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RESEARCH & EVALUATION

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Beginning Teachers' Learning Journeys Longitudinal Study Year 5 Report

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When you're a new teacher

Yes! I've been hired!
I have recently luckily been hired.
I'm a very invested teacher, I like to learn, I reflect a lot.

It can feel very isolating
when you're inside a classroom by yourself.
If you don't know how to get to a bathroom,
or your office,
or your classroom,
it can be very stressful.

When you're a new teacher,
you have no idea what you should be teaching,
when you should be teaching,
how fast you should be going,
it's just a very overwhelming feeling.

I've been lucky.
Principals that were really welcoming and available.
Principals and VPs that open their door.
I was having a very rough time my first week of teaching,
almost in tears, I will admit it.
They say, "let's talk through this...I fully understand."
I hope I work with more principals like that.

I found my mentor was the biggest guide.
She was always checking in on me as a new teacher.
It was reassuring to have someone to talk things through with,
to get their perspective.
And if I had a bad day, they shared their experience with me in a non-judgmental way.

I feel that some teachers, especially older teachers or more experienced teachers,
they forget how hard it is to be a new teacher.
It's not an easy transition.
I'd say there's a learning curve,
it might look like other teachers have it easy,
now I see it's not true, all teachers struggle with some things.
I think the whole NTIP program that the board has really helps.
It has been a trying time, but I have adjusted.

This poem voices how deeply learning journeys can affect beginning teachers. The poem expresses teachers' energy and enthusiasm as they begin their journeys, the challenges they face, and the supports that help them along the way. It consists entirely of verbatim quotations from teachers in the BTLJ study, with each period indicating a different speaker.

Executive Summary

Beginning Teachers' Learning Journeys

Background and Purpose

This study, Beginning Teachers' Learning Journeys (BTLJ), explores beginning teachers' journeys along the continuum to permanent employment in Ontario. This longitudinal study was conducted over five years (2016-2021) and involved three cohorts of beginning teachers and four case studies. Learning from this study will continue to inform Ontario's teacher development initiatives.



BTLJ Earlier Findings

Findings from the first four years of the study showed that **mentorship support, administrator support, and professional development opportunities** are important for all beginning teachers. However, Daily occasional teachers and LTO teacher who were not enrolled in the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) had limited access to these opportunities.

BTLJ Year 5 Participants

In Year 5 of this study, all data collection occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers were working under very challenging conditions. Some teachers were providing online instruction, and many schools had recently returned to in-person learning when the survey was conducted. In addition, due to shortages of occasional teachers many boards suspended or cut back NTIP release time.

- ✓ **592 survey respondents** filled out the survey in February and March of 2021.
- ✓ One-sixth of survey respondents (16%) had never received NTIP supports.

In addition to the surveys, we also completed **four case studies** in four boards across Ontario in year five of the study. We gathered data for the case studies through interviews that took place in January to May of 2021. Taken together the case study boards represent a range of:



- Geography – Eastern, Northern, Greater Toronto and Southwestern Ontario
- Communities Served – Rural, suburban and urban
- Board Size – Scope of NTIP (including mentors) ranges from under 40 to over 2000 participants
- Language – English and French

Through the case studies we found that support from mentors and administrators continued to be important under COVID-19 conditions, and we gathered details on how that happened.



BTLJ Year 5 Key Findings & Promising Practices

Year 5 of this study spanned the 2020-2021 school year, a time when all schools across Ontario were affected by the Covid-19 crisis. The pandemic may have changed teachers' specific learning needs, but **mentorship and support from others** remained most helpful to beginning teachers who have permanent assignments and LTO assignments.

For the small sample of Daily occasional teachers, the most helpful supports included:

- (1) someone explaining school-specific or classroom-specific procedures and ground rules,
- (2) other teachers making a point of talking with or helping them in small ways, and
- (3) their Principal or VP backing them up if an issue arises with a student or parent.

Most Helpful Supports Accessed in the Past Year

- Survey respondents identified **mentorship and/or support from colleagues** or other educators as the most helpful support they accessed in the past year. Among respondents who had accessed informal mentorship, 83% identified it as particularly helpful.
- Having a mentor or colleague **share helpful information, advice, or resources** was identified as a factor that contributes to a powerful mentoring experience (identified by 71% of teachers who had accessed mentorship).
- Support from colleagues was considered particularly important during the COVID-19 crisis. *“My peers have helped me to adapt during COVID-19 by sharing their resources and best practices as well as being supportive and optimistic.”*
- **Relevant learning opportunities** were also helpful (identified by 51% of teachers who had accessed them).

Wished for Professional Learning

- The most desired types of learning opportunities were **half-day or full-day in-person workshops and seminars** (75%) and **school-based learning opportunities** such as guest speakers, group orientation, department-specific workshops, or seminars (75%).
- Most survey respondents were interested in learning about **specific teaching strategies or tools** (78%) and **teaching students with special needs** (60%).

Growth in Confidence & Accessing Supports

- Across all cohorts, teachers demonstrated **growth in confidence** over their first three years in the study. This growth was strongest in teachers who **had accessed a higher number of supports**, such as having a choice of learning opportunities, and opportunities to connect with other new teachers, to take part in an in-person Community of Practice, to observe a colleague teach, or have a colleague observe them teach.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This longitudinal study, *Beginning Teachers' Learning Journeys* (BTLJ), was designed to deepen the understanding of beginning teachers' learning in their first five years along the continuum to permanent employment in Ontario. This study aims to **evaluate the impact of mentorship** supports, both formal and informal, and **identify support gaps** that may exist for all beginning teachers. The study includes the following two groups:

1. Beginning teachers currently participating in the New Teacher Induction Program, aka NTIP, (newly hired Long Term Occasional with assignments of 97 days or longer and permanent contract teachers)
2. Beginning teachers NOT currently receiving NTIP supports. This group includes:
 - Beginning Daily occasional teachers
 - Beginning Short and Long Term Occasional teachers (any duration of assignment)

The length of this study is five years (2016 - 2021). Learning from it will inform the evolution of teacher development initiatives (e.g., Initial Teacher Education, New Teacher Induction Program, Annual Learning Plan, and Teacher Performance Appraisal).

1.2 BTLJ Findings over Five Years



In Year 1 of the BTLJ study, the study team examined the impact of mentorship supports and identified support gaps that exist for beginning teachers across Ontario. Our findings extended those of an earlier study, *Reflections* (2012-2015), about the journeys of beginning teachers who were supported by NTIP. The BTLJ Year 1 findings underlined the importance of support from formal or informal mentors for all beginning teachers. Professional development opportunities were also found to be important; however, access to such opportunities was especially limited for beginning teachers who were not receiving NTIP supports.



In Year 2, we found that BTLJ participants with permanent and/or LTO positions had, on average, become more committed to continuous learning, and more confident that they have the supports they need to be successful teachers. They also reported considerable growth in their repertoire of teaching strategies. Daily occasional teachers also reported growth in this area. Mentorship and support from colleagues or other educators remain most helpful to beginning teachers. Mentorships are often formed when mentors make a strong effort to build relationships with beginning teachers. However, for Daily occasional teachers, continual changes in supply teaching can be a barrier to forming relationships. Principals and Vice-Principals are helpful when they welcome new teachers into the school and are readily available. Other supports that BTLJ participants said are most helpful and most needed included having a choice of relevant learning opportunities, watching a colleague teach, followed by discussion, and interacting with other new teachers. BTLJ Year 2 findings showed that Long Term and Daily occasional teachers received less support than new permanent teachers.

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From the Year 3 survey data, we found that mentorship and support from colleagues or other educators remain the most helpful supports for beginning teachers. For Daily occasional teachers in particular, the two most helpful supports included (1) other teachers making a point of talking with or helping them in small ways and (2) being personally greeted by the Principal, VP or a teacher when they first arrived in the school. Beginning teachers in their third year in the study (Cohort 1) said that while their confidence increased with more experience, they still drew on support from colleagues. Respondents who had accessed informal mentorship identified it as particularly helpful. Year 3 of the study also found that the most desired types of learning opportunities were half-day or full-day in-person workshops and seminars and school-based learning opportunities (such as guest speakers, group orientation, department-specific workshops, or seminars). A majority of survey respondents were interested in learning about specific teaching strategies or tools, teaching students with special needs, and classroom management. Daily occasional teachers were especially interested in learning about topics specific to them, such as using school systems, how to become a permanent teacher, and classroom management for occasional teachers.

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In Year 4, the study was interrupted by labour action and by the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, the survey went ahead with Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 as planned, and we conducted a mini-survey with Cohort 1. The interviews were cut short; the plan was to interview 44 staff in four schools. We were able to conduct 8 interviews in one of the schools. The Year 4 survey data found across all cohorts teachers demonstrated a growth in confidence. This growth was strongest in teachers who had opportunities to observe a colleague teach followed by discussion and/or had access to a choice of learning opportunities. Mentorship and support from others remain most helpful to beginning teachers, though access to both formal and informal mentorship was limited for Daily occasional teachers and Long-term occasional teachers without access to NTIP. For Daily occasional teachers, the most helpful supports included (1) someone explaining school-specific or classroom-specific procedures and ground rules, (2) other teachers making a point of talking with or helping them in small ways, and (3) being personally greeted by the Principal, VP, or other teacher when they first arrived in the school.

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In Year 5 of this study, all data collection occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers were working under very challenging conditions: teaching both online and in-person (in some cases at the same time), needing to keep windows open for part of the day, having to wear masks and face shields, limited access to release time, and handling higher than normal levels of stress, anxiety and depression. In addition, shortages of occasional teachers forced many boards to suspend or cut back NTIP release time. All Ontario schools moved to online instruction after the winter holidays, and many had just returned to in-person learning when the survey was launched on February 8, 2021 (northern schools returned on January 11; GTA schools remained online-only until February 16).

Study Methods and Sample

2.1 Method

We recruited BTLJ participants through their school board NTIP leaders, who forwarded an invitation email from the study team. Participants opted into the study using an online form. The form described the purpose of the study and what would be asked of them.

The BTLJ study is following three cohorts of teachers for three to five years each (see Table 1). Participants respond to an annual survey. Table 1 shows the number of respondents and response rates for the surveys administered to date. The survey responses in 2021 (Year 5 of the study) were lower than in previous years. Response rates and survey results may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Each year, we have conducted focus groups with a sample of participants from all three cohorts. In Year 3, we also held interviews with a sample of individuals in their third year of the study. In Year 4, we conducted case studies, which were interrupted by the labour action and the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. In Year 5, we conducted four case studies in four boards.

Table 1: Longitudinal study design

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2021
Cohort 1 N = 677	Survey A: 542 responses (80%) Focus groups	Survey B: 380 responses (56%) Focus groups	Survey C: 368 responses (54%) Interviews	Voluntary mini-survey: 330 responses (48%)	Voluntary mini-survey: 292 responses (43%)
Cohort 2 N = 385		Survey A: 202 responses (52%) Focus groups	Survey B: 198 responses (53%) Focus groups	Survey C: 152 responses (39%) Interviews	Voluntary mini-survey: 125 responses (32%)
Cohort 3 N = 420			Survey A: 320 responses (76%) Focus groups	Survey B: 229 responses (55%) Interviews	Survey C: 175 responses (42%) 4 case studies

2.2 Study sample

Teachers from all regions of Ontario signed on to the study.

The 2021 survey was completed by teachers with a wide range of characteristics and teaching assignments (see Table 2), including teachers who have had positive experiences as well as teachers who have had negative experiences. The survey results reflect a wide range of perspectives. As the BTLJ participants opted into the study, those who joined could have different characteristics than those who chose not to take part (e.g., they could, as a group, be more committed to continuous learning than teachers who chose not to sign up).

Table 2: Characteristics of 2021 survey respondents

Characteristics	Cohort 1 N=292	Cohort 2 N=125	Cohort 3 N=175	All cohorts N=592
Region				
Barrie	8%	12%	19%	12%
London	23%	24%	26%	24%
North Bay / Sudbury	4%	2%	3%	4%
Ottawa	11%	9%	9%	10%
Thunder Bay	2%	4%	7%	4%
Toronto	51%	49%	35%	46%
Panel				
Elementary	69%	67%	66%	68%
Secondary	30%	28%	33%	30%
Both	1%	5%	3%	2%
Type of teaching assignment				
Permanent teaching assignment	77%	78%	74%	77%
Long Term Occasional assignment	17%	15%	19%	17%
Daily occasional assignment (or no teaching assignment)	5%	4%	5%	5%
Teaching specialties				
Teaching French as a second language?	16%	22%	19%	18%
Teaching Special Ed?	24%	16%	19%	21%
Teaching Technological Education?	3%	1%	3%	3%
Teaching Indigenous Language Studies?	2%	1%	2%	2%
Type of board				
English-language board	96%	95%	98%	96%
French-language board	4%	5%	2%	4%
Exposure to NTIP				
Currently receiving NTIP supports	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	27%	-
Previously received NTIP supports	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	60%	-
Never received NTIP supports	13%	6%	14%	11%
Teaching experience				
Median	7 years	7 years	6 years	7 years
Range	3-28 years	3-25 years	2-26 years	2-28 years

2.3 Survey subgroups

We have broken the survey sample into four subgroups for analysis, as described in Table 3.

Table 3: BTLJ survey subgroup descriptions

Subgroup	Description
1. Permanent	Teachers with at least one permanent teaching assignment. Some teachers in this group may also have an LTO or Daily occasional assignments
2. LTO with NTIP	Teachers with an LTO assignment who have been involved in NTIP. Some teachers in this group may also have Daily occasional assignments.
3. LTO without NTIP	Teachers with an LTO assignment who have never been involved in NTIP. Some teachers in this group may also have Daily occasional assignments.
4. Daily occasional	Teachers who indicated they had a Daily occasional assignment, or no current teaching assignment

Table 4 shows the proportion of survey respondents in each subgroup. Permanent teachers increased from 68% in 2020 to 77% in 2021. Only 6 percent of 2021 respondents had Daily occasional positions, a proportion lower than all previous years.

Table 4: BTLJ survey subgroup breakdown

Cohort	Year	Permanent	LTO with NTIP	LTO without NTIP	Daily occasional	All participants
Cohort 1	2017	143 (26%)	124 (23%)	118 (22%)	156 (29%)	542* (100%)
	2018	188 (49%)	66 (17%)	71 (19%)	58 (15%)	383 (100%)
	2019	253 (69%)	38 (10%)	39 (11%)	38 (10%)	368 (100%)
	2020**	240 (73%)	22 (7%)	38 (12%)	30 (9%)	330 (100%)
	2021**	225 (78%)	17 (6%)	30 (10%)	17 (6%)	289* (100%)
Cohort 2	2018	106 (52%)	44 (22%)	20 (10%)	32 (16%)	202 (100%)
	2019	121 (61%)	34 (17%)	21 (11%)	22 (11%)	198 (100%)
	2020	110 (72%)	11 (7%)	14 (9%)	17 (11%)	152 (100%)
	2021**	98 (78%)	12 (10%)	7 (6%)	8 (6%)	125 (100%)
Cohort 3	2019	158 (49%)	76 (24%)	39 (12%)	47 (15%)	320 (100%)
	2020	134 (59%)	30 (13%)	19 (8%)	46 (20%)	229(100%)
	2021	130 (74%)	22 (13%)	12 (7%)	11 (6%)	175 (100%)

*Subgroup could not be determined for one participant in Cohort 1 – Survey A and one participant in Cohort 1 – Survey D

** Cohort 1 completed a mini survey in 2020 and 2021; Cohort 2 completed a mini survey in 2021

2.4 Case study interview participants

In the case studies, we interviewed staff in four school boards, which EDU identified as reflecting the diverse contexts and realities of implementing NTIP across Ontario. We used an appreciative inquiry approach to collecting and analysing the qualitative data - a method that focuses on the positive processes and outcomes in a program.

