since novices are working in survival mode through most of their first year, we need to be able to answer their “burning questions” in a quick and efficient manner*

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## **Solution: Develop Trained Mentors and a Mechanism to Answer Cries for Help**

- New Teacher Days at AAPT National Meetings
- Support for New Teachers at Section Meetings
- Content Mentoring
- Instructional Mentoring using RTOP
- An ask the mentor portal on the *Physics Front*

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*Isolation is a major cause of new teacher attrition:  
teachers are compartmentalized into egg-crate  
classrooms.*

*The cellular nature of most schools fosters  
independence and self-reliance, but  
discourages collaboration.*

Dan Lortie, *Schoolteacher: a sociological study*

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***To accelerate the professional growth of our novice teachers they must:***

- Be part of Professional Learning Communities
- Have intensive mentoring by a trained mentor from the same discipline and grade level
- Be able to observe colleagues' classrooms
- Be observed (RTOP) and get substantive feedback from mentors
- Keep their focus on increasing student learning

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*New teachers need multiple opportunities to collaborate with other teachers in professional communities, observe colleagues' classrooms, be observed by expert mentors, analyze their own practice, and network with other novice teachers.*

Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Elmore, 2002

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# Respect, Rapport, and Trust



Michael Wolter (1947-2007)

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Questions? Comments?

*Thank you!*

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