

FLIPPING THE READINESS PARADIGM

Tailoring Programs to Address the Achievement Gap
and Teacher Shortages in High-Need Schools

Special Issues Brief

SEPTEMBER 2019



Center on
GREAT TEACHERS & LEADERS

at American Institutes for Research ■

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The Challenge	The Opportunity	The Lessons
<p>Over the last decade, states and districts have experienced teacher shortages as a result of declining teacher preparation enrollments, district efforts to return to prerecession pupil-teacher ratios, increasing student enrollment, and high teacher attrition (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Shortages disproportionately impact high-need schools that are significantly harder to staff with highly effective teachers, resulting in educator equity gaps that can lead to significant achievement gaps (Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015; Goldhaber, Quince, & Theobald, 2016; Isenberg et al., 2016). But these schools demonstrate a “need paradox”—that is, they are the schools where programs that focus on improving teaching quality are most needed, but because of factors including inadequate teacher preparation, lack of resources, poor and/or unequal working conditions, and other negative characteristics, such programs are least likely to be implemented with rigor, if at all.</p>	<p>State and district leaders can design teacher quality programs in an intentional way that addresses the “need paradox” and can thus help to promote the necessary teacher readiness. Instead of excluding the neediest schools that are seemingly unready to implement these programs, design programs in a way that recognizes the challenges in high-need schools and create opportunities for closing achievement gaps by targeting the programs to meet the specific needs and challenges of high-need settings.</p>	<p>By embracing a comprehensive equity approach and designing programs with a specific focus on the characteristics of high-need schools in mind—e.g., lack of mentor experience, fewer resources, responding to accountability requirements, inadequate focus on serving high-need schools in teacher preparation programs, and poor and/or unequal working conditions—leaders can have a positive and sustained impact on achievement gaps.</p>

This Special Issues Brief from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) outlines the unique characteristics of high-need schools, supports state and district leaders as they consider their role in implementing initiatives with a focus on equity, and explores how programs can be customized to meet the unique circumstances of a high-need school context. We illustrate how to take these factors into account when designing and implementing mentoring and induction programs in high-need schools, the challenges that practitioners may face when implementing such programs in these schools, and the unintended consequences—most notably, the widening of achievement gaps—that may occur if these programs are not designed to meet the specific needs and challenges of high-need school contexts. By addressing these challenges and leveraging mentoring and induction programs to tackle teacher shortages and improve equitable access in high-need schools head on, these schools can create the stabilizing supports required to keep effective teachers. Although this paper focuses on mentoring and induction, the discussion applies to the implementation of all teacher quality programs in high-need schools.

Introduction

Over the last decade, states and districts nationwide have experienced the challenges created by teacher shortages. The effects of teacher shortage are exacerbated in high-need schools where staff instability and the lack of qualified, credentialed teachers threaten students' ability to learn, hinder the development of collaborative learning cultures and school climates, and consume school resources as districts are forced to implement stop-gap measures rather than long-term, comprehensive, and stabilizing supports. Studies show that schools serving predominantly low-income students and students of color have significantly higher rates of ineffective, inexperienced teachers and significantly greater teacher turnover (Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015; Goldhaber, Quince, & Theobald, 2016; Isenberg et al., 2016; Sass, Hannaway, Xu, Figlio, & Feng, 2012). This uneven distribution of effective teaching challenges the ultimate goal of providing a high-quality education to all children (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2011; Hanushek, 2014). Addressing teacher shortages and improving access to a diverse pool of effective educators for underserved students and students in low-performing districts and schools is an essential component—and perhaps a condition—of both school improvement and the narrowing of persistent achievement gaps.

Schools, districts, and states often try to resolve the teacher shortage by implementing programs that address broad challenges throughout the teacher career continuum, programs, such as raising teacher compensation, improving preparation programs, developing more effective hiring, improving mentoring and induction practices, and improving school leadership (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016). For these programs to have a positive impact on teacher shortages and student access to excellent educators at the schools where they are needed most, state- and district-supported programs can target and be tailored to high-need schools and take into consideration these schools' challenging characteristics. To address the teacher shortages and, in turn, the achievement gap, districts and states can prioritize high-need schools for the limited resources allocated to such efforts.