In each board we planned to interview the following:

- The NTIP representative at the board level
- An elementary school principal and a secondary principal, selected by the NTIP representative as engaged in best practices with new hires
- 4 beginning teachers in each school, selected by the NTIP representative
- 4 mentors selected by the beginning teachers.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic placed a lot of stress on individual teachers and the education system as a whole. As a result, we were somewhat limited in the number of participants we could reach. We were able to conduct interviews with four NTIP leads, six principals/vice-principals, 11 new teachers, and 7 mentors. The findings from our case studies are presented in Section 4 of this report.

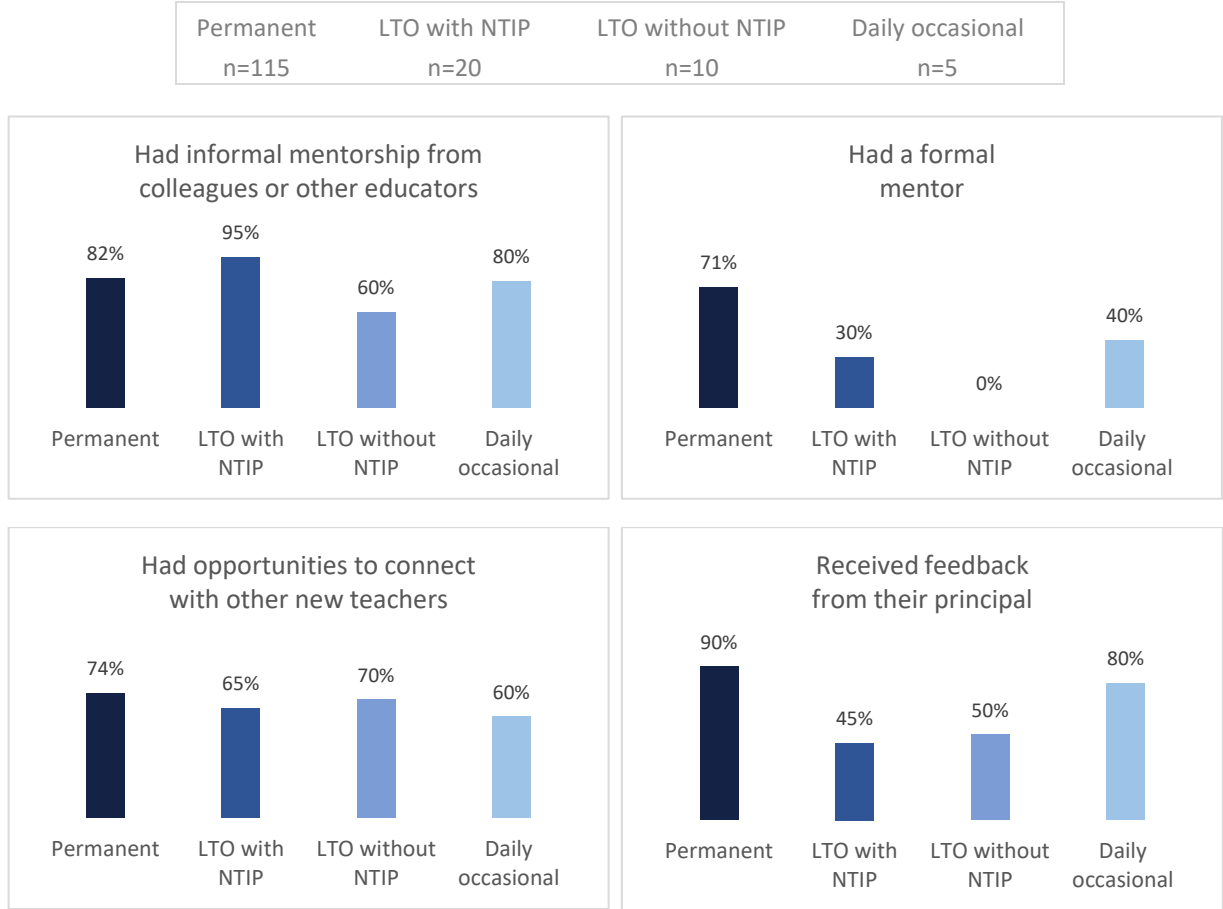
3 Survey Findings: How beginning teachers develop in their first five years of practice

3.1 What supports do beginning teachers access?

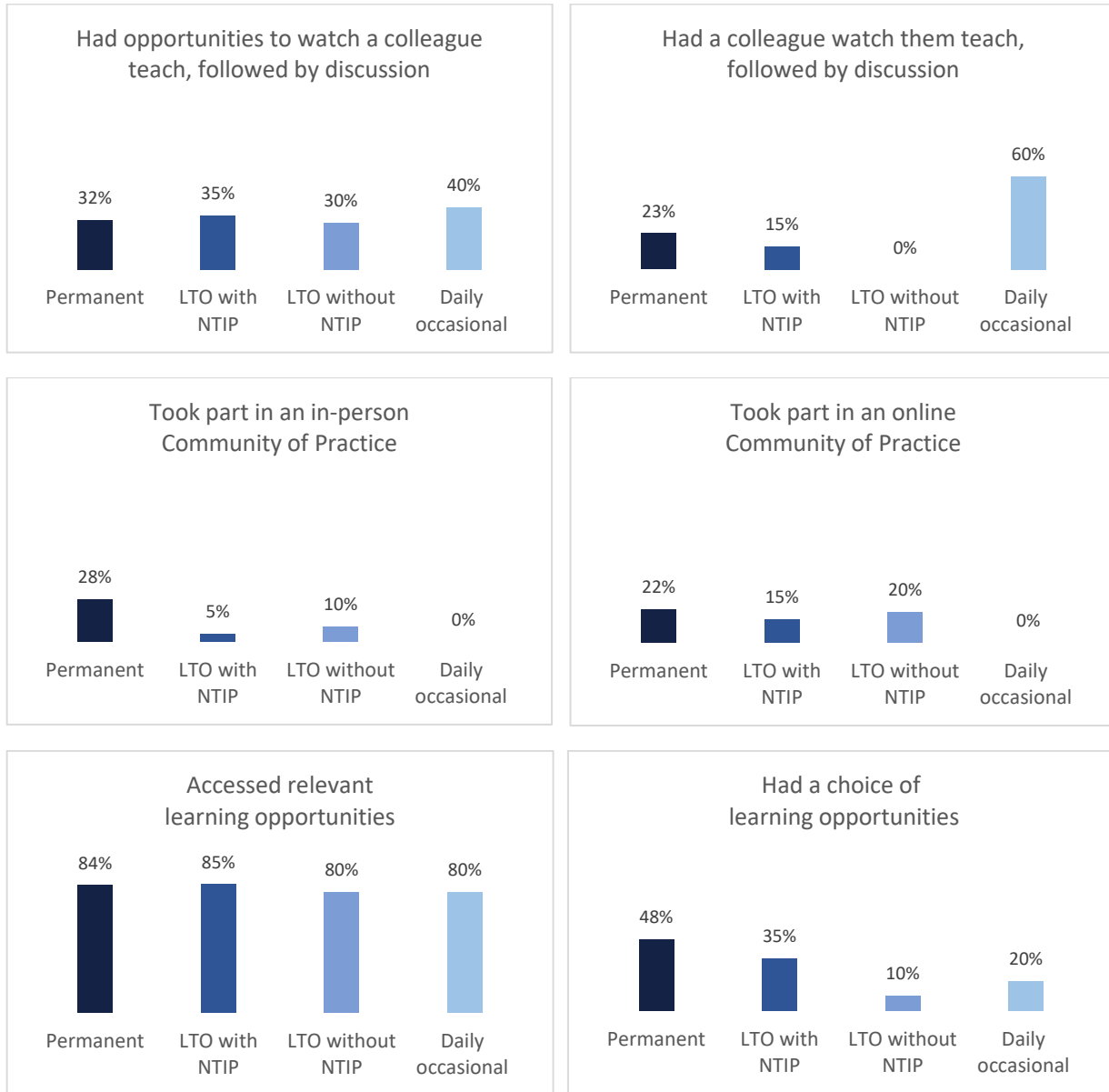
When asked about the types of supports accessed since they started teaching, most survey respondents noted having relevant learning opportunities (84%) and informal mentorship from colleagues or other educators (82%). A majority also indicated having received feedback about their teaching from their principal (81%) and had an opportunity to connect with other new teachers (72%). Sixty percent had a formal mentor assigned to them. Relatively few had opportunities to take part in an online (20%) or in-person (23%) Community of Practice, had a chance to observe a colleague (33%) or be observed (22%), or had a choice of learning opportunities (43%).

Figure 1 shows how many teachers (in each survey sub-group) accessed various supports since they started teaching. The data in Section 3 only include Cohort 3 respondents, as they were the only group included in the survey in 2021. Cohorts 1 and 2 only filled out a mini survey.

Figure 1: Supports accessed, by subgroup



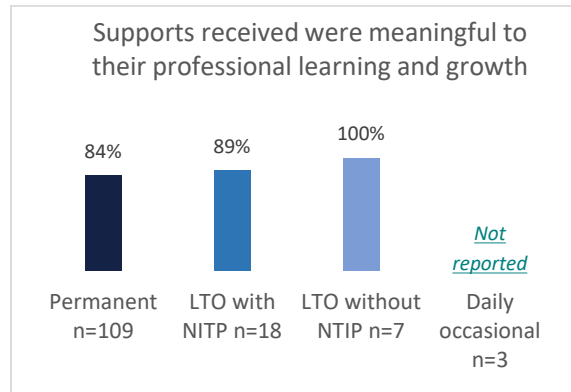
Supports accessed (cont.)



Across all groups, most teachers indicated that the supports they received were meaningful to their professional learning and growth.

Figure 2: Meaningfulness of supports, by subgroup

The graphs below show the percent of respondents who responded ‘Very meaningful’ or ‘Moderately meaningful’¹



¹ Response options included Very meaningful, Moderately meaningful, Slightly meaningful, and Not at all meaningful.

Teachers with permanent contracts tended to have the most access to these supports, followed by teachers with LTO assignments who were involved in NTIP and teachers with Daily occasional assignments.

Three types of supports were accessed by more than half of the teachers, regardless of subgroup: informal mentorship, accessing relevant learning opportunities, and connecting with other new teachers.

Significant differences between the subgroups include:

- Permanent teachers had greater access to a formal mentor².
- Permanent teachers were more likely to receive feedback from their principal³.

Permanent teachers, and teachers with LTO assignments who had been in NTIP, accessed as many or more different types of supports when they had more than 3 years of experience. Teachers with LTO assignments who had been in NTIP and had 0 to 2 years of experience accessed fewer supports than permanent teachers with the same level of experience (see Table 6).

Table 5: Median number of types of supports accessed, by survey subgroup and years of experience

Years of experience	Permanent	LTO with NTIP	LTO without NTIP	Daily occasional	All subgroups
0 to 2 years	5	-	-	-	5
3 to 5 years	6	4	2.5	6	5
>5 years	5	4	3.5	4	5
All levels	6	4	3	4	5

² $\chi^2=29.46$, 3df, $p=0.01$

³ $\chi^2= 28.18$ 3df, $p=0.01$

3.2 What supports are most helpful?

3.2.1 Helpful supports accessed in the past year

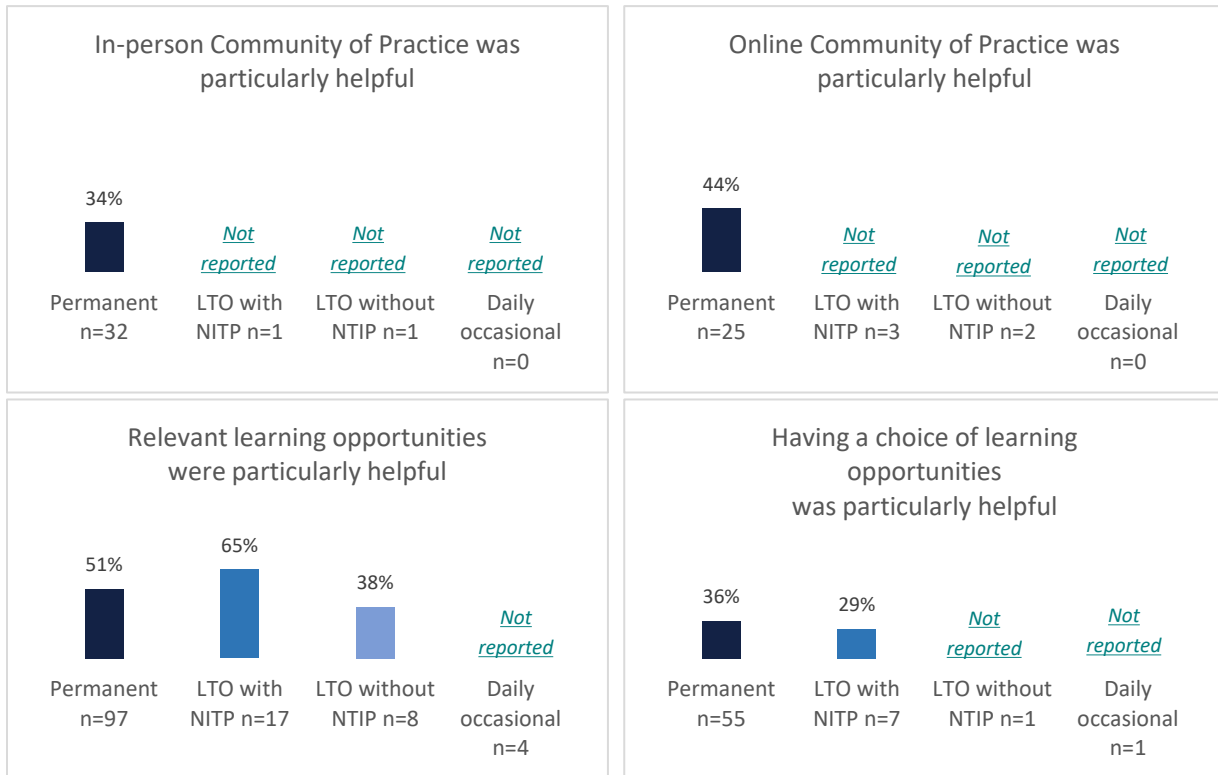
In the survey, respondents identified supports that had been particularly helpful to them in the past year. Informal mentorship and support from colleagues or other educators was the most helpful. Among respondents who had accessed informal mentorship, 83% identified it as particularly helpful. Relevant learning opportunities were also helpful (identified by 51% of teachers who had accessed them). Differences among the survey subgroups were not statistically significant.

Figure 3 shows the percent of teachers in each subgroup who found the supports helpful (among those who accessed the supports).

