Endings and Beginnings:

Experiences in Building a New Teacher Induction and Support Model through a Higher Education Program of Teacher Preparation

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Introduction:
Defining the Role of an Institution of Higher Education
in Providing Induction Support to Graduates

Bank Street College of Education was awarded a Teachers for a New Era grant in the fall of 2002. With funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Annenberg Foundation, and the Ford Foundation, Teachers for a New Era (TNE) is a landmark grant initiative whose goal is to strengthen K-12 teaching by researching and enhancing programs of teacher preparation. Bank Street College is one of eleven institutions in the U.S. selected to receive this five million dollar, five-year grant. This reform initiative has established three guiding principles as critical in the redesign of programs that prepare teachers: First, a teacher education program should be guided by a respect for evidence. Second, disciplinary experts in the arts and sciences should be engaged in the education of prospective teachers. Finally, education should be understood as an academically taught clinical practice profession, requiring strong relationships between colleges of education and practicing schools, and residencies for beginning teachers during a period of induction (CCNY, 2002).

Perhaps the most novel and ambitious of the charges of the TNE grant is the requirement that institutions of higher education undertake the development of programs of induction and support for their graduates in the first several years beyond certification, the typical end point in the relationship between teacher education candidates and their formal programs of teacher preparation. This challenge to re-conceptualize our institution's role in the preparation and support of teachers was significant, yet the obligation also provided a sense of opportunity. Having more structured access to our graduates beyond the initial years of preparation offered the possibility of further developing and encouraging the types of practices we believed would have the most positive effect on the outcomes for the pupils and families in the care of our graduates. As a consequence we enthusiastically embraced this challenge from our grant funders.

Like nearly all other programs of teacher preparation based in institutions of higher education, Bank Street's Graduate School of Education has not historically had a defined role in providing ongoing support and professional development to its graduates. At the
same time, most graduates of our programs have found ways to remain informally connected to Bank Street. For example, a recent survey shows that over 70% of graduates stay in contact with their former Bank Street advisors. Graduates also participate in ongoing and special events at the College, engage with the institution through the College's alumni association, and enroll in the Continuing Education division's New Perspectives courses. Our participation in the Teachers for a New Era initiative spurred Bank Street to undertake an effort to provide a form of induction support that could be made available to all of its graduates in a more systematic and ongoing fashion. From the initial conceptualization of the Induction Model to the particular decisions about each of the offerings to the mundane details of event planning and publicity, we have been charting unfamiliar territory, and we have faced a diverse array of challenges all along the way.

Like other institutions of higher education that have recently created induction programs, we have been grappling with a major shift in our perception of Bank Street’s role in the preparation and support of educators. In this paper, we will offer a description of the design and inception of the Induction Model at Bank Street College; share some of the issues and challenges we have faced in this radical undertaking; and look to our future in the realm of induction, as well as offer some suggestions to the field based on our experiences to date.

Background Information about Bank Street College of Education

Bank Street College of Education is an independent education institution, with three program divisions:

**Children’s Programs** runs the School for Children, an on-site school for children aged three to thirteen, and the Family Center for infants and toddlers;

**Continuing Education** provides professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators, on-site at Bank Street and in schools and districts throughout the Tri-State area (New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut) and the country; and
The Graduate School of Education provides graduate-level preparation programs for approximately one thousand teachers, administrators, and others in professional roles in education such as social workers, museum educators, and Child Life Specialists. Bank Street prepares teachers N-8, with our largest programs at the early childhood and elementary levels. All students have at least an undergraduate degree when they enroll at Bank Street. We typically grant M.S. and M.Ed. degrees to between 300 and 350 educators per year.

Bank Street’s teacher preparation programs are rooted in a clinical model of professional practice. At the core is a year-long, twelve-credit experience of Supervised Field Work, which includes weekly “conference group” sessions in which teacher candidates discuss their clinical work and develop teaching strategies guided by the practice of others, advisor experience, theory, and exemplary practices in the field. The importance of relationships and collaboration is stressed in both Supervised Field Work and coursework. Bank Street proudly ascribes to a theory of progressive education, based on a developmental-interaction approach to student and teacher learning. The conceptual framework for Bank Street’s Induction Model is also based on the developmental-interaction approach.

