

District-Based Teacher Mentoring Programs



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The information in this fact sheet provides guidance in the development of district-based teacher mentoring programs. **(Changes to this Fact Sheet include editorial changes and updated links. Regulatory requirements are unchanged since last Information Bulletin in March 2010)** Under Part 80-3.4 of the Commissioner’s Regulations related to teacher certification, candidates seeking a professional certificate *shall be* required to participate in a mentored program in their first year of employment, as prescribed in Part 100, unless the candidate has successfully completed two years of teaching experience prior to such teaching in the public schools.

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Successful mentoring programs are thoughtfully planned, possess dedicated resources, and benefit from successful collaborations between the district and local union. According to the Commissioner’s regulations, the goal of mentoring in New York State shall be to “provide support for new teachers in the classroom teaching service in order to ease the transition from teacher preparation to practice, thereby increasing retention of teachers in the public schools, and to increase the skills of new teachers in order to improve student achievement in accordance with State learning standards.” In order to realize these goals, the mentoring experience must be of sufficient quality, rigor and relevance, and provide ample time for mentoring to occur.

Mentoring programs should be developed and implemented consistent with any collective bargaining obligation negotiated under Article 14 of the Civil Service Law. The mentoring program must also be described in the district’s Professional Development Plan (PDP). By requiring that mentoring programs be collectively bargained and part of the PDP, which is developed by a committee consisting of a majority of teachers appointed by the teachers union, the Board of Regents determined that the teachers union would have a significant voice in the induction and continuing development of teaching professionals.

A district’s professional development plan is intended to guide *all* professional development in a district or BOCES. NYSUT believes that the PDP should be a comprehensive document inclusive of all mentoring programs or models (NYS Mentor Teacher-Intern Program or MTIP, No Child Left Behind mentoring programs required for schools in need of improvement, alternative certification mentoring programs, and district-based mentoring programs developed under Section 100.2 (dd) of the Commissioner’s Regulations) implemented in the district.

The New York State Mentor Teacher Internship Program—Best Practices in Mentoring

The New York State Mentor Teacher Intern Program (MTIP) was initiated in 1986 and was designed to reflect best practices in mentoring. A competitive grant program, the MTIP is funded by the state. MTIP grant applications require union sign-off and are usually available in early spring - <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/resteachers/mentorinternship.html> . SED Contact for Mentoring Programs: Sanford Lake, NYSED Office of Teaching Initiatives, MTIPRFP@mail.nysed.gov or slake@mail.nysed.gov.

Under the Commissioner’s regulations for district-based mentoring, many decisions about the mentoring program are negotiable. Local leaders should review Section 3033 of New York State Education Law and Part 85 of Commissioner’s Regulations and consider including MTIP elements/features into the district based mentoring plan.

No Child Left Behind and Mentoring

NCLB defines the term “TEACHER MENTORING” as activities that:

“(A) consist of structured guidance and regular and ongoing support for teachers, specially beginning teachers, that:

are designed to help the teachers continue to improve their practice of teaching and to develop part of an ongoing developmental induction process;

involve the assistance of an exemplary teacher and other appropriate individuals from a school, local educational agency, or institution of higher education; and

may include coaching, classroom observation, team teaching, and reduced teaching loads; and

(B) may include the establishment of a partnership by a local educational agency with an institution of higher education, another local educational agency, a teacher organization, or another organization.”

Several provisions in NCLB identified teacher mentoring as an effective means to improve teacher quality, retain teachers, and aid in the school improvement effort (Title I, Part A, Section 1116). Teacher mentoring for school improvement was intended to help both beginning and veteran teachers develop the instructional skills necessary to improve the academic achievement of all student groups in the school.

Funds from Title I and Title II can be used to support mentoring programs.

Districts should seek supplemental funding through state grants (New York State Mentor Teacher-Internship Program - if available) and federal programs (No Child Left Behind: Title I and II) or other local, state or federal grants earmarked for teacher induction and/or improving teacher quality.

Under NCLB rules, the union can call on the district to obtain “technical assistance in analyzing and revising the school’s budget so that the school’s resources are more effectively allocated to the activities more likely to remove the school from school improvement status.”

