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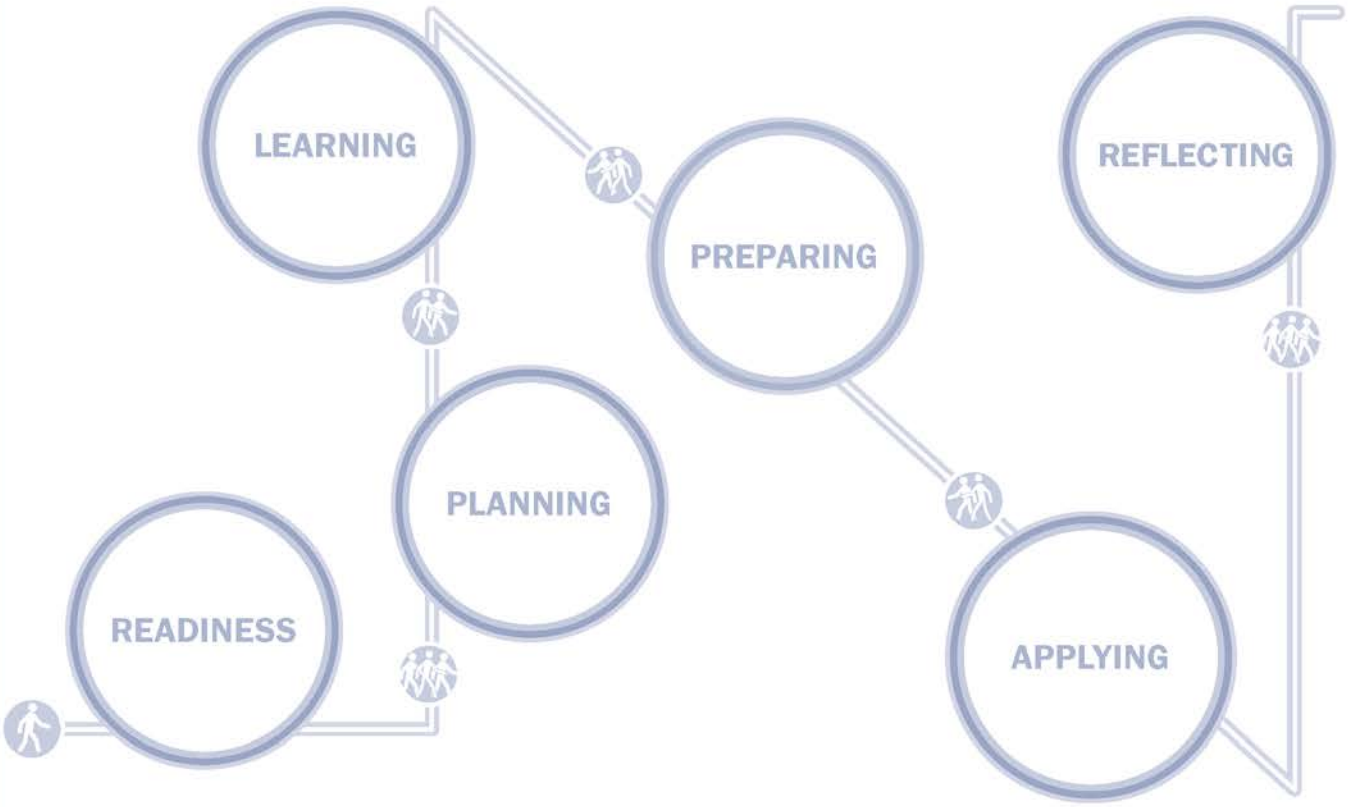
Teacher Induction and Mentoring Brief



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Teacher Induction and Mentoring Brief

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Introduction

There are few options for academic teacher preparation for the adult education field. However, one way to provide systemic and ongoing support to adult educators in the context of their programs and classrooms is through a program-based professional development method known as induction. Induction is a program-level support that spans all of the roles and responsibilities teachers fulfill and can be used to improve their effectiveness in serving students. This professional development model orients and acclimates new teachers or those with little experience into the adult education profession and develops their skills through consistent direction from seasoned staff and through guided reflection. There are many facets to induction that cover content, instructional practice, and program policies.