Figure 3: Supports that have been particularly helpful in the past year, by subgroup



Supports that have been particularly helpful in the past year (cont.)

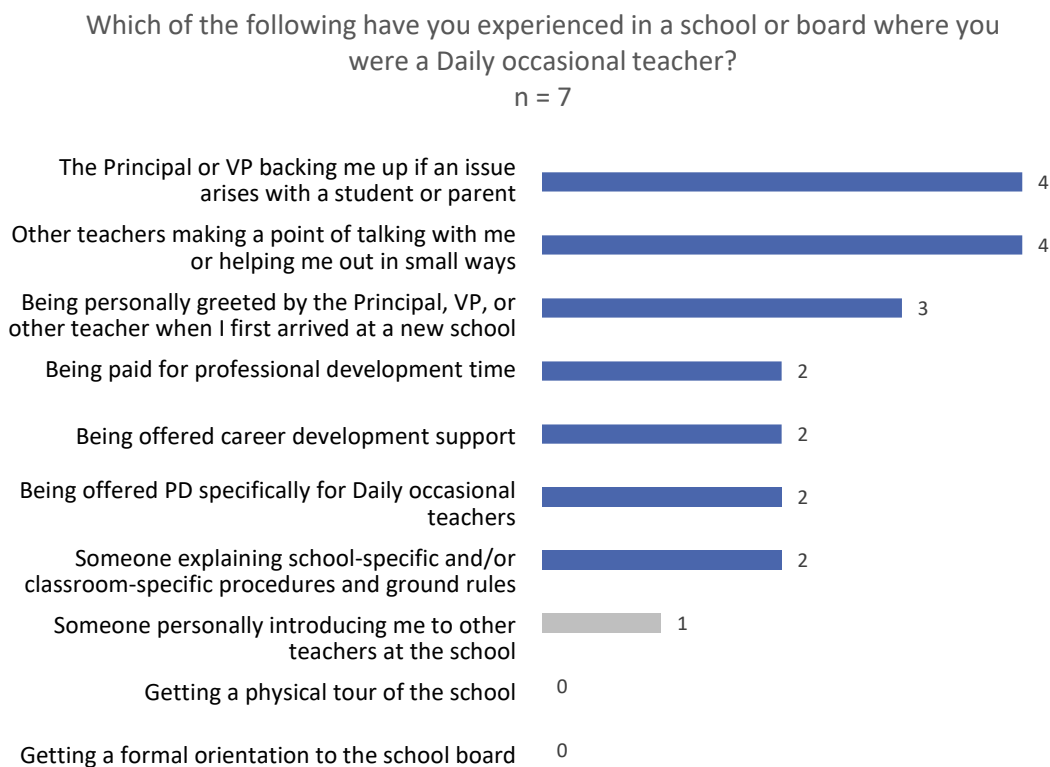


3.2.2 How Daily occasional teachers are welcomed and supported

Some supports are particularly relevant for teachers with Daily occasional assignments (e.g., orientation to school and board, enhanced career development supports beyond what is normally available to Daily occasional teachers). Starting in 2019, Daily occasional teachers in this study were asked if they had experienced specific supports and which of those supports made them feel most welcomed and/or supported.

This year, only 8 teachers responding to the survey had Daily occasional assignments⁴, and only 7 of these completed the full survey. Most of those respondents reported that their principal or VP backed them up if an issue arose and that other teachers had made a point of talking with or helping them in small ways. Most had also been personally greeted by the Principal, VP or other teacher when they first arrived (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: How Daily occasional teachers are welcomed to new schools or boards



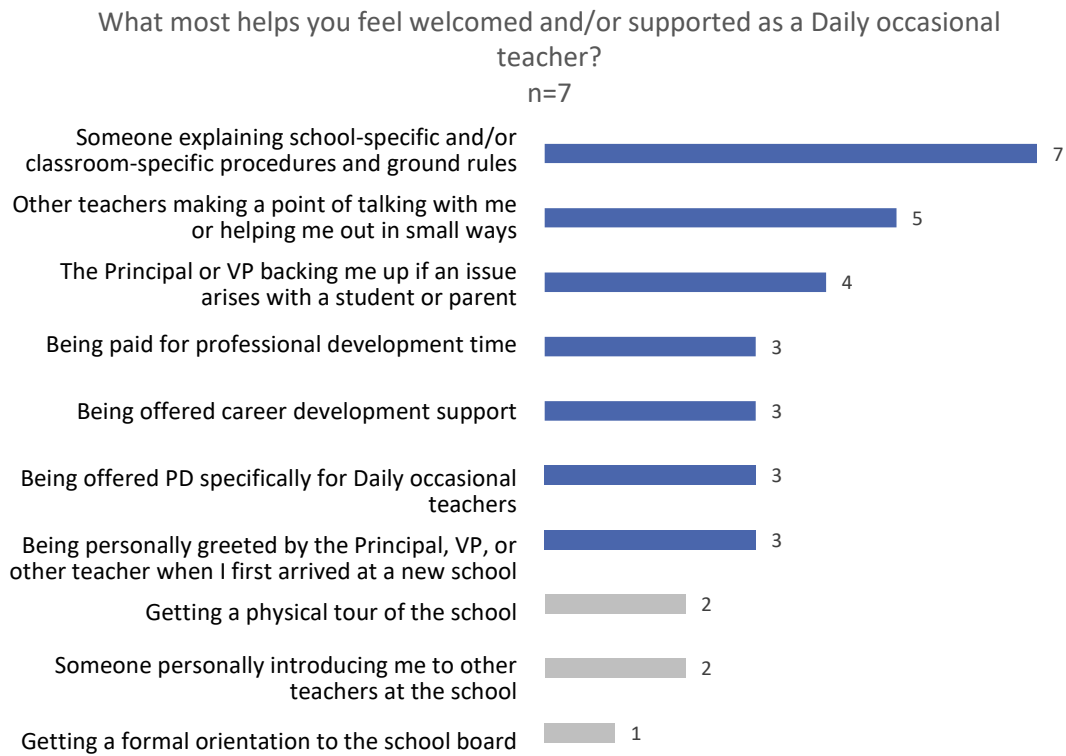
As shown in Figure 5, the top two supports experienced were also among the top three supports that made Daily occasional teachers feel welcomed and supported.

However, having someone **explain school-specific and/or classroom-specific procedures and ground rules** was the most important support for making Daily occasional teachers feel welcomed and

⁴ The Daily occasional subgroup is comprised of teachers who indicated that they had a Daily occasional assignment, or no current teaching assignment. In 2021, 8 teachers had Daily occasional assignments and 3 teachers had no current assignment.

supported. Fewer than half of the Daily occasional teachers had experienced this support, so this is an area where **substantial gains could be made.**

Figure 5: What helps Daily occasional teachers feel most welcomed and/or supported

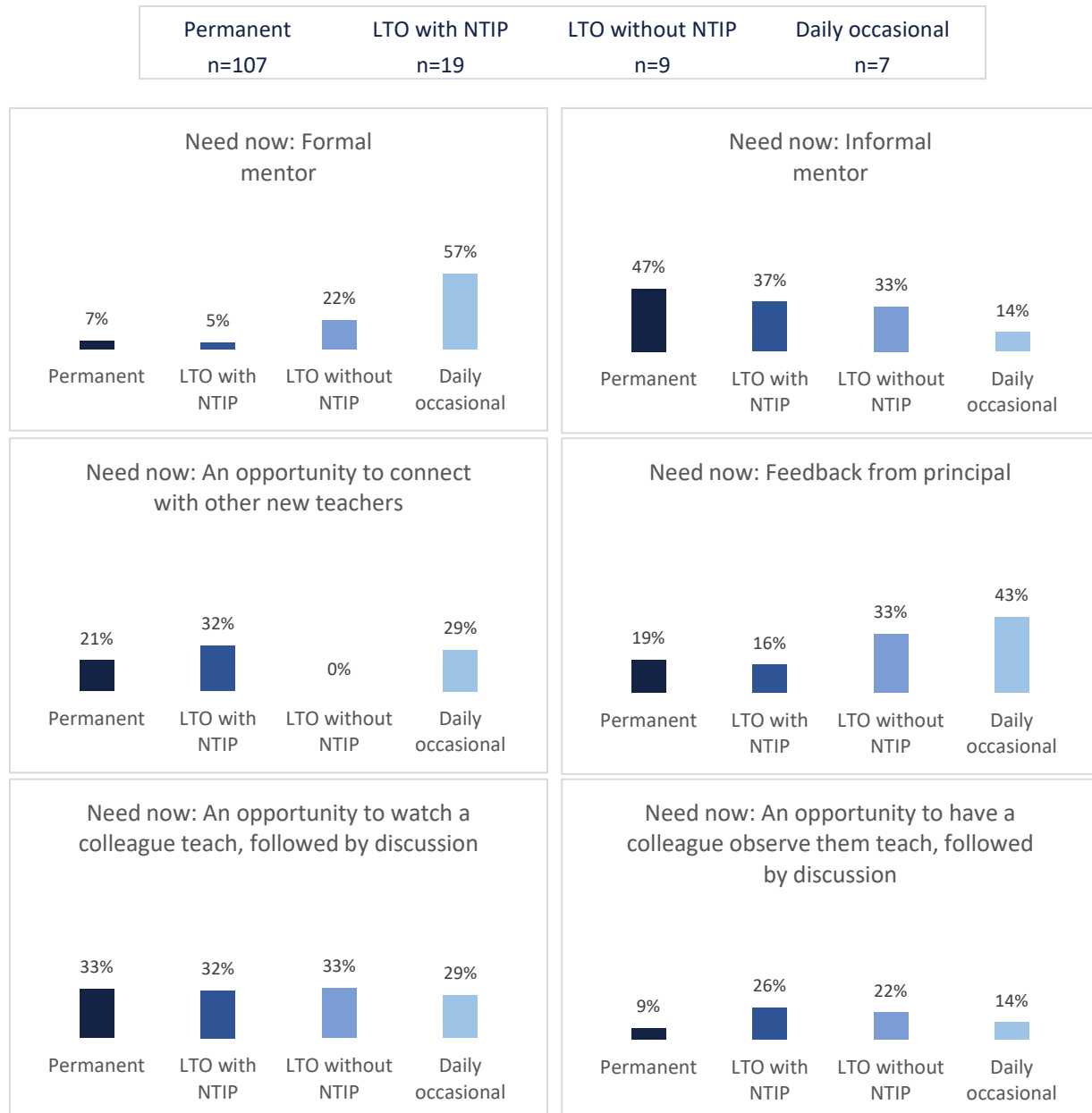


3.3 What other supports do beginning teachers feel they need?

Survey respondents differed in the supports that they still needed. The most common supports needed were relevant learning opportunities (59%), support from colleagues (43%), and an opportunity to watch a colleague teach followed by discussion (32%).

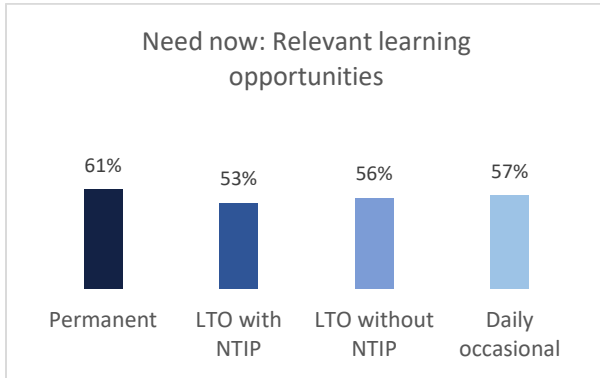
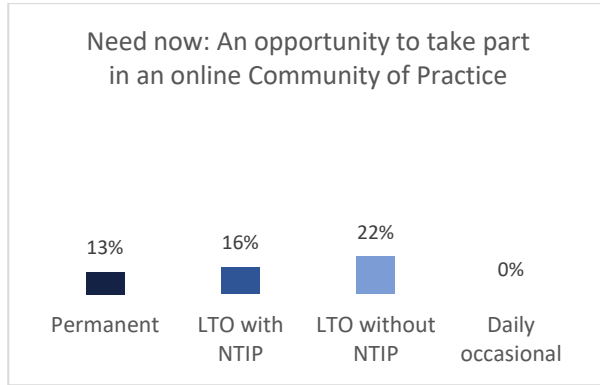
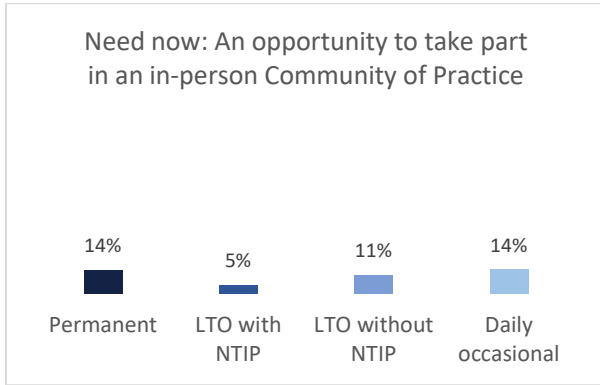
Figure 6 shows the supports needed now, by subgroup. Differences among the survey subgroups were not statistically significant, except for one. Teachers not in NTIP or with Daily occasional assignments were more likely to indicate that they needed a formal mentor than those in NTIP⁵.

Figure 6: Supports that participants need now, by subgroup



⁵ $\chi^2=22.09, 3df, p=0.01$

Supports that participants need now (cont.)



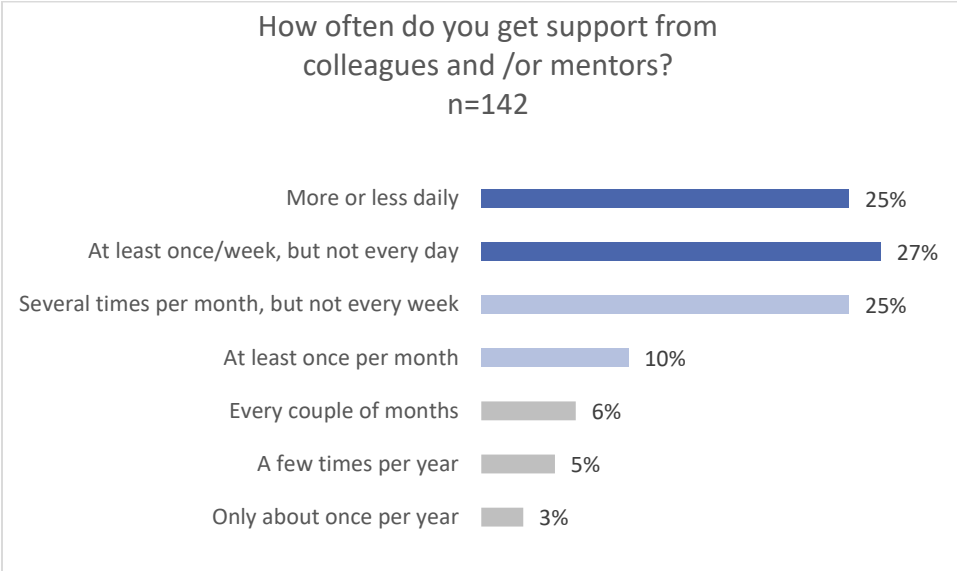
3.4 How does mentorship support beginning teachers?