In this brief, we describe these unique characteristics and consider how programs should be customized to the high-need school context. We do so because these characteristics are particularly salient for designing supports for schools designated as Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI) or Targeted School Improvement (TSI) in a state where students served are, by definition, in high need. In many cases, CSI/TSI schools struggle with poor leadership and infrastructure. In the past decade, states and districts often looked at these schools as lacking readiness for state- or district-wide initiatives. With ESSA in place, states and districts have new opportunities to reconsider their “readiness paradigm” with a lens toward equity (See Table 1). When state and district leaders see these challenges and characteristics as opportunities for a narrow, targeted focus, there is greater potential for both partners to achieve readiness and improved outcomes.

Table 1. Readiness Paradigms for State- and District-Supported Programs

	Existing Paradigm: State- or District-Wide Initiative	Equity-Based Paradigm: Targeted Programs That Take Into Account the Characteristics of High-Need Schools
Overall vision for change	Focused on supporting all schools with the hope that all schools are at similar phases of readiness and have similar infrastructures to enable success.	Recognizes that equity requires building customized, individualized, and targeted supports for those schools that have the greatest need.
Mechanisms for selecting school partners	Offers programs and incentives for all schools, often using competitive grants to select schools that are most ready.	Recognizes the “need paradox,” noting that those schools most in need often are the least prepared to compete for competitive grants or respond to state communications due to lack of capacity.
Approach to readiness	Readiness is measured by schools’ likelihood to implement teacher quality programs effectively.	Readiness is measured by the design of teacher quality programs and whether those programs accommodate all schools, particularly those that most need them.

Taking Action: Leveraging Mentoring and Induction as a Model for Meeting the Challenges of High-Need Schools

How Mentoring And Induction Can Address Shortages in High-Need Schools

Comprehensive mentoring and induction programs provide an evidence-based strategy that can boost the effectiveness of early career teachers while building critical teaching conditions known to significantly reduce teacher attrition (Coggshall, Mizrav, & Lachlan-Hache, 2019). Likewise, comprehensive mentoring and induction programs can play a critical role in building a pool of diverse and effective educators and can improve equitable access and meet the needs of teachers and the students they serve.

Mentoring and Induction’s Impact on Teacher Retention

Comprehensive mentoring and induction programs can have a significant impact on school improvement by improving teacher retention, teacher practice, and teaching conditions in high-need schools (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). For example, an analysis of the Texas Beginning Educator Support System found that mentoring improved teacher retention in schools serving students from low-income families and students of color (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

New teachers are less likely to leave the profession if they are provided with mentors in their content areas and if they participate in formal planning and collaboration with other teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004, Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). These outcomes may be further improved by matching beginning teachers with mentors in the same field (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Notably these effects go beyond teachers to their students: Beginning teachers who participate in induction are more able to keep students on task, develop workable lesson plans, use effective questioning practices, adjust classroom activities to meet students’ interests, maintain a positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrate successful classroom management (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

The High-Need Context: Addressing Challenges in Implementing Mentoring and Induction Programs

Despite clear potential to address the teacher shortage, improve schools, and close achievement gaps, designing mentoring and induction programs in ways that will actually work for high-need schools is challenging. Inequities in funding may arise when states and districts create competitive grant programs, including comprehensive mentoring and induction programs, that favor schools with the time and resources necessary to submit applications. Yet, schools and districts that apply to implement these programs are often those in which teachers thrive, and where such programs are least needed. Characteristics of high-need schools that are suggested in this brief, such as fewer resources, inexperienced teachers, and inadequate preparation, may make them less likely to successfully compete for these grants (Kardos & Johnson, 2010).

The challenges of implementing comprehensive mentoring and induction programs in high-need schools are varied. They relate specifically to the characteristics of both the schools and the teachers who teach in them. For example, high-need schools face the challenge of decreased pools of teachers to draw upon when selecting mentors. This is the result of persistent teacher attrition in high-need schools, leaving the average number of years of teachers' experience lower on average in high-need contexts (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). These contexts also have fewer resources to implement induction programs, experience the pressures of accountability requirements that contribute to teacher attrition, and struggle with inadequate preparation of their teachers to address some of the common issues encountered in high-need schools, such as chronic absenteeism, discipline, and trauma-informed care (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Goldhaber et al., 2015; Goldhaber et al., 2016; Isenberg et al., 2016; Sass et al., 2012). As noted, these characteristics create a need paradox: On the one hand, these are the schools where comprehensive mentoring and induction programs are most needed; on the other hand, they are least likely to be implemented with rigor, if at all.