As the Induction Model has evolved at Bank Street, The Division of Institutional Advancement, a non-program division that focuses on external affairs, has become increasingly important as well. The Bank Street College Alumni Association, which maintains contact with and sponsors events for alumni, is housed in this division, as is the Publications Department, which provides invaluable support in our outreach and marketing of the induction offerings.

**History and Design of the Induction Model at Bank Street**

We set forth to design an experimental model of support and induction for the graduates of our teacher education programs in the spring of 2003. First, a number of guiding principles for induction were developed, based on the Bank Street approach to teacher preparation and the
design principles of the Teachers for a New Era Initiative. Some of these principles include:

- The induction options will be based on the strengths, interests, and needs (SINS) of the graduates;
- The SINS will be determined using multiple lines of evidence;
- The induction options will be based on a notion of a continuum of teacher development (i.e., teacher preparation program moving toward induction).
- Every community has resources and expertise, with which we can partner. This is consistent with the notion that induction is context-specific;
- The induction structure and offerings will be designed so that they can be enacted in other teacher education institutions;
- Induction will reflect and enact the philosophical and empirical base of Bank Street’s mission.

From the onset, induction at Bank Street was viewed as an institution-wide initiative, governed by an Induction Committee with representatives from the Graduate School, Continuing Education, Children’s Programs, the Alumni Association, and the Division for Institutional Advancement. The Induction Committee also includes recent graduates who are practicing educators, and a representative from the American Museum of Natural History, one of our arts and sciences partners.

One of the earliest and most complicated issues with which we grappled has been defining the breadth and scope of the Induction Model. From the start, it was clear that a unified, traditional model of new teacher induction would not be well suited to the varied contexts and circumstances of our diverse graduates. For example, though Bank Street graduates primarily work in the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut tri-state area, they are employed by dozens of different schools and districts, both public and independent, as well as other educational settings such as museums and hospitals. A
substantial number of graduates also live in other areas of the country and the world. The amount of professional support in their work settings ranges from virtually no support to arrays of mentors and professional development sessions. For example, many of our graduates, including those who work in New York City public schools, already have at their disposal a formal mentor and/or a formal, typically required induction program. In addition, our graduate students enter our preparation programs with a very wide range of teaching experiences. For our efforts to be useful, we had to take into account the wide range of circumstances in which our graduates find themselves. The geographic spread of our graduates, the multiple contexts in which they work, their broad range of experience levels, and the different local demands and opportunities for professional development have all contributed to the formulation of the model.

With these considerations in mind, the Induction Committee determined to design and provide a "menu" of induction offerings: an extensive array of opportunities that could meet some of the varying needs and interests of our broad audience of graduates. Our hope and expectation is that such a menu-driven design will best meet the individual priorities and needs of our graduates, while enhancing and complementing, rather than competing with, district and school induction programs.

The ongoing role of the Induction Committee is to recommend and advocate for offerings that support the continuing professional development of teachers and school leaders following their graduation from Bank Street College. The committee is charged with ensuring that induction offerings are consistent with TNE design principles and the principles we set out for our Induction Model, with the ultimate aim of supporting enhanced consequences for children.

Toward this end, the Induction Committee began its work by reviewing relevant research; determining strengths, interests, and needs of graduates; and examining existing and potential induction resources both inside and outside the College. These tools were utilized to design our initial offerings for our induction menu. The Induction Committee recommended that we provide induction options in three venues: electronic, on-site at or near Bank Street College, and on-site in other communities and locales where graduates
work and live. In the spirit of experimentation, learning, and growth, we have approached all of the induction offerings through a cycle of planning, implementing, evaluating, and revising.

**Induction Offerings at Bank Street**

The Induction Model formally began with two offerings in fall 2004. Since then, we have developed several additional offerings, and we have given the name “Professional Growth Opportunities (PGO’s) for Graduates Program” to the full menu of offerings. Below we present a general description of each of our induction offerings, followed by a review of some of the issues and challenges posed by our induction efforts.

*A Day at Lincoln Center Institute*

The first offering of our Induction Model was a large-scale launching event held at Lincoln Center Institute, one of our arts and sciences partners. This event provided a professional development opportunity in aesthetic education, as well as a way for recent graduates to reconnect with one another, with more experienced graduates, and with Graduate School faculty. Approximately 50 recent and experienced grads attended this event, but publicity enabled us to inform hundreds of alumni about the new Induction Model.

