Evaluation of the Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring (BTIM) Program

Executive Summary

January 2009

Submitted to:
Texas Education Agency

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CREDITS

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Executive Summary

The first year of teaching is a "make or break" time; often referred to as a "trial by fire" or "sink or swim" experience, this time period can be spent in isolation, leaving the novice teacher to navigate a system they may not be familiar with or thoroughly understand (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, as cited in Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 682; Kauffman, Johnson, Karos, Liu, & Peske, 2002, as cited in Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 682; Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2000). The transition into the teaching profession can be a challenging experience for the beginning teacher. Approximately 30% of all beginning teachers either move to a different campus or leave teaching at the end of their first year (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The U.S. Department of Education (as cited in American Federation of Teachers, 1998) reported that nine percent of new teachers may not even make it to the end of their first year and research cited by Smith & Ingersoll (2004) finds that up to 50% of new teachers leave the profession within 5 years of entering the classroom.

Teacher turnover is evident throughout the profession, not only among beginning teachers. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Follow-up Survey[1], of the more than 3 million public school teachers in the profession during the 2003–04 school year, 84% remained at the same campus ("stayers"), 8% moved to a different campus ("movers"), and another 8% left the profession at the beginning of the next school year (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2007). In Texas, the state's Legislative Budget Board and the Governor's Office of Budget Policy and Planning list the state turnover rate for teachers in Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 at 16.6%. Whisnant, Elliott, & Pynchon (2005) cite a current trend of providing "sustained and purposeful professional support" to beginning teachers as critical to their retention in the teaching workforce.

Beginning teacher induction programs have increased in an effort to provide beginning teachers with support and encourage them to remain in the classroom. Induction programs, which often include a mentoring component, are designed to ease the beginning teacher's transition, while also providing professional development opportunities to build knowledge and skills. In 1990–91, only 40% of new teachers experienced some type of induction program, compared to more than 80% of new teachers today (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2006). In addition to being implemented as a strategy for keeping teachers in the profession, teacher induction programs that frequently incorporate mentoring are being used with the goals to improve teacher quality, meet national curriculum standards, and promote higher student achievement (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2006).

Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program

In an effort to increase retention of beginning teachers, the Texas Legislature (80th Texas Legislature, General Appropriations Act, Rider 73) authorized and funded the Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring (BTIM) program with appropriations in FY 2008 and FY 2009. The first appropriation ($15 million) funded 50 Cycle 1 grantee school districts distributed among approximately 470 campuses for use in the 2007–08 and 2008–09 school year.[2] The overall

[1] The Teacher Follow-up Survey is a sample of teachers who participated in the Schools and Staffing Survey conducted during the 2002-03 school year. This survey aims to calculate teacher attrition and mobility rates among U.S. school teachers teaching grades K-12, and describe characteristics of those teachers who leave and stay in the profession (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2007).

[2] BTIM Cycle 2 grantees were funded from a 2008 appropriation of $15 million and began induction and mentoring programs in the 2008–09 school year.

goals of the BTIM program are to: (a) increase beginning teacher retention, (b) improve beginning teacher performance, and (c) improve overall student achievement. The program also works to provide support and training to mentor teachers and administrators.

BTIM Cycle 1grants targeted school districts and open-enrollment charter schools with high rates of teacher attrition, high percentages of beginning teachers, high rates of teaching outside the field of certification, or high rates of beginning teachers in Texas Teacher Shortage Areas, which includes those subject and geographic areas identified by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the U.S. Department of Education as lacking sufficient numbers of educators. BTIM Cycle 1 grants required the districts to provide a minimum of a 20% financial match (based on total grant funding). Program funds could be used for professional development and support and training for mentor teachers. These funds also could be used to provide teacher stipends for participating mentors, substitute teacher pay and other resources to allow mentor teachers to devote time during the school day to observe and work with their beginning teachers. Although funds could not be used for administrator training, grantees' matching contributions could be used to fund this required activity.