Overview of Mentoring Regulations

Section 100.2 (dd) <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1002.html#dd>

1. **Mentoring Programs** – mentoring programs are part of the district’s Professional Development Plan (PDP). The PDP shall describe how the district or BOCES will provide a mentoring program, which includes the following:
 - ◆ the procedure for selecting mentors which shall be published and made available to staff;
 - ◆ the role of the mentors which shall include but not be limited to providing guidance and support;
 - ◆ the preparation of mentors, which may include but shall not be limited to adult learning theory, teacher development, mentoring relationships, peer coaching and time management etc.;
 - ◆ types of mentoring activities, which may include but shall not be limited to modeling instruction, observing, planning, peer coaching, and orienting the teacher to the new school; and
 - ◆ time allotted for mentoring, which may include but shall not be limited to scheduling common planning sessions, release time from instructional and or non-instructional duties, use of superintendent’s conference days, and time before and after the school day and during summer orientation sessions.
2. **Collective Bargaining** – The mentoring program shall be developed and implemented consistent with any collective bargaining obligation required by Article 14 of the Civil Service Law.
3. **Confidentiality** – Information obtained through mentoring shall not be used for evaluative purposes, unless the district or BOCES has an agreement under Article 14 stipulating otherwise.
4. **Recordkeeping** – The district shall maintain documentation of the implementation of the mentoring program for at least seven years. The documentation for each individual receiving mentoring should include his or her name and teacher certificate identification number, the type of mentoring activity, the number of clock hours successfully completed in the mentoring activity, and the name and the teacher certificate identification number of the individual who provided the mentoring.

Related Issues

- ◆ **Professional Development** – Service as a mentor may satisfy requirements for substantial professional development required as part of the Commissioner’s Regulations (100.2(dd)) that govern the district’s professional development plan.
- ◆ **Peer Assistance and Peer Review, an AFT/NEA Handbook.** Local leaders should obtain a copy of this publication. It provides an overview of peer mentoring/assistance/evaluation programs, a discussion of legal protections for employment, a guide to contract language, and sample guidelines. Go to AFT at www.aft.org or call (202) 879-4409.
- ◆ **Roles for Retirees:** State law allows for the re-employment of retirees, for periods not exceeding two years, when other persons are not readily available to perform the duties of such a position (see Section 211 and 212 for specific details).

Advice to Local Leaders

NYSUT believes that service as a mentor should be voluntary and individuals should not be compelled to take on the duties of a mentor. NYSUT recommends that you negotiate a mentoring program that contains elements that are critical to the success of the mentoring program:

- ◆ Release time for mentoring activities to occur
- ◆ High quality mentor training and preparation
- ◆ A role for the union in the mentor selection process, and
- ◆ Adequate compensation for service as a mentor

Additional recommendations include:

1. Consult with your Labor Relations Specialist prior to any discussions or meeting with your district’s administration or negotiations team about the mentoring program.
2. Ensure contract agreements contain clearly formulated provisions that address the time necessary to perform mentoring responsibilities, including payment of stipends, if warranted, for mentoring duties performed prior to the start of the school year and before or after the normal work day.
3. Determine if the relationship of the mentor and intern will remain confidential. The regulations state that the relationship “shall not be used for evaluative purposes, unless your district or BOCES has negotiated an agreement under Article 14 of the Civil Service Law.”
4. Negotiate a program coordinator who is a union officer or union member.
5. Negotiate a governance structure that requires union participation in program oversight, problem solving and conflict resolution, making sure your contract language is clear about the issues that will be addressed by this group and process for resolving them.

6. Consider working closely with a teacher center, higher education institution, and/or NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust (ELT) to develop mentor/mentee training programs.
7. Establish a reporting system by which the union's board is regularly kept aware of developments regarding the mentoring program.
8. Contact other locals in your area as you develop your mentor program. Remember that some districts have had extensive experience with mentor programs funded by the state's grant program (MTIP) and other funding sources.