3.4.1 How beginning teachers engage with mentors

The survey findings show that most beginning teachers engage in informal mentorship and/or receive support from colleagues or other educators. Most teachers who have participated in NTIP have had a formal mentor. Without having been in NTIP, very few teachers have access to a formal mentor.

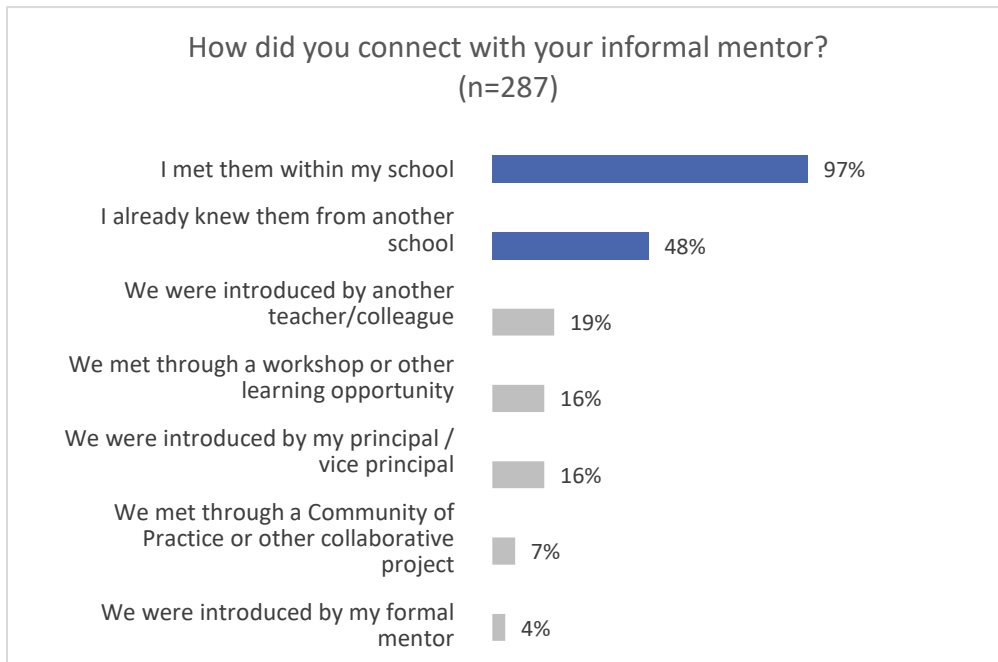
Among survey respondents who have formal or informal mentors, around half (51%) receive support from colleagues or educators at least once per week (see Figure 7), while a minority (14%) receive support less than once per month.

Figure 7: How often participants get support from colleagues or mentors



For the most part, respondents indicated they met their informal mentors within their school, or had met them at another school (see Figure 8). They were also introduced to mentors by their colleagues, principal or vice principal. Few participants were introduced to informal mentors by their formal mentor.

Figure 8: How survey participants connected with informal mentors



3.4.2 What mentors do that really makes a difference

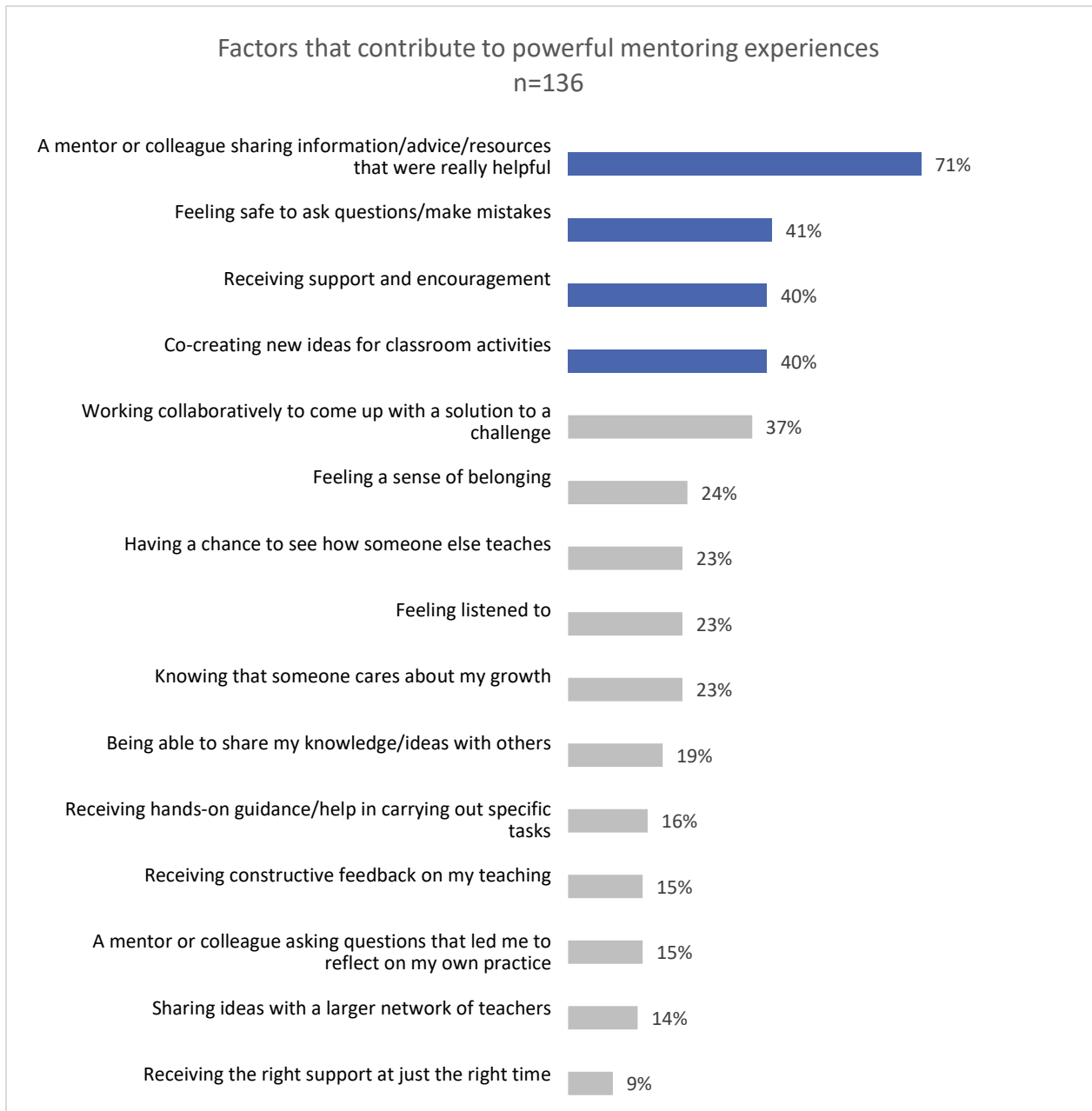
Survey respondents were asked to reflect on a mentoring experience that was particularly powerful in improving their confidence. Most respondents (91%) were able to identify at least one such experience (though only 57% of teachers with Daily occasional assignments identified one)⁶.

Powerful mentoring experiences typically (in 71% of cases) involved a mentor or colleague sharing information, advice and/or resources that were really helpful. Other important elements of the mentoring experience were feeling safe to ask questions and make mistakes, receiving support and encouragement, and working collaboratively (to co-create ideas for classroom activities or to come up with a solution to a challenge). A full list of elements is shown in Figure 9. Differences among the survey subgroups were not statistically significant, except for one: three out of seven teachers with Daily occasional assignments who responded the question indicated that they appreciated when a mentor or colleague asked questions that led me them to reflect on their own practice⁷.

⁶ $\chi^2=14.47$, 3df, $p=0.01$

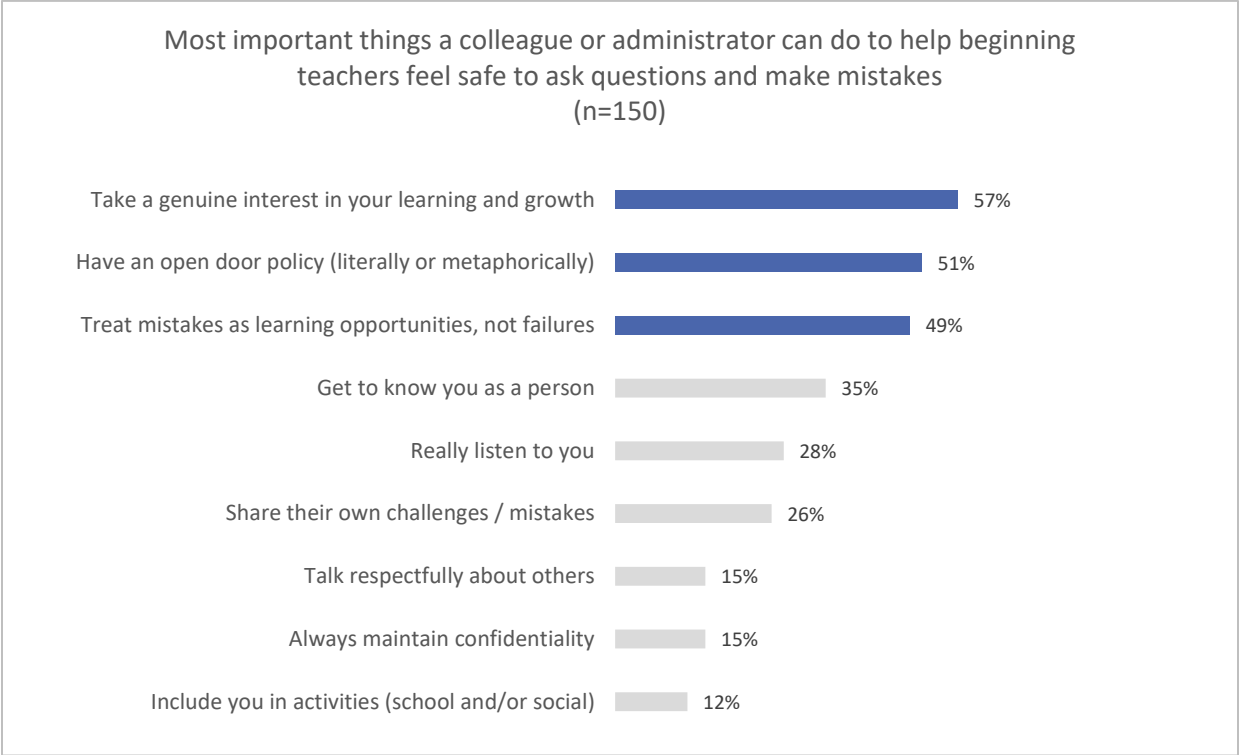
⁷ $\chi^2=17.24$, 3df, $p=0.01$

Figure 9: Factors that contribute to powerful mentoring experiences



In the survey, participants were asked to identify the top three things a colleague or administrator could do to help them feel safe to ask questions and make mistakes. The most common responses were to take a genuine interest in their growth (57%), be readily available (have an open-door policy) (51%), and treat mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failures (49%). Figure 10 shows the 2021 results for all of the options listed.

Figure 10: What colleagues and administrators can do to help beginning teachers feel safe to ask questions and make mistakes



3.5 How do administrators help beginning teachers?

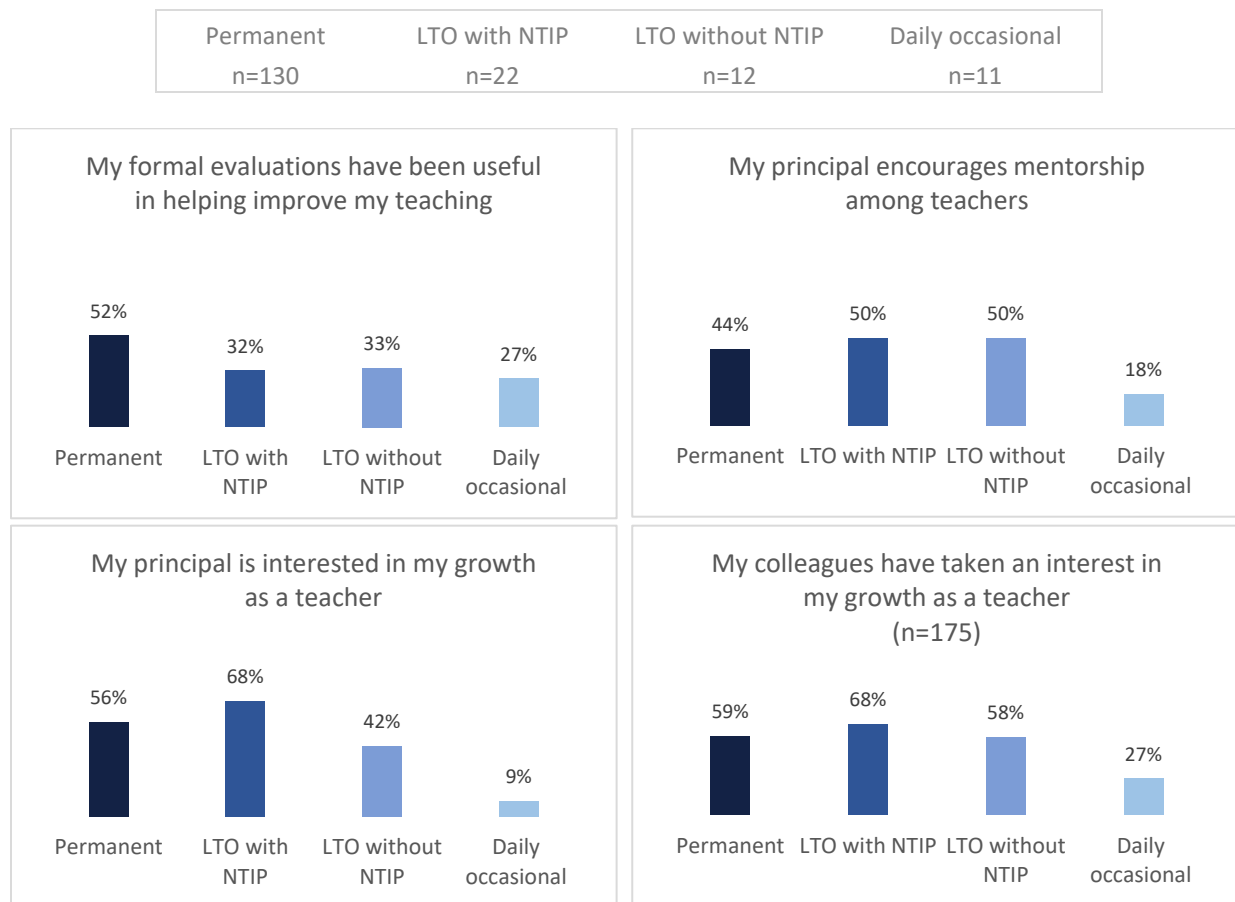
3.5.1 What administrators do that is most helpful

Principals and Vice-Principals support the development of beginning teachers in many ways, including taking a personal interest in their growth, encouraging mentorship, and providing useful feedback through performance appraisals. They can also encourage teachers within the school to be supportive of each other and of Daily occasional teachers.

For the most part, survey respondents with permanent contracts indicated that their principals were providing strong support in all three of these areas (see Figure 10), as did teachers with LTO assignments who were in NTIP.