Although all BTIM grantees were not required to use the same mentor training program, the grant stipulated that they implement TEA-approved programs that utilized adult learning strategies and prepared the mentor to assist their beginning teacher in classroom management, instructional pedagogy, student achievement, and collecting and analyzing data.

Mentor teachers were required to meet with their beginning teacher on a weekly basis, commencing at teacher orientation. The mentors were required to observe and assess their beginning teacher in the classroom. These observation sessions were an opportunity to guide the one-on-one time between the mentor and beginning teacher, allowing the mentor teacher to provide their beginning teacher with feedback and offer strategies for improvement. The beginning teachers worked with their mentor to develop improvement plans to help meet professional standards. Additionally, grantee campuses were asked to support mentor teachers through regularly scheduled meetings with administration staff.

BTIM Evaluation

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) contracted with ICF International (ICF) and its partner SPS Consulting Group Inc. to conduct a statewide evaluation of BTIM Cycle 1 program implementation and outcomes.[3] For this evaluation, the ICF team addressed TEA's five major objectives:

- Describe and evaluate the selection, support, and training of mentor teachers,
- Evaluate the quality of the match between mentors and beginning teachers, and the degree to which this influences student achievement,
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the BTIM program on increasing retention of beginning teachers,
- Evaluate the training and support of campus administrators related to the BTIM program, and
- Evaluate the sustainability and cost of BTIM programs implemented by Cycle 1.

The evaluation also investigated two additional evaluation questions: (a) was BTIM participation a substantively different experience for teachers in their first career who obtained certification

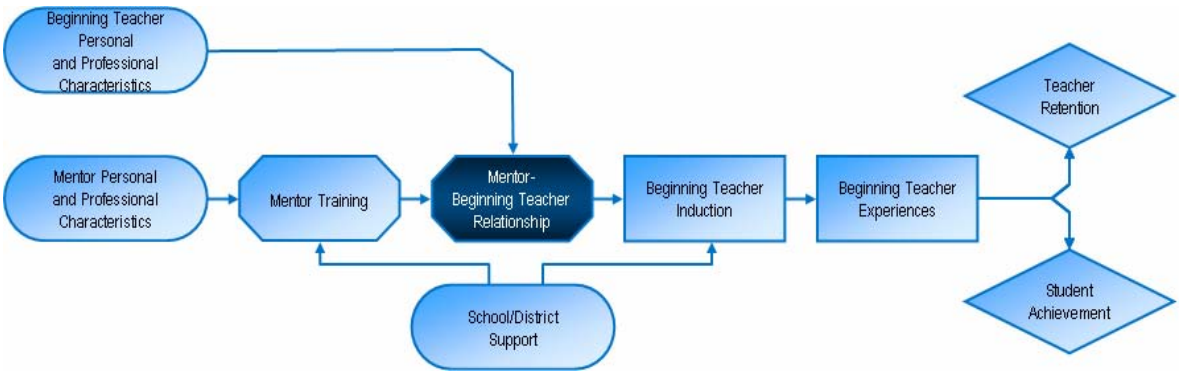
[3] BTIM Cycle 2 grantee data was not available by the time of this report submission. As a result, this report focuses exclusively on BTIM Cycle 1 programs.

through traditional routes (e.g., college/university undergraduate certification programs), rather than those beginning teachers coming from a different career path and certified through an alternative certification program (ACP), and (b) what was the impact of participating in the mentor program on mentor teachers' job satisfaction.

Evaluation Framework and Data Sources

To systematically evaluate the implementation and outcomes from the 2007-08 implementation of the BTIM program, the evaluation team developed a logic model (see Figure 1) to guide the collection, analysis and interpretation of BTIM data. The mentor-beginning teacher relationship is at the core of the BTIM program logic model. Mentor training is influenced by mentor characteristics and campus-level support. Both mentor training and beginning teacher characteristics influence the mentor-beginning teacher relationship. This relationship, as well as campus support, influences beginning teacher induction and subsequent experiences as a teacher. These combined experiences affect the outcomes of beginning teacher retention and student achievement. In each of these key areas, the ICF team collected data to inform the assessment of the BTIM program.

