

Philadelphia's New Teacher Coaches: Reflections on Their First Year

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Introduction

The School District of Philadelphia launched a group of initiatives for the 2003-04 school year to retain teachers who were new to the system. The district held intensive summer orientation programs for new teachers, trained principals in methods of holding on to their new teachers, and created a cadre of 61 experienced teachers who were charged with the task of coaching the new teachers. These efforts appear to have produced a substantial early payoff in teacher retention: as of June 2004, 91 percent of the teachers new to the district during that year were still on the job compared to only 73 percent of new teachers in June of the previous academic year.

District leaders believe that the work of the New Teacher Coaches was a major factor in the improved retention rate. In contrast to the district's traditional mentoring program in which classroom teachers mentor their new colleagues in the same building, the New Teacher Coaches did not have classroom teaching responsibilities and were based outside of the school in the Office of Professional Development at the district's central office. Their exclusive concern was the support and professional development of teachers new to the district. The New Teacher Coaches, chosen through a competitive process, were full-time teachers on special assignment (TOSAs).

District leaders, led by CEO Paul Vallas and by Tomás Hanna, Special Assistant to the CEO for Recruitment and Retention, viewed this effort as a high-priority initiative worthy of substantial investment. Implementation was carried out by the Office of Professional Development.

This report focuses on New Teacher Coaches' appraisals of their experience during the first year of the initiative's implementation. In order to capture the coaches' reflections, the Office of Professional Development and the Office of Research and Evaluation worked with an outside evaluation group, Research for Action, to design and organize one-hour focus groups with the New Teacher Coaches in early June 2004. The purpose of the focus groups was to get coaches' feedback about the frustrations and successes that characterized the first year of the initiative. In all, 58 of the 61 coaches participated in one of eight focus groups held at Dobbins High School on June 4, 2004.

Findings from the Focus Groups

The New Teacher Coaches expressed a remarkable degree of unanimity in their focus group discussions. Their responses to the questions are summarized below.

The Best News: Coaches' Sense of Efficacy and Satisfaction

The coaches believed they had played an important role in boosting the retention rate of new teachers and cited instances when they had convinced new teachers to stay when the going got tough. They reported positive relationships both with the new teachers and with their coaching peers. Their excitement and pride was evident when they spoke about the ways in which their teachers had grown and developed since the beginning of the school year. Overall, the coaches reported high levels of satisfaction with their jobs. A sampling of quotes from the focus groups illustrates their feelings:

One teacher was just very disillusioned about the grade assignment that she had gotten in the building, and for the first month when I would come, you could just see she was miserable and she would tell me she would be crying after school. So one day I stayed after school with her and said, 'If you are going to stay you're going to have to just throw out and forget about what you wanted, where you subbed before, what you had, and look at what you have in front of you because this is it, if you are staying here, at least for this year this is what you are going to have. You can't keep going home crying every day.' And I would think every time I came [that] the principal is probably going to tell me that 'She's not here, she's gone.' But a couple weeks later I came into her room and she was smiling and said, 'Later that day I really took to heart and thought about what you said because I was really miserable and I did realize that I had to just let it go and I needed to stay. I like the kids even though they were older than what I wanted to work with,' and from that point on ... if you walked into her room, you would never think she was a first year teacher.

I recall one [new teacher] who just sat there crying in September. So I said 'You know we're going to be laughing about this in April.' And we were. And to see her classroom, how it really evolved into a very rich environment for an autistic support class, it's really nice to see and I'm sure she's going to be there a long time. To see that turn around when she was really on the edge—and [she] even said 'I'm going to quit' and things like that—so that was rewarding.

One [success] is that all of my teachers have stayed, which to be very honest, at the beginning of the year, I didn't think some of them were going to stay. But they hung in there and they're still here. They are going to make this first year.

The greatest satisfaction was watching these new teachers come in at all different levels and watching them grow, feeling confident, seeing them take ownership of their students and the responsibility they had towards their students. There are some wonderful, wonderful new teachers who I've had the pleasure of working with this year.

I think the biggest positive for me was when the teacher says, 'Come in and see this lesson.' It made me feel really good when they could just soar on their own.

My greatest success is the relationships that I forged with my new teachers. I loved them as daughters and sons and a few sisters. That was the best.