One strategy often used in teacher induction is mentoring, or pairing experienced teachers with teachers beginning their careers. The mentors work closely with beginning teachers and provide them with much-needed support and guidance. This brief focuses on this strategy and will explain how induction using mentoring can help beginning adult educators learn the teaching craft, become better instructors, and serve their students more effectively.

Findings in this brief informed the development of the *Adult Education Teacher Induction Toolkit*, a set of resources used to prepare beginning teachers for their roles as adult educators. Appendix A identifies the tools in the Toolkit and where they can be accessed. In 2013–2014, eight programs field-tested these materials to learn the impact of induction and mentoring on adult education teachers beginning their careers. The quotations cited within this brief illustrate the experiences and reflections of those mentors and beginning teachers working together.

For more guidance and tools for mentors and beginning teachers as they work through induction together, please see the *Mentoring Guide for Teacher Induction.*

Definition of Teacher Mentoring

You may be familiar with the role mentoring plays in many industries to facilitate professional growth within a workforce. The mentorship relationship is one in which one colleague supports the skill and knowledge development of another, providing guidance to that individual based on his or her own experiences and understanding of best practices. At times, this is an informal relationship that emerges organically through common work assignments. Or one colleague may approach another to offer or ask for help. In other instances, workplaces provide structured mentoring programs implemented at the program or organizational level. No matter the situation, the common features of mentoring relationships are that they are between coworkers or people in the same field, involving a more senior or seasoned professional advising someone who is less experienced in a role or in the field.

Induction is a professional development program that incorporates mentoring and is designed to offer "support, guidance, and orientation for beginning teachers during the transition into their first teaching job"[1]; these programs help teachers through their first year by supporting ongoing dialogue and collaboration among teachers, which accelerate the new teachers' effectiveness and increases student achievement.

The definition of this and other terms relevant to teacher induction can be found in the *Teacher Effectiveness Glossary*.

Mentoring can be key in preparing beginning teachers for the demands of a profession that is often learned on the job rather than in a certification program or practicum placements. Mentors coach beginning teachers in the implementation of evidence-based instruction and use of data for lesson planning and nurture their critical and reflective thinking. Pairing one or more beginning teachers with skilled practitioners who can mentor them allows the beginning teacher(s) to deepen their understanding of teaching theories and approaches, classroom management, and program policies through dialogue and reflection with their mentor. This focused, joint look at practice and student learning through an ongoing, developmental, and formative relationship provides much-needed support to teachers new to the field of adult education, those who are implementing a new initiative, or those assigned to teach a new content area.[2] The ultimate aim for adult education practitioners is to provide quality instruction so students can meet their goals of obtaining or improving employment, participating in training programs or postsecondary education, or more fully engaging in their community.[3] Mentoring from seasoned adult education professionals can support beginning teachers in reaching these outcomes for themselves and their students.

Structure of Mentoring as Part of Teacher Induction

Research from the New Teacher Center has found that a number of components and conditions should be in place for mentoring within teacher induction to be successful.[4] Programs should establish an infrastructure for the mentoring piece of induction that articulates how beginning and experienced teachers will be supported, the process for selecting mentors to participate, the standards and instructional content that will be used, and the evaluation process for assessing how the beginning teachers are performing. For best results, a rigorous mentor selection process should:

- Be conducted so that beginning teachers are paired with experienced teachers in the same content area who are equipped to field questions about instruction and program policy and foster their growth and development.
- Set aside regular, dedicated, and sanctioned time for mentors and beginning teachers to communicate and interact so that supportive relationships can develop and the mentors can monitor beginning teachers' professional growth over time.
- Establish learning communities so that beginning teachers have a network of support through their mentors and other colleagues to share ideas and problem solve with peers who understand classroom challenges.
- Use teaching standards and competencies, such as the *Adult Education Teacher Competencies*, as benchmarks for performance and evaluation through observation, and

consultation. This should be conducted regularly to help beginning teachers make decisions about instruction based on evidence and data rather than in a haphazard fashion. By dedicating time and resources, establishing a support network, and providing structure, mentoring programs can thrive and bolster adult education teaching staff.