Figure 1: BTIM Evaluation Logic Model



The evaluation of the BTIM program employed a mixed-methods design, using both quantitative and qualitative data to construct a comprehensive picture of the BTIM program. The evaluation relied on both existing data (i.e., BTIM grant applications, Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and new data collection (i.e., online surveys of administrators, mentors and beginning teachers; case studies).

Findings from BTIM Grantees

The evaluation findings focus on the key aspects of BTIM program development and implementation as well as the program's relationship to teacher retention and student achievement. The ICF team also provides information related to job satisfaction and the relationship between certification route and other outcomes including job satisfaction and

attitudes towards remaining in teaching. Finally, the evaluation provides insights into the cost and sustainability of campus mentoring programs.

Selection, Support and Training of Mentor Teachers

The ICF team examined the selection of mentor teachers for participation in the BTIM program and the campus-level supports provided for mentors as well as the mentor perceptions of effectiveness of, and satisfaction with, their mentor training.

Demographic information about mentor teachers accessed from PEIMS for the 2007-08 school year revealed:

- The majority of mentors (72%) held Bachelor's degrees and 27% held a Master's degree or doctorate,
- Seventy percent of mentors had six or more years of teaching experience, and
- Mentors were predominately White (60%) and female (80%).

Campus administrators provided information about the selection of mentor teachers for participation in the BTIM program. The characteristics that guided mentor selection included:

- A demonstrated ability to model best practice instructional strategies,
- The ability to work collaboratively,
- Accessibility and responsiveness to the concerns, progress, and questions of new teachers,
- Demonstrated effectiveness in ensuring high levels of achievement for all students, and
- Good communications skills.

Summary site visit data illustrate that principals often approached mentor teachers and asked them to participate in the program. Additionally, while administrators did not rate experience teaching the same subject area as a key component in making mentor-beginning teacher matches, site visit data revealed that mentors and beginning teachers thought it was important.

The majority of mentors (82%) reported that meetings between mentors and beginning teachers were scheduled individually by the parties involved. Mentor teachers also indicated their campus administration facilitated their contact with beginning teachers by providing release time for observations (62%) and allowing common planning/ preparation time (44%).

Mentors were asked to rate the effectiveness of their training programs and their satisfaction with the training provided. Overall, mentor teachers had positive perceptions of the mentor training:

- Over 75% of the mentors rated their mentor training as "excellent" or "good."
- Over 60% found the training to be helpful in their role as a mentor.

Mentors were also asked about the content provided to them in the mentor training. The mentor training content designed to help beginning teachers establish effective teaching practices focused on:

- Classroom management,
- Instructional techniques,
- Assessment strategies,
- Motivation of student learning, and

- Professional development for beginning teachers.

The content pertaining to effective mentoring strategies focused on:

- Establishing a positive relationship with a beginning teacher and
- Providing constructive feedback.

Site visit data indicate that mentors would have liked more information or direct instruction about their responsibilities as mentors and the required paperwork.

Mentor-Beginning Teacher Relationship

The ICF team examined beginning teacher and mentor teacher survey responses regarding the mentor-beginning teacher relationship. Generally, both the mentors and the beginning teacher spent time and energy cultivating their relationships. Mentors and beginning teachers met frequently throughout the school year, usually once a week.

The evaluation survey results indicate that teachers, both mentors and beginners, rated their relationships favorably:

- Over half of the mentors (68%) and beginning teachers (64%) described their BTIM professional mentoring relationship as “excellent,” with less than 10% describing their relationships as “poor.”
- The site visit data support these findings and indicate strong relationships developed between the mentor-beginning teacher pairs.