Compromising the Work of the New Teacher Coaches: the Problem of Overload

The coaches felt strongly that they were assigned to too many new teachers and worked in too many schools. They entered the job expecting a ratio of one coach per 10 teachers but ended up with a ratio of one coach to an average of 19.5 new teachers. These caseloads ranged from 12 to 27 teachers. On average, coaches were assigned to 7.7 schools, with the range running from as few as 2 schools to as many as 21 schools. They argued that their effectiveness would be much greater with lighter caseloads and fewer schools.

The coaches were also surprised that some of the “new” teachers who had transferred in from other districts were, in fact, very experienced. The inclusion of school counselors in their caseload was not expected either. Many of the coaches tried to handle their caseload by prioritizing services, giving less attention to teachers with prior experience in another district and to those who were doing well, and spending more time with struggling novices.

Their comments illustrate their views about working with too many new teachers and the need to prioritize their support.

Unfortunately what happened with having so many schools and so many teachers is that I feel like a band-aid rather than being able to be in the classroom for extended periods of time where I really got to know the children.

I kept thinking, ‘I’m supposed to be cognitive coaching.’ I really bought into that and thought that’s right. They are only going to get better if they make themselves get better. And I will be the conduit for that. Forget it. I was just so overwhelmed and thinking so fast that you had to say, ‘Do this, and here, take that, and do it this way.’

It took me a while before I was able to really have a schedule that would work and that would really be effective for the role that I was in to support a new teacher. Some of them were not brand new teachers and they came from other districts ..., so those I scheduled to see every other week. I found that that was working for my real new teachers that needed the support

As the numbers [of new teachers in their caseload] changed ..., I was a little concerned as to whether or not I would be able to provide the same level and quality of support. So what happened was I started shortchanging [some of the new teachers]. Those people who were self-directed, more capable of being able to handle the classroom and instruction, I started pulling back servicing them... . There’s only so many hours in a day, and only so much you can do.

There needs to be more flexibility in our scheduling. There are some teachers who need more support and working with than others, but if we do our scheduling a week in advance ..., that really impedes and ties your hands on how much support you can give to someone who might need you a couple days.

The coaches focused as well on the problem of being assigned to too many schools.

I have 23 teachers that I service in 12 different schools. Because of the logistics involved, I’m not able to spend a large amount of time in any one school because I visit each of my teachers each week. I believe, for that reason, my relationships with the schools were not as strong as they could have been if I was there for longer periods of time.

I think those people who had a lot of new teachers in just a few locations felt more connected to the buildings than those of us who had a lot of new teachers in a lot of locations.

Figuring Out What To Do: Evolution in the Coaches' Role

While some of the coaches said that the job was pretty much what they expected, many said that their role lacked clarity from the start and that it changed during the course of the year. Initially they were told that coaching on academic content/instruction was not to be a primary part of their work and that their focus should be on classroom management and general issues of pedagogy. Midway through the year, however, they were told that support in instruction in content areas was to be a key component of their work.

Coaches' comments on this issue ran along the following lines:

For the most part, the job is what I expected it to be. I think one change is that initially we were told that we were going to be 'non-instructional.' I did have some concerns about that because I felt that it would be difficult to go into a classroom, work with the teacher, and stay away from reading and math strategies and techniques. Then [later], we were made to understand that our role was instructional When we found that out, that helped me in terms of dealing with my teachers and feeling comfortable about the information I was giving to them.

At first we were told not to worry about the content and then we were told mid-year that the core curriculum would be part of our job and that we would be providing support with that.

I was under the assumption that when we first went into the school everybody would know who we were, but they didn't. I found a lot of people asking later, 'What do you do?' So I think that needs to be defined.

The job description initially was murky and uninformed I think people came in initially thinking that this is an opportunity to work with and help new teachers, retain them, train them, support them in every manner possible, but that was not actually defined for us That's where the perception going in did not become a reality. It became more of a 'form your own job description.'

The principals had absolutely no idea why we were there I just don't think it was ever presented exactly who we were, what was expected of us, how much authority or leadership we were supposed to have or not have.

Most schools were very welcoming and open [But] some of my schools, the principals and the staff looked at me as an intruder—as someone that was coming not to do very much. Almost like a glorified teacher's assistant.

I felt that that the school administration wanted me there but I think they looked at me as an assistant for those teachers who are weak [or as a] shoulder for those teachers to cry on because the schools are not taking the time to do that kind mentoring.

