

CHAPTER 3

STRANGERS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY: TEACHERS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

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Teacher induction programs in the Northern Territory (NT) are designed to increase teacher retention by acculturating and orienting new teachers (both inexperienced and experienced, but new to the Northern Territory). They address how to live in the NT and in remote, often isolated communities, how to teach Aboriginal students and how to work with Aboriginal communities. Many teachers in urban areas, as well as teachers in rural communities, are engaged in multicultural education and living, where the language spoken and community mores and values usually differ from their own. The programs designed to assist teachers are an outgrowth of the Territory's geographic, demographic, and cultural characteristics.

The Setting

The Northern Territory includes one-sixth of the Australian continent but less than 1 percent of Australia's population. The Territory has a population of 170,000; it has two cities, Darwin with 78,000 people and Alice Springs with 25,000, a few small "urban" towns, and many scattered, remote settlements. The large percentage of people concentrated in a few places is consistent with the rest of Australia, where the population centers hug the coastline and are



dominated by five large urban centers. Australia has one of the lowest population densities in the world, and the population density in the Northern Territory is only one person per 8.3 square kilometers.

The Northern Territory's population is diverse and multicultural. Almost 18 percent of the population was born outside Australia. Another 23 percent are Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders, compared to 1.5 percent for Australia as a whole. Many non-Aborigines were born in other parts of Australia, attracted by jobs and the sense of adventure, although the rate of interstate migration has slowed in recent years. The population is younger than that of the rest of Australia. The student population is 35 percent Aboriginal, and almost 100 percent Aboriginal outside Darwin, Alice Springs, and a few mining centers. Twenty-five percent of the population speak a language other than English as their first language; 61 percent of these speak an Aboriginal language.

Large sections of the Northern Territory are designated as Aboriginal tribal lands. In these areas, Aboriginal councils are responsible for community policies and administration. Much of this land is off-limits to non-Aborigines without permits issued by the council. Since the mid-1970s, many communities have seen a renaissance of traditional Aboriginal lifestyles. With the exception of teachers and health workers, few non-Aborigines live in these communities.

Education in the Northern Territory

The provision of education in Australia is a state or territory responsibility. Since the Northern Territory government assumed responsibility from the Commonwealth and South Australia governments in 1979, the Northern Territory has provided free public education for preschool, transition (one year between preschool and primary), primary, and secondary students throughout the Territory. Preschool is available for most students beginning at four years of age. Enrollment is compulsory for children between six and fifteen years of age; however, most Aboriginal children living in Aboriginal communities do not continue beyond primary school, since attendance at secondary school often requires them to leave their remote communities.

In the population centers one typically finds primary schools, junior secondary schools (grades 7-10), and senior secondary schools (grades 11-12). Most schools

in the Northern Territory, however, are remote primary schools, many with only one or two teachers.

To respond to the huge distances separating schools in the Territory (for example, Darwin and Alice Springs are almost 1,500 kilometers apart), education administration is decentralized into North and South divisions, with each division having several regions. In 1995, Operations North served 31,500 students in 110 schools; Operations South served 9,600 students (with 2,000 students in non-government schools). There are 59 government schools in the Division. Of these, 74 percent are in rural and remote areas; these schools serve 41 percent of Operation South's students. To serve these students, NT employs about 2,100 teachers (5 percent of whom are Aboriginal) and 375 teacher assistants and teacher trainees (74 percent Aboriginal).

Beginning in 1993, responsibility for teacher recruitment passed to the divisions. Until then, most recruiting duties were handled centrally from the Territory's Department of Education, located in Darwin. Policies and guidelines for teacher induction are made at the departmental level and designed and implemented by the divisions and regions. The two operating divisions take different approaches for urban and rural areas, reflecting different patterns of student and teacher retention and mobility, availability of support programs and specialists, student composition, and isolation.

The teaching force is primarily recruited from other states in Australia. While the Northern Territory University (NTU) now provides some new teachers, its output is insufficient to meet the need for teachers in rural communities. The Northern Territory, in contrast to the rest of Australia, has a long history of interstate recruiting. This need to recruit teachers unfamiliar with living in the Territory and its curriculum (which are state and Territory adopted) led to the initial development of a teacher induction program in 1972 and expansion in 1985. In contrast, the Australia Department of Employment and Education (DEET) reports that teacher induction programs in the rest of Australia are less well developed than those in the Northern Territory because the other states train 95 percent of new teachers in training institutions within the same state. Other states now are beginning to develop more robust teacher induction programs incorporating many of the features currently being used in the Northern Territory.

In addition to recruiting staff from other states and NTU graduates, the Territory operates Batchelor College, which trains Aborigines as primary school teachers.

Currently, Batchelor prepares about 25 fully qualified teachers from the four-year training course. This course—which is equal to a three year-Diploma of Teaching—qualifies the graduates to teach anywhere in the Territory and, technically, anywhere in Australia where the three-year diploma is accepted. The College also offers a three-year course; the graduates are employed as assistant teachers in rural and remote schools. Thirteen assistant teachers were recruited in 1996, and 92 assistant teachers are employed in schools throughout Operations South. The philosophy of the college is to infuse all programs with a community-development orientation where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture, attributes, values, and aspirations are given equal status. Even with Batchelor College, most teachers in the Territory, including schools in Aboriginal communities, are non-Aboriginal and trained outside the Northern Territory.

In the 1970s the average length of teaching service in rural schools in the most isolated areas was as low as nine months. Retention of teachers has improved markedly in recent years (as recruitment has improved, induction and support programs expanded, and the demand for teachers dropped significantly in other states); however, it remains low in rural areas. The proportion of bushies who are new teachers varies each year. In 1995, of the teachers new to the NT or teaching, 83 percent were assigned to rural and remote areas. In that same year, 43 percent of the recruits were new teachers. In 1996, 39 percent of recruits were new teachers and, of the total recruits, 69 percent went to rural and remote areas. In addition, teacher mobility is very high among rural schools and from rural to urban schools. Few teachers in rural communities spend more than three years at a school. Retention is higher and mobility less in Darwin and Alice Springs.

First-year teacher assignments in the NT are similar to those of more experienced teachers. The sole exception is the desire of administrators, usually successfully implemented, not to assign inexperienced teachers to one-teacher schools in their first year. For first-year teachers, responsibilities such as teaching loads, participation in curriculum and planning committees, and attendance at staff meetings, are comparable to those of other teachers. In larger urban schools, where team teaching is feasible and more common, first-year teachers may be assigned classes at the beginning of the term that are anticipated to have fewer discipline problems. By the second or third term, even these differences vanish.

AS YOU COME TO THE END OF YOUR FIRST YEAR, WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST FEW WEEKS LIKE?

"Like someone changed the TV while I was out of the room. I often didn't know what movie I was watching."

"The teaching load was enormous. I got good support from school, and the other teachers were helpful."

"It was like jumping in at the deep end. It is a very steep learning curve moving from the university to the real world."

"I was nervous; would I be up to the challenge?"

"Daunting. A lot of work. It took a while to figure out where to get stuff; you ask a lot of dumb questions at first."

"Nothing prepared me for these children. The first week I wanted to take a blunt knife to my wrists. The next months were hectic. Very slowly my life and my relationship with the children is falling into place."

HOW DID YOUR EXPERIENCE AND EXPECTATIONS CHANGE OVER THE YEAR?

"I became more realistic. Now I see small steps and a little progress with my students as exciting big steps."

"I'm no longer a perfectionist. I've become more flexible. I've learned to, and am now willing to, organise around the students instead of expecting the students to behave the way I expect."

"I don't think anything can prepare you for being in charge and responsible for a class day after day. I learnt more the first few months than I did at university and in practicums combined."

"I think the biggest lesson I learned was that it's the job you do in the classroom that counts. I had to reduce the time I spent outside planning and worrying. I was exhausted all the time. I didn't have a life outside school. I've come to accept that I can't do it all."

Challenges for Teachers

Teachers new to the Northern Territory are faced with numerous professional and personal challenges. Some of these are common to all new teachers. Others are unique to situations where there exist personal and teaching challenges caused by physical and cultural isolation and multicultural living and teaching. Like teachers elsewhere, newly trained teachers in the Northern Territory are idealistic, have high expectations for their students, and have high standards for themselves. As a result, they work exceptionally hard and long hours developing lesson plans and teaching materials, teaching, and meeting with mentors and other school staff. Beginning

teachers spend a great deal of time working, often losing themselves in work. As several teachers commented: "The challenge is finding the right balance in my professional life so that I have a personal life."

Teachers also are less valued by the community in general. It was reported that throughout Australia, including the NT, the status of teachers has declined noticeably in recent years. New applicants to teacher training institutions have lower admission scores, and teaching is often not a new teacher's first choice for a career. Teacher morale has declined, in some instances pay has lagged behind other professions, and urban jobs are scarce. Teachers are increasingly seen as employees and less seen as professionals.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN OUTSTATION TEACHER

Karen lives in Sedgwick Downs and teaches at a remote settlement 45 minutes away. Karen's day begins at 7:15 when she arrives at the Sedgwick Downs Primary School to pick up materials and make copies. She then loads the land cruiser for the drive to Gulibi. When she arrives at about 8:30 the children start arriving. The first hour Karen helps the children with personal hygiene—nose blowing to clear ears, tooth brushing, etc. Assisted by Dedi, her Aboriginal assistant teacher, the next two hours she teaches 17 children, ages 3 to 11, oral English, stories, and chanting. Dedi takes the smaller children for reading, while Karen provides the bigger children reading, writing, and phonetics.