It is important to keep in mind that the role of the mentor is not supervisory or managerial; rather, mentors guide beginning teachers in reflective practice and provide classroom and teacher observation so the beginning teachers can better implement evidence-based instruction. The mentoring process used within formal induction programs is to create a collaborative learning environment that cultivates problem-solving between the mentor and the beginning teacher. In so doing, mentors can help their colleagues reach their full potential and thereby increase the likelihood of student achievement.[5,6] Although many factors contribute to student learning, research has shown that teacher quality is the strongest influence on positive student outcomes.[7,8] Knowledgeable and skilled teachers increase student learning, and mentoring is one strategy to improve the performance of both teachers and their learners.

Value of Mentoring in Induction

Often, when teachers begin their careers, they concentrate on the basics of what they are required to teach. As they become more comfortable with the many facets and demands of teaching, they turn their focus to how to teach most effectively and how the system they are working within operates. With mentoring in place, however, beginning teachers can start their careers and placements addressing both "the what" and "the how," as they rely on veterans to share best teaching practices and institutional knowledge. In addition to contributing to new teachers' sense of efficacy and their professional growth, the collegial relationship with the mentor decreases the new teacher's isolation and helps them navigate the intricacies of organizational and classroom politics.[9] By providing the required time, resources, and leadership needed for quality mentoring within induction, adult education programs can shepherd beginning teachers through the various adjustments and phases of professional growth they experience early in their careers.

Creating Effective Mentoring Pairs

The *Leadership Guide for Teacher Induction* included in the *Adult Education Teacher Induction Toolkit* provides detailed guidance about how program leaders can identify and recruit mentors within their adult education program and match them with beginning teachers. Matching mentors with less experienced teachers is a process that should be considered carefully to have the desired effects; assigning any experienced teacher is not enough. Although it is not a science,[10] many variables do need to be considered. For example, beginning teachers tend to have the most success when assigned to a mentor who has similar teaching responsibilities[11] because it fosters the opportunity for deeper collaboration, and the insights and information they glean are more directly applicable to their classrooms. Emotional support, including valuing personal characteristics as well as professional ones, is also important to consider within the mentoring relationship, along with common planning time and similar teaching styles.[12] Taking time to make effective matches can accelerate beginning teacher effectiveness and consequently increase student achievement.

Thoughts From the Field Test

"I taught a lesson that I had never taught in this particular context, so I was stretched to rely on my prior experience. As I reflected upon this afterwards, I realized that many of the strategies that I used throughout the demo lesson come very naturally now, but took lots of years and hard work to develop. … Beginning teachers may have questions on how to effectively develop and implement such strategies, and I need to be prepared to articulate that."

—Canton City Schools Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE)

However, sometimes the ideal mentoring program design and the local reality do not align—depending on program size or site locations, it is not always possible to pair mentors and beginning teachers who are in the same locale. Or, due to scheduling challenges, it may be hard for the beginning teacher to observe the mentor teacher in the classroom or vice versa. However, there are ways to address these barriers creatively. For example, the mentor and beginning teacher can observe a third teacher together and then compare their opinions. Although lacking some of the shared experience found in the reciprocal observations, this observation structure can provide a collegial analysis in which both mentor and beginning teacher can learn.

Using technology is another strategy to address scheduling and distance issues. Both mentors and beginning teaches can record themselves teaching a class, and then the other can critique, provide feedback, and ask questions based on what they observe in the recording. In addition, if mentors and beginning teachers cannot meet face-to-face, they can use videoconferencing software like Skype or iChat to discuss the teachers' experiences and work in the classroom. Using e-mail and shared electronic drives, mentors can post print, video, and audio resources for the beginning teacher so that information can be shared even when face-to-face meetings are impossible. Mentors and beginning teachers can develop or review lesson plans together, or a mentor can demonstrate how to use a website, all while using screen-sharing software. A beginning teacher can also convert student work to PDF and send it to the mentor so they can discuss errors or areas in which students excelled to determine what could be covered differently and what was successful during instruction. In effect, any electronic tool that can be used in instruction, meeting planning, and communication allows the mentor and beginning teacher to share their thoughts, opinions, advice, resources, and work. Although in-person contact is ideal, relationships, open communication, and resource sharing can flourish at a distance as well.