Although schools serving vulnerable populations such as students of color, students from low-income families, students with disabilities, English language learners, students below grade level, and others clearly demonstrate the highest need for mentoring and induction programs, it is more successful schools that are often prioritized through statewide initiatives. In the relatively rare instances in which comprehensive mentoring and induction programs are implemented in high-need schools, they are often poorly supported, poorly funded, or implemented by staff who are stretched beyond capacity, leading to less rigorous and effective






Research suggests that teachers in high-need schools who deal with the most significant challenges and need proper mentoring and induction the most are among the least likely to receive it (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). One study found that new teachers in low-income schools were significantly less likely than others to have formal mentors or mentors from the same schools, subject areas, or grade levels during their first year. Teachers in low-income schools also were significantly less likely to have meaningful conversations with their mentors about lesson planning, classroom management, and classroom instruction during their first year (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). These findings compel states and districts to take heed when developing programs for systemic change.

programs (Bettini & Park, 2017; Kardos & Johnson, 2010). This approach can result not only in failure to address systemic issues such as teacher attrition or equitable access to effective teachers, but also can lead to greater inequities when such programs are implemented in schools that do not have the greatest need.

Designing and Implementing Induction Programs for High-Need Schools

In delivering comprehensive mentoring and induction programs, state- and district-supported programs can be designed and implemented in ways that promote the necessary readiness among high-need schools. To do so, programs must take into account the characteristics of high-need schools in order to strengthen school readiness through additional, individualized, targeted support and resources. Although the characteristics and challenges outlined in the following narrative are facts that cannot be changed, school readiness can vary substantially based on how state- and district-supported mentoring and induction programs are designed and implemented to support high-need schools.

Preview: High-Need Hurdles for Mentoring and Induction

	Limited Pool of Experienced Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whereas mentors are often selected for experience, here we need to prioritize effectiveness over experience <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pool mentors at the regional level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use technology and virtual mentoring to increase teacher pool <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Offer stipends to retired teachers to serve as mentors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identify early-career teachers as future mentors
	Fewer Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide additional funding for implementation in high-need schools <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus programs on the schools in greatest need <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use cost-neutral design models <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Include resources on building effective teacher planning schedules
	Severe Accountability Pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide additional resources for implementing in schools with low-performance classification <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use accountability ratings to prioritize schools for program implementation
	Inadequate Teacher Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Create partnerships with teacher preparation programs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prioritize programs that include residency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Involve program faculty and mentors in program design
	Poor and Unequal Working Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assess school working conditions and use the results to inform conversations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recruit mentors who are culturally competent and can offer support that goes beyond academic needs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Embed cultural relevance and social justice content in mentorship



Strategy 1: Address the Limited Pool of Experienced Teachers

Rationale: Mentoring and induction programs require a pool of experienced, effective teachers who can be paired with novice teachers to provide a variety of supports. However, in high-need schools, it is often true that the supply of effective mentor candidates is significantly lower than the demand. As demonstrated earlier, low-income schools and schools that predominantly serve students of color have higher rates of inexperienced and ineffective teachers and greater teacher turnover, factors that significantly increase the number of beginning teachers while reducing the mentor selection pool (Goldhaber et al., 2015).