*Transitions for New Educators Website*

Since large numbers of Bank Street graduates leave the New York City metropolitan area after graduation, the Induction Committee realized the importance of focusing early attention on the design of an induction offering that would be easily accessible “offsite.” The "Transitions for New Educators" induction website was initially regarded as a way to connect recent graduates to the vast array of resources available on the internet, as well as those within Bank Street that could be accessed electronically. Originally conceived as a type of “Yellow Pages,” the website has gradually evolved to include more elements. These elements now include all of the following:
Yellow Pages: This section offers links to other online resources in the categories initially identified by graduating students and faculty members as the greatest needs of new educators: classroom management, curriculum, parents/families, range of learners, authentic assessment, instruction for equity, and new teacher strategies. There are also links to a number of Bank Street programs that offer professional development opportunities.

Helpful Tips for Educators: This section was conceived as a way for new and experienced educators to exchange resources and ideas related to seasonal themes, including beginning the school year, communicating and working with parents, and authentic assessment. Contributions have been solicited through targeted emails to graduates, and a number of new and experienced teachers have contributed downloadable forms, digital photographs of classroom settings and student work, and suggestions related to the seasonal themes. Recently, we added references to graduate students’ masters’ theses, and we are exploring the possibility of featuring other significant work, such as curriculum projects, completed during the Graduate School experience.

Other Professional Development Opportunities: This section includes information about other post-graduate opportunities offered through the Bank Street community (e.g., courses sponsored by the Continuing Education Division’s New Perspectives program and events sponsored by the Alumni Association) and links to resources and opportunities provided by external organizations.

Other Induction Program Offerings: In this section, visitors to the website can access information about all other induction offerings.

We are also experimenting with other types of online offerings, with the goals of making the website both more visually engaging and more interactive. Recently, we have explored the potential of two additional online offerings, discussion groups and video clips.

Discussion Groups: Many graduates have eagerly requested a forum in which they can exchange ideas, pose immediate questions to one another, and stay in touch with other
Bank Street graduates. In response to the enthusiasm of our graduates, an online discussion board called the "New Teachers’ Virtual Lounge" was added to the website in the summer of 2005. Run as a short-term pilot, the New Teachers’ Virtual Lounge was conceptualized, implemented, and moderated by a recent graduate. We are exploring the possibility of running other short-term discussion boards in the future, with the hope of building a more robust, ongoing online community.

**Video Clips:** Videotapes are used extensively in Bank Street graduate school courses. Recent graduates have requested access to videos that demonstrate effective teaching practices or highlight particular instructional strategies, as they are typically unable to visit other classrooms to do direct observations. Several internal programs and projects at Bank Street College have produced videos that would be suitable for this purpose. We are currently working through constraints of our technological infrastructure at the College to determine the feasibility of adding these resources to our Transitions for New Educators website. In the interim we are adding links to classroom based video clips from other websites.

**Alumni Partner Program**

In the early stages of the development of the Induction Model offerings, the Induction Coordinator worked closely with the college’s Director of Alumni Relations, who has frequent contact with experienced alumni. She noted that alumni who had been working as educators for several years often expressed a desire to support newer educators. Although Bank Street never intended to offer a formally structured mentoring program because of the varied needs and circumstances of our graduates as well as the costs associated with building and sustaining such a program, we decided to experiment with an informal matching program that would connect recent graduates with Bank Street alumni who are practicing or retired educators.

The concept of the Alumni Partner Program is that by working in “buddy pairs,” new educators would benefit from the expertise and support of experienced educators. Additionally, experienced educators would benefit from the skills and interests of new
educators, and both partners would expand their circle of colleagues and grow professionally. The Alumni Partner Program was also designed to help graduates expand their "Bank Street web" of professional colleagues who share a sense of mission and vision. Alumni partners determine together the type and frequency of interactions as well as the topics and issues for consideration, based on their own interests and needs.

The initial response to the Alumni Partner Program’s appeal for experienced educator volunteers was significant, attracting over 75 volunteers from all over the United States. The response from recent graduates was much more muted, however, and so the program was initiated with just over a dozen buddy pairs in the first year. Interactions between the partners have ranged from one-time friendly contacts to ongoing support with issues like finding a job or making the transition from classroom teacher to director.