Some coaches suggested there be a meeting of relevant school and regional staff before school starts in order to arrive at explicit understandings of the coaches' role and authority.

Finding Time to Debrief: Dealing with Cramped School Schedules

Another common source of severe frustration was the lack of time to meet with new teachers outside of classroom hours. Many of the coaches were under the impression that they would have time to work with individual teachers (i.e., do cognitive coaching, practice active listening) before or after school. They noted that it was difficult to meet with teachers during their prep and lunch periods. While this made many coaches feel as though they were not able to do their jobs effectively, some coaches did find creative ways to fit in times to meet with their teachers.

Their comments follow:

I thought I would have more time to work and spend time with teachers. But I didn't want to take their preps. So we didn't really have a lot of after-school time or before-school time that I thought we would have. I think that could have helped. I felt bad. I tried really hard not to take their entire time during their prep. But there were times when there were things we really did need to go over, but they wanted to do paper work or they just needed a break.

We were also told there would be time before and after school to work with teachers. That never materialized which made it difficult to find quality time to meet with those teachers.

We didn't have enough time to cognitively coach our new teachers. They spent a lot of money bringing people in to train us and cognitively coaching them. No time was [available] unless we borrowed prep time or went into grade meeting time. If that didn't exist then it just didn't exist. It was more on a fly than it was being able to reflect.

I found it very difficult at first to find that time because they are so overwhelmed with everything that they have to do. They have so many responsibilities and I feel really guilty taking 10 minutes from their lunch, 20 minutes from prep Of course you become very creative, bringing coffee and donuts first thing in the morning, or maybe you buy the lunch so when they sit down they don't feel like they've missed a whole lot since you have the lunch right there for them, or maybe bringing in something for them after school.

Making Sensible Matches: Linking Teachers with Appropriate Coaches

Coaches noted the problem of the frequent mismatch in content areas and grade levels in the assignment of coaches to new teachers and the paucity of coaches in Special Education. They were sympathetic to the dilemmas faced by the Office of Professional Development in assigning coaches when a higher-than-expected number of new teachers materialized. These unexpected assignments required them to adapt their coaching to unfamiliar fields and grades. They also talked about the importance of closer ties between specialty curriculum offices in the district and the coaches and new teachers, particularly in the area of Special Education.

[New Teacher Coach assignments] became more random It didn't seem like it was planned well ahead of time where they made good use of our expertise areas.

I have ten schools and I go between regular grade, special education, high school, middle school, elementary, and that's difficult. I would like to see the coaches concentrate in only on or two areas rather than being spread out and stretched so much.

I guess my frustration would be the fact of going to classrooms from K to 7th grade. I don't think you can be effective. I think you need to limit whatever grade level we're going in [because] it's almost impossible to be an expert in all of those grade levels I felt unprepared and embarrassed many times ..., and there are a lot of skills I learned as I went along.

I was hired as a science support and then once I got into the schools, they sort of put science on the back burner because they were really focused on math and literacy. I had to change hats and become an expert in math and literacy.

Integrating Coaches into Life at the School: Overcoming Turf and Fear

The coaches reported that most of the administrators at their assigned schools welcomed them and valued their service. In these schools, they had a positive relationship with the principal and other school staff, and they were integrated to some degree into the life of the school.

Over the course of the year, it's more positive. They [administrators] see what we are doing and the support we are providing. The [new] teachers are still there in the building, so we are effective.

And for the most part the other staff members are respectful... . Often I hear, 'Gee, I wish they had new teacher coaches when I came on board.' So, I think we're viewed favorably.

Initially the teachers ... don't know you and they say, 'Who is that person, and who do they think they are to just come walking up in our building?' Then as the year goes on, they lighten up.

We're quite visible. And as a matter of fact in the schools I go to, we are seen in a positive light. I think we are seen as very effective and we can get the job done. The reason I say that is because I have had people who are not new teachers come to me and say, 'Why can't you be with me?'

The coaches had been told in their training to be proactive and to make themselves known and visible in their schools. Some of them commented on their efforts to do so.