At 11:30 they break for lunch. Karen brings the food that she has brought with her from Sedgwick Downs to the mothers to prepare. This is part of a community nutritional program. The children begin returning in 15 minutes, so Karen doesn't get a lunch break for herself. Until 12:30 she involves them in games.

Classes resume at 12:30 with silent reading, one-on-one instruction, a break for fruit, and a math lesson. School finishes between 2:30 and 3:00.

On her way home each day, Karen must stop at the grocery store in Sedgwick Downs to pick up food for tomorrow's lunch.

Arriving home between 4:30 and 5:00, Karen chats with Amy, a teacher in Sedgwick Downs with whom Karen shares a house. They chat about the day and how their program is working. She then reads or watches TV or takes a nap. Then she prepares dinner, eats, reviews plans for tomorrow, and is in bed, exhausted, between 8:30 and 9:00. Tomorrow is another long day. Since Karen travels to Gulibi only from Monday through Thursday (an assistant teacher is in charge on Friday), she is able to do lesson plans and review curriculum materials at Sedgwick Downs Primary School every Friday.

In addition, teachers in the Territory often are isolated from their natural support group—family and friends. Most have moved several thousand kilometers from their homes to cities and rural communities where initially they know no one. They enter

schools where the students are different from those whom they have interacted with in their school lives and student teacher practicums. For the first time, many are faced with the complexities of a multicultural society. While most come from large, urban multicultural settings, these cities often break down and exist as a set of cultures living side by side. In the Northern Territory, one sees this parallelism in Darwin and Alice Springs, and a few other places; but in most schools multiculturalism is the norm. The new teacher is also faced with a new curriculum. In Australia, the teacher training institutions base their curriculum around the state's curriculum. Therefore, students are exposed extensively during training only to that state's curriculum.

Because of the smallness of many schools in the NT, teachers have assignments requiring multiple preparations. With a large number of Aboriginal children, teachers face language barriers. They have difficulty setting realistic expectations for low-performing students and schools. They have inadequate and often inappropriate classroom-management skills that result in disruptive students and other disciplinary problems. And, they have limited preparation in dealing with cultural diversity.

"In recruiting, I look for flexibility, maturity, realistic expectations about Aboriginal communities (although these always exceed reality). I try to match people and schools based on community support, isolation, sense of support needed, size of school, experience level, and gender. I speak to the superintendent and principal; then I speak to the applicant and I have the applicant speak to the headteacher. Then, I make an offer. This process paves the way for effective school-level support. I'm able to do this now for about two-thirds of the new teachers."

Central Office Staff Member

Teachers working in rural schools encounter additional challenges. They must learn and live by the mores of the community. Each Aboriginal community has distinct roles, responsibilities, and behaviors that children, women, and men follow. Most communities speak their own languages. One principal describes a





recent incident: "A new teacher who arrived after orientation was chased by an Aboriginal mother with a stick after the teacher said to her child, 'You look like your mother.' While the teacher meant it as a compliment, in this community, this was an insult. You only say, "You look like your father." The principal worked with the community and teacher to resolve the incident.

In Aboriginal communities, new teachers teach in either an ESL or bilingual program. Few new teachers have received very much ESL training, and those that have typically have dealt with providing ESL to new immigrants to Australia from central Europe and Asia. To assist the new teacher, particularly to provide bilingual education, Aboriginal classrooms have Aboriginal assistant teachers. New teachers also have to learn to interact and effectively use an assistant teacher, who is often untrained, reserved, and wary about committing to the new teacher.

The Aboriginal students provide challenges to teaching. Aborigines were traditionally a nomadic people. Although Aborigines are settled in communities, going to class every day at the same time and staying in class all day has to be established "as the norm" by the new teacher. It can be a particularly difficult problem with teenage boys. As one teacher noted: "These children must be brought from the dust to desk." Aboriginal students, because of inadequate health care, also have an exceptionally high incidence of hearing problems. As many as 50 percent of all Aboriginal students suffer from an educationally significant hearing loss at some stage during their school life. All new teachers are instructed in "nose-blowing," which is performed every morning to clear ear passages; schools also have audiology equipment for the new teacher to use in assisting the students. In sum, these new teachers were trained as primary school teachers yet must also be able to implement some of the approaches used by ESL and special education teachers in more urban schools.

Rural teachers are provided with housing, either free or at reduced cost, depending on the degree of remoteness. In some communities teachers must share houses. In some communities very good housing is available; in others, relatively poor accommodations are all that are available. Regardless of the condition of the house, Aboriginal communities are difficult places for non-Aborigines to live: with the exception of television, which is always available, the communities are isolated and the teachers will almost always be apart as non-Aborigines.

Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal communities face their own challenges. First, Aboriginal teachers must adapt to accepting assistance and assessment from a single source, usually a non-Aboriginal staff member. This is sometimes difficult because in Aboriginal culture, there is little overlap of these two roles — individuals are either acceptable or unacceptable. Second, Aboriginal teachers must find ways to achieve objectives (such as discipline) within community constraints. Primarily females, Aboriginal teachers live in a male-dominant culture and are often less mobile and more bound to their communities.

The Aborigines' contact with formal education began relatively recently. In many communities, Aborigines went to schools that were run by missionaries. To ensure attendance, many missions did not give the Aborigines food if their children did not attend school. With the decline of mission schools and increased self-determination, Aborigines have not, until very recently, given priority to education. In some instances education continues to be given low priority. Their primary concerns have been maintaining and reintroducing traditional Aboriginal practices and local decision making. To many, schooling was not relevant. The legacy of this period remains. Teachers are challenged by high truancy rates, limited use of English, massive dropout of males at the secondary level, alcoholism, and petrol sniffing. Today, support for schooling is slowly improving. The Federal government supports programs to involve Aboriginal parents. Aborigines and non-Aborigines are also working to build bridges between the communities.

To meet these challenges, the Department of Education provides a multifaceted teacher induction program for all teachers new to the Northern Territory.

Goals of the Teacher Induction Program

The teacher induction program is designed to increase teacher retention by providing teachers new to the Northern Territory with support, acculturation, cross-cultural training, and skills assessment. To accommodate the different experiences of urban and rural teachers, specialized activities and supports are provided to teachers serving in urban and rural areas.

A great deal of concern and attention is given by administrators and resource specialists to make new teachers feel welcomed, appreciated, and supported. As former new arrivals themselves, those involved in teacher induction are keenly aware that a successful transition to a new environment is of key importance in the Territory—more important in the first year than curriculum, classroom management, or lesson plans, which form the basis for teacher assessments. Support is both formal,

such as ESL resource specialists who visit to assist teachers, and informal, such as “having a shoulder to cry on” and “providing a support network.”

A successful transition requires new teachers to find their place in a multicultural environment. Teachers come to the Northern Territory for many different reasons—some as "missionaries," some on "paid holiday," others "to save money to buy a house," some because "there are few teaching jobs available in the rest of Australia." The school system must orient new teachers to the realities of living in Aboriginal communities and teaching Aboriginal students throughout the Territory. They encourage new teachers to keep some zeal of the missionary but to temper their enthusiasm with the pragmatism of the mercenary. As program deliverers say: "It is important that you remember who you are, your value system, and your culture."

Before arriving in the Territory, few new teachers are aware of Aboriginal learning styles, Aboriginal customs and mores, the role of community councils, and other aspects of the Aboriginal community. It is important for the new teacher to "get off on the right foot." Although learning to live in another culture can last a lifetime, some shortcuts are useful. Program administrators have found that a few lessons before going to their schools give new teachers a perspective on what is occurring and why, and how they should deal with the situation. Equally important, cross-cultural training provides contact with experts at the central office that can serve as a resource for new teachers: "They're only a telephone call away."

New teachers are on probation for one year in the Northern Territory. Although retention is the goal and assessment is downplayed, administrators want to ensure that "the few bad apples" are weeded out during the probation period.

The Teacher Induction Program

Teacher induction consists of four components that are provided throughout the first year of service in the Territory:

- **Orientation:** provides support, acculturation, and cross-cultural training to all teachers new to the Northern Territory. **Orientation consists of three parts:**
 - Basic Orientation, which is a one-week pre-NT service introduction;
 - Orientation recall, which reinforces basic orientation and provides exposure to NT curriculum and practical models of program delivery; and
 - School-based support, which further reinforces basic and about orientation recall and provides on-going individually focused advice,

coaching, mentoring, and counseling at the school site by school-level and central-office staffs.

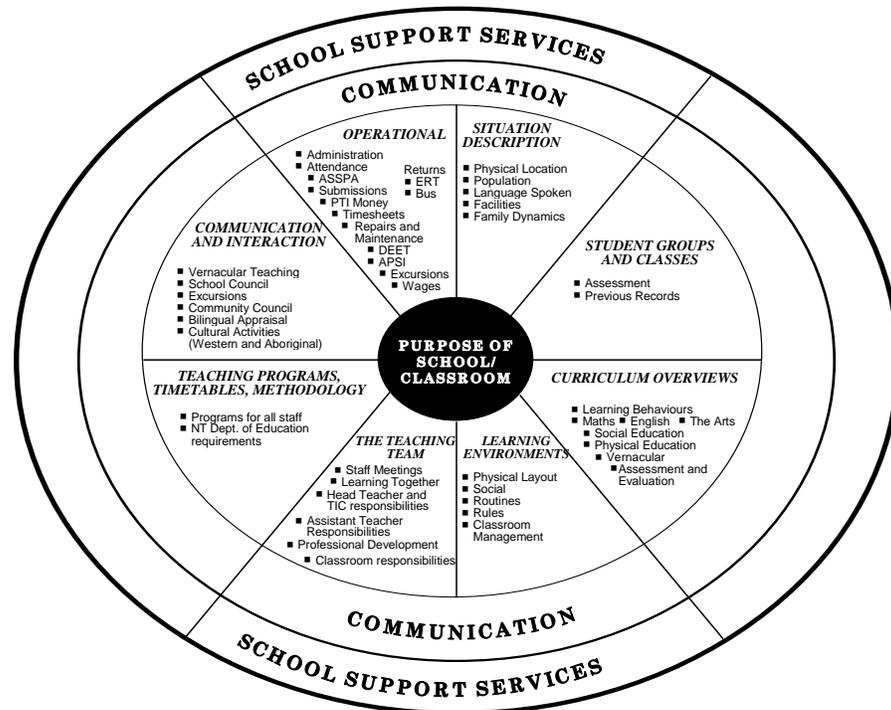
- **Peer probation:** assists and assesses teachers new to the Territory on their teaching skills and their adaptation to living in an isolated Aboriginal community.
- **Professional support for Aboriginal teachers:** provides additional support to new Aboriginal teachers.
- **Other teacher training:** exposes new teachers, through in-services, to successful teaching practices.