This fall, we revised the program’s structure in an attempt to garner more widespread participation. Interested experienced alumni were asked to contact one or more of our recent graduates (May 2006). These volunteers were provided with sample letters offering congratulations to the graduates, welcoming them to the professional world of education, and offering collegial support. In this way, we were able to connect 27 of our experienced alums with 43 of our recent graduates. This winter we will follow up with our Alumni Partner pairs to determine the content, strength, and utility of these connections.

Post-Graduate Online Science Courses

Bank Street is committed to joining with other institutions to offer professional development opportunities for our graduates. These offerings are focused on meeting identified needs of our graduates (as indicated in several of our TNE-related inquiry efforts) and on providing opportunities for new teachers to acquire continuing education credits in order to meet ongoing certification requirements and to advance on the traditional salary scale in many schools and districts. Our first such offering is a series of on-line science courses, designed and orchestrated by the American Museum of Natural History, one of our arts and science partners. Bank Street College now offers post-
graduate credits for these sophisticated and highly regarded courses, at a significantly reduced rate (the lowest offered in the city). Participation in these courses started slowly, and is gradually increasing.

Peer Discussion Groups

The newest of our induction offerings is a set of Peer Discussion Groups: small, interest-based study groups, facilitated by Graduate School faculty or other experienced educators. These offerings are designed to provide opportunities for graduates to expand resources for teaching, explore particular areas of interest, and reconnect and expand their networks with colleagues from Bank Street. Each Peer Discussion Group has a different focus and format, determined by the participants in coordination with the faculty facilitator. Discussion topics are also developed jointly by participating graduates and the faculty facilitator.

The initial idea for the Peer Discussion Groups arose out of a request from some of the participants at the Lincoln Center Institute inaugural induction event to form a study group, in order to continue the exploration of aesthetic education that began at this event. The Induction Committee and TNE Leadership Team seized upon this suggestion and eventually organized five initial Peer Discussion Groups with a focus on topics of interest and expressed need by graduates, facilitated by faculty members who were known for expertise in those particular areas. The topics for the 2005-6 Peer Discussion Groups were: Art Matters (an exploration of Aesthetic Education); Social Action Research; Folklore and Storytelling; Online Book Talk (centered around Amanda Lewis' Race in the Schoolyard); and Teacher Talk: Challenges and Opportunities in Under-resourced Schools.

Participation in the initial Peer Discussion Groups was mixed, ranging from 2 to 12 steady participants. In each of the active groups, there was a mix of very recent graduates, more experienced graduates, and soon-to-be graduates.

This summer, faculty facilitators were recruited for a new set of Peer Discussion Groups. A proposal process was created, with the aim of focusing more faculty attention on the
needs and interests of graduates, as well as the hope of developing a wide range of interesting and exciting offerings for our Induction Model. Seventeen faculty members submitted proposals, and 6 were selected as peer discussion groups for 2006-7: So Why isn't S/he Reading Yet?; Hot Topics in a Cold Climate; Teacher as Supervisor; Weaving Bank Street Principles into your Daily Math Practice; Teacher Leadership; and Issues for Child Life Professionals.

Issues and Challenges

As the Induction Model has evolved, several broad issues and challenges have remained at the forefront of our efforts:

Building an Audience

Understanding the Strengths, Interests, Needs, Contexts, and Constraints of Graduates

While extensive research exists about the needs of new teachers (Johnson, 2004; Rust, 1994), determining how to best tap the range of interests and needs of our graduates in order to get them involved in our induction efforts has proven to be quite difficult.

To begin with, when Bank Street embarked on creating an induction model, “recent graduate” was used synonymously with “new teacher,” and the focus of our efforts was on meeting the needs of recent graduates in their first two years of teaching. However, it became increasingly obvious that the definition of “new teacher” from a Bank Street perspective was more complex than we first anticipated. Recent graduates possess a range of experience because they enter the program at Bank Street with varying levels of experience in teaching. Some enter with virtually no teaching experience, undergo a year of student teaching experience (“supervised fieldwork”), and upon graduation enter the field as “new teachers.” Many of these graduates work as assistant teachers for a year or two before becoming head teachers. On the other hand, incoming graduate students in the Working Teachers Pathway are currently employed as head teachers with varying degrees of experience ranging from first year teachers in the Teach for America
alternative certification program to classroom teachers with some years of teaching under their belts. Additionally, graduate students who have completed half of their required number of credits can teach in the New York City public schools under an internship credential program. Some of our students take several years to complete a graduate program and may be working as a teacher during that time period. Moreover, Bank Street attracts a large number of independent school teachers with years of experience who wish to return to graduate school to enhance their knowledge base and/or receive one of our various credentials. In short, there is little correlation between graduation status and new teacher status.