I am very fortunate to have been able to establish a very good rapport with both the administration and staffs at all [three of] my schools In this job, you have to be resourceful. I kind of explained [to the principals] who I was, what my responsibilities were going to be, what I could do, what I couldn't do—more or less to reiterate what we had been told that they were already supposed to know I purposely made myself a part of each school family. I joined their Sunshine Clubs, [went to] birthday parties, ... and my picture is right there in the main office with the rest of the staff.

While coaches were well received by the administration and teachers in most schools, in a minority of schools the relationship was problematic. Many coaches reported that one or more principals and other school staff failed to integrate them into the school community and were sometimes discourteous toward them or suspicious that the coaches were there to “spy” on them. In some schools, their work was seen as infringing on the work of the Content Leaders in Math and Literacy. Coaches wished for a “home base” at their schools (where they could leave materials, coats, make phone calls, etc.) as well as access to small amenities such as keys to the elevator or bathroom. Some reported instances where they were not informed about or encouraged to attend school-based professional development. In these and other ways, coaches were made to feel as though they were not part of the school community.

My feeling about how we were viewed [was that I was] this cloak and dagger person walking around the school, taking notes to snitch on the principal, what they were doing, and to snitch on teachers. Of course, that gradually faded away

... When there was professional development, they never offered anything to me Sometimes my new teachers would go to professional development, and you would think they would send me a little flyer to let me know that 'Your new teacher will be here, would you like to come?' I didn't feel comfortable following my new teacher [and] I didn't feel like my presence was wanted.

I don't understand why anybody would not have understood what our role was as a new teacher coach. How can I step on your toes if you are an academic coach for literacy? ... I am only dealing with maybe 13 people in your entire region and you have to deal with 700 odd teachers. There is plenty of work to go around for everybody.

In schools where there is a strong climate and sense of community, everyone in the school knows who I am, embraces me. But in the schools where there is tension, the tension is there for me also.

The potential for strain in the principal-coach relationship was heightened by confusion about principals' authority to influence how coaches spent their time. Some coaches resented policies that undermined their independence such as the rule that principals had to sign off on their attendance. In addition, some principals apparently did not grasp the fact that coaches had so many new teachers and schools to visit, and consequently they made unreasonable demands upon the coaches' time. Further, coaches reported that some principals tried to use them inappropriately, asking them for evaluative information on the new teachers or requesting that the coaches pass on the principals' critiques or comments to a new teacher. As one coach put it:

One principal actually put me in a really bad situation where a lot of times she contacted me when she wanted to let her teachers know about something that was negative that she didn't want to tell them. She thought that I should tell them. 'Well these are your teachers, can you please pass this on to them?' And that made me feel very uncomfortable, and I felt like I was in a compromising situation Like they wanted me to snitch on the [new teachers], and I felt that 'I'm not here to do that. I'm here to support the teachers'

For the most part, the coaches said they had little contact with the Regional Offices. A few reported either very close or somewhat strained relationships. All said that their two-day meeting in June (that same week) with regional staff was very positive. As one put it, "I think next year, with what happened [at these meetings] over the last few days, kind of opened the door, and we will now have a relationship with regional staffs." Indeed, the district has decided that the coach function will be managed out of the Regional Offices in 2004-05 thus insuring that the coaches will have much closer ties with those administrative units.

Speeding up the Revolving Door: The Impact of Dysfunctional School Climates

A number of the coaches said that the "out-of-control" climate at some of their assigned schools undermined their efforts to retain the novice teachers. They reported that administrators at these schools did not respond effectively to discipline problems in the hallways and lunchroom and other common areas of the school, nor did they give individual teachers adequate support with discipline problems in their classrooms. They were struck by the variations in climate from one school to another. Their comments follow:

The lack of support around discipline from administration has caused some of my new teachers to look in other districts [for jobs]. Over and over throughout the year, nothing was done.

I think my biggest disappointment this year has been, sometimes you are in a building where it's just a rough building, it's not just a new teacher [problem] It's not just new teachers struggling, other teachers are as well, and there are no other supports in the building to give help and assistance. That's been hard for me when I go in that building. I feel so bad for my new teachers. It seems like no matter what I have done, it hasn't been very much help because the environment is just not [good]. They've hung in there, but I know it's been a very hard year.

I began in a building with 14 teachers in this one building, and they started dropping off like flies because of the structure of the school, and as fast as they were being replaced, they were leaving They didn't want to stay in the building. It's very hard to get somebody to come into a building where there are no parameters for what the children do and to get them to come in every day. That was the hardest part of the job—trying to convince somebody to stay when you had kids throwing crayons and chalk at you when you were at the board There was nothing being done by administration to help, and even when I went to administration, I was pushed aside.

