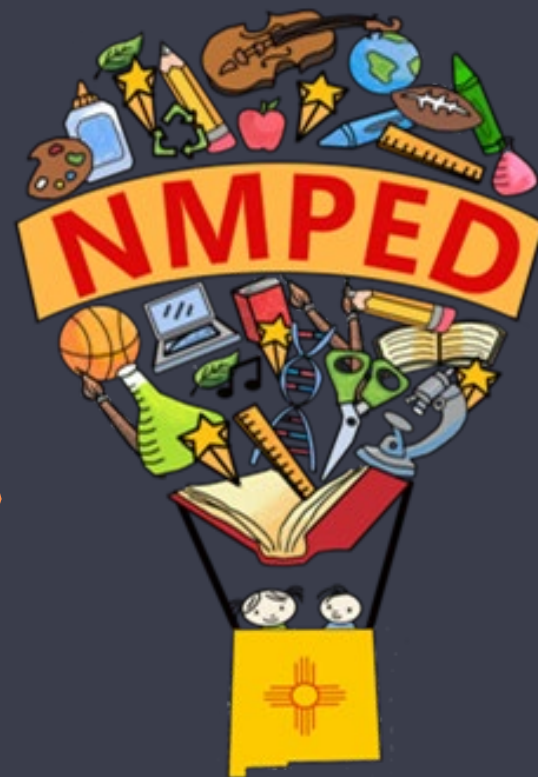


# District Mentorship Program

Title II Communities of Practice (CoP)

1/19/2022



*Investing for tomorrow, delivering today.*

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<sup>1</sup>*Language adopted from the U.S. Department of Education*

# Today's Agenda

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Presentations
  - Taos Municipal School : District Mentorship Program
- Upcoming Trainings & CoPs
- Closing

# Mentorship



## Taos Municipal Schools District Mentorship Program

*Dr. Toni S. Wright, NBCT & Melissa Quintana, NBCT*

# Importance of a Mentorship Program

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- Research has shown that mentors can help to address the persistent issues of teacher shortages and job dissatisfaction, preventing new teachers from burning out and leaving the profession.
- In addition, serving as a mentor often has the effect of revitalizing the mentor teacher...if the program is structured in a way so as not to be experienced as a stressor or extra drain on the mentor's time.

- Beginning teachers have among the highest rates of turnover of any group of teachers. Overall, **more than 44 percent of new teachers leave the profession within five years.** – Cineas, 2022
- Without a mentor, nearly one in three new teachers leave by their fifth year, but with a mentor that ratio drops by more than half, to one in seven. – Edutopia, 2017



- Stanulis & Floden (2009) found that new teachers who received intensive mentoring remained in the profession, exhibiting a retention rate that far exceeded the national average. Mathur et al. (2012) learned that 39 of the 41 novice teachers who received mentoring remained in the teaching profession. Having a mentor promotes efficacy, alleviates some of the stress of being in a new profession, and encourages teachers to remain in their chosen career.

-BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education, Volume 6, Issue 1, 2014

- Mentors encourage new ideas, question the novice teachers, and help them to find effective ways to solve problems (Jones & Brown, 2011; Orland- Barak & Hasin, 2010).



- We knew our early year teachers and those new to our district could benefit from having a mentor (with differing program focuses).




But a new study from SRI Education suggests a dramatic pass-through effect to students as well: When new teachers are part of a high-quality mentorship program, their students experience major academic gains.


# Benefits to the Mentor as Well

Teachers who have opportunities to mentor other teachers emerge as leaders within their professions, thus developing learning organizations and improving their own credibility with their colleagues (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008). These are the teachers seen continuously developing their own careers (Portner, 2008). Through mentoring, they have acquired levels of ownership and responsibilities in the programming that takes place within schools

Teachers who take the time to mentor novice teachers invariably feel revitalized within their own careers. Many mentors report that mentoring not only energizes them, but also helps them to improve their skills (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008), and reflect on and improve their own decision-making abilities (Mathur, Gehrke, & Kim, 2012). Mentors motivate, challenge, and respond to new teachers, thus enhancing their own professional knowledge and keeping up to date with new developments in education



**Mentoring relationships benefit entire schools** (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson 2009), because they are a form of professional development that directly affects the school in which they are taking place. Often, this professional development continues long after the year of mentorship concludes, and fosters enriched feelings for both the mentor and the new teacher



# So, the big question was not if we should do it.

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The big question was:

**How do we do it?**



- **Needed to create a program that:**
- Did not feel like another item on an unmanageable to do list
- Felt enjoyable and rewarding as well as beneficial to both
- Was flexible so as not to feel as a drain on already limited time
- Reduced stress instead of causing more
- **(for the mentor or mentee)**

We knew we wanted two mentorship tracks:

- One for our teachers who were new to the profession
- One for experienced teachers who were new to our district

- We also knew up front that we wanted to match our mentees with teachers in their departments or grade level

- What do our new teachers need support with?
- What do those new to our district need?
- How will we identify potential mentors?
- How will we train and support these mentors?
- How will we accommodate the process?
- What will be the expectations for both participants?