The surveys and site visit findings also revealed that the majority of mentors and beginning teachers found that their BTIM mentor relationship helped beginning teachers adapt to their campuses:

- The majority of mentors (93%) reported that they helped the beginning teachers learn campus policy and classroom management. Seventy percent of beginning teachers reported that the mentor helped them learn campus policy and 78% reported receiving guidance on classroom management
- Both mentors and beginning teachers reported that the mentors helped beginning teachers develop their professional skills by:
  - Providing constructive feedback (97% of mentors and 85% of beginning teachers),
  - Providing tips on instructional techniques (95% of mentors and 89% of beginning teachers) and effective classroom management strategies (93% of mentors and 78% of beginning teachers), and
  - Helping with lesson planning (74% of mentors and 62% of beginning teachers).
- The majority of mentors (98%) reported a willingness to learn new teaching strategies from beginning teachers.
- The majority of mentors (94%) and beginning teachers (79%) reported that mentors provided emotional support and 90% of mentors and 84% of beginning teachers indicated that the mentor acted as a sounding board for difficult teaching problems.
- Eighteen percent of beginning teachers reported that their mentors did not help them to find professional development activities and 15% of beginning teachers reported that their mentors did not prepare them for performance appraisals.

- Many mentors commented during the site visits that they noticed an improvement in their beginning teachers' classrooms over time, especially around classroom management.

Mentors and beginning teachers shared common perceptions of the barriers and facilitators of the mentor-beginning teacher relationship:

- Similar beliefs, professional roles, personalities, and classroom practices were reported as facilitators to the mentor-beginning teacher relationship. According to evaluation survey findings, mentors and beginning teachers differed somewhat in their beliefs about teaching and learning. Both mentors and beginning teachers tended to agree with constructivist beliefs while beginning teachers reported higher agreement on traditional beliefs than did mentors.[4]
- Open communication and the development of a trusting relationship also were identified as keys to the relationship's effectiveness; the importance of these factors was reinforced by interviews and focus groups with mentors and beginning teachers.
- Logistical issues (e.g., lack of time to meet), professional assignment differences (e.g., grade level taught), and differences in classroom activities, beliefs, and personalities were identified as barriers to the development of an effective mentor-beginning teacher relationship.

The results from the mentor and beginning teacher surveys and site visit data suggest that mentors and beginning teachers valued their BTIM mentor relationships and made time for these relationships. Additionally, beginning teachers received help with adjusting to the campus climate, and learning to be a better teacher while receiving emotional support from someone who has more years of experience in teaching.

Campus Support for the BTIM Program

The ICF team examined the administrator survey for insights administrators could provide on the effectiveness of the BTIM program, as well as the level of BTIM implementation received across the campuses.

- The majority of campus administrators reported that BTIM was a helpful program, leading to such positive outcomes as:
  - Retention of beginning teachers,
  - Improving the overall quality of education, and
  - Job satisfaction among beginning teachers and mentor teachers.
- Administrators perceived that the BTIM program helped with indirectly related outcomes, such as student achievement and classroom management.
- Administrators reported that most policies to support the BTIM program were being implemented either fully or partially. Specifically, campuses were reported as having:
  - Clear policies on matching mentors to beginning teachers,
  - Limits on sharing information outside the mentor-beginning teacher relationship, and

[4] Constructivist items beliefs focus on student ability to construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences in the classroom (e.g., "I believe that expanding on students' ideas is an effective way to build my curriculum") and the traditional beliefs focus on the teacher imparting knowledge and assessing students in traditional ways (e.g., "I base student grades primarily on homework, quizzes and tests").

- Mentor and beginning teacher handbooks.

- Administrators perceived the primary focus of a beginning teacher induction program as:
  - Learning classroom management,
  - Improving teaching methods, and
  - Focusing on the curriculum content.
- The BTIM program was seen as a program that campuses needed to facilitate through providing support to mentors and their beginning teachers.
- Site visits showed campus support for the BTIM program varied greatly across districts and was largely dependent on the principal and the presence of a lead mentor or campus facilitator.
- The majority of administrators surveyed perceived the supports provided to the mentors as focusing on:
  - Campuses' provision of release time for observation of teaching, and
  - Meetings scheduled individually between the mentor and beginning teachers.
- The administrators reported that beginning teachers were supported through such methods as:
  - The new teacher orientation,
  - Observations of veteran teachers' classrooms, and
  - Common planning time with colleagues.