Administration [at one school] found every excuse in the book to put it back on everybody else and never assumed the responsibility themselves If I had those teachers in other schools, those classrooms would have been model classrooms because things that [students] were doing would have been addressed.

Some of the buildings that I went to were just out of control. I really didn't want to be there at times. There were times when I was in settings that I was totally against everything that was happening, but yet I still had to offer some type of support, and I wasn't getting any support from the leadership in that building. So that was my biggest frustration—the climate of a lot of the buildings that I went to.

There were places where the discipline was deplorable and [there was] very little support. I really felt like I was ... powerless to be able to help. I did the best that I could to assist that teacher. However, there was not a mechanism in the school to support the discipline. That was a real frustration for me.

My biggest frustration is principals—how they treat new teachers and how much they take advantage of new teachers. I think they abuse a lot of them. Our job is teacher retention. If they only knew they are the reason that a lot of them leave.

Supporting Special Education Teachers: The Most Urgent Need

Several coaches commented on the needs of new Special Education teachers, particularly those on Emergency and Intern certifications who may have had no prior experience or coursework in teaching Special Education students. These teachers, often located in middle schools, required substantial help with all aspects of their work, including very basic information on paper work and diagnostic evaluations required by law. In some cases, their coaches were not experienced Special Education teachers, and support from the district's central office was limited.

I was hoping we would have a close attachment with the office of Special Ed Services. I spent a lot of time calling asking questions at the beginning of the year... . Finally in April, they did call a meeting and invited the Special Ed coaches to meet with them. Their first comment to us was, 'For the first six months, we didn't even know there were New Teacher Coaches for Special Ed.' I just found that unbelievable that they didn't know we existed at all.

According to some of the coaches, many Special Education teachers didn't get core curriculum materials until the end of November. In some cases, teachers experienced difficulties obtaining materials that were aligned with students' instructional levels.

All of my teachers [were] receiving materials on the grade level and not on their instructional level. So the kids couldn't deal with the materials, couldn't handle them. The teachers were frustrated because they didn't know how to adapt the materials going down five or six levels to meet the instructional needs of the students... . Some of them never received them and were told by the administration to use materials that were obsolete in the schools and were in storage rooms. That is what they used for the balance of the year.

Several of the New Teacher Coaches working with Special Education teachers felt frustrated because the only information they received about new Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and paperwork was from the teachers they were working with. They expressed a desire to receive training on the IEPs as well as the procedures and timelines for completing forms and other required paper work.

There is a new IEP. I had to get one of my new teachers to train me how to do that new IEP. Also starting [last] September, every Special Ed class has to do the Woodcock Johnson, system wide. I had to get a new teacher to get on the computer to show me what to do. It's not right. I am supposed to be training them. Special Education is like 'sweep it under the carpet and it's gone.'

What's needed is something more than [training on IEPs]. I am talking about the particulars of how to do an ER [Evaluation Report], what is the lack of time between when an ER is due and when an IEP is due, how many days before you contact the parent. That's what places the school district out of compliance. We really need to have training on that, all of the coaches.

Mastering Their Craft: Coaches' Recommendations for their Own Professional Development

The coaches talked about their need for more meetings to share ideas among themselves and for increased opportunities for their own professional development. While coaches held varying perspectives on the extensiveness of the training they received, many noted the need for further training in one or more of the following topics:

- The core curriculum (although they praised their initial training in it); the curriculum specific to a coach's content area, school level, and Educational Management Organization (EMO) or other school manager;
- Methods of successful coaching;
- Assessments being used in the schools;
- The use of SchoolNet, an on-line information management system that enables teachers to look at student data;
- The new on-line report card required of teachers;
- The Kaplan-designed curricula used in high schools.

Feelings on these issues are illustrated in the comments below:

They exposed us to a lot of information but very little was ever modeled. That looks very different when people can stand up and tell you what you do, but if you are not modeling it, you really can't get the whole perspective.

We need to be on one page about what is a coach, how do you do it, how do you do your job better. We've got to come together so that we can air issues and frustrations and successes throughout the year and not let it bundle up in a two- hour session where nobody has time to really express themselves.