# What do our new teachers need support with?

- **Why is Being a New Teacher Difficult?**
- **Teachers report high levels of occupational stress** — more than people who work in medicine, sales, executive management, the service industry, business, construction, transportation or farming. Being *new* magnifies many of the stressors that teachers face.
- **Navigating a New Normal** -There's a saying: "Teaching isn't a job; it's a lifestyle." There is a lot of truth in this statement because the teaching profession has a unique culture and set of demands. Being a new teacher means orienting oneself to the culture of the profession and the day-to-day realities within a district and school.
- **Inefficient Routines** -New teachers are starting from scratch. They often find themselves teaching unfamiliar content to unfamiliar students in an unfamiliar grade level using unfamiliar materials. As teachers gain experience, they become more fluent with these elements and develop personal routines and systems. But in the beginning of their careers, teachers aren't as efficient with allocating their time and energy.
- **Stress and Fatigue** -Adjusting to new realities and starting from scratch can be physically and mentally taxing. Planning and preparing lessons often spills over into personal time. New teachers expend a lot of energy and effort learning to balance the management of their classroom and professional role with their personal life.
- **Lots of Demands** -Even with conventional knowledge, skills and support, new teachers need help meeting the specific needs of their specific students within their specific classroom. These needs are diverse, and managing all of them cohesively can be overwhelming. (SREB)

# What do our new teachers need support with?

**Logistical Support:** Mentors act as information providers for new teachers.

This information makes the transition into the building and day to day functioning easier.



Who is Sandra?

## **Examples Include:**

The procedure for securing a sub

Logging into required programs


Taking attendance

Using the copier

“Who is who, and what do they do?”

Tour of the building

And more...



But, where is the copier?

Covering these as soon as possible will alleviate a lot of stress, frustration, and exhaustion and will also serve to make the new teacher feel more “at home” and confident

# What do our new teachers need support with?

**Becoming a part of the school community:** Mentor helps the new teacher get to know colleagues and become engaged with others and in activities. This fosters a sense of belonging and increases the feeling of support.

In addition, “when teachers feel that they are part of a team, they are more likely to be invested in every student’s learning, not just the students in their current class. These teachers work well, are passionate about what they are teaching, and are more concerned with student learning” (Hargreaves, 2009).

**Examples include:**

- Introductions
- Connecting them with clubs and organizations
- School clothing

One of our current goals is to host once a of month series of themed lunches where new teachers to meet other new teachers, meet long time faculty, school administration, district personnel, etc. These will be informal with a prohibition on “shop talk.”

# What do our new teachers need support with?

**Someone to count on:** Mentor provides a safe and calming space.

The act of teaching is hard — that's why most mentoring programs for new teachers focus on skill-related goals, such as improving instructional delivery and applying feedback.

But the ins and outs of being a teacher are hard too.

Becoming a teacher can come with emotional challenges.

New teachers want assurance that the professional *and* personal challenges they are experiencing are normal.

Supporting new teachers needs to be more than just sharing information, providing instructional coaching and designing professional development. It also needs to come in the forms of empathy, perspective and advice. When mentors work on professional growth goals without probing a teacher's mindset or emotional health, skill development can become distracting, stressful and even counterproductive (SREB).

## **Examples include:**

Advice

Listening

Empathizing

Feedback

Productive venting

Positive redirecting

Encouragement

Someone you can be wrong and imperfect with...someone from whom you can safely and comfortably be vulnerable with. Saying “I don’t know” or “I need help” should feel safe and not embarrassing

# What do our new teachers need support with?



**Self Care:** Mentors help new teachers find a work/Life balance

-New teachers need to know they are not the only one feeling frustrated or overwhelmed. Mentors share how they find ways to “put it aside” and rejuvenate...to get the rest they need.