It has also become apparent through our work in the Induction Model as well as our TNE studies of recent graduates that there is no universal developmental trajectory for new teachers. While we have attempted to define “typical” strengths, interests, and needs of our recent graduates, the individual strengths, interests, and needs of each of our graduates are clearly quite unique. We have learned to pay close attention to self-definitions of need for professional support and development, and we recognize that this need for professional support clearly extends beyond two years after graduation. With that understanding, early on we began to extend the Induction Model offerings to all of our graduates, while still retaining a focus on "recent graduates."

Extending our audience in this way has proved to be of benefit to our Induction Model. Both new and experienced educators have areas of strength and need, and allowing each to learn from the other has been an enhancement to our efforts. For instance, when soliciting contributions for the website, it was apparent that many new teachers had significant expertise to share, as a first-year Working Teacher Pathway graduate student demonstrated with her math student tracking system. The whole premise of the Alumni Partner Program is that both new and experienced teachers benefit from working together, and many experienced educator volunteers explicitly stated that they wanted to participate so that they could learn from recent graduates. The mix of new and experienced educators in the Peer Discussion Groups has created a vitality of learning experiences, and is also aligned with the model of staff development that is typically used in schools and other settings. In this way, both new and experienced educators expand
their professional knowledge base and extend their web of professional contacts and resources.

We have also learned that dependency issues can be quite complex for new teachers. It is not always easy to admit that one feels insecure, overwhelmed, and/or less than fully competent. Some new teachers feel that asking for help is tantamount to admitting that they are not good teachers. Others, who view themselves as self-sufficient, are reluctant to admit that they need suggestions or encouragement from more experienced others. For these reasons, we have endeavored to design our induction offers around strengths and interests of our graduates as well as needs. Our sense is that many of our graduates may be more responsive when we reach out to them in a way that emphasizes building upon their strengths rather than addressing their deficits.

Additionally, our Induction Model is in competition for the time and attention of our graduates. New teachers are often inundated if not overwhelmed with “support opportunities.” For instance, most first-year New York City public school teachers currently have mentors as well as literacy and math coaches who define their needs and provide mandated professional support. New teachers are sometimes confused and overwhelmed by excessive or conflicting support opportunities, and they may feel reluctant to seek our additional opportunities. Finally, many new teachers may simply lack the energy to seek or partake of professional development opportunities given the rigorous demands of the profession. With many schools’ mandated “extended-day programs” and increased professional development requirements, teachers have even less time for outside professional support.

Discovering Incentives for Participation

For all educators, there is always more that one would like to do than one has the time to do. To date, participation in many of the induction offerings has been fairly modest, and this remains a clear and present challenge that we must continually face as we enact and revise our Induction Model. Thus, a significant challenge for Bank Street’s non-compulsory Induction Model is to discover incentives for participation that are sufficient
to attract participants. Clearly, the caliber and the relevance of the offerings are critical factors, and we have devoted much time and attention to these issues. We have also carefully considered scheduling and costs in designing our offerings. While TNE funding is available to subsidize our efforts, we can provide most induction offerings at little or no cost to participants. We have wrestled with the question of whether people are more likely to show up for activities for which they have paid a small fee in advance, and we have wondered whether charging such a fee might result in more consistent participation.

We have learned that it is important to clearly identify the benefits of participation in the induction offerings, and to frame them as something beyond "help to the needy." For instance, the induction offerings can be promoted as an opportunity to become part of a larger professional world beyond one’s school environment or a chance to strengthen and extend connections to the Bank Street community. Members of one of the Peer Discussion Groups requested a letter from the Dean of the Graduate School, which they felt would give them professional prestige in future job searches. The tangible benefits of participation, such as post-graduate credits or certificates of attendance that can count toward a salary increase, can also be emphasized.

Outreach and Marketing

Developing effective outreach and marketing strategies to inform graduates about the existence of the induction offerings has been a significant challenge. Traditionally, Graduate School marketing has been targeted to prospective students, and Bank Street draws upon its rich and extensive history in the realm of teacher preparation to build a solid student base. The educators involved in the Induction Committee, as well as the College more broadly, have much less experience and expertise in developing a new market aimed at bringing graduates back to the College for rich and sustained professional development opportunities. In turn, graduates are not likely to look to us for these kinds of resources, since it has not traditionally been a part of the mission of the College. Developing strategies, skills, and resources to make these publicity efforts
successful has proven very difficult to date, and the response to our initial outreach efforts has been limited.