The graphs below show the percent of respondents who ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’⁸

Figure 11: What administrators do that is helpful, by subgroup



⁸ Response options included Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly disagree. “Not applicable” responses were included in the denominator when calculating percentages.

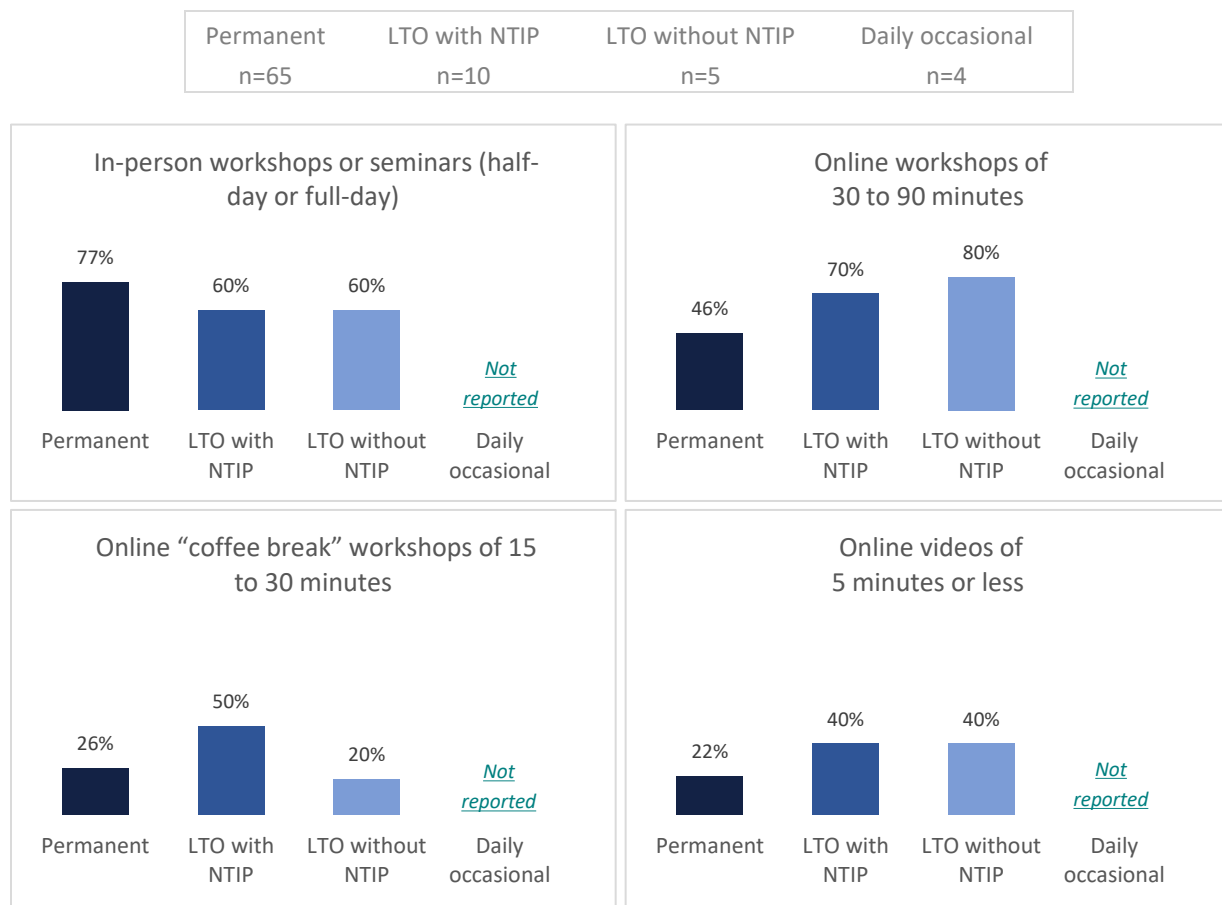
3.6 What types of learning opportunities do new teachers need?

In the survey, respondents who indicated that they still needed relevant learning opportunities were asked some follow up questions about their preferred types, timing and topics. The Year 5 survey was completed in February/March 2021, when many schools were just returning to in-person learning after several weeks of online instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this year’s survey, there was more interest in online workshops (especially among LTOs) and less interest in in-person workshops than in previous years (possibly because of increased comfort with online instruction, restrictions on in-person gatherings and/or lack of access to release time).

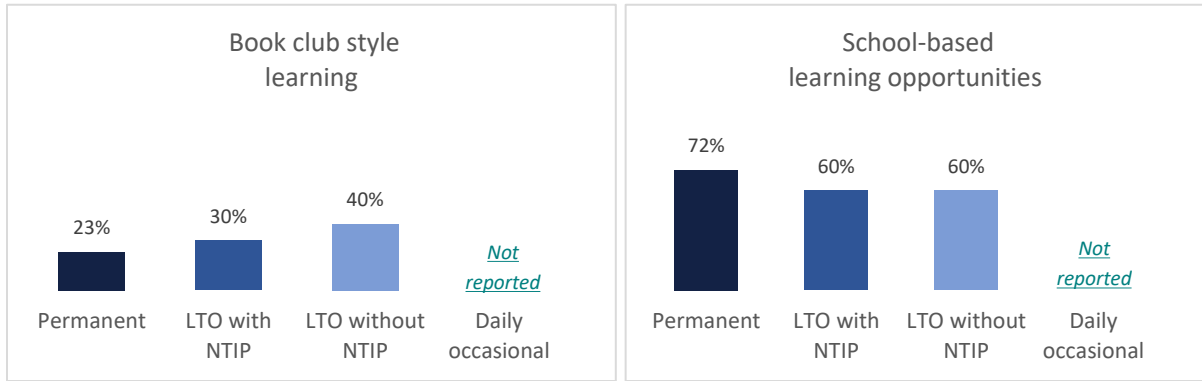
3.6.1 Types of learning opportunities

The most desired types of learning opportunities (for all subgroups) were half-day or full-day in-person workshops and seminars (75%) and school-based learning opportunities such as guest speakers, group orientation, department-specific workshops, or seminars (69%). Of the online learning opportunities, respondents preferred longer workshops (30 to 90 minutes) as opposed to “coffee break” workshops or short videos of five minutes or less. Figure 12 shows the types of learning opportunities of interest to teachers each of the subgroups. Results for teachers with Daily occasional assignments were not reported because less than five respondents answered the question.

Figure 12: Types of learning opportunities new teachers need, by subgroup



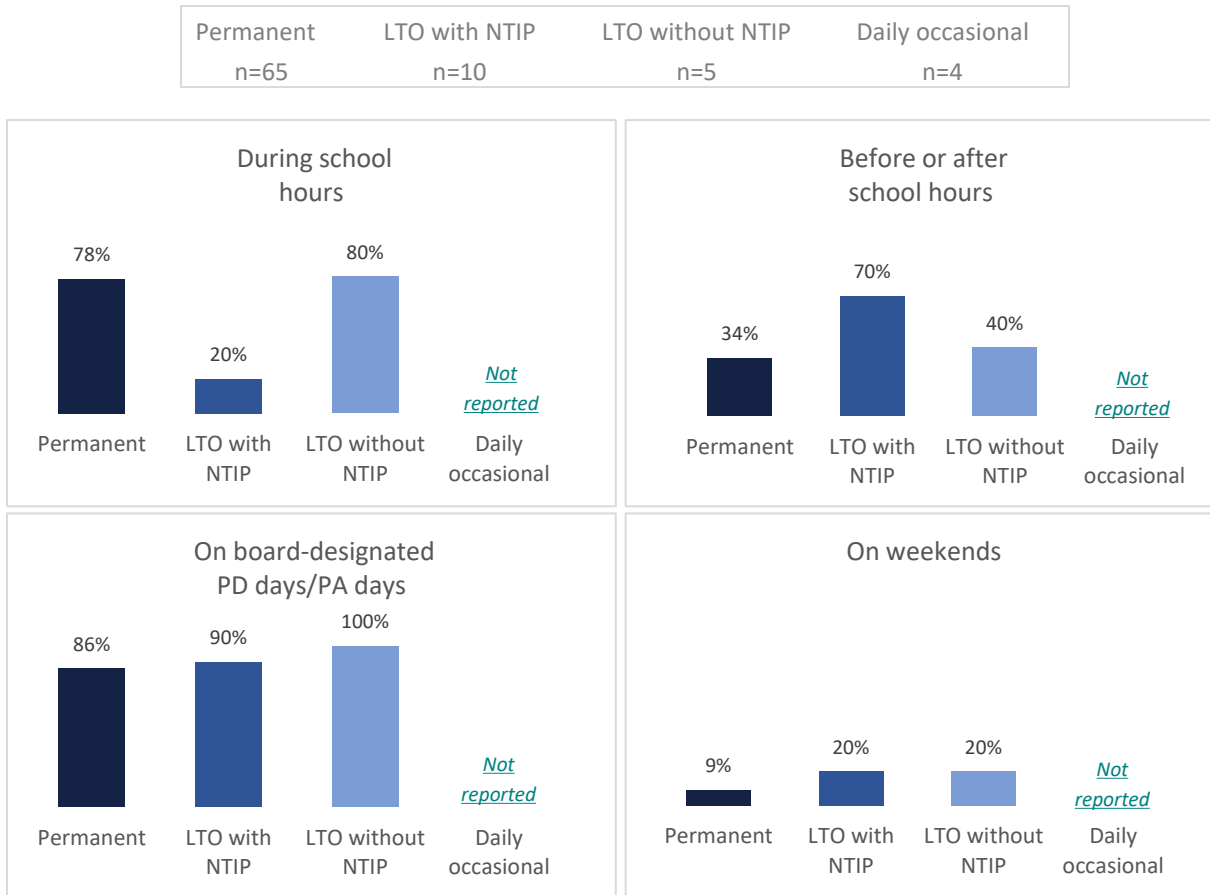
Types of learning opportunities new teachers need, by subgroup (cont.)

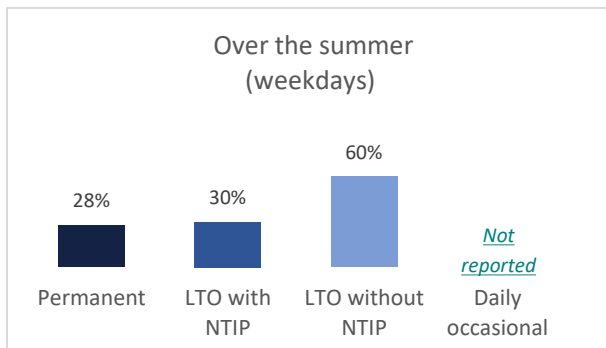


3.6.2 Timing of learning opportunities

Most of the teachers in all subgroups (88% overall) indicated they could participate in learning opportunities during board-designated PD days / PA days. Most Permanent teachers (78%) and LTO teachers without NTIP (80%) could also participate during school hours, but this wasn't an option for most LTO teachers with NTIP (see Figure 13). Results for teachers with daily occasional assignments were not reported because less than five respondents answered the question.

Figure 13: When new teachers can participate in learning opportunities, by subgroup



