

Early Career Teachers

Project Title	Early Career Science, Mathematics and ICT Teachers in South Australia
Project Team	Dr Bruce White, Dr Alan Barnes (SiMERR SA)
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Funding Agency	SiMERR
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Description

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Early career teachers are located in significant numbers in country schools. Their special needs as entrants to the profession may be at risk of not being met due to geographic isolation; on the other hand the sense of 'community' may result in better induction for these new teachers.

Information about what actually happens for early career teachers in the country, compared with what happens for their peers in metropolitan schools, will be valuable and has the potential to inform programs at a range of levels including:

- Pre-service courses;
- Systemic mentoring programs;
- Induction programs in schools; and
- Programs of teacher professional associations.

Data will be gathered from early career teachers through an online survey(s), follow-up telephone interviews of small number of the respondents, and a Focus Group(s) session in Adelaide, with a professional development workshop offered as an incentive for attendance.

Findings will be disseminated at a seminar to systems, principals, academics and professional associations. This will be followed by a discussion to determine possible responses to the issues identified. The outcomes will be a series of recommendations from the report that inform the programs and actions to support graduate teachers in country South Australia that are undertaken by employers, schools, universities (in their pre-service programs) and teacher professional associations.

Participants

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16 teachers completed the survey, nine from rural/remote schools and seven from metropolitan schools. 40 beginning teachers will be invited to the focus group interviews.

Findings

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The size of the sample is very small and there is an ongoing effort to increase the number of participants. The focus groups will take place in October as part of a beginning teacher's conference. The survey data does however provide the following insights:

- There was no typical pathway into employment for the participants;
- The support for the beginning teachers was inconsistent and varies dramatically from school to school. Approximately one third felt that they were well supported within the school and two felt that they had little support, most had some support from a variety of sources;
- The "Desire to help children learn" and "Job satisfaction" were consistently the main reasons that the participants gave for entering teaching, "Holidays" was also mentioned by most respondents; and
- Over half of the participants were concerned that they did not have enough time for planning.

Outcomes

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SASTA is now running a beginning teachers conference and intends to make this an annual event. Data from the surveys has fed into the development of the program.

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