The following diagram illustrates the way in which program developers conceptualize the integration of the topics covered through the teacher induction program's four components.

Orientation

Orientation includes a one-week *basic orientation* at the divisional and regional center, an *orientation recall* four to six weeks after the basic orientation, and *school-based support*, which provides initial school-based orientation and continues with professional development throughout the year. Since each division is responsible for implementing NT policy, variations are found between Operations North and Operations South in the design and operation of orientation. The basic description presented refers to Operations South. Differences in program design and implementation are discussed afterwards.

Basic Orientation. Before arriving in the Northern Territory, new teachers receive information packets that outline the first week's activities at the division orientation and regional orientation. At that time, new teachers are informed of the school where they will be teaching. Increasingly, attempts are made to provide information about the school ahead of time and provide an opportunity for the



new teacher to speak to the principal or head teacher. The Territory rarely sends an inexperienced teacher to a one-teacher school.

During the three-day divisional orientation, "participants will be able to access regional personnel in order to informally discuss working and living in the Northern Territory." The orientation begins with a brief welcoming session and barbecue, to set the tone that the central office is serious about supporting new teachers and to begin building networks between central office staff and new teachers and among new teachers. Social events play an important part in the basic orientation and are viewed by new teachers as extremely important and successful.

During the three days, the program administrators hope to achieve five intended outcomes:

- Completion of the paperwork required to begin work;
- Introduction to Operations South structure and procedures and the related familiarization with personnel and services;
- An awareness of Aboriginal mores and customs;
- An exploration of teachers, schools, and law; and

- An understanding of NT-specific information.

During basic orientation, teachers who will be working at isolated schools have additional logistical arrangements to complete before leaving town.

Through formal sessions, breaks, and planned social events, new teachers meet all division staff with whom they may interact at any time during the year. This includes administrative support staff who may deal with payroll issues, administrators who may deal with equipment needs, resource specialists who may provide curriculum and instructional advice, and human resources who can provide information about legal issues. All division staff view their responsibility as "being there when needed, for whatever."

Immediately following the divisional orientation, a one-day regional orientation takes place. Prior evaluations found that rural teachers wanted more time on issues related to bush teachers and rural schools, and urban teachers felt too much time was spent on issues that only bush teachers encountered. Operations South therefore revised its regional orientation to provide separate rural and urban programs.

The rural program takes place at Titjikala School, a two-teacher school located 130 kilometers south from Alice Springs. Topics covered during the rural regional orientation include developing a school culture; programming and teaching language; administrative survival and useful resources (permitting new teachers to speak with Titjikala's head teacher who has one year's experience in the NT); and proforma model programs (NT teachers use NT curriculum resource materials). The underlying focus of the rural orientation is living and working in Aboriginal communities and in remote areas. In contrast, the urban program stresses issues that new teachers must deal with during their first week: establishment of classroom routines and class rules; expectations for teachers; curriculum documents; support resources; and primary and secondary model programs and programming requirements. The urban program is not school-based.

OPERATIONS SOUTH ORIENTATION

Sunday, 21 January

- 1500 Welcome to the NT and Education Department
- 1530 Explanation of Week's Arrangements
- 1545 Teaching Structure
- 1700 Approximate Closing
- 1800 Barbecue

Monday, 22 January

- 0830 Cross-cultural Awareness
 - Beliefs and understanding;
 - Kinship and skin systems;
 - Differences between European and Aboriginal kinship and skin systems;
 - Aspects of Aboriginal culture that give rise to misunderstanding;
 - Implication for classroom practice and living;
 - Resource specialists introduced
- 1030 Languages
 - Central Australia history;
 - Language learning and bilingual programs;
 - Influences of Aboriginal languages on speaking of English
- 1300 Health Considerations
 - Health services available;
 - Staying healthy
- 1330 Human Resources Management Unit
 - Removals, housing, and travel
- 1400 Conditions of Service
- 1430 Four-Wheel Drive Vehicles — Theory Session
(optional bus tour of Alice Springs — other participants)

At the end of the week rural teachers are escorted to their schools. Attempts are made to ensure that each escort is familiar with the school and community. The first day at school for rural teachers (if it has more than one teacher), as well as for urban teachers, is devoted to a school-based orientation. The school-based orientation is intended as an introduction to the school. New teachers meet

OPERATIONS SOUTH ORIENTATION (Continued)

Tuesday, 23 January

- 830 Overview of School Support Services
General overview of curriculum;
Senior Education Officers introduced
- 930 Education in the South: "the Superintendent's Perspective"
Roles, responsibilities, and expectations;
Superintendent introduced
- 1100 NT Specific Information
NT Liquor Act;
Restricted areas and permits
- 1300 Head Teachers: "An administration session"
(all other participants visit Education Centre)
- 1430 Personal Business
Banking;
Permits;
Housing; and
Purchasing;
- 1900 Orientation Dinner

Wednesday, 24 January

- 0830 Continuing Orientation: "Probation as an Integral Support Process"
- 0900 Satisfying Probation Criteria
- 1030 Evaluation of Division Orientation

colleagues, senior teachers, and curriculum specialists (if the school has any), and learn about school policies, community and school expectations for teachers, school culture, logistics, rules, and, in some cases, their assignment. Most urban teachers in secondary schools do not know the specific classes they will be teaching until the beginning of the school year. Bush teachers will usually receive briefings about the local language, Aboriginal customs, and community rules.

In recent years, only 50 percent of teachers new to the NT in any year have been hired in time to attend basic orientation. Missing basic orientation handicaps new teachers, particularly their ability to achieve confidence in dealing with issues of Aboriginal classroom management and student discipline. Several years ago, Operations South

offered a second basic orientation. This repeat session was eliminated because of budgetary constraints.

NEW TEACHER COMMENTS ON ORIENTATION

The orientation program has been extremely well organised, enabling new recruits to obtain a greater understanding of personal and professional expectations in the NT. A great way to meet new friends and fellow teachers as well as obtaining information about the education department. Getting to know people from Human Resources Management, student support and so on has and will be an essential part of our future development... Thanks for a great few days.

I found the interaction with other staff to be invaluable, getting to know other recruits as well as my supervisor on a professional and social basis. The recruits need to be broken down into smaller groups; this would enable them to ask questions which relate to their own situation.

Coming from Victoria, my knowledge of Aboriginal culture was limited. This opened my eyes, and I feel more confident dealing with Aboriginal people.

Made me aware of some of the customs and social rules. Made me aware of the difficulties from the children's point of view.

Orientation recall. Four to six weeks after basic orientation, new teachers return to Alice Springs for additional orientation. (New teachers who missed basic orientation



also participate.) For rural teachers, orientation recall is a three-day training program that covers curriculum issues, teaching materials, and practical solutions to everyday classroom situations. It is an opportunity for "bushies to strengthen ties among themselves and with central administration staff." Orientation recall provides bushes with a needed dose of

support after the difficult first extended period living in an Aboriginal community and teaching at an Aboriginal school. A key word stressed at orientation recall is "belonging."

Most of the new rural teachers report that classroom management is a major problem in the early months. However, basic orientation intentionally does not cover this topic

in any depth. Central staff believe and teacher reports support that new teachers need to experience the situation first, otherwise they are not ready for training.



Commenting on an orientation recall session on teaching appropriate learning behaviors, one teacher said it clearly:

"Recall provided what I need to know. I learned the importance of reflection, and I have a much better sense why my children will not or cannot do some things. I will be concentrating on teaching these behaviors when I return to Yuendumu." Similarly, a recall session on appropriate learning behaviors provided new teachers with models of student behavior to help them realize the importance both of individual learning styles and of the cultural learning environment.

At rural orientation recall, emphasis is placed on new teachers learning from one another. In general, curriculum strategies "are learned by word of mouth." Trainers encourage new teachers to share ideas and experiences about what they have tried, what worked for them, what didn't, and what they are thinking about trying in the future. New teachers are encouraged to continue this reflective assessment and outreach after orientation recall. A "bush network" exists in the NT that links all remote schools by telephone and fax. Advice and support for teachers is available continually from a network of peers. "It was my lifeline the first few months," one said.

Throughout the three-day session, practicality is stressed over theory. The purpose is to share ideas, learn shortcuts, and develop a reservoir of teaching strategies and materials to draw on in the months ahead.

In contrast, the urban orientation recall is only one-half to one day. The program centers on learning more about the curriculum and curriculum materials.

School-Based Support. Support is intended as "an intensive, vital and planned professional and personal introduction for newly appointed staff to relevant aspects of their daily workplace. This part of induction continues throughout the year and is closely aligned with probation."