We absolutely need more professional development of us I'm not talking about 'let's look at this program, let's look at that program.' New teacher coaches should be evolving in their profession and should be growing in some way. We have not really been taught how to be a coach.

... Many of us are in EMO schools and they don't follow that [core] curriculum. So, we had to learn four to five different curricula under four to five different managerial styles in different lesson planning ways with different levels of teachers.

A few coaches also suggested initiating a monthly book club to discuss a book related to their work, and compiling a directory or “face book” of coaches which would help coaches identify other coaches who have expertise in particular areas or subjects.

Taking a Proactive Stance: A Key to Successful Coaching

Many coaches claimed that they actively addressed gaps in their knowledge or the uncertainty inherent in their roles. They felt that they were learning about the new expectations as their teachers were learning about them. In some cases, they sought out professional development with their new teachers. Many of the coaches highlighted the importance of learning new information so that they could help their teachers. In general, focus group participants spoke in a problem-solving mode rather than one of helplessness. The comments below reflect this thinking.

This job requires people who are resourceful, who are independent thinkers. So, I took it upon myself to try and do that. But at the same time, that was a surprise to me. I'm like, 'Boy, I wish I was in a core curriculum school because I've got all this staff development.' I had to learn the Victory model on my own, the Edison model on my own, etc.

I took advantage of some of the opportunities that were for the new teachers or any teachers, professional development every other Friday. And if you stay and really get involved in their thing, you're learning right along with them. It provided a lot of opportunity to me to learn more about it. I think I feel pretty comfortable with helping my teachers with things that they don't know.

You have to extend yourself... . You have to say, 'I'm going to go on-line and check this out.' You have to be the kind of person who is willing to learn as well.

If you are in a position training somebody, you have to know it and if you don't get the information and be a go getter, then you're not going to know. You will be just as blank as the person you are trying to train, so what good are you?

When I went into the classroom with the teacher, I said, 'Let's sit down with the core curriculum, let's look at your lesson plans.' That is how I got my experience with the core curriculum. I also relied on my teaching expertise as a teacher myself.

Summary

Put briefly, the New Teacher Coaches believed their efforts contributed to a higher retention rate of teachers new to the School District of Philadelphia. They loved their work and expressed enthusiasm about their relationships with the teachers they were mentoring. Yet the coaches spoke bluntly about the ways in which their over-sized caseloads severely compromised the quality and quantity of the support they were charged with providing. They expressed frustration with the poor school climate and inadequate leadership in some schools, and argued that these factors contributed to high levels of dissatisfaction among new entrants to the district's teacher workforce.

The coaches made specific recommendations with regard to reducing their caseloads, clarifying their role and authority, speeding up their integration into school staff cultures, and extending their own training. As the coaching function gets folded into Regional Offices for 2004-05, leaders in those offices need to take seriously the recommendations expressed so passionately in these focus groups.

As of this writing, it appears that the number of coaches will not be increased for the 2004-05 school year even though as many as 1100 new teachers may be hired. This decision is surprising and disheartening given the apparent success of this initiative and its potential to be even more effective with a lower coach to teacher ratio. If the number of coaches is not increased, the district would be wise to drop experienced teachers—new to the district but not to teaching—from the coaches' caseloads. It might also make sense to remove new counselors as well.

Beyond that, the coaches' comments highlight the pressing need for the School District of Philadelphia to intensify its efforts to choose and train school administrators with great care. New teachers are far less likely to remain in dysfunctional schools than teachers in well-run buildings, regardless of the quality of the work of the New Teacher Coach. The work of the coaches is far more likely to boost new teacher retention, both during the first year and beyond, in schools with strong leaders and collegial professional cultures.

The focus groups were planned by the Office of Professional Development and Office of Research and Evaluation of the School District of Philadelphia in collaboration with Research for Action. Focus group facilitators included Dr. Catherine Johnson, Senior Program Evaluator from the School District's Office of Research and Evaluation; Dr. Elizabeth Useem, Senior Research Consultant to Research for Action; Dr. Ruth Curran Neild, Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania; and Sarah Costelloe, doctoral student at the Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania. The work is part of a larger study on teacher recruitment and retention being carried out under the auspices of Learning from Philadelphia's School Reform, a research and public awareness project of a consortium of scholars led by Research for Action.