Perhaps our outreach materials and campaigns have been ineffective in and of themselves. Are our publications and announcements attractive enough to garner the attention of our busy graduates? Are we timing our outreach campaigns appropriately? Do we have the right balance of electronic and print materials? These mundane features of our efforts provide significant challenges to our knowledge base and skill sets, though we have worked with our institutional resources to strengthen and improve our efforts over time.

Involving faculty members more deeply in reaching out to both current and former students is another of our strategies for increasing participation. For instance, after a faculty seminar on induction, several faculty members took the initiative in introducing their students to induction offerings. This year, we plan to engage faculty in a more systematic outreach effort.

Whereas at the beginning of the Induction Model we targeted outreach only to recent graduates, we now extend our outreach efforts to current as well as former students. Unless directly informed, students in the graduate school program generally do not know about the existence of an Induction Model, and so we have begun outreach efforts as early as the beginning-of-the-year New Students Fair in order to encourage students to partake of induction offerings such as the website that could be beneficial during any stage of their teacher preparation process. We hope that discussion of the induction offerings will become part of student dialog about professional growth throughout their graduate school experience, and that our candidates will graduate with a more deeply internalized sense that ongoing professional development is a natural part of the continuum of a professional teacher’s development and professional responsibility. Ideally, our graduates will proactively seek professional learning opportunities, and will include Bank Street’s induction offerings among their professional development activities.
Clarifying the Nature of Faculty Relationships with Graduates and the Role of Faculty in the Induction Model

Graduate School faculty members also hold complex mindsets and perspectives about the needs of new teachers. When faculty participated in discussions during the design phase of the Induction Model, there was not uniform agreement about the needs of their former students. It is not surprising that faculty would have a range of perspectives in a graduate school with dozens of different programs and students who are at varying levels of teaching experience and who work in varied educational settings.

Faculty members have also grappled with defining their own role in the professional lives of their former students. Because personal conversations and relationships are essential elements of the Bank Street approach to teacher education, the connection between graduate students and faculty members (particularly advisors) is usually quite strong. How can faculty members continue to play a part in supporting new teachers’ growth without jeopardizing the development of professional autonomy?

Our Induction Model is based on the premise that the first years of teaching are part of an ongoing growth process in which our graduates move away from dependence on teacher preparation program faculty and towards support from and collaboration with professional colleagues (including Graduate School faculty). Recognizing that learning to find professional resources and establish professional relationships are key tasks of new educators, and that building and growing a professional community of colleagues outside of the graduate school setting is an essential facet of success for our graduates, faculty are grappling with the associated shifts in relationships with their former students. Some faculty members have likened this process to the stage in parenting when the child leaves home. Like the parallel shift that occurs between parent and young adult child, the changing relationship between faculty members and students involves a transformation on both sides. Without the power differential that typically exists between teacher and student, the relationship has the potential to become more equal and collaborative. In fact, faculty members and former students can and do form
professional, collegial relationships. It is not always easy, however, to make this change.

With each induction offering, we have struggled to balance the roles and involvement of Graduate School faculty. For instance, when we considered ways to make the website more interactive, we recognized that a discussion board would be more effective with a facilitator, and we weighed the merits of faculty versus peer facilitation. On the one hand, faculty are known by recent graduates and might attract additional participants. On the other hand, a peer-supported network could help develop leadership skills and professional community amongst graduates in a more powerful way. In addition, Bank Street graduates have expertise in a wide range of areas that could be beneficial to new educators and could enrich the professional networks available to recent graduates. In this case, we opted for facilitation by a recent graduate, who would be in a similar stage as the new teachers most likely to participate in the discussion group. For future discussion groups with other foci, we may opt to use a faculty member, or a more experienced graduate, or some combination of the above as facilitators.

The Alumni Partner Program was conceived as an alternative to a faculty mentoring program, a way in which Bank Street could encourage supportive, professional relationships without setting up the personnel, support, and logistical infrastructures required for an intensive mentoring program. The “buddy” relationship between recent grad and experienced educator serves as a powerful model of the shift from dependency on faculty members to a more collegial relationship with a professional peer. It also represents the type of peer support and mutual learning that can be found within schools, other educational settings, and the wider community.