The results from the administrator survey and site visits suggest that BTIM was perceived as a program that promoted many positive outcomes for both beginning teachers and the mentor teachers. Administrators also perceived the BTIM program as being mostly implemented and supported through the campuses, primarily through individual meetings between mentors and beginning teachers.

BTIM Program Outcomes

The ICF team investigated the effects of the BTIM program on beginning teacher retention, student achievement, and job satisfaction. In addition, it presented the relationship between certification route (traditional and alternative) for beginning teachers and job satisfaction, views on their mentor relationship as well as their willingness to teach in the upcoming year. Findings were:

Beginning Teacher Retention

The evaluation team examined the effect of the BTIM on beginning teacher retention from several perspectives including (a) their self report of teaching plans in the year following BTIM participation, (b) the influence of the BTIM experience on their decision making, (c) a comparison of BTIM to state and national retention rates, and (d) a comparison of beginning teacher retention rates in participating BTIM districts for the cohort teaching the year before BTIM implementation and the first year of BTIM implementation.

- Analyses using data provided from BTIM grant coordinators indicated that the BTIM retention rate for beginning teachers who remained at the same campus (79.1%) was lower than the state (84.8%) and national level (83%). However, it is important to clarify how the

state and national rates differ from the BTIM rates. The state retention rate is the percent of teachers, not just beginning teachers, who remained in the district. (When the evaluation team includes BTIM teachers who remained at the same campus as well as those that returned to the district, the BTIM retention is 84.1%, virtually the same as the state average retention rate.) The national rate is the percent of the elementary and secondary teachers who remained in the same campus. The BTIM rate examines the retention of teachers who are in their first and second year of teaching. Additionally it is important to note, the BTIM program targeted districts and campuses with historically high beginning teacher turnover.

- For BTIM Cycle 1 participants returning to the same campus or district, the retention rate was 84.1% (2008-09 school year). For comparison, the beginning teacher retention rate across the same campuses in the prior school year (2007-08 school year) was 69.9%. In 42 of the 49 BTIM campuses (86%), the campus beginning teacher rate increased after the first year of BTIM Cycle 1 implementation compared to immediately prior to program implementation with a median increase in the beginning teacher rate of 14.3%.
- Beginning teachers (49%) attribute, in part, their decision to remain in teaching on experiences with their mentor. Summary site visit data support these findings, as the vast majority of the interviewed beginning teachers stated they will return to their campus or stay within the district next year.
- Using BTIM survey data, teacher characteristics that predicted teacher retention are high job satisfaction and high efficacy in classroom management. Additionally, the evaluation detected an unusual relationship: BTIM teachers reporting high efficacy in student engagement appeared to be less likely to remain in the participating BTIM district. It is important to note that the outcome variable was whether the BTIM teacher left the district. This analysis did not examine whether BTIM teachers who reported high efficacy in student engagement left the district, but remained in teaching.
- Beginning teachers were more likely to remain teaching at the same campuses when they worked in campuses with higher percentages of special education students.

Student Achievement

Using propensity score matching techniques to select non-BTIM districts similar in characteristics to BTIM, the evaluation team developed hierarchical linear models to investigate the relationship between BTIM program implementation and student achievement.

Results from comparison of BTIM participating campuses to non-participating campuses were:

- Middle schools that participated in the BTIM program were less likely to have students meeting the standard in TAKS reading.
- Elementary schools receiving a higher proportion of funding from the BTIM grant were less likely to have students meeting the standard in TAKS reading.

