

High Quality Induction & Mentoring Practices

A resource for Illinois educators seeking to develop and/or improve their current induction programs with research-based practices that support teacher retention, teacher development, and improved student learning

DEVELOPING BEYOND

CHOOSING MENTORS WITHOUT CRITERIA OR AN EXPLICIT PROCESS

Without administrator and teacher leader engagement in choosing mentors, there is a risk that mentors may be chosen based more on availability rather than on qualifications to engage in meaningful interactions with beginning teachers.

INSUFFICIENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT FOR MENTORS

Without initial and ongoing high quality training to support their development, mentors miss out on the guidance and professional community they need regarding the complex practice of developing beginning teachers and strategizing for the challenges they face.

MEETINGS HAPPEN OCCASIONALLY OR 'WHENEVER THE MENTOR AND TEACHER ARE AVAILABLE'

Often both parties are so busy that meeting time gets relegated down on the list of priorities. The short fragments of time that may be found are typically insufficient for fostering real relationships and growth.

NON SPECIFIC EMOTIONAL AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT ALONE

Emotional support is important but is not sufficient to improve teacher practice. Without specific instructional feedback, mentoring cannot impact student learning. Example: "You're doing a great job teaching your ELL students, Jane. Keep it up!"

INFORMAL/NON EVIDENCED BASED FEEDBACK

The rigor of the program may be compromised when interactions are too often based on informal conversation. Without structure and evidence of beginning teacher practice, interactions may not result in improved teaching practice

MOVING TOWARD

RIGOROUS MENTOR SELECTION BASED ON QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR

Qualities may include: evidence of outstanding teaching practice, strong interpersonal skills, experience with adult learners, respect of peers, and current knowledge of professional development.

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT FOR MENTORS

Effective teachers do not always know what it is about their teaching that is effective. Many mentors are surprised to find that translating knowledge for students is not the same as translating knowledge for adults. High quality and ongoing training and a professional learning community are needed to help mentors develop the skills to identify and translate the elements of effective teaching to beginning teachers.

SANCTIONED TIME FOR MENTOR TEACHER INTERACTIONS

Mentors need sanctioned time to focus on beginning teacher development. Research suggests that mentors and beginning teachers should have 1.25-2.5 hours per week to work together in order to allow for the most rigorous mentoring activities. Time to work together should be protected by teachers and administrators.

INTENSIVE AND SPECIFIC GUIDANCE MOVING TEACHING PRACTICE FORWARD, WHILE ALSO PROVIDING ELEMENTS OF EMOTIONAL/LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Focusing on the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS) and the appropriate content area standards allows for instructional growth that enables teachers to know how to improve. Example: "Let's look at your assessment data and talk about which strategies will help you address the concern you had about reaching your struggling English Language learners."

DOCUMENTATION AND EVIDENCE OF TEACHER PROGRESS

As with student learning, beginning teacher learning should be data driven. To be effective, feedback to beginning teachers must be grounded in evidence about their practice, including evidence gathered through classroom observations. Tools to collect data about various components of their classroom practice and documentation of mentoring conversations ensure a structure for focusing on continuous instructional growth.

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MENTORING FOR ONE YEAR ONLY One-year mentoring programs can provide the support beginning teachers need to survive, but they are not sufficient to help teachers reach an optimal level of effectiveness in their practice and do not recognize the continuum of teacher development.

TOO LITTLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SPECIFICALLY TAILORED TO THE NEEDS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS Novices are in a unique developmental phase that cannot be addressed by “one size fits all” workshops or training. Professional development that is disconnected from teacher needs can be irrelevant and in many situations only serves to overwhelm beginning teachers.

LACK OF TRAINING FOR ADMINISTRATORS AND/OR LACK OF FORMAL COMMUNICATION WITH ADMINISTRATORS Without clearly articulated strategies to support beginning teachers and protect induction activity time, principals may inadvertently undermine the prospects of their teachers’ success. Assigning beginning teachers the most challenging classes, assigning additional responsibilities, or not anticipating their needs for basic resources are all examples of practices to avoid.

ISOLATED PROGRAMMING AND LACK OF ALIGNMENT Without strong partnerships and collaboration, program quality is compromised and beginning teachers are not adequately served.

LOW ACCOUNTABILITY AND DISCONNECTED FROM STANDARDS Without integrating appropriate program, professional, and content standards, programs lack quality and accountability and risk having little impact on beginning teacher and student performance.

MOVING TOWARD

MULTI-YEAR MENTORING Mentoring should be intensive and ongoing (for at least two years) in order to move teacher practice forward in ways that help all students thrive. Research suggests that most deep learning about instruction through mentoring happens in teachers’ second and third years in the classroom.

ONGOING BEGINNING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Beginning teachers benefit from a professional learning community that is guided by the IPTS and the appropriate content area standards and focused on teacher development, problem solving, and mutual support. Opportunities such as regularly scheduled seminars and online learning communities provide a context for rich networking, professional dialogue and reflection, as well as combating isolation.

CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ADMINISTRATORS Administrators play a critical role in setting the stage for beginning teacher and mentor success, creating time for induction, and establishing a positive culture for teacher development in their buildings and in the system. Professional development for administrators and ongoing communication with them about the nature of the program ensure that they understand their role in fully supporting induction.

COLLABORATION WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS Strong communication and collaboration among stakeholders, including administrators, school boards, union/association leaders, and professional partners creates a culture of commitment and ensures success.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND STANDARDS-BASED INDUCTION A commitment to using the Illinois Induction Standards (under development), the IPTS, and the IL Learning Standards creates programs that have high standards for accountability. A commitment to being data-driven will inform program development and improvement as well as policy.