The Peer Discussion Groups are the induction offerings in which Bank Street faculty play the most central role. Recognizing that some graduates wish to continue studying with faculty members, albeit in ways that may differ from those pursued in graduate school, we set up opportunities for short-term collaborative study in groups facilitated by faculty members. We felt that the faculty members themselves might be as great a draw as the topics of the Peer Discussion Groups. Though not all of the initial Peer Discussion
Groups attracted large numbers of participants, we continue to feel that opportunities to interact in this way with faculty members are important, and this year six different faculty members will be facilitating our Peer Discussion Groups.

Perhaps the most critical role that faculty play in graduates’ transition from being graduate students to being professional educators is in making the continuous growth of teachers transparent. If, during the time they teach and advise graduate students, faculty members explicitly state that professional growth continues long beyond graduation and emphasize the value of participating in professional development activities including Bank Street’s induction offerings, they can help launch their students as new members of the educational community. They can direct upcoming graduates to other sources of support and resources, including Bank Street’s induction offerings, rather than feeling an obligation to meet all of the needs of their former students.

With the introduction of the Induction Model, Graduate School faculty members are becoming more consciously aware of the changing nature of their relationships with graduates. It remains to be seen how this new kind of relationship will impact the work that Graduate School faculty and students do together during the teacher preparation period, and beyond.

Initially, we may have underestimated the magnitude of the change in thinking about institutional and personal roles sparked by the introduction of the Induction Model. We realized the necessity of clarifying the framework of the Induction Model, emphasizing that the primary role of faculty is to help graduating students make the transition to professional independence. In order for faculty to fully engage in the Induction Model, they need to have a clear vision of induction as a part of the continuum of our work in preparing teachers, and as a critical part of our commitment to preparing and supporting high quality teachers for our schools and the students and families they serve.

Towards this end, this past spring we conducted a faculty seminar focused on the mission, development and design of our Induction Model. The highlight of the seminar was a panel of recent graduates who had participated in one of the Peer Discussion
Groups and the Alumni Partner Program. Faculty members were intrigued by their firsthand accounts of the challenges and successes in their lives as new teachers and their descriptions of how the induction offerings helped them cope and grow professionally. Faculty also participated in a lively discussion about philosophical and pragmatic issues involved in meeting the needs of new educators. This seminar provided a significant learning opportunity for the faculty, as well as an opportunity to interact with former students. Faculty feedback indicated that they gained a better understanding of both the needs of our graduates as well as their own roles in supporting new teachers after graduation.

We continue to seek other venues in which faculty can engage in dialog about meeting the needs of new educators. Other components of the Teachers for a New Era initiative have provided opportunities for inquiry and discussions about the professional growth and development of teachers beyond their stay in our graduate programs. We need to be sure to include information about the philosophy as well as specific offerings of the Induction Model in these types of conversations, as well as conduct induction-specific conversations.

The development of our Induction Model has also offered opportunities for faculty professional development. For example, with their direct experience of interacting with recent and experienced graduates in a new way, faculty facilitators of Peer Discussion Groups have noted particular shifts in their relationships and roles with former students. In verbal communication, one faculty member struggled to describe it. “I can’t describe it yet, but it’s not parental like advisement . . . They [the participants] see themselves as professionals. I want to be sure I’m not directing or setting goals, but rather setting a structure. The dynamic of recent graduates taking responsibility [for the direction of the group] is as important as anything I have to say.” All faculty facilitators have agreed that this new type of work with graduates has given them an opportunity to reflect upon themselves as teacher educators.

*Collaborating with Other Programs Internal and External to the Institution*
Like other institutions of higher education, Bank Street has traditionally had rather clear distinctions across institutional divisions. The introduction of an Induction Model provided exciting opportunities and challenges for cross-divisional collaboration. Historically, there have been few forums in which staff from various divisions in the College could cross-fertilize ideas and develop joint programs, as noted in a recent strategic planning process for the institution. The development of the Induction Committee with membership from across divisions of the College as well as from outside the institution has become a model for how this can be successfully achieved.