These findings do not, however, necessarily suggest that BTIM campuses are less effective than comparison non-BTIM campuses. BTIM campuses may have been selected for BTIM based on such factors as need to improve TAKS scores among the student body. Therefore, the resulting difference in student performance may be due in part to campus differences that could not be addressed in the early stages of program implementation.

In addition to comparison made between participating BTIM and non-BTIM campuses, the evaluation examined differences among participating BTIM campuses. Results from these analyses included:

- Certification route was related to higher student achievement on math TAKS tests for teachers at BTIM campuses.
- BTIM middle schools were more likely to pass the TAKS in math and reading than BTIM elementary and high schools.
- BTIM campuses located in suburban areas were more likely to pass the TAKS in math and reading than BTIM campuses in town/rural areas.
- BTIM campuses with higher percentages of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students were less likely to meet the standard on the reading TAKS.
- BTIM campuses with higher student mobility were less likely to pass the math and reading TAKS tests.
- Summary case study data show that mentors and beginning teachers believed that in many cases, participation in the mentoring program positively influenced student achievement in the beginning teachers' classrooms.

Other Findings: Job Satisfaction and Certification Route

The evaluation also investigated the relationship between participating in the BTIM program and job satisfaction as well as the experiences of beginning teachers who received their teaching certification through traditional and alternative routes.

Job Satisfaction

Site visit findings indicated that as the mentor-beginning teacher relationship developed throughout the year, and the beginning teacher began to feel more comfortable in the classroom, their job satisfaction and level of performance increased as well. Site visit data also indicated BTIM beginning teachers who expressed satisfaction in their jobs expressed a willingness to stay at the BTIM campus. Additionally, beginning teacher job satisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of teacher retention according to analyses. As a follow up to these results, the evaluation team examined the relationship between beginning teacher job satisfaction (and other characteristics) and campus student achievement. Additionally, the evaluation investigated relationship between BTIM participation and mentor job satisfaction and teaching practices. Findings included:

- The relationship between beginning teacher job satisfaction was weak yet significantly positively related to reading achievement, indicating that teachers with higher job satisfaction tended to work in campuses where more students passed the reading TAKS.
- Job satisfaction, efficacy in classroom management, efficacy in student engagement, and constructivist beliefs were weak yet significantly positively related to math achievement. This indicates that teachers with higher job satisfaction, higher levels of self-efficacy, and who hold constructivist beliefs about teaching and learning tended to work in campuses where more students passed the math TAKS.
- Mentors (72%) reported that the BTIM program had a positive impact on their job satisfaction.
- Mentors (70%) reported that the BTIM program had a positive influence on their teaching practices.

Certification Route

BTIM included beginning teachers who obtained certification through both traditional and alternate routes. The evaluation looked at differences in job satisfaction, rating of professional relationship with the mentor, and willingness to return to teaching among the three certification routes. Evaluation findings were:

- Beginning teacher job satisfaction ratings and ratings of their professional relationship with their mentor were similar across all certification routes.
- Certification route was found to be related to beginning teacher willingness to teach next year.

Cost and Sustainability of BTIM Cycle 1 Programs

The ICF team examined the cost of implementing the BTIM program. Findings included:

- The range of per beginning teacher BTIM participant costs is large. Sixty-five percent of BTIM Cycle 1 grantees spent between $1,500 and $3,000 per beginning teacher in the first year of the two-year grant. Three BTIM grantees spent in excess of $5,000 per beginning teacher.
- Most successful[5] BTIM grantees (91%) spent less than $4,000 per beginning teacher, and 18 of these 21 grantees spent less than $3,000 per beginning teacher.

The ICF team also examined program effectiveness in terms of retention rates and expenditure patterns and found that:

- Of the 49 BTIM grantees, 73% have retention rates above 80% at the district level for beginning teachers participating in the BTIM program.
- Approximately one in two (47%) BTIM grantees was successful at retaining beginning teachers at a rate equal to or greater than the Texas state average beginning teacher retention rate (84.8%).
- Approximately one in three BTIM grantees was successful at meeting their retention targets as indicated by their performance measures in their grant applications.
- Greater financial investment in the BTIM by grantees was weakly associated with higher beginning teacher retention rates.