FIRST IMPRESSIONS—RIDING A ROLLER COASTER

We made good time that first Sunday driving northwest on the dirt road from Alice Springs. It took Ted, an ESL resource specialist, and me about 90 minutes to drive to my school at Gutabi. The ride was exciting, beautiful, and reassuring. While I was a bushy (the name rural teachers use) at a bush school, Alice Springs and Ted would not be far away.

The Australian outback was all I had imagined as a child growing up in Melbourne—vast, red, and intriguing. I had gotten a glimpse flying to Alice, where it looked vast, red, and empty—but most of my view was blocked by clouds. It is vast, and the red soil gives it a special look and feel. I liked what I saw.

While the first 90 minutes were reassuring, during the next week my emotions were on a continuous roller coaster ride. During orientation, Ted showed me pictures of Gutabi. I don't think anything would have prepared me—the pictures showed the school and my house, but I couldn't get a sense of Gutabi, a cattle station where the school was located.

On entering the house my normally optimistic nature faded quickly. The house was filthy. Spider cobwebs dangled in every corner. Looking out the kitchen window, I was struck for the first time that there wasn't much to Gutabi except my house and the school. I wanted to get back in the car with Ted and leave. Ted said, "Give it a week and if you still want to leave, I'll come pick you up." As upset as I was, it seemed a reasonable request.

Ted and I walked the 15 meters to the two-room school. Ted said the school might need a second teacher, but they wouldn't be sure until the middle of the term when they knew what enrollments would be. The school was better equipped than I expected. We had computers, a telephone, fax machine, VCR and tapes, and a library. The school also included an ablution block so the children could wash and brush their teeth. After about 30 minutes, Ted said that he had to go and would telephone me during the week to see how I was getting along.

Sunday afternoon, as I was trying to clean up the house (which was difficult since my gear hadn't arrived), a group of children congregated outside the fence surrounding the school compound. I went out and said, "Hello, I'm Miss Jackson, the new teacher. What are your names?" I was met by silence. I was disappointed but not surprised. At orientation, I was told not to be surprised at the lack of a verbal response. As the Aboriginal trainer described, "You need to sit back. Your culture is to barge in; the Aboriginal approach is to ease in. Be patient." I just "hung out." Some of the time the children talked to each other in their language, but most of the time they just sat in the dirt on one side of the fence as I tried to pretend I was cleaning up outside the house. After a while, one of the older-looking children told me that he wouldn't be coming to school tomorrow—there was going to be a funeral. He said it would be all right for me to come since I was the new teacher.

Urban schools and many rural schools provide a one-day school introduction. New teachers are provided with school and staff handbooks and in some cases, school action plans for school improvement. For most urban secondary teachers, it is on this day that they learn the specific classes that they will be teaching—beginning the next

day. The content of school-based orientation is usually followed up throughout the year in meetings between school executives and new teachers, school-wide or syndicate-wide (a staff grouping) planning meetings, and local training programs (e.g., an optional weekly language course).

In urban areas, teachers are not isolated. Schools are often organized to promote collaboration and collegiality. One finds open classroom designs in many primary schools in the NT, team teaching, and school-within-school secondary schools, where teachers have daily planning periods on the operation of "their school." This physical and organizational structure provides a great deal of daily interaction and support between new and experienced teachers.

Larger schools have senior teachers (a promotional track) who are expected as part of their duties to provide assistance to other teachers. These senior teachers interact continually with new teachers as they fulfill their own responsibilities as mentors, team teachers, informal advisors, department heads, and members of peer probation panels.

School-based support also exists for bush teachers. In schools with two or more teachers, it is not uncommon to find a senior teacher. In small schools, decision-making is collegial with both the new teacher and experienced teacher(s) deciding who does what, why, and how. Teachers provide peer cross-training. Teachers with strength in mathematics will support teachers strong in language, and vice versa. In some schools, Aboriginal teachers are used to provide training to non-Aboriginal teachers on classroom-management techniques; these individuals reverse roles in curriculum areas.

In addition to this programmed school-based support, new teachers regularly meet informally with other staff. Many of these contacts transcend professionalism and blossom into friendships.

The central office provides school-based support through a team of traveling resource specialists. Most schools are visited for several days at least once a term. Curriculum and ESL specialists coach the new teachers (gaining insights by observing lessons, reviewing lesson plans, looking at student work, and in "late into the night" talks), extending the emphasis on practicality introduced at the orientation recall.

SCHOOL SUPPORT: A HEADTEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

As one headteacher described his duties: "I begin in-service as soon as they arrive. I need to explain community and acceptable interaction, how to interact with the children, and proper behavior and dress. Most recruits come from big cities and don't know anything about Aboriginal culture in the North, which is a bilingual situation. For Aborigines in the South, English is becoming their first language. Then it is my duty (spelled out in my duty statement) to explain the probation process—what their role is, my role, expectations and policies of the school, role of the assistant teacher, helping them with their programme, and identifying reasonable and applicable learning outcomes."

Peer Probation

The second component of the NT teacher induction program is called peer probation and is the formal process by which new teachers are determined to be suitable for continued employment. As such, it sounds like an assessment system. However, in operation the assessment aspects of peer probation are minimized and downplayed and the assisting, supportive elements highlighted. At most schools, school and central-office administrators do the minimum amount of assessing allowed by the policy. Even so, many new teachers, particularly immediately after presentations on peer probation at basic orientation, view it as threatening and intimidating. Reflecting back after a year, new teachers agree that peer probation is an additional form of support.

Consistent with this more assistance-focused orientation, although the official name for the program is probation assessment, peer probation is the name commonly used throughout the NT in discussions about the program. Probation applies to all new permanent positions with the NT Department of Education: teachers, specialists, administrators, and support staff.

According to the *Probation Assessment Handbook of Instructions and Guidelines*, "Probation is concerned with the professional competency of an employee and is a period prior to permanent appointment being confirmed when the probationer's standard of performance, in terms of the duties undertaken and conduct, is assessed to determine whether the office should have his/her appointment confirmed or terminated." The initial phase of peer probation is referred to as induction and includes requirements that each new teacher's supervisor provide an explanation of the probation process, a copy of the job profile, information on what is expected of a teacher, job specifications, selection of a probation panel, and explanation of rights

and duties. These supervisory instructions to the new employee are usually explained at an initial meeting, and a form is signed initiating the probation process.

During the next school year, the new teachers have a midterm assessment (after about 20 weeks) in which their skills are rated. Participants in the assessment vary for rural and urban teachers. For urban teachers, probation panels typically are chaired by the principal and include the department or section head, and a peer teacher selected by the new teacher. In larger rural schools, the head teacher and other staff are members of the probation panel. For the numerous small schools, central-office staff serve as probation panel members. In schools where interaction between the new teacher and probation panel is frequent, the assessment process is proforma, with brief meetings of ten minutes to complete documentation. In small rural schools, more lengthy observations and discussions are held.

Although the peer-assessment policy discusses the importance of support, the policy document lays out a very formal process requiring evaluative judgments, particularly at midterm. However, the picture that emerges in implementation is in marked contrast to the formality of the policy statement. Teacher assessment is not rigorous. Peer probation appears to operate as a support mechanism to ensure that new teachers meet standards. Central-office and school-level personnel spend considerable time throughout the year observing, modeling, critiquing, and advising new teachers. For many involved in peer probation, the rare occurrence of a new teacher not being recommended for appointment is as much their failure as the new teacher's.

Peer probation establishes the requirements, although in most cases the assessment component is administrative and most of the attention is on support. As one administrator said, when the peer probation process is a formal evaluation, "the nails are going in the coffin."

At the end of the probation period, supervisors submit a form stating whether the new teacher meets requirements and appointment should be confirmed, probation should be extended, or appointment should be terminated. Unlike the midterm assessment, no rating is completed. In the NT almost every new teacher is confirmed and few new teachers have problems satisfying the peer probation criteria.

Although the central office provides guidelines to help ensure that one panel is not tougher than another, members of the probation panels do not receive any special training, and no information is provided to guide the reviewers on what is acceptable standard. Unless problems arise, panel members learn by doing and operate autonomously. Among the safeguards are the ability of new teachers to protest the operation of the panel and, in extreme cases, formally grieve and request due process

hearings. The guidelines include suggestions about the supports that can be provided to new teachers to assist them in becoming good teachers.

Although probation assessment was designed for those in permanent positions, new contract¹ teachers are now eligible to participate in the program. The inclusion of contract teachers in probation assessment reflects the growing proportion of Australia's teachers employed on contract. As a result, all teachers new to the Territory, both inexperienced as well as teachers with a dozen years' experience, complete peer probation.

All teachers new to the Territory are supposed to participate in orientation—although the late arrival of many new teachers precludes their participation. They also must participate in peer probation. In addition, new Aboriginal teachers participate in a mentoring program specifically designed to ease their transition. This program takes place at the school.

Variation in Orientation and Peer Probation

There are at least three kinds of local variation in orientation and peer probation within the NT. In both Operations North and Operations South, there is a difference between those teachers who experience the first week's orientation and those who do not. In Operations North, new teachers who start later in the term are not exposed to cultural training, are less knowledgeable about the extensive support available from the central office (and the linking of names to faces that is stressed at orientation), and must try to enter networks forged among new teachers at orientation. As mentioned earlier, about 50 percent of rural teachers are hired in the NT after the beginning of the school year.

Operations South has a more fully developed orientation program than Operations North. With a larger proportion of its teachers in rural schools, Operations South operates an orientation recall for exposure to the NT curriculum, whereas Operations North (with a higher percentage of urban teachers) does not. Until recently, when the staff member responsible for orientation in Operations South transferred to Operations North, the basic orientation in Operations North was more focused on logistical and legal issues and less on cultural and personal support issues than the orientation component in Operations South. Proposed basic orientation for Operations North in 1996 introduces sessions that are currently provided in Operations South.