Viable Approaches:

- **Identify qualified mentors by focusing on effectiveness rather than experience.** For example, the minimum qualifications to become a mentor could change from five years of experience to three consecutive years of effective or highly effective teacher evaluation ratings. Further, recognize that mentoring requires skill not just as an effective teacher, but also as an effective communicator who is knowledgeable regarding adult learning needs.
- **Pool mentors at the district or regional level.** Programs can focus on pooling mentors at the district or regional level instead of the school level and can include virtual mentoring practices if needed.
- **Funding for full or partial release time for mentors and teacher leaders.** Funding for full or partial release time for mentors and teacher leaders in high-need schools can be prioritized to leverage the impact of effective mentors while increasing their reach to multiple high-need schools. Programs also can offer stipends for local retired teachers who meet effectiveness requirements to serve as mentors. For more information on full-release, multiclassroom teachers, see [Multi-Classroom Leadership: School Model](#) by Public Impact.
- **Establish a home-grown mentor pipeline.** Mentoring programs can focus on building home-grown mentor pipelines by identifying early-career teachers who demonstrate potential to become teacher leaders and by establishing pathways toward the role of mentor.

Pooling resources: The [Performance-Based Academic Coaching Team \(PACT\)](#), developed by The Texas A&M University System and the Texas Education Agency, for example, pools mentors' time by assigning them to four-hour time shifts, during which they are responsible for answering an online discussion board and chat room questions posed by new teachers on topics related to instruction, classroom management, communication with parents, and professional learning.

In **Aurora Public Schools in Colorado**, a group of new teachers was paired with a retired mentor. Although the program did not significantly affect evaluation scores or retention rates, students taught by participating new teachers had higher mathematics and reading achievement than students of teachers with similar levels of experience who did not participate in the program.



Strategy 2: Plan Implementation for Schools With Fewer Resources

Rationale: High-need schools often struggle with a shortage of resources and an adequate budget to address the requirements of their student populations. These schools serve more students with special needs (e.g., students with disabilities, English learners, and students who are significantly below grade level), often requiring additional resources if efforts to close achievement gaps are to succeed (Miles & Roza, 2006; Miles, Ware, & Roza, 2003). This results in more limited availability of resources for implementing new programs. Similarly, schools that serve students from low-income families often are at a further resource disadvantage. A recent report measuring additional factors such as district tax-based funding supplements and parents' contributions found that despite federal and state programs targeting high-need schools, schools serving students of color were likely to be funded at lower rates than schools serving predominantly white schools (EdBuild, 2019). Schools with more resources are better situated to implement comprehensive mentoring and induction programs because they often have greater access to curricular resources, funds for professional development, and the funding necessary to enable teacher collaboration time, among other supports.

Viable Approaches:

- **Provide additional funding to high-need schools.** To create readiness and target mentoring and induction programs for high-need schools that experience shortages in resources in comparison to other schools, states and districts can provide additional funding and manpower to ensure that these schools are supported to establish quality programs, even at the expense of implementing the programs in fewer schools overall.
- **Bridge funding streams to target high-need schools.** States and districts can use funding from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and funding available through Title I and Title II (ESSA, 2015). Braiding and blending funds in this way allows for investment in mentoring and encourage targeting equity gaps by investing in schools with less access to high-quality instruction. Since IDEA, Title I and Title II are rarely administered by the same offices, collaboration among leaders is a necessary step in building this bridge. Investing in targeted implementation in the schools where these programs are most needed can yield greater positive impact on teacher retention, equitable access, and closing achievement gaps. For more details, see [Opportunities to Use ESSA to Support and Retain New Teachers](#).
- **Develop cost-neutral strategies.** Programs also can include embedded support for designing mentoring programs as a cost-neutral strategy by allocating existing funds more effectively and prioritizing this high-impact strategy over other expenditures. For example, the [Opportunity Culture Model](#) developed by Public Impact and implemented in districts nationwide is designed to accommodate high-need schools that do not have available funding reserves. The model does so by offering funding trade-offs in program design: mentor teachers are funded out of resources that would otherwise be used for hiring separate learning specialists, providing a cost-neutral way to support new teachers

(Backes & Hansen, 2018). Finally, mentoring and induction programs can include support on developing models for more effective scheduling to enable planning time for teachers and mentors as an integral part of the program design.