The ICF team also investigated the sustainability of the BTIM program at participating campuses at the conclusion of state funding. The findings suggest that campuses with a history of a beginning teacher retention program were more likely to identify alternate funding sources to continue their mentoring and induction programs. Approximately two-thirds of administrators belonging to campuses that have some BTIM-like program experience believe that their campus should find funds to continue the BTIM program without grant support. Alternate funding sources that were identified included district, campus, local, and Federal Title I and Title II funds. Campus administrators indicated local funds including district and campus operating budgets are the most likely sources for program continuation.

[5] The term “successful” is defined as BTIM grantees who either met or exceeded the Texas state average beginning teacher retention rate or met or exceeded their retention targets/historical retention rates.

Limitations of the BTIM Evaluation

Since the evaluation of the BTIM began in January 2008 (approximately halfway through the first year of Cycle 1 grantee implementation of the BTIM program), data were only collected at one point in time. The BTIM surveys were administered at the end of the school year, providing a snapshot of stakeholder perceptions of the program. Because of this limitation, changes over time (on such variables as beginning teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction) were not examined. Comparing survey results at two points in time would allow a better exploration of cause and effect relationships between beginning teacher, mentor, and administrator perceptions and program outcomes.

Case study findings are often used to confirm findings from other sources of data, such as a survey (Stecher & Borko, 2001). Additionally, a case study allows for an in-depth examination of particular issues and questions generally on a single subject; therefore case study findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. In other words, the findings from one urban school district may not be applicable to other urban school districts. Recognizing the limitations of case study data, the ICF team used the case studies in the BTIM evaluation to complement survey data and identify overall themes across the BTIM program.

The cost and sustainability study was limited because of the lack of real-time expenditure data. Grantees are not required to draw down their funding until the end of the grant period, which does not allow for accurate information on spending until the grant period has concluded. To account for this, an approximation of grantee's first year expenditures, which was the amount equal to 50% of each grantees total grant award, was utilized. TEA and ICF agreed that using this measure to approximate first year expenditure was the most appropriate measure for this analysis at this time. With that said, the findings of the cost and sustainability study should be interpreted with caution. In addition, the findings related to comparing cost to retention success also should be interpreted with extreme caution since the evaluation team did not have multiple data collection points on which to establish a trend.

Implications

Because the evaluation focused on the first year of BTIM program implementation, it was unlikely that program impacts on student achievement would be significant. The evaluation confirmed no significant impacts on student achievement at BTIM campuses compared to campuses not participating in BTIM. The analyses, however, did indicate that the BTIM program at the end of the first year of implementation appears to have positive influence on teacher retention – beginning teacher retention rates (79%) at BTIM campuses, which were selected because of their low retention rates, were comparable to the Texas state average (85%) and the national average (83%).

Our recommended next steps emphasize actions that the ICF evaluation team believes will bring (a) immediate program improvement and (b) potentially positive impacts on student achievement with long term implementation. The recommended next steps for the BTIM program include:

- Implementing and communicating fully BTIM program policies and procedures at the grantee level including the full development of handbooks and other materials,
- Obtaining full participation in training by program administrators,

- Removing constraints related to campus logistical and matching barriers by placing mentor and beginning teacher classrooms near to one another and using grade and department as key matching criteria between mentors and beginning teachers,
- Monitoring the consistency and nature of mentors-beginning teachers interactions including the number and format (e.g. face-to-face, e-mail) of communications and the topics included in those communications (e.g. classroom management, instructional strategies), and

Finally, ICF recommends that the evaluation continues with BTIM program implementation. The current evaluation only measured the influence of the BTIM program in a single year that was the first year of implementation. It is important to understand both the program's evolution of implementation as well as the BTIM program's influence on teacher retention and student achievement over an extended period – approximately three to five years.