¹Contract teachers are teachers hired for one-year or shorter non-permanent positions.

**EXCERPTS FROM PROBATION FORM B
(used during the midterm review)**

Part 1

Complete and discuss with the probationer Probation Assessment Part 2A.
Using this information, complete the following summary statement of the Probationer's performance (circle appropriate number):

1. The Probationer is performing well and should satisfy requirements of Probation if current performance continues.
2. There are some aspects of the Probationer's performance that indicate the need for continued counseling.
3. There are major problem areas in the Probationer's performance that indicate the need for intensive counseling.
4. Not recommended for continued employment.

Part 2A

Summary of Probation's Performance:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Preparation (e.g., knowledge, consistency, quality) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Teaching (e.g., presentation, clarity, use of resources, variety, individual differences, student evaluation, questioning, supervision, effectiveness, classroom management/control) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Professional Responsibilities (e.g., administration, obligations, acceptance of feedback, rapport with parents and community, implementation of advice) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Relationship with Students (e.g., classroom atmosphere, concern for individuals, consistency) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Relationship with Colleagues (e.g., communications, tact and consideration, willingness to work as a team member, involvement in staff activities) | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Description of Rating Scale

1. Performance consistently below an acceptable standard
2. Performance sometimes below an acceptable standard
3. Performance is at an acceptable standard
4. Performance is consistently above an acceptable standard
5. Performance indicates outstanding qualities

OBSERVATION OF A PROBATION PANEL IN A SMALL RURAL SCHOOL

We drove out to Turkana School, a ride of about two hours along a sealed dirt road from Alice Springs. Accompanying us was Stu, an ESL specialist, who served as one of two probation panel members for Allison, the head of a two-teacher school at Turkana. After arriving and a tour of the school, Allison and Stu sat down to begin the panel meeting; they allowed us to observe.

Stu asked Allison what she'd been doing since he last visited. Allison described how she and Nancy (the school's other teacher who arrived mid-term and also new) had decided to organize the school and divide teaching duties: with Allison taking the younger and less advanced children and Nancy, the older, more advanced children. "How many children come to school on a typical day?" Stu asked. Allison reported, "Recently 28 to 34 children have been showing up daily. However, in the last week enrollments are dropping." "Don't worry about that," Stu said, "it happens at all the schools when it gets near initiation time. The numbers also drop on Fridays when parents get their cheques."

As the discussion proceeded, Allison described her work with the community council to reorganize the school's hours to better serve the children. She reported that Nancy and she had organized barbecues, and student trips with Aboriginal parents as chaperons, and they are learning to be more patient to gain community support. They are now thinking of providing an organized sports program from 5:00 to 6:00, since many of the children wander back to school then.

"Have you had any problems?" Stu asked. "Any kids need extra help?" Allison thought things were going pretty well now and much improved from the first few weeks. As headteacher, Allison is responsible for school administration as well as teaching. She related to Stu that she was working with central-office staff to understand what grants the school could apply for, how, and when. As Nancy was not going to be there next year, Stu told Allison about the arrangements for next year. Allison had spoken to the next year's new teacher. She was glad that there would be two teachers from the start of the year. Stu related later that Allison was ill a lot during the first term. He thought it was from being overworked. Once Nancy arrived, Allison's health improved.

After about an hour, Stu and Allison went to look over the students' work and discuss what seemed to be working and areas that remained problematic. For example, Allison has never had ESL training and every one of the children is ESL. Allison commented that a workshop she went to at mid-year was very helpful with her ESL teaching, and it provided an opportunity to talk to central-office staff about administrative requirements.

During our visit, there was no formal observation, although Stu and we spent about 15 minutes watching from the back of the classroom before the meeting started. On earlier visits Stu had observed Allison's classroom.

Later, over tea in Allison's house, we asked Allison about the probation panel. She indicated that she thought it was a good practice. Although she never felt during the panel sessions and observations that she was getting anything but assistance and advice, she thought that "having the pressure in the back of your mind makes you want to do your best."

Finally, one sees variation in the school-level implementation of peer probation and school support. There is no moderation of peer probation standards or implementation. At some schools, new teachers select a peer teacher as required by the peer-assessment policy; however, in many of the schools visited, new teachers are not given a choice. In some schools, systematic observations take place; in others, no formal observations. Similarly, the degree of school-level support provided to the new teachers varies. School-level support appears to vary according to the focus and atmosphere established by the school principal. Where the principal is actively involved in overall school professional development activities, school-level support for new teachers is more central to the induction process; in schools where principals are more focused on administration, the degree of school-level support is less extensive.

Other Teacher Training

New teachers also participate in school-level and individual in-service programs during their first year of teaching. In addition to ESL training, many primary teachers receive additional in-services in teaching numeracy, a competency that is difficult for Aboriginal students to achieve because their languages generally do not have counting systems beyond the number five.

Perhaps the greatest support provided in the NT is the high degree of collegiality and professional respect that experienced teachers and administrators show to new teachers. The first year in the NT is not treated as an additional training year. It is viewed as the new teacher's first year in the profession. Conversations between new teachers and others are characterized by two-way learning, with the new teachers providing information and training as well as receiving it. This sense of mutual sharing pervades all interactions with new teachers and is stressed in orientation to central-office staff. For example, all central office staff, including administrative support staff, travel to rural schools to understand the conditions faced by the new teacher to whom they speak over the phone.

As often as not, support is of a personal nature. A central-office staff member or peer met at orientation and recall is there to help when a new teacher is feeling low and alone, having problems maintaining a long-distance relationship, or having a stressful relationship with a colleague at school. The creation of positive attitudes is reinforced throughout the support systems: As teachers noted, "It's good to know someone cares"; "I'm not the only one having these problems"; "I needed that encouragement; I'll make it until the end of the term."

Professional Support for Aboriginal Teachers

This component of the teacher induction program is technically not part of the NT teacher induction. In contrast to orientation and peer probation, the Professional Support for Aboriginal Teachers (PSAT) is a DEET-funded program designed to provide induction-like support for new and recent Aboriginal teachers. It is subject to funding renewal every two years as part of DEET's involvement in Aboriginal education.

PSAT is designed to support Aboriginal graduates of Batchelor College who have completed stage three. These teachers are qualified to teach only in Aboriginal schools. The program is an outgrowth of school and regional initiatives dating back to the 1970s. NT designed PSAT in consultation with Aborigines. The program served 63 teachers in 1995 (more than 50 percent of all Aboriginal teachers), with 12 mentors, and a program coordinator. The annual budget is about \$US 1.0 million.

The program was initially designed for and provided to classroom executives (principals and headteachers). After several years the program expanded to include classroom teachers. The basic model is one-on-one mentoring for classroom executives, and a team of four teachers and a mentor for teachers (although because of rural isolation the teachers can also receive one-on-one mentoring). The goal is to create "mentoring schools" that involve all staff and where mentors are learners as well as models. Over a two-year period, new teachers are provided assistance in achieving the following: building confidence (to deal with students and the community); balancing family and work (most Aboriginal teachers are female and mothers); developing classroom-management skills (Aboriginal teachers, expected by the community to follow Aboriginal customs, cannot discipline or talk to students in the same way that non-Aboriginal teachers can); and preparing lesson plans (a weakness in their training and recognized as a problem for teachers whose second or third language is English). Over time, the mentor and teacher move on to more difficult individualized problems.

All mentors receive orientation and are reportedly evaluated annually. Some are former Batchelor College lecturers. The new teachers prefer these former lecturers, with whom they have developed relationships during training. Currently, all mentors continue to be non-Aborigines. A goal is to improve recruiting and increase the number of Aboriginal mentors.

**MY PERSONAL FEELINGS ABOUT PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR
ABORIGINAL TEACHERS: OBSERVATIONS OF A SECOND-YEAR ABORIGINAL
TEACHER**

In the beginning of last year, I found it difficult to follow and maybe thought it was hard work, writing up weekly activities, programming, and planning themes and faxing it to the regional office for my teacher mentor. I didn't feel like doing it. Soon this year, I finally got used to it and that it was important to follow curriculum documents, programming and planning weekly/daily activities.

This year, I have learnt a lot from my mentor teacher who showed and taught me things that can be done in many ways. I find it easy now and enjoy it every time my mentor teacher comes for her visit each month. With all the support and assistance from the headmaster and my mentor teacher, I feel I am confident and capable of doing things myself. I shared most of my planning and programming with the headmaster just to be sure I was keeping on the right track.

My relationship with my mentor teacher is very good. We both get on well together. We discuss and exchange ideas and think about appropriate ways of teaching students in class. We observe each other's teaching styles in my junior class.

In the future, I think that Aboriginal teachers who are experienced in educational issues should be taking over the roles as a mentor teacher to teach other Aboriginal teachers in their community schools....

Nancy Murray, Band 1 Teacher, Bulman School

Although mentors can serve on the Aboriginal teachers' peer probation panel, this is not always successful. Aboriginal teachers have difficulty, in contrast to non-Aboriginal new teachers, separating the "guidedog from the watchdog." In general, peer probation is difficult to implement, because of community pressure, in Aboriginal communities that are beginning to be led by Aboriginal principals and senior teachers. The new Aboriginal teachers as well as the Aboriginal principals are members of small, closely knit communities. The peer probation is not compatible with Aboriginal culture. Therefore, schools being run by Aborigines are not fully implementing peer probation. This lack of implementation will expand with the NT's emphasis on "Aboriginalization" unless the program is adapted to align it with Aboriginal priorities.