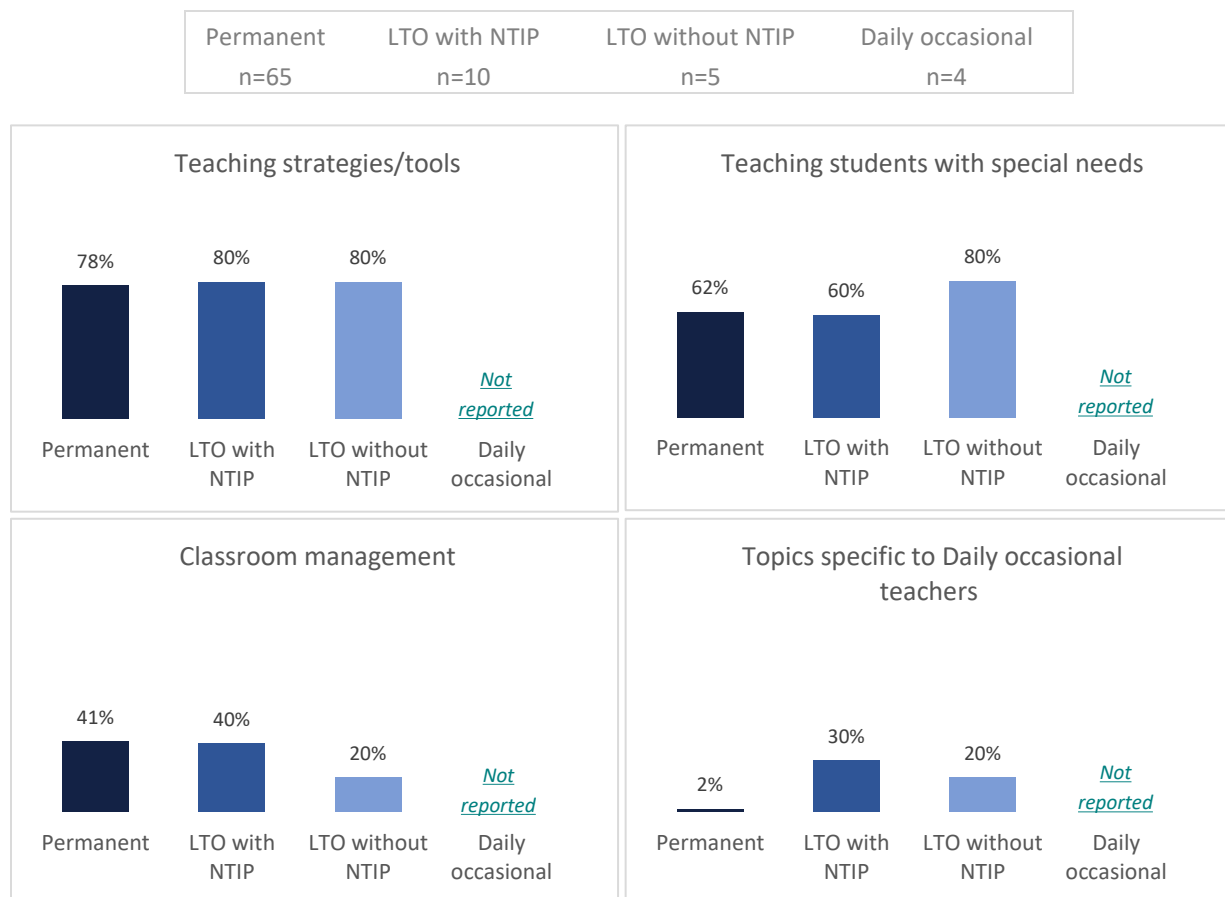


3.6.3 Topics of interest

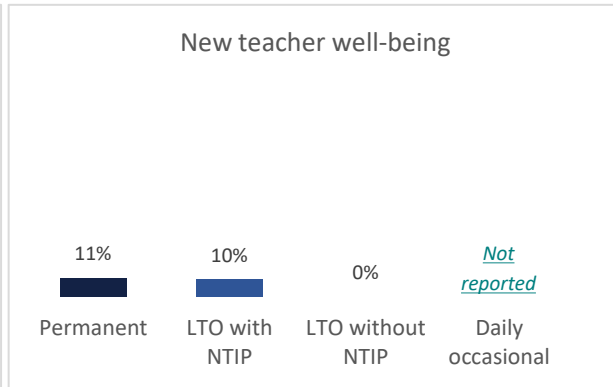
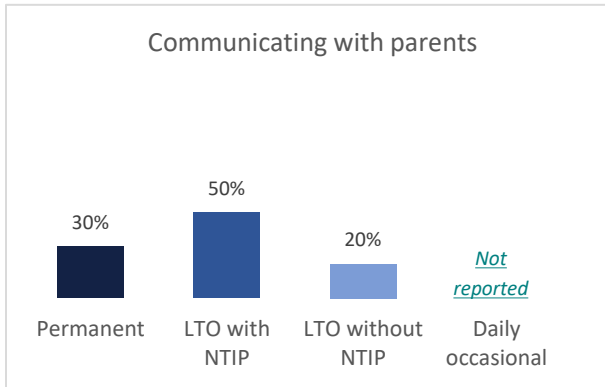
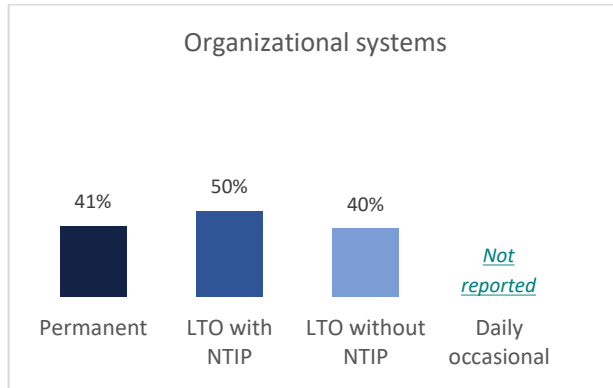
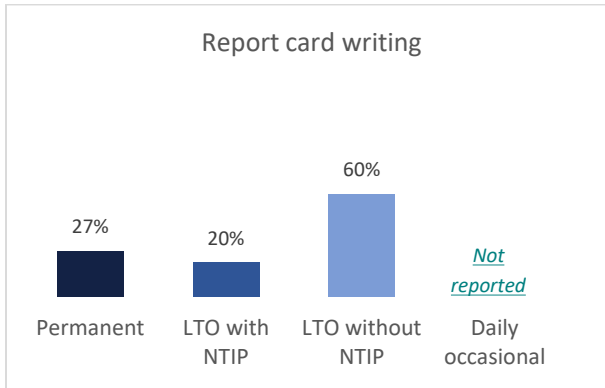
A majority of teachers in all survey subgroups were interested in learning about specific teaching strategies or tools (78%) and teaching students with special needs (60%).

Figure 14 shows the breakdown of responses by survey subgroup. Results for teachers with Daily occasional assignments were not reported because less than five respondents answered the question.

Figure 14: Topics new teachers are interested in, by subgroup



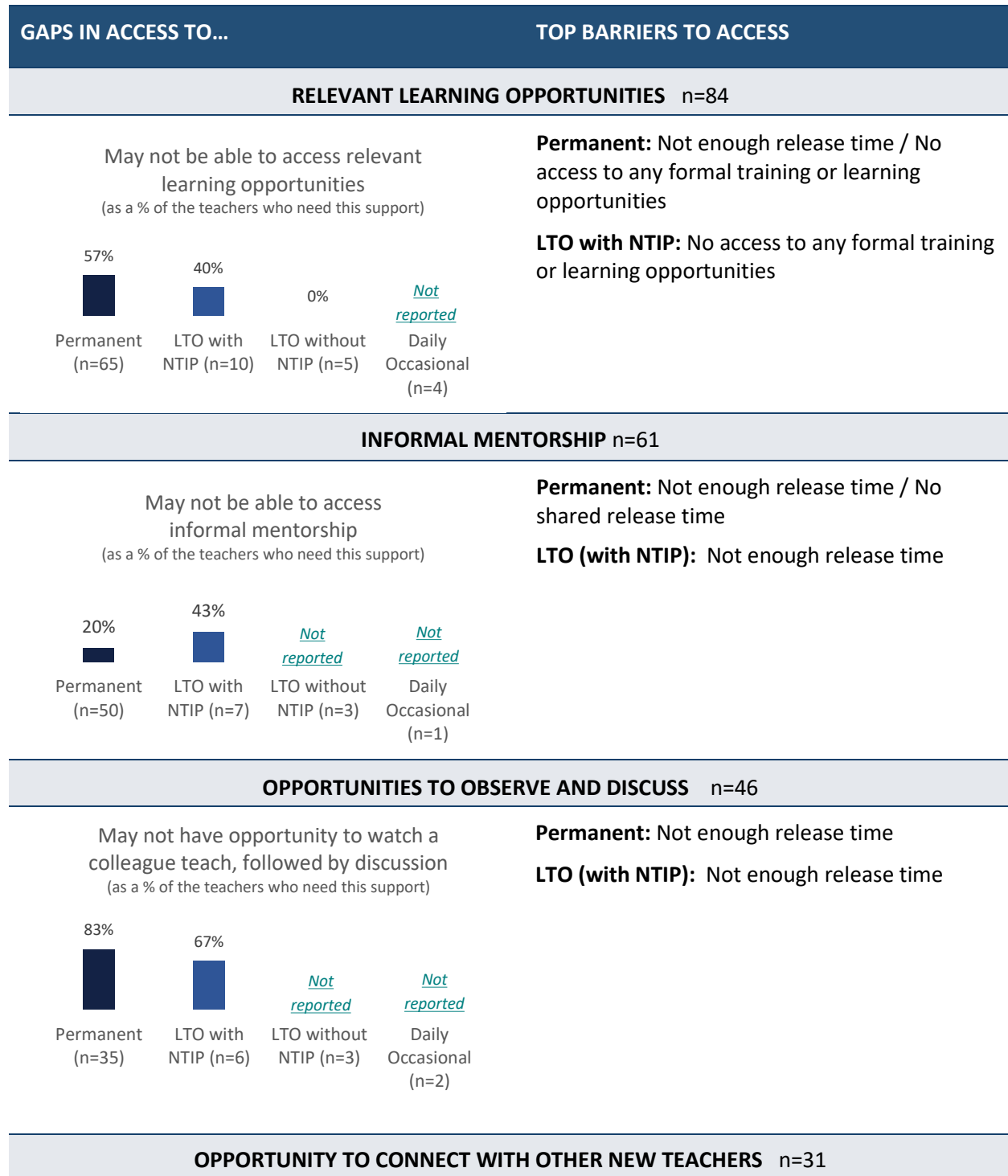
Topics new teachers are interested in (cont.)



3.7 What are barriers to accessing supports?

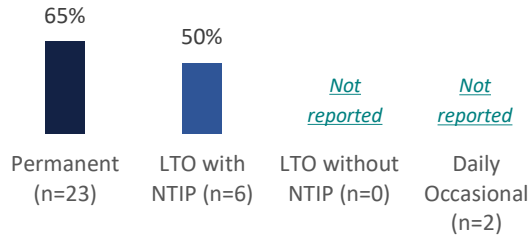
The survey revealed that access to needed supports varied among subgroups. Gaps in access, as well as the main barriers to accessing needed supports, are summarized in Figure 15, for the five most needed supports.

Figure 15: Analysis of gaps and barriers in access to most-needed supports, by subgroup



May not be able to access opps to connect with other new teachers
(as a % of the teachers who need this support)

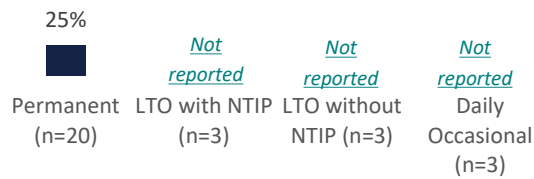
Permanent: Not enough release time
LTO with NTIP: No shared release time



OPPORTUNITY TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK FROM PRINCIPAL n=29

May not have opportunity to receive feedback from their principal
(as a % of the teachers who need this support)

Permanent: Principal does not have to provide feedback about teachers' teaching / Not enough release time



3.8 Do FSL teachers need different supports than other teachers?

FSL teachers appear to need and access very similar types of supports as other teachers. Their survey responses were very similar to the responses of other teachers in terms of:

1. the supports they had accessed,
2. the helpfulness of those supports,
3. the supports they need now, and
4. topics they are interested in.

We did observe some trends that were not statistically significant but would be worth monitoring over the coming years. Relative to other teachers:

- more FSL teachers reported receiving feedback about their teaching from their principal (89% compared with 79%);
- FSL teachers were less likely to indicate that supports were particularly helpful in the last year. The exception was informal mentorship, indicated by 86% of FSL as particularly helpful, compared with 76% of not FSL teachers;
- more FSL teachers indicated informal mentorship (60% vs. 37%), as well as an opportunity to watch a colleague teach (43% vs. 28%) as supports they need most now;
- more FSL teachers indicated an interest in learning about teaching strategies or tools (93% vs. 72%), and organizational systems (60% vs. 38%).

3.9 Do more experienced teachers need different supports than less experienced teachers?

Teachers with varying levels of experience appear to need and access very similar types of support, with few exceptions. While there were no major differences in what teachers need or found particularly helpful (across experience levels), a few trends were observed.

- Teachers with three to five years' experience:
 - Were more likely to have had an opportunity to watch a colleague teach (40% compared with 28% of teachers with more than five years of experience), or have a colleague watch them teach (27% vs. 18%).
 - More likely to indicate some supports as particularly helpful: informal mentorship (88% vs. 73%), connect with other new teachers (50% vs. 32%)
- Teachers with more than five years of experience:
 - Were more likely to have received feedback about their teaching from their principal (85% compared with 71% of teachers with three to five year's experiences).

3.10 How have beginning teachers grown?

While some of the teachers in the study were not supported by NTIP, we found it valuable to use the core measures of growth that had been developed for the NTIP program. These measures assess growth in four areas:

- **Confidence:** Feeling they have the supports they need to be a successful teacher
- **Efficacy:** Believing that they can help all students learn
- **Commitment to continuous learning:** Having a desire and willingness to improve their teaching
- **Instructional practice:** Having a strong repertoire of teaching skills

To assess growth in the core goal areas, the surveys asked participants to reflect on a set of statements and indicate how true each statement was for them a) in the past month, and b) when they first started teaching in Ontario. This retrospective baseline approach is an appropriate way to measure changes in perceived knowledge, attitudes or behaviours, particularly when participants might “not know what they don’t know” at the outset⁹.

For this report, growth was assessed for teachers in all Cohorts who had filled out all three main surveys, so we are seeing the patterns in growth for the same people at each point in time¹⁰. Participants from Cohort 1 responded the surveys in 2017, 2018, and 2019, participants from Cohort 2 responded the surveys in 2018, 2019, and 2020, and participants in Cohort 3 responded the survey in 2019, 2020, and 2021. The breakdown of respondents is shown in Table 7.

Table 6: Number of participants completing outcome items in all three of the surveys, by subgroup

Subgroup	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	All Cohorts
Permanent	180 (71%)	60 (71%)	94 (74%)	333 (72%)
LTO with NTIP	22 (9%)	9 (11%)	20 (16%)	51 (11%)
LTO without NTIP	23 (9%)	8 (9%)	7 (5%)	38 (8%)
Daily occasional	27 (11%)	8 (9%)	6 (5%)	41 (9%)
All participants	252 (100%)	85 (100%)	127 (100%)	463 (100%)

⁹ Gouldthorpe & Israel 2003; Klatt and Taylor-Powell 2005; Pratt, McGuigan, and Katzev 2000.

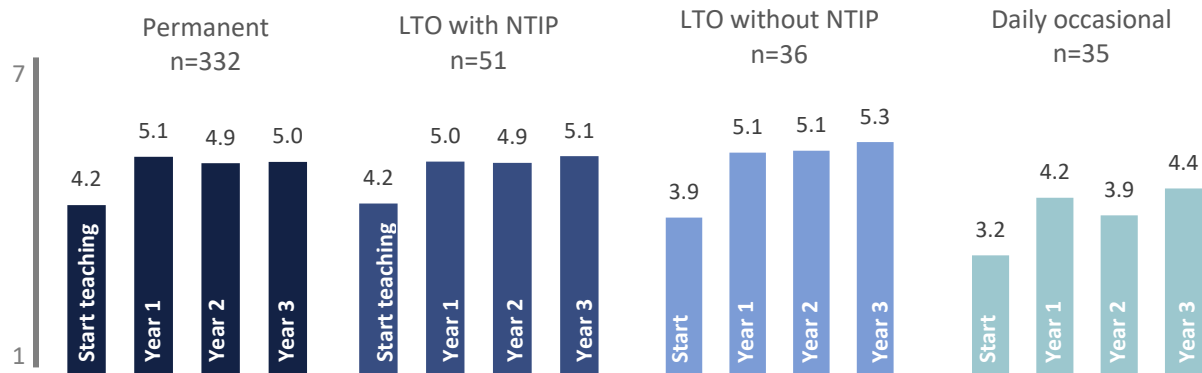
¹⁰ 2017 and 2018 figures have been adjusted slightly to account for any difference in respondents’ ratings (between the 2017, 2018 and 2019 surveys) of themselves of when they started teaching in Ontario. This adjustment is meant to counter peoples’ tendency to assess themselves against higher standards as they become more skilled (a phenomenon observed in the previous 3-year evaluation of the NTIP program).

3.10.1 Growth in confidence

Since they started teaching in Ontario, participants from all cohorts have become more confident that they have the supports they need to be successful in their third year of participation in the study (See Figure 16). The change in confidence was statistically significant within each of the survey subgroups.¹¹

Data for the third year of participation was collected in 2019 for Cohort 1, 2020 for Cohort 2, and 2021 for Cohort 3.

Figure 16: Growth in confidence, by subgroup (all cohorts)



Item: “I have the supports I need to be a successful teacher”

Scale: 1: Not at all true for me to 7: Very true for me

Study groups reflect 2019 teaching positions for Cohort 1, 2020 teaching positions for Cohort 2, and 2021 teaching positions for Cohort 3.

Results include only participants who completed all three surveys in the first, second, and third year of their participation in the study

The growth in confidence was strongest in teachers who had accessed a higher **number of supports**¹², such as having a choice of **learning opportunities**¹³, and opportunities to **connect with other new teachers**¹⁴, to **observe a colleague teach**¹⁵ or **have a colleague observe them teach**¹⁶.

In 2021, Cohort 1 and 2 participants responded to a mini survey that captured a fourth and fifth year of confidence data, respectively. The mini-survey results showed that confidence levels decreased slightly since their third year in the study (2019 for Cohort 1 and 2020 for Cohort 2), though still higher than they were when they first started teaching (4.6 compared to 4.2).