Effective Mentoring

Each day spent in the adult education classroom generates questions for teachers regarding strategies, curriculum, technology, and more. These issues are best addressed by those with similar real-life experience working with students,[13] and experienced teachers serving as mentors are able to provide this assistance.

Thoughts From the Field Test

"I observed my mentor applying the two principles of 'presenting clear and organized instruction' and 'using multiple and varied examples and formats to present information.' It was helpful to see that even when giving very clear directions she still runs into the same things I deal with in my class."

—Heartland Community College

Mentors can help beginning teachers develop the following behaviors and skills:

- **Making connections between what is learned in professional development activities and the teacher's own work context.**[14] Mentors can help beginning teachers apply in their classrooms the concepts and techniques they learn about in training.
- **Analyzing and reflecting on practice.**[15,16,17] Teachers need to know when and why to use a strategy or technique, not just how.[18] They are more likely to learn by observing the practice of other teachers—including their mentor—by trial and error in their own classes, and by receiving feedback from their mentor rather than from described examples.[19]
- **Including various instructional approaches in their practice.** Observing mentors in the classroom—as well as being observed by mentors—will encourage beginning teachers to present theory, do demonstrations, give students opportunities to practice, and include application and reflection activities.[20,21, 22]
- **Using student work to inform practice.**[23,24] Mentors can help teachers learn how to analyze student work on assignments, performance in the classroom, and achievement on standardized tests, and use this information to improve their lesson planning and instruction.
- **Making their implicit knowledge about teaching explicit, by articulating their assumptions and testing them against new knowledge.**[25] Mentors can help teachers process and integrate into their practice what they are learning each day as they work with students.

Thoughts From the Field Test

"I know that this is the beginning of the process and that I am learning, but it was eye opening to realize how much I don't know."

—The Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI)

Combined, these behaviors and skills allow beginning teachers to approach teaching as "an inquiry process" or exploration that is "assisted by an experienced other" found in the mentor.[26] The mentor shares with the beginning teacher lessons and knowledge gained from real-world implementation that are rarely learned through traditional academic means. In so doing, mentors help beginning teachers define goals and conduct continuous self-assessment of their practice. Through this work together, the mentor provides developmental support to beginning teachers and shares accountability for that teacher's growth.[27,28,29]

Pedagogy of mentoring is described as "an in-depth understanding of teacher development, professional teaching standards, performance assessment, and student content standards, along with strategies for classroom observation and a variety of coaching techniques" designed to present the optimal conditions for beginning teacher learning, development, and problem solving.[30]

Characteristics of Effective Mentors

One might assume that all good teachers naturally would be great in the mentor role. However, many effective teachers are not aware of what makes them successful because their actions in the classroom and skill with students are second nature.[31] Effective mentors are not only good teachers, but also able to articulate the art of teaching—to convey what they do and why to achieve positive results. Mentors must have strong interpersonal skills, the ability to build a trusting rapport, and the capacity to respond to the challenges faced by teachers taking on new assignments so they can transfer that knowledge to beginning teachers. Effective mentors should be responsive to a wide range of communication styles, adept in problem solving, engaged in self-reflection, and active listeners.[32] Mentors should possess a commitment to collaboration as well as be patient, have enthusiasm, and share their love of learning with others.[33] Successful mentors seek to develop trust by encouraging open, two-way communication; this often means sharing their own teaching challenges so that the beginning teacher knows the mentor is familiar with and available to discuss tough issues and share his or her own struggles.

No absolute number of years of classroom instruction or relevant experience equates to being a successful mentor; however, to provide high-quality mentoring in adult education, one should have relevant experience in the classroom, strong content knowledge in the same subject, understanding of adult learning theory, prior experience with coaching or facilitating groups, and the ability to build honest and reflective relationships.[34] It is most helpful for mentors to have a comprehensive grasp of the field of adult education and to keep up with current trends and research so they have many resources to draw from in shepherding beginning teachers.