Links:

Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, Section 100.2(dd) Professional Development
[Excerpts on Mentoring start at (2) (iv)]

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1002.html#dd>

Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, Part 85 Mentor Teacher Internship Program

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/part85.html>

Guidelines for Implementing District - Based Teacher Mentoring Programs

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/resteachers/guidemenprog.html>

NYSED / Higher Ed / OTI / Frequently Asked Questions

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/faqmentoring.html>

Appendix A

Developing a Quality Mentoring Program

Since mentoring is linked to teacher certification requirements, the district and union should work collaboratively to create a quality mentoring experience that will allow beginning teachers to become effective teaching professionals. The regulations do not prescribe a single mentoring model for all districts to follow, but rather allow for local flexibility in the design of the mentoring program. As a result, many decisions will be made at the local level about the various aspects and elements of the program. Open for discussion is the purpose, scope, intended outcomes, implementation strategy, compensation, incentives, time to perform mentoring activities, and creating an oversight or mechanism for resolving problems.

The following are important aspects of the development of a quality mentor program.

1. **Statement of Purpose and Intended Outcomes for the Mentoring Program**

The mentoring program should be viewed as more than an orientation program designed to help the intern learn the “nuts and bolts” of working in the school or district. The best mentoring programs have clear and measurable goals, are multi-faceted, and multi-year. Collectively, the union and district should determine the purpose of the mentoring program committee.

2. **A Description of the Mentor Program Committee to be Formed**

According to regulation, the mentoring committee can serve as a subcommittee of the Professional Development committee, responsible for developing a mentoring program.

3. **The Role of the Mentor**

The mentor’s role will be to guide and support their interns . . . provided that the role of the mentor “shall not be construed as limiting or supplanting the authority of school administrators or supervisors to supervise or evaluate the performance of the interns.” Information obtained by a mentor through interaction with an intern shall not be made available to supervisors or used in the evaluation of such intern.

The language signifies that the relationship between the mentor and the intern is to be advisory, not evaluative. However, the local district and union can negotiate otherwise. If the mentor’s role is supervisory and/or evaluative, be sure the contractual language clearly defines the process, conditions, and parameters for evaluation to occur.

4. **The Formal Procedure for Mentor Selection**

Regulations require that the procedures for selecting mentors should be publicized and made available to staff. The procedure for mentor selection should be based on a criteria and an equitable selection.

5. **The Preparation of Mentors**

Effective mentoring requires training. The most effective mentor training will focus on the development of coaching skills, how to engage beginning teachers in critical reflection on their teaching practice, and the mentor’s skill in collecting and interpreting evidence of effective teaching.

6. **Types of Mentoring Activities**

Activities should be developed consistent with program goals and intended outcomes. Consideration should be given to needs *common to the group* (awareness of the district's policies and procedures); *individual* needs (develop a particular teaching skill), and needs *specific to a category of teachers* (bilingual, special education, career and technical education, and speech therapists etc.). Additionally, mentoring activities should be research-based in the areas of instructional strategies and classroom management.

7. **Time Allotted for Mentoring**

In order to achieve the program's goals and outcomes, sufficient time must be allotted for mentoring to occur. Some mentoring activities – planning, reflecting, commenting, and record-keeping – can occur during non-instructional periods, while other activities—team teaching, modeling instructional strategies, role playing, etc. will need to occur during the instructional day.

8. **Mentor/Intern Matches or Teams**

A district may choose to negotiate an agreement whereby the teachers union creates the mentor/intern teams. Decisions regarding mentor/intern matches should include consideration of certification titles and subject areas of both mentors and interns.

9. **Full and Part-time Mentors**

Full and part-time mentors may be needed to make the appropriate mentor/intern matches. Under the MTIP program the full-time mentor ratio is 1:10 and part-time is 1:4. Mentoring is, by regulation, service in a teacher's tenure area. Therefore, both part-time and full-time mentor teachers accrue seniority in their tenure area, in the same way they would if they were teaching in their certificate area.

10. **A Program Evaluation System**

The program evaluation system, which is subject to negotiation, is essential to determine program effectiveness and areas for improvement. An evaluation system may include the following:

- ◆ Sources of data to be used;
- ◆ Who is responsible for evaluating the program;
- ◆ How the information will be used to make program improvements;
- ◆ Criteria for assessment of mentor performance; and
- ◆ Criteria for assessment of intern performance including instructional planning and management, classroom management, presentation of subject matter, and communication skills.

11. **Develop an Operational Budget**

Identify those expenditures that will be supported, including incentives, compensation, release time, fringe benefits, training, supplies and materials, travel, program coordinator salary, replacement or substitute teacher, evaluation, and any other expenses associated with the program. As part of the negotiated plan, the operational budget is subject to negotiations consistent with the Taylor Law.