



High Quality Mentoring & Induction Practices

A resource for education leaders seeking to create and/or improve induction programs with practices that support teacher retention, teacher development, and improved student learning

MOVING TOWARD...

Rigorous mentor selection based on qualities of an effective mentor

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

Ongoing professional development and support for mentors

Effective teachers don't always know what it is about their teaching that is effective. Many mentors are also surprised to find that translating knowledge to students is not the same as translating knowledge to adults. High quality and ongoing training, as well as 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. Mentors and beginning teachers should have 1.25-2.5 hours per week to allow for the most rigorous mentoring activities. That time should be protected by teachers and administrators.

Multi-year mentoring

Mentoring should be intensive and ongoing (for at least two years) in order to improve teacher practice and consequently student achievement. NTC and other research suggest that most deep learning about instruction (through mentoring) happens during the second and third years of teaching.

MOVING AWAY FROM...

Choosing mentors without criteria or an explicit process

Without strong criteria and a rigorous selection process, there is a risk that mentors may be chosen based more on availability or seniority, rather than their 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 to support the developing practice of beginning teachers and address 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 the list of priorities. The short fragments of time that may be found are typically insufficient for fostering real relationships and growth.

Mentoring for first year teachers only

One-year mentoring programs are great at providing the initial support first-year teachers need to survive but are insufficient to help teachers reach optimal effectiveness.



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Intensive and specific guidance moving teaching practice forward

Mentors who are trained to draw upon professional teaching standards and appropriate content area standards can focus their support on instructional growth and concrete steps to help new teachers improve their practice. Example: “Let’s look at your assessment data and talk about what strategies will help you address the concern you had about reaching your struggling English Language Learner students.”

Professional teaching standards and data-driven conversations

Just like student learning, beginning teacher learning should be data-driven and standards-based. To be effective, feedback to beginning teachers must be grounded in evidence about their practice, including information gathered through classroom observations and student work. Use of professional teaching standards, documentation of mentoring conversations, and data collection on various components of classroom practice ensures a solid structure for focusing on continuous instructional growth.

Ongoing beginning teacher professional development

Beginning teachers benefit from a professional learning community that is guided by professional teaching standards 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 needs of new teachers, and the nature of the program ensures that they understand their role in fully supporting induction.

Collaboration with all stakeholders

Strong communication and collaboration among stakeholders, including administration, school boards, union/association leadership, and professional partners, creates a culture of commitment and ensures success.

MOVING AWAY FROM...

Non-specific, emotional or logistical support alone

Emotional support is important, but alone is not sufficient to improve teacher practice. Without specific instructional feedback, mentoring can not impact student learning. Example: “You’re doing a great job, Jane. Keep it up!”

Informal and non-evidenced based feedback

The rigor of the program may be compromised when interactions are too often based on informal conversation and opinions not drawn from evidence. Without a structure and focus on real-time data derived from beginning teacher practice, interactions may not result in improved teaching practice.

Professional development NOT specifically tailored to the needs of beginning teachers

Novices are in a unique developmental phase that can not be addressed by “one size fits all” workshops or trainings. Professional development disconnected from teacher needs can feel irrelevant, at best, and in many situations, only serves to overwhelm beginning teachers.

Lack of training/communication with administrators

Without clearly articulated strategies to support beginning teachers, and protected induction activity time, principals may inadvertently undermine the prospects of beginning teacher success (e.g., assigning beginning teachers the most challenging classes, assigning additional responsibilities, or not anticipating their needs for basic resources).

Isolated programming and lack of alignment

Without strong partnerships and alignment, instructional initiatives can be undermined. Beginning teachers may receive mixed messages from varying support providers, and feel overwhelmed, confused and frustrated by all the different layers of information coming at them.