Behaviors of Effective Mentors

Are Active Learners	Support Beginning Teachers' Growth and Professional Development	Communicate Effectively
▪ Know they will learn from the beginning teachers and the mentoring experience and express this to the beginning teachers. ▪ Demonstrate that they are reflecting on their own practice while working with beginning teachers. ▪ Are open to feedback and willing to adapt as needed. ▪ Establish goals with the beginning teachers for their	▪ Can articulate the art of teaching. ▪ Help teachers establish goals for themselves and the partnership. ▪ Do not feel the need to prove competence by having all the answers or preempting the beginning teachers' discoveries. ▪ Know when to share knowledge and when to help beginning teachers discover	▪ Listen with full attention and are able to read verbal and nonverbal cues; can "hear" what is said as well as what is not said. ▪ Are able to articulate clearly what they know and have experienced. ▪ Recognize and honor different communication styles. ▪ Ask open-ended questions to elicit thinking; ask follow-up questions to clarify

Are Active Learners	Support Beginning Teachers' Growth and Professional Development	Communicate Effectively
partnership. ▪ Continue to build their own content knowledge and familiarity with emerging research and practices in the field.	things on their own. ▪ Use learner-centered approaches with beginning teachers. ▪ Encourage beginning teachers to assess their own situation and make their own conclusions and decisions. ▪ Set high expectations for beginning teachers and recognize and build on teachers' strengths.	understanding and to demonstrate genuine interest. ▪ Probe for specificity, clarity, elaboration, and precision so that teachers learn to reflect on their practice and learn to better articulate their thinking and reasoning. ▪ Check assumptions and find out whether interpretations and perceptions are valid and accurate.

A mentor does not equate to a perfect educator. Like beginning teachers, mentors should be encouraged and willing to participate in continual professional development to further expand their knowledge, skills, and expertise. Potential topics of professional development for mentors include understanding the role of a mentor, honing classroom observation skills, engaging in reflective practice, using student work to evaluate and inform practice, addressing diverse learning needs, and providing effective feedback.[35,36,37] By engaging in continuous professional development, mentors provide an additional model of what it means to be an effective lifelong learner and progress through phases of knowledge and understanding.

Thoughts From the Field Test

"I always feel I have a lot to learn in teaching, even after many years of teaching."

—The Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI)

Reflection and using data are two key practices to improve instruction, and mentors should have a lot of experience with both. Reflection helps teachers at any level of their career build understanding, change practice, set goals for improvement, and engage in continuous discovery. Successful mentors engage in this activity in their own practice and provide guidance and support to beginning teachers so this behavior becomes an automatic part of their work. By sharing their reflections with beginning teachers, mentors can teach them to analyze their work and make adjustments on the basis of their conclusions. This is one form of data collection and use. There are other data that teachers should analyze, such as student work, student behaviors, test scores, and so on, to understand students' strengths and needs as well as to evaluate their own teaching effectiveness. Mentors can help beginning teachers interpret these data and plan accordingly.[38] By sharing their expertise in examining their work and collecting data, mentors can help beginning adult education teachers develop effective habits they will use as they progress in their careers.

Implications and Considerations for Adult Education

There are implications for incorporating mentoring into adult education teacher induction models. Because there is strong evidence that "student learning is directly linked to teacher effectiveness,"[39] adult education programs should take advantage of teacher induction and the

mentoring process used within it. Adult education students have limited time for class, so having well-trained and well-supported beginning teachers facilitating instruction can support and encourage student learning. In fact, it has been noted that students with lower ability tend to be the first students to increase achievement when teachers receive training and are educated on best practices.[40] Thus, this will likely encourage the lower-performing students to persist and reach additional goals. In addition, as beginning teachers feel more support, improve their skills, and increase their confidence, teacher attrition will be reduced. Support from key stakeholders, such as mentors, instructional leaders, and other teachers, is critical for complex programmatic change. Revamping schedules, skills, and procedures may be necessary when integrating induction into a program, but it will serve the objective to shape effective teachers and increase student learning. Although changes in program structure, and possibly philosophy, often are needed for effective teacher induction and mentoring in adult education programs, the results warrant such work. We know that "what the teacher knows and can do in the classroom is the most important factor resulting in student achievement,"[41] and teacher induction and mentoring can facilitate this ultimate educational goal in adult education.