As Induction Committee members looked together at the identified needs of recent graduates and the existing resources within the college, natural partnerships across divisions began to emerge. For example, early partnerships were developed between the Professional Growth Opportunities Program and Bank Street’s Alumni Association, and there are now numerous ways in which the Alumni Association and Professional Growth Opportunities for Graduates Program collaborate. For instance, the Alumni Association played a crucial role in the conceptualization of the Alumni Partner Program, and continues to recruit experienced educator “buddies.” In addition, the two groups now co-sponsor an annual event at the College each spring that serves as both an alumni reunion and a graduation event for exiting candidates. This event serves as an opportunity for new and experienced alumni to meet one another, and for the Professional Growth Opportunities for Graduates Program to market the induction offerings to both recent and experienced graduates. Importantly, Graduate School faculty members are also invited to attend, helping to usher their new graduates into the induction phase of their professional lives, as well as reconnecting with former students.

The Alumni Association and Professional Growth Opportunities for Graduates Program also joined forces to create a new monthly alumni e-newsletter, which provides information about the full range of professional development events offered by all Bank Street divisions. The groundwork is now firmly in place for the Alumni Association and the Professional Growth Opportunities for Graduates Program to collaborate and support one another’s programs and events.
A similar process has unfolded with the Division of Continuing Education, which is also represented on the Induction Committee. For example, we recently began exploring the possibility of posting videos created for New Beginnings, a project of the Continuing Education division, on the Transitions for New Educators website. We have also shared marketing and outreach strategies and are considering potential joint course offerings in the future.

This type of collaboration across divisions is certainly beneficial to graduates, who often want to remain connected to Bank Street as an institution but don’t particularly care which department or division offers the programs. It is also a model of ways in which Bank Street can engage in increased cross-division planning and implementation of programs.

The induction work has also provided opportunities for increased collaboration with programs outside of Bank Street. The partnership with the American Museum of Natural History, a cornerstone of the TNE initiative, has been strengthened through our joint sponsorship of online science courses. We have explored other cross-institution induction course offerings. We are also exploring collaboration with other TNE sites to offer technologically supported induction options to graduates across institutions.

The Future of the Induction Model at Bank Street: Issues and Challenges for the Field

As we look for ways to engage our graduates in our various induction offerings, it is obvious that the equation between need and participation is not clear cut. In Bank Street’s alumni surveys, a large majority of recent graduates indicate that there are areas in which they do not feel fully prepared to teach, and most respondents pinpoint specific areas in which they need support. We have created induction offerings based on our evolving understanding of the strengths, needs, interests, and contexts of our graduates. Yet initial participation in our induction offerings has been meager, though increasing.
We know that new teachers may often feel too busy, too overwhelmed, and too stressed to take advantage of even the most appealing of professional development opportunities. We must consider the possibility that by conveying the message that we expect new teachers to participate in induction offerings while they feel unable to do so, we are actually increasing their sense of frustration and failure. Perhaps it is most realistic to acknowledge that at least some of the professional growth opportunities offered through our Induction Model are best-suited for teachers in their second, third, or fourth years of teaching. If teachers knew that this kind of professional development and support was available during the years when they often consider leaving teaching, perhaps they would be encouraged to stay.

We must also consider the possibility that an institution of higher education that offers a teacher preparation program is not the best-suited locus for an induction model. Because of scheduling constraints as well as the advantages of building professional relationships with one’s colleagues, perhaps induction support is best located within schools and other educational settings in which our graduates work. If this is the case, then Bank Street’s role could be one of supporting local efforts to create professional growth opportunities, rather than directly providing induction offerings.

Conceived as an experimental effort, Bank Street’s Induction Model is still very much a work in progress. The induction offerings that are currently offered look substantially different from the original conceptions, and they will continue to evolve as we discover more about the needs of new teachers and ways to support those needs. Additionally, we will continue to explore the most effective ways of connecting graduates to the broad spectrum of programs that are offered both internally by the Alumni Association, Division of Continuing Education, and the Graduate School itself, and externally by a host of different organizations. For example, the design of the Transitions for New Educators website can be enhanced to better publicize and link to these programs. We can also explore whether active partnerships with external programs lead to greater participation by our graduates, and whether Bank Street-supported, school-based initiatives are feasible.
As we approach the end of our Teachers for a New Era funding period, we must also honestly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our Induction Model, identify what is worth pursuing into the future, and determine ways and means of supporting these efforts. Finally, we must bear in mind that the success of the Induction Model, like the success of all human endeavors, is more complex than quantifiable outcomes, and that the true success of our Induction Model may be immeasurable.

References