¹¹ Permanent: t=7.93; p=0.01
 LTO with NTIP: t=2.52; p=0.01
 LTO without NTIP: t=3.61; p=0.01
 Daily occasional: t=3.43; p=0.01

¹²Partial correlation, controlling for confidence score when they started teaching in Ontario: r=0.17, p=0.01

¹³Partial correlation, controlling for confidence score when they started teaching in Ontario: r=0.17, p=0.01

¹⁴Partial correlation, controlling for confidence score when they started teaching in Ontario: r=0.10, p=0.01

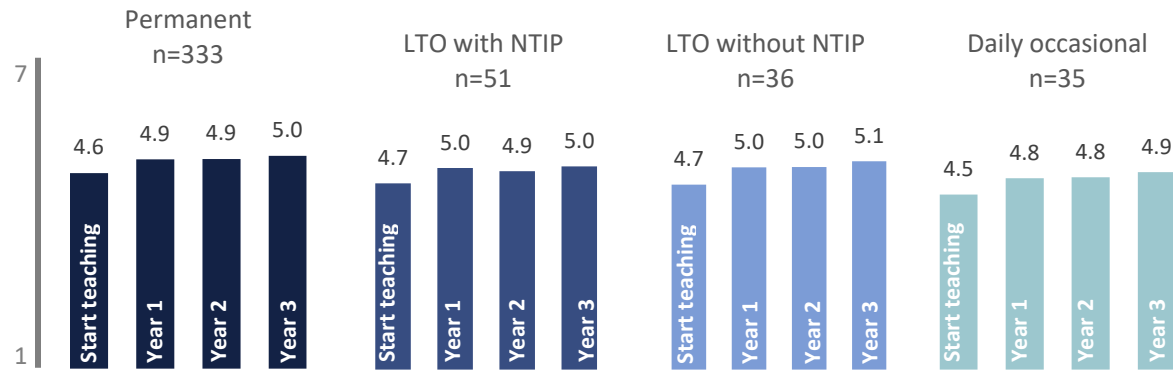
¹⁵Partial correlation, controlling for confidence score when they started teaching in Ontario: r=0.13, p=0.01

¹⁶Partial correlation, controlling for confidence score when they started teaching in Ontario: r=0.11, p=0.01

3.10.2 Growth in efficacy

Efficacy scores were very high for all subgroups and showed little change since participants started teaching in Ontario (See Figure 17). The growth in efficacy scores was statistically significant within each of the survey subgroups.¹⁷

Figure 17: Growth in efficacy, by subgroup (all cohorts)



Items: “When I encounter students who are really struggling to learn I know I can find a way to help them” (Reverse scored) “Some students are going to do poorly no matter what I do”
 “With effort I can engage even the most unmotivated students”
 “I can make a difference in the lives of every single one of my students”

Scale: 1: Not at all true for me to 7: Very true for me

Scale scores reflect the average of all the items.

Study groups reflect 2019 teaching positions for Cohort 1. 2020 teaching positions for Cohort 2, and 2021 teaching positions for Cohort 3.

Results include only participants who completed all three surveys in the first, second, and third year of their participation in the study

Teachers who had opportunities to have a **colleague observe them teaching followed by discussion**¹⁸ tended to have slightly stronger growth in efficacy.

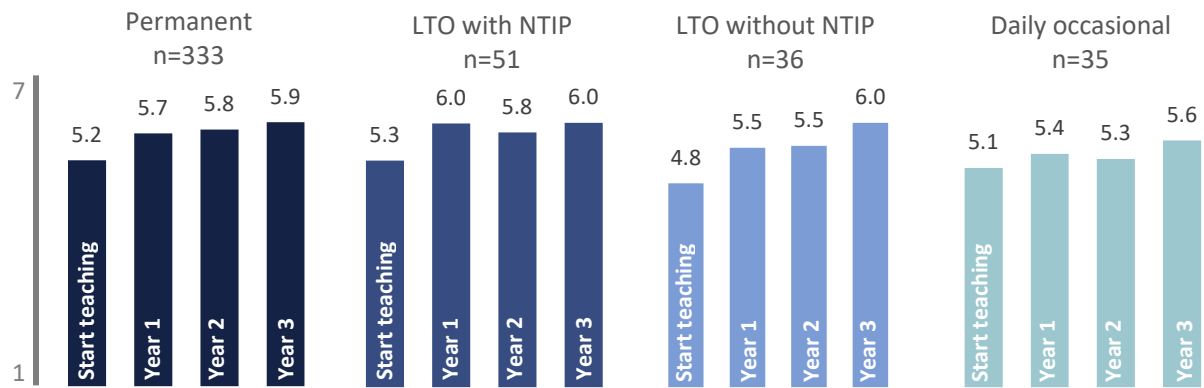
¹⁷ Permanent: $t=5.09$; $p=0.01$
 LTO with NTIP: $t=2.04$; $p=0.01$
 LTO without NTIP: $t=2.46$; $p=0.01$
 Daily occasional: $t=2.96$; $p=0.01$

¹⁸Partial correlation, controlling for efficacy score when they started teaching in Ontario: $r=0.12$, $p=0.01$

3.10.3 Growth in commitment to continuous learning

Participants were quite committed to continuous learning when they started teaching in Ontario. Since then, commitment to learning has increased significantly within each of the survey subgroups¹⁹ (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Growth in commitment to continuous learning, by subgroup (all cohorts)



Items: “I reflect on my teaching every day to figure out what’s working well and what I need to do differently”
 “I talk with my colleagues about challenges that I’m facing in my teaching”
 “I use a wide variety of effective instructional strategies”

Scale: 1: Not at all true for me to 7: Very true for me

Scale scores reflect the average of all the items.

Study groups reflect 2019 teaching positions for Cohort 1, 2020 teaching positions for Cohort 2, and 2021 teaching positions for Cohort 3.

Results include only participants who completed all three surveys in the first, second, and third year of their participation in the study

Teachers who had accessed a higher **number of supports**²⁰, **informal mentorship from colleagues**²¹, opportunities to have a **colleague observe them teaching followed by discussion**²², and/or **did not have a Daily occasional assignment**²³ tended to have slightly stronger growth in their commitment to lifelong learning.

¹⁹ Permanent: $t=10.5$; $p=0.01$
 LTO with NTIP: $t=5.01$; $p=0.01$
 LTO without NTIP: $t=6.26$; $p=0.01$
 Daily occasional: $t=3.27$; $p=0.01$

²⁰Partial correlation, controlling for learning score when they started teaching in Ontario: $r=0.097$, $p=0.01$

²¹Partial correlation, controlling for learning score when they started teaching in Ontario: $r=0.10$, $p=0.01$

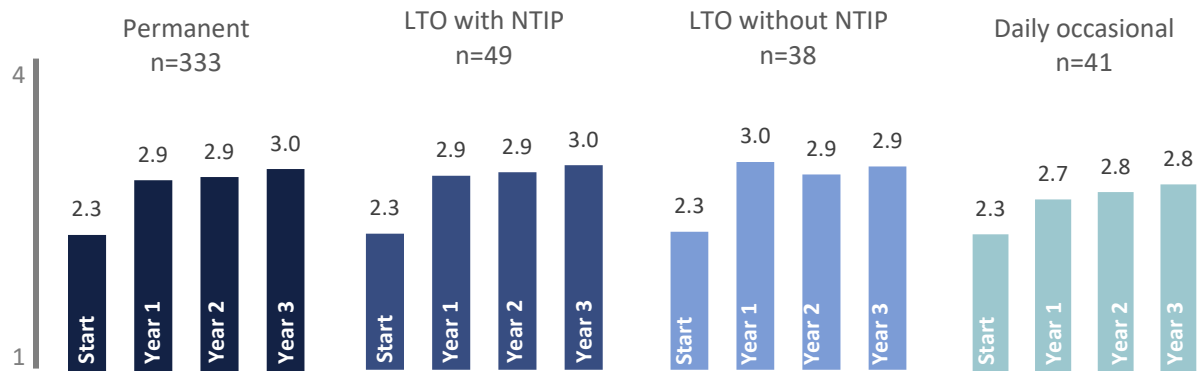
²²Partial correlation, controlling for learning score when they started teaching in Ontario: $r=0.09$, $p=0.01$

²³ Partial correlation, controlling for learning score when they started teaching in Ontario: $r=-0.09$, $p=0.01$

3.10.4 Growth in instructional practice

Since they began teaching in Ontario, participants' repertoire of teaching strategies has blossomed (see Figure 19). The growth was statistically significant within each of the survey subgroups.²⁴

Figure 19: Growth in repertoire of instructional strategies, by subgroup (all cohorts)



Item: How would you describe your repertoire of strategies for...

- ... maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning
- ... building students' confidence
- ... getting students motivated / excited to learn
- ... helping students master new concepts/skills
- ... responding to students' diverse learning needs
- ... assessing students' learning

Scale: 1: Not adequate to 4: Very strong

Scale scores reflect the average of all the items.

Study groups reflect 2019 teaching positions for Cohort 1. 2020 teaching positions for Cohort 2, and 2021 teaching positions for Cohort 3.

Results include only participants who completed all three surveys in the first, second, and third year of their participation in the study

Teachers who had more **years of experience**²⁵, who had accessed a higher **number of supports**²⁶, opportunities to **connect with other new teachers**²⁷, to take part in an **in-person Community of Practice**²⁸, and/or had opportunities to have a **colleague observe them teaching followed by discussion**²⁹ tended to have slightly stronger growth in instructional practice.

²⁴ Permanent: $t=22.54$; $p=0.01$
 LTO with NTIP: $t=8.31$; $p=0.01$
 LTO without NTIP: $t=8.56$; $p=0.01$
 Daily occasional: $t=6.72$; $p=0.01$

²⁵Partial correlation, controlling for instructional score when they started teaching in Ontario: $r=0.13$, $p=0.01$

²⁶Partial correlation, controlling for instructional score when they started teaching in Ontario: $r=0.12$, $p=0.01$

²⁷Partial correlation, controlling for instructional score when they started teaching in Ontario: $r=0.09$, $p=0.01$

²⁸Partial correlation, controlling for instructional score when they started teaching in Ontario: $r=0.09$, $p=0.01$

²⁹Partial correlation, controlling for instructional score when they started teaching in Ontario: $r=0.09$, $p=0.01$

3.11 What are the impacts of NTIP?

3.11.1 Impacts of NTIP on students' learning

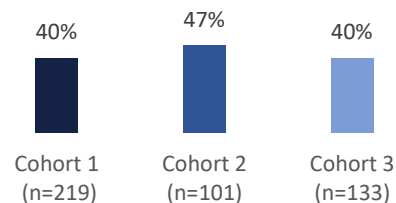
Across all cohorts, almost half of respondents believe their participation in NTIP has had an impact on student's learning. When asked to describe the most significant impact they've observed, respondents most frequently noted the impact of NTIP on their ability to engage students. As one respondent explained, "Networking with other teachers has increased my resources and methods, so students enjoy more interactive, rich classes."

Respondents also felt that they learned valuable skills that impacted their students, including skills in assessment and classroom management. Others explained that access to new ideas and strategies impacted their teaching practice, which impacted their students' learning experience.

Some respondents reported that they gained confidence, or felt a greater ability to adapt to changes in the classroom, due to their experience with NTIP. One respondent explained, "(NTIP's impact was) being able to observe and implement tried and true classroom management and pedagogy into my classroom. I gained confidence trying things with my students. I learned about strategies that worked for other teachers and was able to adapt them into my practice." Other impacts of NTIP included greater comfort teaching online and a greater understanding of cultural competency and equity (including anti-racism principles).

Figure 20: Participation in NTIP and impact on student's learning

% who said that participation in NTIP had an impact on students' learning



3.11.2 Impact of NTIP and related supports in adapting during COVID-19

When asked "How have NTIP and/or related supports affected your ability to adapt during COVID-19", most respondents (64%) reported that they did not feel supported by NTIP during the COVID-19 crisis. Respondents reported different experiences across boards, including NTIP release time being cancelled or reduced during the pandemic, NTIP supports being offered but without release time to utilize them, and NTIP being an added source of stress and extra work during an already challenging time.

For those respondents who found NTIP helpful in adapting to the COVID-19 crisis, access to professional development and mentorship were both important, as well as receiving resources that aided in adapting to the new teaching environment. Some teachers pointed to receiving regular email newsletters that contained tips and resources, including information on staying safe during COVID-19.

Others explained that NTIP provided skills and knowledge that they have been able to utilize during the COVID-19 crisis. One respondent noted, “It has helped in the sense that it gave me a solid foundation to the curriculum. This allows me to adapt to COVID-19 and remote learning in small ways.”

Whether they attributed the support to NTIP or not, many respondents pointed to support from their colleagues as particularly important during the COVID-19 crisis. One respondent explained, “My peers have helped me to adapt during COVID-19 by sharing their resources and best practices as well as being supportive and optimistic.”

4 Case Studies: Promising Practices Across Ontario

With the goal of reflecting the diverse contexts and realities of implementing NTIP, the ministry approached four school boards to participate as case studies in year 5 of the BTLJ research. Taken together the case study boards represent a range of:

- Geography – Eastern, Northern, Greater Toronto and Southwestern Ontario
- Communities Served – Rural, suburban and urban
- Board Size – Scope of NTIP (including mentors) ranges from under 40 to over 2000 participants
- Language – English and French



Below we describe the findings from each study. For each case, we draw from the interviews with NTIP leads and administrators to describe what the board offers to beginning teachers. We also describe the experience of beginning teachers and their mentors, based on their interviews.

4.1 Board A

Board A in Northern Ontario covers a vast geographic region and has a relatively small number of new hires. At this board we interviewed 1 NTIP lead, 1 principal and a beginning teacher. Human Resources contacts newly hired teachers with details of pay, benefits, and pension. The NTIP Lead connects with the principal to ensure the principal communicated with the new teacher about NTIP. After newly hired teachers have got their “feet wet,” the NTIP Lead asks them what they need help with, such as classroom engagement, assessment, and evaluation.



4.1.1 Supports offered to beginning teachers

In our interview with a school principal, the principal explained that she and the school secretary welcome new teachers as they arrive in the school. They give new teachers a tour of the school including the office, the photocopier room and the staff room, and check they have the essentials including email login and photocopy password. The principal meets the new teacher and gives them her cellphone number and the times they can reach her. The principal encourages teachers to “to lean

on any staff member. They can go to anybody to ask questions and get support.” The principal has an open door policy: “all teachers, staff, students, whoever it is, they are more than welcome.”

Board A has a virtual learning environment (VLE) that existed pre-COVID. The VLE includes an area for beginning teachers, *“where they can login and access a lot of basic materials around those competencies [e.g., classroom engagement, assessment, and evaluation]. Being in a small board in the north, and with a lack of supply teachers, face-to-face training, and a new teacher orientation session...they put a lot of information in the VLE, with videos of the people that are in our board, like myself, and the superintendent, and our math lead so they [new teachers] can see and put a name to the face.”* Through the VLE, *“coordinators have even partnered with classroom teachers to teach lessons in different things, where they take over the class for 45 minutes and co-teach with classroom teachers.”* The virtual platform has enabled teachers *“to reach more students and more classrooms”* beyond just a single physical building.

The Board has adopted a group mentoring approach, where everyone supports new teachers. This approach works primarily in three ways: beginning teachers are encouraged to reach out and ask questions; principals check in with beginning teachers; and principals and the NTIP Lead explore and support teachers’ specific needs. This approach also helps find ways to support release time; for example, in one case the Superintendent, NTIP Lead, the Principal, and Early Years lead worked together to coordinate release time for a beginning teacher who needed support.