Development and Implementation of Teacher Induction Program

The teacher induction program operating in the NT began in 1973. Compared to most programs described in this report, it represents an exceptionally early and continuing

recognition of the need to support new teachers during their first year. In 1973, the NT eliminated its inspectorate and introduced peer assessment. At this time, rural teachers in the NT served an average of less than one year. While the number of teachers seeking transfers to urban schools remains high today, the average length of service has increased to over two years; the average teacher age has increased from about 27 in the 1970s to the early 40s today.

The teacher induction program is designed at the Territory and divisional levels and its implementation supervised at the regional level. Both divisions have human resource positions responsible for developing and implementing basic orientation. Orientation recall in Operations South is also designed by the human resources management staff. The orientation programs in both divisions are evaluated annually. All new teachers complete an evaluation on each session and the overall program at basic and orientation recalls. Central-office staff in both divisions participate in planning meetings to revise (Operations North) and refine (Operations South) basic orientation. In addition, Operations South surveys school principals regarding what they want covered at basic and orientation recall.

Peer probation is developed at the Territory level with input provided by a committee from the divisions. The teachers' union also collaborates in formulating and implementing peer probation policies and procedures.

The basic structure of both orientation and peer assessment have remained constant. Over the years, the basic orientation has increasingly focused on cultural awareness in Operations South. The desire and need to provide greater attention to cultural awareness is not always matched by an ability to provide such training. It has not been easy to provide orientation on Aboriginal culture. Currently, they have an Aboriginal consultant and her non-Aboriginal spouse (an Operations South School Support Services Officer) qualified and effectively providing cultural awareness training.

All presenters at the basic and orientation recall in Operations South are provided training on how to make effective presentations. The central office also has prepared an in-service handbook on dos and don'ts for effective training.

The cost of providing orientation in Operations South was US\$18,000, not counting staff time. This comes to US\$428 per participant. The major cost is participant accommodations for attending basic and orientation recall in Alice Springs. The second largest expenditure is for social events. No estimate has ever been attempted of the cost of staff time for orientation, peer probation, or support services. Participation on the part of central-office staff, principals, senior teachers, and peer

teachers are viewed as part of one's job. Only in the PSAT program are mentors paid for their services. For the mentors in PSAT, mentoring is their full-time job.

DEET initially funded orientation and recall. In recent years, the funds have come principally from the NT Department of Education, with small supplementation by the division (for orientation and recall) and schools (for in-services).

Future Program Directions

No major changes are planned in the orientation, except as noted above in Operations North. Operations South plans to increase the use of videotaping of orientation so that the many new teachers hired later in the school year can access the basic orientation. Based on evaluations from teachers, Operations South also plans to increase the time spent on cultural awareness. New teachers in both locations would like more time with experienced teachers and specialists. Orientation is planned prior to the start of school when other teachers remain on holiday.

The use of ratings for the midterm assessment is being reevaluated. Rural teachers, in particular, compare scores on the scales. In the review of the probation process and documentation, particularly for the mid-term assessment, Operations South stated a preference for a "Successful/Unsuccessful" classification. It also preferred continuation of the past practice that if a probationer was rated "Unsuccessful" and, depending on the reasons for such a classification, a program of additional support was implemented and probation often extended. Operations North wanted to retain the current format of a scale with five categories. The result of the review is that the rating scale will be retained.

There also is interest, on the part of some program developers and central-office staff to rename peer probation as peer support in order to convey, in a less threatening way, its fundamental nature. The fundamental support and development components of the process will be reinforced if the proposal to rename the process "peer support" rather than "peer probation" is accepted.

Other areas where new recruits would like more emphasis include how to use Aboriginal assistant teachers, more in-depth coverage of current basic orientation topics by expanding basic orientation to two weeks, more time spent working with other new teachers in small groups (the current program is too rushed), and exposure to "real situations" through school visits. Training in how to make the best use of their Aboriginal assistant teachers would increase a new teacher's effectiveness. So far, there is no workshop on cross-cultural team work, and new teachers and their assistant teachers do not participate in joint in-service training. This also appears to be an area

where there is limited school support. According to several new teachers, their inability to use Aboriginal assistants relates to "their own lack of confidence in their abilities and also concern not to offend." At the same time that new teachers are trying to figure out what to do, they are also expected to work with an assistant teacher. Teachers in bilingual programs must effectively use the Aboriginal assistant who speaks the local language. In schools implementing an English-as-a-second-language curriculum where the new teacher and Aboriginal assistant teachers do not have the pressure to bond, some relationships are ineffective even at the end of the school year.

Program Effectiveness

Neither Operations North nor Operations South has attempted to measure the effectiveness of their teacher induction programs. While both divisions survey new teachers after basic orientation, and in Operations South also after orientation recall, these surveys are narrowly targeted to the presentations and immediate perceptions of the new teachers regarding the particular orientation. Ideas for improvements are solicited, and central-office staff take these recommendations seriously and revise orientations to reflect new teacher input.

However, before requests were made during the preparation of this case study, data were not collected and analyzed to determine if retention has improved with the introduction of teacher induction. Unfortunately, data going back to the beginning of the program are not available. Therefore, the determination of success is based on several experienced informants' impressions and statistical data for the past five years.

In addition, a professor at Monash University (in Victoria) who has sent students to the NT for practicums for several years has proposed that the NT conduct a three-year longitudinal study of new teachers. This study would begin in 1996 or 1997.

Successes

There is a sense on the part of experienced central-office staff that the teacher induction programs have promoted more effective teaching and increased retention. While no data are available, those responsible for recruitment and retention believe that in the past five years, the proportion of new recruits remaining in their original positions has increased. The percentage of teachers who are in the system after 5, 4, and 3 years also is increasing. The high percentage of teachers remaining in teaching but moving to another school is consistent with historical patterns for rural-based teachers throughout Australia.

Since some of the new recruits have children, it is to be expected that as their children become school-age (or secondary-school age) their parents will request transfers to urban schools where their children will attend schools with both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students.

Teachers share the feeling that the teacher induction program has increased their chances of staying in teaching at their NT school. "Many won't survive without it"; "helped to bridge the millennium gap"; "orientation gave me an immediate support group that was even more important than content"; "gave me confidence; I applied the healthy kid program shown at orientation to great success" are comments expressed by new teachers. New teachers who started after orientation sense that they have missed something extremely useful.

With few exceptions, new teachers feel that the peer probation program is useful and successful. Only in rare cases where the new teacher and senior teacher have either a personality clash or different philosophies of teaching was peer probation viewed negatively. In one case where the panel was reconfigured, "the swap was handled promptly and professionally," said the new teacher. "It showed that they were interested in me, not protecting the system." Everyone recognizes that mentoring/advising works best when the teacher selects the mentor. In urban and larger rural schools, teacher selection of informal mentors reinforces the formal teacher induction program. In smaller, rural schools everyone has to be able to get along.

School support was viewed as helping the new teachers come to terms with the "overwhelming nature of what needed to be done." Many new teachers found principals and senior teachers extremely useful in advising them on classroom management and behavior management. Advice was provided about dealing with runaways, how Aboriginal children learn, and cultural taboos to avoid.

As one principal noted, the NT teacher induction program "provides a good framework for taking people on a personal journey.... Everything helps, but initial social contact is critical."

Program developers also believe that the teacher induction program provides new teachers an appropriate introduction to the school system. Concrete information about norms, procedures, and ways to improve new teachers' knowledge, skill, and performance are systematically conveyed to most recruits early in the year. During the remaining year, new teachers are continually encouraged to reflect on the application of and transition from theory to practice and on preparation for assessment. The latter is supported primarily by providing informal feedback on performance.

In summary, new teachers, program developers, and program deliverers perceive that the NT does a good job of easing the transition from student of teaching to teacher of students.

Reasons for Program Effectiveness

Teacher induction in the NT is perceived as effective because it is a year-long, continual activity. After an intensive opening—one-week orientation, three-day recall after four to six weeks, peer probation, school support, and additional central office in-services and handholding—the new teacher is assisted through the most difficult times. While many of the new teachers live in rural, fairly remote communities, they are not forgotten. Consistent efforts are made to provide for both in-person and remote contact, via telephone and fax, with central-office staff and peers. At least five factors contribute to sustaining these efforts.

Culture of Peer Support

First, over the years the NT has developed and inculcated a culture of peer support. Sharing, two-way learning, and the extensive use of committees to develop and implement policies and activities, are examples of the normal way of working for all staff members in the NT. An individual who did not help out a colleague would be viewed negatively. Perhaps because of the size and remoteness of large sections of the NT, those in education are like an extended family, often socializing as well as working together.

Openness of People in Northern Territory to Newcomers

Second, people in the NT have at least one dominant shared value—they were once new to the Territory and know how difficult it is to be removed from your supporting family and friends when one first comes to the Territory. In addition, many senior officers in both Operations North and Operations South began their careers as teachers in bush schools either in the NT or other states. The concerns voiced and problems encountered by new teachers reach staff with an empathetic ear and the ability to draw on similar real-life experiences.

Senior Management Support

Third, within the NT there is commitment to the teacher induction program from the top. The Secretary of Education (a former bush teacher) and other senior officers view recruiting and teacher induction as high priorities. When the Commonwealth

funding was withdrawn in the late 1980s, the Territory immediately plugged the budgetary gap. Similar commitments are shown by senior teachers who view assisting new teachers as a professional responsibility. Often meeting in their off hours, senior teachers willingly gave their time and expertise to support new teachers. Calls to central-office staff, principals, headteachers, senior teachers, and peers on weekends and nights are not viewed as interruptions but opportunities to help the new teacher. "Knowing that someone cares and is there even if you don't need them," was how one new teacher defined the teacher induction program.