Recommendations for Further Reading

Moir, E. (2003, July). *Launching the next generation of teachers through quality induction*. Paper presented at the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. 2003 Annual Commissioners and Partner States' Symposium, Racine, WI.

Moir, E., & Gless, J. (2001). Quality induction: An investment in teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 28*(1), 109–114.

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Appendix A. Tools in the Adult Education Teacher Induction Toolkit

Name of Tool	Main Intended User	Description of Tool	Tool Location
Teacher Induction and a Toolkit for Adult Educators (Information Brief)	All team members	This brief provides an introduction to and overview of what induction is and what the process involves. It explains the roles and responsibilities of instructional leaders, mentors, and beginning teachers throughout the induction process.	http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/te/toolkit.pdf
Conditions for Success in Teacher Induction (Information Brief)	Instructional leaders	This brief identifies the conditions needed within a program for an induction process to have a positive impact on the performance of beginning teachers. It includes a local program self-evaluation worksheet that instructional leaders can use to determine which conditions are present in their program before deciding whether to start the induction process.	http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/te/conditions.pdf
Teacher Induction and Mentoring Brief (Information Brief)	All team members	This brief defines a mentor, describes the impact that a mentor can have, and identifies characteristics of an effective mentor.	http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/te/mentoring.pdf
Evidence-Based Instruction and Teacher Induction (Information Brief)	All team members	This brief introduces evidence-based instruction.	http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/te/ebi.pdf
Leadership Guide for Teacher Induction	Instructional leaders	This guide offers specific directions and resources to help instructional leaders better understand their roles in the induction process. It details what instructional leaders can do to lead and support the efforts of mentors and beginning teachers as they work through the induction process.	http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/te/leadguide.doc
Mentoring Guide for Teacher Induction	Mentors and beginning teachers	This guide provides direction and support for the mentoring of beginning teachers in adult education. It provides specific guidance and resources to help beginning teachers, with support from mentors, to plan, document, and evaluate professional growth. It also describes effective mentoring strategies, provides tools to guide mentoring activities, and	http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/te/mentorguide.doc

Name of Tool	Main Intended User	Description of Tool	Tool Location
Mentoring Guide for Teacher Induction (continued)		supports the collaboration between mentors and beginning teachers in planning, pursuing, documenting, and evaluating professional growth. It guides beginning teachers and mentors in using the *Adult Education Teacher Effectiveness Toolkit*.	
Teacher Effectiveness Glossary	All team members	This glossary defines terms found throughout the *Adult Education Teacher Effectiveness Toolkit*.	http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/te/glossary.pdf
Teacher Effectiveness Annotated Bibliography	All team members	This annotated bibliography provides a detailed view of some key pieces of literature on subjects related to teacher effectiveness, teacher induction, teacher competency, and adult learning.	http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/te/annotatedbib.pdf
Introduction to Teacher Effectiveness and Induction (Online Course)	All team members	This self-directed, online course introduces the *Adult Education Teacher Effectiveness Toolkit* to all team members.	http://lincs.ed.gov/programs/teachereffectiveness/online-courses
Principles of Learning for Instructional Design (Online Course)	Mentors and beginning teachers	This self-directed, online course supports teachers' understanding of the key principles behind instructional design that promote the learning and of strategies for applying those principles in their teaching.	http://lincs.ed.gov/programs/teachereffectiveness/online-courses
Motivating Adult Learners to Persist (Online Course)	Mentors and beginning teachers	This self-directed, online course supports teachers' understanding of strategies that motivate adult learners to persist. It also guides teachers in making focused observations of how these strategies are implemented.	http://lincs.ed.gov/programs/teachereffectiveness/online-courses
Adult Education Teacher Competencies	Mentors and beginning teachers	These competencies identify the knowledge and skills expected of any adult education teacher.	http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/te/competencies.pdf
Adult Education Teacher Competencies Self-Assessment	Mentors and beginning teachers	This self-assessment offers a structured approach to determining the knowledge and skills that adult education teachers still need to develop and to identify the professional development priorities that will help them to acquire such knowledge and skills.	http://lincs.ed.gov/programs/teachereffectiveness/self-assessment