The principal we interviewed said COVID has been a *“blessing in disguise,”* noting that *“we can actually set aside time to meet, so if there is a divisional group meeting, they can do that via Google now. We eliminated that inability to meet and travel and coordinate schedules with technology. As much as COVID has made it a little bit harder to teach sometimes, with all the protocols and things in place, it has really increased our connectivity in terms of people across the board connecting with each other, which has been really, really nice.”*

Board A emphasized how *“new teachers need to know you care about them. You need to make it personal. They need to feel that they can reach out to you, someone like myself that is in a senior administrator role. That is one thing and that is unique to our smaller board is that you get to know everybody. And I feel that having that personal touch, I think we do really well here, and that makes our new teachers feel really good.”*

4.1.2 Beginning teachers’ experiences

Receiving direct support from different people has been most helpful in Board A. One teacher shared how her **principal is always available** to meet or answer questions through email, text, phone call, or a video call. The **NTIP Lead** has gone over types of assessment and the different supports the NTIP program offers. And the **VLE** has been a good resource because of the different topics it offers, with different Leads, e.g., Math, Special Education, posting links to materials.

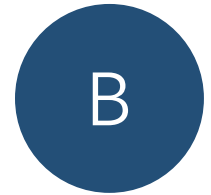
4.1.3 Future Opportunities

Use learning modules created at the Ministry. Ensure forms, such as applications for training and release time, are easy to fill out. Provide job descriptions for teaching roles that are not well understood but will affect new teachers, such as Special Education Resource Teacher.

4.2 Board B

Board B is in Southwestern Ontario and has been hiring more teachers. At this board, we were able to interview the NTIP lead; the principal, two beginning teachers and two mentors at an elementary school; the vice-principal, two beginning teachers and two mentors at a secondary school. Human Resources is responsible for their on-board orientation.

“Normally, in a group, we provide tutorials on how to access board systems and programs, and how to find that information later online.” Under COVID, the orientation is held on Microsoft Teams and Google Meet, with the addition of reviewing COVID protocols. Occasional teachers are included. *“We still try to maintain some sort of group feeling. It allows people to ask questions and learn from one another as well.”*



4.2.1 Supports offered to beginning teachers

- Meetings with administrators or department/divisional heads
- Welcome package containing the mission and values of the school and spirit wear (t-shirts or pens)
- Planning time aligned for new teachers and mentors
- Bi-weekly NTIP newsletters from the NTIP lead
- Online asynchronous supports “in bite-sized pieces”
- Workshops on topics they have chosen, released as NTIP podcasts
- Mentors volunteering at the NTIP workshops

4.2.2 Beginning teachers’ experiences

Mentors have been the most helpful support for beginning teachers: *“Starting out, I found it really positive that I had a really good mentor. She has been phenomenal in helping me get started.”* Mentors offer help with writing comments on report cards and also lesson plans. Beginning teachers especially appreciate mentors who check in with them regularly and allow them to observe their class. Teachers find administrators very helpful, connecting them with senior teachers and dropping by their classes. *“My principal is great. She is very involved, she is constantly checking in. Since COVID, she has been really creative, organizing monthly assemblies virtually.”* Teachers need more support with the following: communicating with parents, creating IEPs, and changing from grade to grade.

4.2.3 Mentors’ experiences

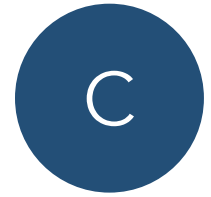
Mentors enjoy helping people who are having a hard time: *“I’m sure they are feeling the same way I felt when I started. Overwhelmed. Worried.”* By helping other teachers, mentors have developed friendships and gained confidence in their own teaching. Before COVID there were regular mentor meetings and under COVID the NTIP lead sends monthly newsletters and posts resources for mentors, including strategies found in books such as *When Mentoring Meets Coaching* and *Mentoring Matters*. The biggest challenge for mentors is having time together with the new teachers. This mentor does COVID check-ins: *“I just walk around at the end of the day and see how they are doing.”*

4.2.4 Future Opportunities

Invite mentors into the workshops for NTIP teachers. Keep the menu of online asynchronous supports that were created for the COVID situation. Encourage more job-embedded learning.

4.3 Board C

Board C, located in the Greater Toronto area, had significant new teacher hiring in the 2020/21 school year. We heard from the NTIP lead, 2 principals (one elementary and one secondary), 4 beginning teachers (including one teacher candidate hired by the board for next semester) and 1 mentor who hosted the teacher candidate.



In the 2020-2021 school year, Board C offered online professional development and support for teaching in a virtual context to all teachers including beginning teachers and their mentors, daily occasional teachers, and pre-service teachers. They paused release time for mentors and beginning teachers to meet. Instead of in-person workshops, the board offered online supports including regular, brief sessions after school that were *“45 minutes to an hour, so it’s short and sweet, doable.”*

The board’s NTIP lead found opportunities to network with other NTIP leads across the province to be especially helpful *“so you can actually hear what other people say about their best practices.”*

4.3.1 Supports offered to beginning teachers

Staff at Board C *“welcome new teachers with open arms.”* They offered a menu of supports including:

- A board-level welcome letter and online orientation
- An in-school personal welcome, orientation, and tour of the school (physical or virtual)
- Assigned and approved formal mentors
- Regular check-ins with principals, including “classroom walkthroughs”
- Onsite and online resources, including a Google site with resources for pre-service and beginning teachers
- Opportunities to meet with mentors and other teachers with similar assignments
- Formal learning opportunities including self-directed learning modules, workshops, and online learning.
- Informal network opportunities, supported by board-level instructional program leaders
- In-school lunch and learn sessions (including mindfulness, yoga, google apps, sessions on anti-racism, anti-harassment, anti-discriminatory language)

“We do have a little more opportunity to support teachers to a greater extent ... our occasional teachers can access the professional development that we offer online.” – NTIP Lead

4.3.2 Beginning teachers’ experiences

One interviewee said, *“the board here has a new teachers’ program with a lot of PD sessions, and those were extremely helpful for me in the beginning, for networking, for sharing ideas and resources, and learning new things.”* **Mentors**, whether formal or informal, are one of the most helpful supports. *“My mentor was very generous with her time and sharing her planning and ideas and resources.”* Mentors help in many ways, including sharing teaching and planning resources, observing new teachers and offering feedback, and offering guidance on student assessment and reporting: *“My mentors would share their bank of comments for report cards—that was priceless!”*

When they start at a new school, teachers appreciate a personal welcome from **principals and vice-principals**. Some teachers appreciate regular check-ins: *“Just checking in from time to time, saying, how are you doing, how are you coping, how can we help?”* As beginning teachers progress through NTIP,

they appreciate principals and VPs who observe their teaching, and offer feedback: *“When they do pop in,... I really found it helpful to have both positive and constructive feedback from administration because you get different ideas and different perspectives depending on different administrators and their own experiences.”* In addition, principals who engage with beginning teachers can provide valued references when they apply for new teaching positions.

Beginning teachers appreciate support to overcome **various challenges**. One challenge is learning how to encourage classroom engagement: *“Anytime that some problem arises with specific students, that may not be working nicely, or something happened on the school yard, that has been where I had to lean on my mentor teacher for advice.”* Another teacher said, *“My first two years teaching were very hard in terms of classroom management... I felt very unprepared to deal with difficult students.”*

Another challenge for beginning teachers is learning how to work with parents: *“interacting with parents is a challenge.”* Beginning teachers want to feel supported by their principal when they interact with families.

4.3.3 Mentor Experiences

Mentors can be motivated by their own experience as beginning teachers: *“My own experience was quite terrifying...I let them find their way...I really focus on building confidence.”* The mentor benefited from his mentoring relationships: *“Teaching is a form of learning. I’ve gained abilities to strengthen my own practice by teaching someone else. And staying current, I’ve picked up some resources.”* The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on this mentor’s experiences because classes are being taught online. He felt that teachers who have begun their teaching career during the Covid-19 pandemic have had fewer opportunities to develop classroom engagement strategies: *“because they are at home, keeping them engaged at this time seems to be more challenging.”*

4.3.4 Future opportunities

Participants in Board C identified a variety of future opportunities. Opportunities include making sure that new teachers are **supported from the moment they step in** the school. Also, **increasing support for mentors**, continuing to develop a *“bank of available mentors”* and encouraging mentoring as *“a real leadership opportunity.”* Other opportunities include **strengthening support for beginning teachers** around classroom engagement skills.

4.4 Board D

This Eastern Ontario board has had many new teacher hires. At this board we had the opportunity to interview 1 NTIP lead, 1 vice-principal, 2 beginning teachers and 2 mentors. This board has two NTIP leads, one for elementary and one for secondary.



Board D offers workshops for beginning teachers, supply teachers, and mentors. Full-day workshops cover topics such as classroom engagement and IEPs. Half-day workshops are offered to LTOs and STOs. The board offers a one-day workshop to mentors that provides guidance on mentoring.

In 2020-2021, due to COVID, some adjustments were made to the NTIP program. The NTIP lead visited schools to have 30-to-45-minute in-person visits with each beginning teacher, including new supply teachers. Workshops were shortened from a one day, in-person format to half a day and virtual. For the first month, the school board established video weblink “*call-ins*” between 7-8 am and 3-4 pm, Monday to Friday, so that beginning teachers could ask for help from experienced teachers, such as the NTIP leads. The school board website was modified to make it useful as a resource: links to webinars and to one-pagers were added. The school board NTIP website was made available to all teachers, including short-term occasional teachers. The NTIP leads provided 30-minute monthly webinars to beginning teachers highlighting priorities for that month.

4.4.1 Supports offered to beginning teachers

Board-level supports for beginning teachers include:

- A welcome letter with details about the NTIP program
- A welcome kit from the school board that explains the NTIP program, the workshops offered by the school board, the role of the mentor.
- A social hour for beginning teachers at the start of the year.
- 6 one-day training workshops on topics such as classroom engagement, working with students on IEPs. Supply teachers can participate in the workshops if they choose.

School-level supports for beginning teachers include:

- A welcome meeting at the start of the year.
- A guide including fire evacuation plan, school calendar etc.
- All new teachers, whether beginning, experienced, or daily occasional, are assigned a “partner” to explain technical details of the school.
- After a few weeks, the principal has a one-on-one meeting with the new teacher
- If the beginning teacher has not found a mentor after 2-3 weeks, the principal (VP) helps them find a suitable mentor.
- The department head helps beginning teachers and provides them with resources.

4.4.2 Beginning teachers’ experiences

Beginning teachers appreciate working in a school environment where other teachers, mentors and the administration are **accessible** and **responsive** to questions as they arise. One beginning teacher remarked how he had not had any major challenges because “*at our school, if you ask a question, everyone is there to help you*”. He explained that if he encounters any small problems, he can turn to his colleagues, the vice-principal, the principal, his mentor, or teachers that he passes in the hallways: “*I ask my questions then they guide me easily and it works.*”

Beginning teachers interacted in a variety of ways with their mentors, on Teams, by phone in the evening. They appreciated being able to contact their mentor easily : *“I don't have a problem with my mentor, because she's always there.”* One beginning teacher explained that having **mentors** who teach at the same school and who teach the same subjects is particularly helpful: *“so sometimes we plan the course together, we plan [curriculum] units”* together. Teachers appreciated the opportunity to observe their mentor's classroom and to have their own classes observed by their mentors.

Beginning teachers also found support and good advice from their **principal** and **vice-principal** and from their **school board**. Teachers appreciate having principals or vice-principals that they can turn to when needed: *“I know that I can count on the principal and vice-principal. They are there for me.”* Interacting with parents is a situation where beginning teachers may turn to the school administrators for advice: *“Sometimes if I have an email from a parent, if I'm not comfortable responding directly, I often discuss the email with my mentor, but sometimes I discuss this email with the vice-principal.”* Board-level NTIP workshops for beginning teachers were also useful: *“At the workshop training for new teachers, I learnt good strategies... that are helpful for classroom management.”*

4.4.3 Mentors' experiences

Mentors enjoy exchanging ideas with beginning teachers. Mentors helped their mentees with all aspects of teaching, e.g., understanding school rules, finding resources, planning lesson, writing report cards, and engaging students: *“It's really about anything associated with teaching.”* One mentor explained that the school day is very busy, so she gives her mentee her personal phone numbers, so that they can talk in the evening. Mentors were very grateful for any days away from the classroom, where they can work one on one with their mentee or attend workshops on how to be a good mentor. Time away from the school, allowed them to really focus: *“a full day not at school, so no distractions, just an opportunity to really just share and exchange ideas.”* The school-board mentoring training was especially appreciated: *“What was really good was that we had training days with the board where there were teachers who specialize in mentoring, who offered us approaches to use with my mentee”.*

Mentors noted that mentoring others could be beneficial for their own teaching practice. Explaining their teaching approaches to their mentees led them to reflect about their own teaching: *“It feels good to take a little break and then think about what we're doing, and then why we're doing it”.* Also, mentors appreciated hearing about new teaching ideas from their mentees, such as the use of technology in the classroom: *“It really becomes an exchange, especially with new teachers who come out with new technology, lots of new approaches. That's also inspiring for teachers who are - they've been in the profession longer. It also allows us to renew our approach.”*

4.4.4 Future opportunities

Teachers and mentors are allocated 2 full days to work together. One participant suggested that extending that support to a week or two would be ideal. The quadmester system makes it difficult for mentors to find the time to help beginning teachers. It was suggested that maybe teachers that have greater flexibility in their schedule such as resource teachers, should be encouraged to be mentors.

4.5 Case study findings: What principals do that is most helpful

Below is a list of promising practices that principals can try:

- Provide orientation: *“orientation when we first start at the school.”*
- Be available and approachable:
 - *“really welcoming and available”*
 - *“we did not hesitate to approach him at any time”*
 - *“open their door, where you don’t feel as if you’re being annoying when you’re coming to talk to them”*
- Stay in touch often with beginning teachers: *“check in and make sure you’re ok”*
- Share resources: *“He often shares resources with me that are relevant to the subjects that I teach”*
- Offer support and feedback on teaching strategies, and references:
 - *“observe a lesson or two”*
 - *“positive and constructive feedback”*
- Provide references, when appropriate: *“offer themselves as references for the hiring process”*
- Help with challenging students: *“I described the problem, and then together we were able to find solutions for the student.”*
- Support beginning teachers when they interact with parents.

4.6 Case study findings: Promising practices recommended by NTIP leads

Below is a list of promising practices suggested by NTIP leads:

- Connect with other NTIP leads across the province through online networking opportunities
- Designate a single contact point so beginning teachers know who to ask when they need help and where to find the resources
- Create the context where people feel they belong
- Connect with people virtually, ask them what supports they need
- Touch base with beginning teachers throughout the year so you can be responsive to emerging and changing needs
- Offer LTOs and STOS the same workshops as beginning permanent teachers – but shortened versions.
- Offer micro PD sessions.
- Offer workshops on
 - how to use technology in teaching
 - classroom engagement. (five modules: routines and procedures, connecting with students, giving positive reinforcements, pedagogical planning and managing disruptive behaviours)

5 Learning Journeys Illustration

The image below illustrates our learning from the BTLJ study. This image shows there are many unique and different pathways to permanent employment as a beginning teacher in Ontario. The speech bubbles represent the voices of beginning teachers. Their experiences are represented as follows: **commitment to ongoing learning** (the head, represented by puzzle pieces); the **importance of mentorship and connecting with other teachers** (the hands); the **hustle and movement involved in new teaching** (the feet); the **emotional investment** in the practice of teaching (the heart); and the **resilience and determination** involved in the journey (spirit, represented by a rainbow).