Strategy 3: Mitigate Accountability Pressures

Rationale: Pressures from school accountability also drive teacher turnover in high-need schools. One report indicates that in 2012, approximately 25% of teachers who left the profession noted that the impact of assessments and accountability measures on their teaching was a significant factor in their decision to leave (Podolsky et al., 2016). Low-performing schools classified as in need of comprehensive and targeted support under ESSA confront an even greater pressure. At these schools, teachers must deal with additional tasks and responsibilities related to district or state improvement initiatives and are pressured to produce results (Ingersoll & May, 2011). These schools demonstrate the needs paradox best: Although they are the target of most improvement efforts conducted by the state and district and are in need of quality, comprehensive mentoring and induction to support these initiatives and create an environment in which teachers can grow, they are least likely to have the capacity, time, and resources necessary for implementation. The pressure to raise test scores and improve accountability ratings for their schools may be a significant challenge teachers face in their daily practice—a challenge that elevates the need for high-quality mentors.

There are several GTL resources focused on developing comprehensive mentoring and induction in high-need settings. For example, see the [Center on Great Teachers and Leaders' Mentoring and Induction Toolkit](#), which includes a [Mentoring and Induction Turnaround Schools Crosswalk and Reflection](#) and a [Turnaround Schools Self-Assessment](#)—both of which can be good starting points for high-need district or school leaders to assess, reflect, and monitor progress of mentoring and induction as a strategy for addressing teacher retention.

Viabile Approaches:

- **Provide additional resources and facilitated planning time.** To create readiness for schools experiencing severe accountability pressures that may lead to significant turnover, state- and district-supported mentoring and induction programs can provide additional resources and facilitated planning time for schools.
- **Use accountability ratings to prioritize low-performing schools.** State and district leaders also can use accountability ratings to prioritize low-performing schools for mentoring programs and to work with them to accommodate specific challenges in program design while targeting specific needs (e.g., lack of mentor candidates).



Strategy 4: Remedy Inadequate Teacher Preparation

Rationale: Often, there is misalignment between teacher preparation and the job that teachers in high-need schools are required to perform. A mathematics teacher candidate, for example, may be prepared to teach mathematics but may also be asked to focus on how to reduce chronic absenteeism among his or her students, handle discipline, and manage classrooms

of students with varying special needs. Arguably, the teacher needs high-quality mentoring and induction the most as a way to compensate for this misalignment. In the absence of a mentoring and induction program that targets these and similar issues, all too often the teacher will decide to leave the profession or transfer to a school that does not serve underserved populations in order to achieve a better match between her or his content preparation and the actual job.

Viable Approaches:

- **Create strong partnerships with educator preparation programs.** To create readiness and target mentoring and induction programs for schools that experience inadequate teacher preparation, leaders can focus on creating strong partnerships between their districts and educator preparation programs. Developing these partnerships can help establish recruitment pipelines in critical shortage areas and can create a feedback mechanism between high-need schools induction programs.
- **Develop and include residency programs.** Mentoring and induction programs also can be designed to include a residency component with a specific emphasis on high-need settings, giving preservice teachers the opportunity to experience teaching in high-need schools.
- **Engage preparation program faculty in the design of the initiative.** States and districts may engage preparation program faculty and effective mentors from high-need schools in the design and implementation of mentoring programs. For guidance on building this engagement, see the GTL Center's *Mentoring and Induction Toolkit*, Module 6, on high leverage instructional practices. Doing so can leverage their expertise to ensure that there is continuity in instructional expectations and new teacher supports from preservice to inservice.

Although no longer in operation, The Denver Teacher Residency (DTR) was one of the country's leading teacher training programs for more than a decade, providing hundreds of classroom-ready teachers for the Denver Public Schools (Denver, Colorado). DTR proved that the key elements of the residency model can be adopted and incorporated into district talent management systems at scale, and the Denver Public School system is now creating residency-like programs throughout the city in partnership with colleges, universities, and other providers. For more information, see [Building Systems of Innovation at Scale: A Look at How the Denver Teacher Residency Transformed the Human Capital Pipeline in Denver Public Schools](#).