Linkage to Promotion

Fourth, it is a critical, unwritten requirement for teachers and senior administrative staff seeking promotion to demonstrate an ability to advise and support others in a collegial way. They can demonstrate this skill formally, by being a member of a peer probation panel, or informally as a new teacher-selected mentor. This requirement buttresses and extends the commitment and culture of peer support.

Utility of Teaching

Finally, the new teachers recruited to the Territory view teacher induction as just one of many professional development opportunities. They view teaching as a profession where one must always be a learner to remain effective. The teacher induction program reinforces this sense of professional development, and even peer assessment is by and large viewed as a positive professional development activity, not an evaluation.

Remaining and Emerging Issues

For all its perceived success, teacher induction continues to be reevaluated by program developers and staff.

An exceptionally large percentage of teachers in the NT do not begin teaching at the beginning of the school term. In many of the past 20 years, the applicant pool for teaching in bush schools has been insufficient. As teaching jobs in the rest of Australia decline (at least temporarily), the NT may be able to fill more jobs at the beginning of the school year. However, variations in enrollments, particularly in rural schools, are often not known until the school year begins. Also, resignations midterm and illness require continual hiring throughout the year. With the exception of one year (when two basic orientations were held) in Operations South, late starters do not receive basic orientation; and if they start after week six, they do not receive

orientation recall until their second year (for rural teachers). Funds are not available for a basic orientation later in the year. The most problematic area for teachers missing basic orientation is the lack of training in cultural awareness.

The teacher induction program serves both rural and urban teachers. However, its philosophy and design are tilted towards assisting new rural teachers. Numerous urban teachers, while enjoying basic orientation, did not see much of the program as relevant to them. Rural schools tend to have homogeneous student populations; many urban schools have heterogeneous student populations. While Aborigines are the largest minority group in urban schools, Darwin, in particular, also has a large Asian population. The implementation of peer probation also differs for rural and urban teachers. Many urban teachers were barely aware of the panel meetings. "We met twice for ten minutes," was a typical urban teacher's experience. Panels in urban areas may have a lower profile because the urban context allows for almost continuous informal observation and discussion -- and formal responses if deemed necessary by supervisors. In the bush, panels involve staff from other sites and may include senior officers for the Alice Springs and Barkly Education Offices. This may create a greater focus on the panel process for bush teachers. The different levels of attention paid to probation, by those involved in it, is a reflection of the significantly different personal and professional contexts in urban, rural, and remote areas.

Since the program is designed and implemented primarily at the division and regional level, other variations exist. Operations South provides considerably more support to its rural teachers than Operations North. While this gap appears to be narrowing, it still exists. Also, variations exist among urban schools in the amount of school support. For example, not all new teachers had knowledge of or attended urban recall in Operations South. In most schools, they had regular meetings with senior teachers and other team members; in other schools, they received minimal school support.

New teachers in the NT report very infrequent contact with their preservice training institutions. This is not surprising given that most new teachers are relocating out of their native states. However, new teachers training at the Northern Territory University have similar experiences. Maintaining contact with recent graduates is not a faculty priority. The potential benefit of continuing contact with teacher-training institutions is not being tapped. NTU now is embarking on a new program philosophy that will increase the linkages between themselves and students. While this change may increase contact with new teachers at urban schools, it is uncertain whether new teachers in rural schools will see much additional contact with faculty members. Contact with new teachers in rural and remote areas is hampered by the lack of housing to accommodate visiting faculty. Also, students can choose where they do

their practice teaching. Most NTU students have no intention of teaching in rural schools.

Another possible way of increasing contact between new teachers and faculty is for faculty members to participate in peer probation. However, currently, only employees of the NT Education Department can participate as members of peer probation panels.

In urban schools, the school-based component is often the responsibility of the senior teacher or another designated mentor. While most of these individuals are considered to be doing an effective job, areas for improvement exist. The need for additional training for mentors, especially in urban schools where continual monitoring by the central office does not occur, is recognized by program developers as an important unmet need.

The Territory is beginning to implement a performance-management system of appraisal for all employees. It is probable that teachers, along with all staff, will now be appraised annually for as long as they remain employed by the NT. The relationship between peer probation and appointment and the new performance-management system remains to be worked out.

Sustainability Built-in

The teacher induction program has withstood the test of time. Through reorganizations, changes in personnel and leadership, and shifts in budgeting responsibility, the teacher induction programs have continued unabated. As important as individuals are to the success of teacher induction, the system



is not dependent on individuals (with one notable exception). Since there is so much mobility in the NT, teacher induction is designed around positions, not individuals. The NT has built into the roles and responsibilities of many people throughout the system the requirement to support new teachers during their first year in the Territory. Both divisions have a human resource specialist position to revise and oversee the annual implementation of orientation and school support. The Territory has a personnel position to ensure that peer probation functions. Senior teachers clearly recognize that mentoring and advising new teachers is an important responsibility assigned to them. Principals in smaller schools advise and relieve new teachers so that they can observe other classrooms.

Individuals also play an important role in the teacher induction program. An exemplary headteacher serves as both role model and trainer. A respected principal, who strongly supports school-based induction, creates a school climate in which the senior teachers can mentor effectively. With the mobility that exists in the NT, opportunities exist to spread both effective and ineffective models from school to school. The administration attempts to maximize the migration of effective models by explicitly considering the impact on teacher induction in their approval of staff transfers.

The sustained ability to support new teachers in the NT is based on the shared ethos to treat each new teacher as an individual and professional. Several respondents feared that the new performance appraisal system and demands for more quantitative-oriented information from human resource departments might drive the divisions to more standardized, non-individualized approaches, thereby negatively affecting the teacher induction program. Other respondents thought that the strong culture of support that exists in the NT is an effective counterbalance, for the time being.

Budgetary Constraints

Many of the costs for providing the teacher induction program are embedded in day-to-day operations. The costs explicitly counted, such as housing during basic orientation and orientation recall, and training consultants, are a fraction of the program costs. At the school level, many "program costs" do not add to the budgetary expenditures. Much of the meeting time of senior teachers, mentors, peer probation panels, and new teachers occurs during planning periods, after-school hours, lunchtime, nights, and weekends. Although the NT, as well as the rest of Australia, is undergoing a period of contract disputes and strikes among teachers, those involved in the teacher induction program view these more as professional responsibilities than job duties. Even in a time of "work to rules," these activities continue.

Quality of Rural Schools and Housing

Although many schools in the NT are remote and culturally isolated, the physical facilities and equipment are usually of very high quality. Rural schools are not resource poor. Computers (in at least one case with a 1:4 ratio), modems, faxes, printers, audiology equipment, VCRs, a library, dark rooms, telephones, curriculum materials, and so on are common. Teachers are provided with housing with either discounted or free rent. All houses have television. The NT wants the quality of the teaching environment and teacher housing to be a positive aspect of the bush teacher's job. Most urban teachers have the ability to go to restaurants, the movies, and grocery stores whenever they want. But they also must pay city prices for housing, operating a car, and so on. Rural teachers may splurge on their visit to town but many also are able to save a considerable part of their salaries, often toward a down payment on a house. Therefore, all teachers in the NT are faced with tradeoffs and personal lifestyle choices. Without the provision of well-equipped schools and inexpensive to free living accommodations, the ability to retain rural teachers would probably decline.

Aboriginalization

The objective of the Australian government is Aboriginalization: Aboriginal-managed and -staffed schools. Aboriginal teachers are at a disadvantage in terms of basic qualifications, curriculum knowledge, and the ability to prepare lesson plans. According to an Aboriginal teacher educator, "The gap for Aboriginal teachers to cover is very wide. The contact history (between Aborigines and non-Aborigines) is very short and much of that, until the 1980s, was negative, paternalistic, and exploitive."

Aboriginalization could present several challenges to the existing teacher induction program. As discussed earlier, Aboriginal-led schools do not fully implement peer

probation for Aboriginal teachers. As more Aboriginal teachers enter the system (Batchelors College graduates 25 teachers a year), an increasing number of teachers in rural schools will not have been assessed. Since these teachers have community support, ways must be found to ensure that minimum standards are met. The current policies and procedures of peer probation are not compatible with Aboriginalization. Several staff in Operations South suggested renaming and orienting the policy from peer probation to peer support to better reflect the program aims and how the program operates. Although staff were not specifically addressing the issue of Aboriginalization, this change may permit greater application to Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal-led schools.

Another aspect of Aboriginalization that could impact sustainability is the replacement of non-Aboriginal teachers with Aboriginal teachers. Currently, non-Aboriginal teachers (new and experienced) provide school-level induction support to new Aboriginal teachers. In the years ahead, if Aboriginalization continues to its logical end, few non-Aboriginal teachers will be in these schools. Without other forms of support, such as depending more on school-level personnel, curriculum and teaching could suffer.

At the same time that the government is promoting Aboriginalization of community schools, they are shifting funding away from Aboriginal primary education. For example, next year Batchelor College no longer will provide additional tutoring (8 hours a week per student) to Aborigines enrolled in the primary education program. Instead, DEET will fund Batchelor College students enrolled in adult and vocational education training programs.

Cultural Awareness

Staff in Operations South believe that several factors have contributed to increased retention of teachers. First, in the past several years recruiting has been decentralized and made a divisional responsibility. Recruiters now try to portray a more realistic picture of what new teachers can expect in rural and remote communities. The objective is to use the recruitment process to "weed out" those least likely to adapt to living in an Aboriginal community. Second, the quality of the cultural-awareness training has improved. Although always committed to providing cultural-awareness training and support, the central office staff responsible for orientation has often had difficulty obtaining the services of Aborigines who can relate to both cultures and understand the problems that NT's new teachers face. Today, they have two exceptionally competent trainers.