Strategy 5: Address Poor and Unequal Working Conditions

Rationale: Teachers in high-need schools experience poor working conditions that often include a lack of administrator support, unsupportive school cultures, and a lack of instructionally focused conversations with their colleagues and administrators (Bettini & Park, 2017; Schernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, & Spencer, 2011). Such conditions often lead to beginning teacher attrition (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). These effects are particularly salient for teachers of color who are disproportionately assigned to teach in high-need schools compared with their White counterparts (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Studies find that these teachers experience personal isolation (Hansen & Quintero, 2018) and may confront inferior working conditions

(e.g., when asked to perform additional duties regarding student discipline instead of growing professionally to prepare for leadership roles they desire [Brockenbrough, 2015]). Addressing these disparities is critical, as studies show that teachers of color benefit students of color and all students on a wide range of outcomes including raising test scores and graduation rates, providing equitable disciplinary treatment for all students, reducing dropouts, and other positive outcomes (Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

Viable Approaches:

- **Assess school working conditions and use the results to inform conversations.** Research suggests that working conditions predict teachers' attrition from high-need schools (Johnson et al., 2012). Therefore, understanding the nature of beginning teachers' experiences of their working conditions may help school leaders develop conditions that retain beginning teachers in high-need schools. Surveys on working conditions can be conducted, and the results can be used to inform conversations at the state, district, and school levels. The collaborative interpretation of survey results can lead to critical policy decisions that improve working conditions for all teachers.
- **Use induction programs as a sounding board.** Mentoring and induction programs can serve as a sounding board to identify and address concerns, make note of the career goals of beginning teachers, and seek and provide opportunities to support mentees in meeting those goals.
- **Incentivize teachers of color.** Given the importance of building a diverse teacher workforce, states and districts can incentivize teachers of color in high-need schools by providing housing supports (e.g. stipends, tax credits, or affordable housing; for examples see Lambert & Willis, 2019, or Iasevoli, 2016), other financial arrangements, and opportunities to build relationships with key education leaders and community members.
- **Focus on culturally relevant practices and pedagogy.** In addition, effective programs targeting high-need schools should focus on practices that are culturally relevant. To better meet the needs of teachers of color, mentors must be more than professional leaders who have mastered the skills of teaching and classroom management. They also must have awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to the issues that are relevant to teachers of color, particularly around social justice and equity (Ginsberg & Budd, 2017). Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs, and Dana (2009) add that "Given that the selection criteria for

Incentives for Teachers of Color: The Call Me MISTER Program
(Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models), founded at Clemson University in 2000, was designed to increase the pool of available teachers, particularly in South Carolina's lowest-performing schools. The program meets this goal by recruiting outstanding candidates—many of whom are candidates of color—from underserved, socio-economically disadvantaged, and educationally at-risk communities. Candidates pursue approved programs of study in teacher education at participating colleges while receiving tuition assistance in the form of loan forgiveness. Candidates also receive structured mentoring supports including academic counseling, cultural and social support from a cohort, and assistance with job placement. The program now operates in 24 colleges and universities across South Carolina as well as nine partner universities across the country.

many mentoring programs does not include attention to these dispositions, many mentors will need to engage in professional development and self-reflection about social justice before even thinking about how to support novice teachers...” (p. 40). Thus, embedding such content in mentoring and induction programs can go a long way toward meeting the needs of the high-need schools in which they teach.

Conclusion

Practitioners should consider addressing teacher shortages, equitable access, and the achievement gap by tailoring the design and implementation of programs for high-need schools. Prioritizing these schools, rather than hoping for systemic change with statewide models, can leverage lessons learned from years of research. State and district programs can have a positive and sustained impact by targeting programs and taking into account the challenges of high-need schools. To succeed, equity should become the primary goal of education leaders; it should drive their theory of action and determine their use of resources, their strategy, their structures, and their processes. In the case of mentoring and induction, programs may be characterized by lack of mentor experience, fewer resources, accountability pressures, inadequate teacher preparation, and unequal working conditions for teachers of color. Other programs that target teacher quality such as teacher leadership, teacher evaluation, professional development, leadership, and others may be characterized by similar challenges and considerations for both design and implementation stages. Such programs can improve teacher practice while creating the instructional conditions that make teachers more likely to stay. By addressing these challenges and leveraging programs, strategies, and interventions specifically to tackle teacher shortages and equitable access in high-need schools head on, these schools can create the stabilizing supports required to retain effective teachers. These components and conditions are essential to narrowing persistent achievement gaps.

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This work was originally produced in whole or in part by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders with funds from the U.S. Department of Education under cooperative agreement number S283B120021. The content does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, nor does mention or visual representation of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the federal government.

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