Professional Support for Aboriginal Teachers

PSAT's success is currently highly dependent on a dynamic program coordinator. Continued success will depend on building a better program infrastructure, a better understanding of the program in general, and a better understanding of the rationale for such a labor-intensive instructional approach. Unlike orientation, peer probation, and school support, PSAT is a categorical, federally funded program, not a local program. Although it operates independently of the teacher induction program, it directly impacts all new Aboriginal teachers (by providing a supplemental teacher induction program) as well as indirectly affecting other new teachers through their continual interaction with Aboriginal teachers. The PSAT does not have the long history of Territory support and commitment. In addition, it will be difficult for the Territory to replace US\$1 million in federal funds if DEET refocuses its Aboriginal program to address other Aboriginal issues.

National Support

Teacher induction is not a federal priority, although current rhetoric may translate into programs in the future. DEET is concerned about professionalizing the teacher profession and improving teacher morale, but it has done little specifically on induction. DEET expects to pay more attention to teacher induction in the future.² A report was prepared in 1992 on the subject, and the Australian Teachers' Council received DEET support to develop voluntary, locally administered registration systems. Draft materials show a process similar to the NT's peer-probation system, except teachers would choose both a peer mentor and a peer evaluator. The NT government does not participate in or recognize the Australian Teachers' Council (ATC). (However, there are NT teachers elected to the ATC's Council.) Education is a state and Territory function, and DEET has not been actively involved in teacher induction.

² Since the site work was completed, Australia held a national election. As a result of the election, a Conservative government has replaced Labour.

CREATING AN ABORIGINAL-LED SCHOOL

Yirrkala community has a long-term plan for the school to be Aboriginalized, which means that most of the staff will be Aborigines. We are not sure that we want all the staff to be Aborigines for there may be some balanda [non-Aboriginal] staff who are able to contribute in full measure to the development of the school and the community. The Aboriginalization process really means that the decision-making in the school rests with us, the local people, and now that there are quite a number of trained and qualified local people, the community is very pleased to support the ideas that these staff provide....

The process to date has not been without problems. We have found that some non-Aboriginal staff have not been supportive of the training and Aboriginalization programs. We know that these people are worried that the process may mean that they could lose their position, but we cannot let this stop us from seeking the best possible training programs. However, as I have already said, there are some balanda staff who are very supportive and who have assisted me greatly in this development.

I have found that there are ...real conflicts between being an Aboriginal employee of the Department of Education, and being an Aboriginal member of my own community. Some examples...

The clock rules life in the balanda way, but does this mean that better things happen at school? [Aboriginal teachers and students are often late.] We have to ask ourselves whether school is starting at the right time, and providing programs that will attract and keep the students.

Cultural activities are the key to our existence and we have to ensure that they are accorded their rightful place. [All schools currently use the same curriculum in the NT.] For this to happen, we need to help parents understand the importance of school [truancy is high], and how it is organised to help the children.

Nalwarri Ngurruwutthun, Principal-in-Training, Excerpts from Address for Conference of Aboriginal Educators

Adaptability

Professor Jordan Irvine, an education professor at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, was recently quoted on the subject of teaching minority children in central cities in the United States: "I am convinced that there are large numbers of teachers who drop out of teaching after three years, not because they are incapable of teaching these children, but because they never had the training or support in order to do it." Like the NT, many APEC members and others are faced with situations in which the backgrounds and culture of a majority of its teaching force differ from the linguistic, cultural, social, and economic background of its student body and the community in which the school is located. While the scale of the situation faced in the NT is smaller than that faced in APEC economies, its approach maybe a useful model for dealing

with isolated communities (such as that faced in APEC members who support small schools across large archipelagos).

Key to the adaptability of the NT's teacher induction program are jurisdiction and school *culture of support*. It is neither a one-shot exposure, which is a common form of orientation, nor focused on support being provided by a single mentor. This support culture exists within a fairly small and flat administrative structure. This flat structure reinforces all staff working together as colleagues and peers. The two divisions are small enough and deal with a reasonable number of new recruits so that everyone knows the new recruit personally—one is always dealing with individuals, and components can be and are adapted to personalities.

Reinforcing the culture of support is the principle, as one headteacher put it, that "*good human management is communication.*" In the NT, this communication is two directional. Teachers are not passive regarding their induction, nor are they expected to be. Teachers do not expect to be told what to do. At the same time, other staff are always accessible and approachable.

The teacher induction program requires *teachers to self-assess and seek out support*. It also requires administrators to tailor components to the situations and needs of individual new teachers. In cases where communications between the new teacher and key support personnel break down, the NT teacher induction program falters unless communications are reestablished (such as by counseling participants, transferring personnel, quickly replacing an individual on a peer probation panel, or protecting a teacher from inappropriate demands from a headteacher or principal). The effectiveness in implementing the NT program depends on the willingness and ability of participants to communicate. This means that personnel must feel "safe" in asking for assistance and bringing problems to the attention of supervisory and administrative staff.

The requirement that teachers with experience teaching elsewhere yet new to the NT participate in all teacher induction components substantially increases the number of teachers receiving services. In the NT, this requirement appears justifiable. In interviews, with few exceptions, one could not distinguish the inexperienced from the experienced new NT teacher. In many teacher induction programs, only inexperienced teachers are included; or if experienced teachers are included, they participate in a greatly reduced support program. Combining inexperienced and experienced new teachers in the NT creates an additional support mechanism, particularly in the area of preparing lesson plans and organizing daily schedules.

This form of support requires a great deal of *personal commitment* on the part of all staff. Staff must be willing to provide support as needed. The holistic nature of teacher induction in the NT is time consuming. Frequently, school support and peer probation occur after school hours. In the NT, most teachers do not have long commutes from their schools; many are either single or, if coupled, without children, and in remote areas, they have few diversions. Providing this level of support in places outside of Australia's Northern Territory, where diversions and competing demands on individuals' time may be greater, may be difficult.

Most APEC members have an orientation component in their teacher induction program. Few are as extensive as the basic orientation and orientation recall found in the Northern Territory. Implementing an NT-type orientation would probably not require many adjustments, since the principles and goals behind orientation programs tend to be similar. However, adjustments would probably be required in implementing peer probation and school support in APEC members where the central authority provides greater direction and schools are expected to implement a uniform teacher induction program.

Other adaptations may be necessary to accommodate differences in communication modes between teachers and administrators. Most teachers in the NT are not reticent to assert a position. Teachers in other APEC members may be more reactive and expect to be told what to do.

Adaptation also may be necessary in APEC members that have a long tradition of assessment of new teachers as the basic strategy of teacher induction. Just as the Aboriginal teachers, coming from a different culture than that which develops and promotes the NT teacher induction program, have difficulty viewing the peer probation panel as both guidedog and watchdog, changing from an assessment to a fully supportive approach may be difficult in situations where assessment and certification requirements are more rigorous.

Orientation requires scheduling and paying new teachers for one additional week, prior to the school term. In addition, rural recall removes new teachers from the classroom for an additional week (three days of recall and two days of travel), requiring substitutes (if possible) or other teachers to cover enlarged classes. With the exception of central-office program development specialists and resource specialists, few additional resources are earmarked for induction. As noted previously, personnel consider providing induction support as either a part of their job descriptions or professional responsibility. In both cases, time allocated often falls outside "normal work hours." One cannot easily separate the willingness of so many to "donate" time from the commitment to maintain the culture of support that pervades Operations

South, in particular, and the NT more generally. Illustrative of this deep-seated willingness to participate: During the time that the site work was undertaken for this case study, NT teachers were involved in a long-standing labor dispute that involved working to rules. Under such a policy, teachers would not participate in preschool or after-school activities not specified in their contract. Yet even teachers who mentioned during their interview the labor dispute, continued to participate fully in the teacher induction program.

DO YOU FEEL THE TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM HAS HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT?

"It was most successful at providing support; least useful at providing critical assessment."

"The social aspects and friendships that I made were critical."

"I was ready to quit several times. Once I even packed up my stuff. An ESL specialist and another teacher convinced me to hang in until the year ended. I'm glad I did."

"Yes, but they don't pay enough attention to urban teachers."

"It gave me confidence. I was able to apply what I was shown at Basic and Recall, and it worked."

"Many wouldn't survive without it. I taught twelve years in a rural area of Victoria, and I benefited from the support."

"Orientation gave me an immediate support group. This was more important than the content. The information on Aboriginal family relationships has proved invaluable. I would have been lost without it."

"We've never had such a welcome."

Conclusion

Faced with the need to support new teachers in rural and remote areas, where they will be confronted, on a daily basis, by the challenges of working and living with cultural differences, the NT provides a comprehensive set of support programs to assist these teachers, as well as new teachers in urban areas, during their first year of teaching in the Territory. The teacher induction program reflects the NT response to its geography and demography and their goals to successfully acculturating new teachers and increase teacher retention.

Building from a culture of support and strong personal commitment on the part of its leadership, the program focuses on making new teachers feel welcome and providing access to a wide circle of specialists, peers, and supervisors who can and want to support them. The program combines a basic orientation (whose focus, however, is more targeted to cultural awareness than typically found in other orientation programs); an orientation recall (to build a peer network and provide curriculum

training); an assist and assessment component (peer probation that is weighted heavily toward assistance); and a year-long school-based support system.

Teacher induction support in the Northern Territory begins before the new teacher arrives in Alice Springs or Darwin for basic orientation and occurs continually throughout the year. Throughout the year, Division staff are working to see that all new teachers receive support and nurturing.

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