They need to hear the reality right up front:  
You will **NEVER** be caught up...not even by taking the big rollie box home!!!  
But neither will the teachers in the rooms around you.  
Breath and know you are not alone, and it is ok...it is the norm, not your inadequacy...and it does get easier over time.

Hearing this from someone they have learned to trust is the only way it will get through.

# What do our new teachers need support with?

**Planning to plan:** Mentors become thought partners.

**Examples include:**

- How to set up their classroom
- Procedures for collecting, grading, and returning work
- Classroom norms
- Procedures (Bell Work, etc.)

***Mid-level supports are what new teachers need the most but are least likely to receive.*** Teachers' days are filled with constant decision-making. New teachers who are not accustomed to this often experience decision-making fatigue. Mid-level supports help new teachers make and manage these decisions in ways that create smoother personal and professional transitions. Mentors have the greatest impact on teachers when they act as *thought partners* who balance empathy and expertise. There is an urgent need for districts, schools and mentors to prioritize mid-level needs. (SREB)

These “mid-level” needs should be done at the beginning of the school year.

# What do our new teachers need support with?

**High Level Needs:** Mentors act as skill developers with new teachers.

## **Examples include:**

- Goal Setting...help them keep it realistic but also applicable and mostly, manageable.
- Lesson Plans and Learning Opportunities: Plan some together, review and give feedback, mentor shares some of their own
- Differentiation: What it is and what it isn't, share resources for finding multi-level texts, keeping up with who gets what, providing true support, documenting, attending meetings and giving valuable feedback.
- Observations: Fifteen Minute Observation, Reverse Observations
- Team teach a lesson or two
- Seek appropriate professional development opportunities

# What do those new to our district need?

**Logistical Support:** Mentors act as information providers for new to district teachers.

This information makes the transition into the building and day to day functioning easier.

**Examples Include:**

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Logging into required programs

Taking attendance

Using the copier

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And more...

**If New teachers or new to district teachers are new to the community, do they need help finding housing, where to shop, medical providers, etc.?**

**The purpose of this mentorship should be made clear to the new to the district teacher when assigning to avoid offense**

Covering these as soon as possible will alleviate a lot of stress, frustration, and exhaustion and will also serve to make the new teacher feel more “at home” and confident.



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# What do those new to our district need?

**We refer to our mentees and mentors in both categories as learning partners**

For new to district teachers, it should be made clear that they can ask for help in any of the other skill level areas. It is our hope that the learning partners grow into a relationship of reciprocity and learning from each other.

# How will we identify potential mentors?

First and foremost, we work directly with the principal for each school

Reframe traditional mentor  
selection criteria

THIS DOES NOT MEAN WE ARE NOT LOOKING  
FOR EXEMPLARY TEACHINGS SKILLS...WE ARE

Strong lesson planning  
Exemplary instructional practice  
Positive Student Interaction

Good attendance

People Skills

In 29n states, laws or administrative rules define criteria for selecting mentors. Most of these states require new mentors to have a minimum number of years of teaching experience and demonstrated instructional effectiveness, usually measured by past evaluation ratings.

But selecting mentors using criteria such as years of experience and past evaluation scores can be problematic because teaching and mentoring have distinct knowledge bases and skill sets. Although there is some overlap, there are significant differences. Effective mentors are not simply people who are good at providing instruction to students — they are people who are good at providing personal *and* instructional support to *adult* learners (Edutopia<sup>28</sup>, 2017).

# How will we train and support these mentors?

Mentorships are particularly effective, researchers found, if mentors are well trained and use strategies such as regularly observing classroom instruction and providing feedback to new teachers and using available student data to identify areas of growth for the teacher (Edutopia, 2017).

We set up an initial schedule as follows:

Two-hour PD at beginning of year followed by a one-hour training with mentor and mentee.

Elementary coordinator/Middle and High School Coordinator check in with mentors throughout the semester to answer questions, determine needs, and provide support.

Second round training at the beginning of second semester to facilitate questions and information sharing.

# How will we train and support these mentors?

- **Interpersonal Relationships:**  
Mentors learn how to build trusting relationships with their mentees, and strategies for helping new teachers adjust to their profession, district and school.
- **Active Listening Skills:** The first step in communication and in mentoring is listening to the needs of your learning partner.
- **Coaching Skills**  
Mentors learn coaching techniques, including collecting evidence, guiding teacher self- reflection and providing actionable feedback.
- **Growth for Both**  
Mentors engage in opportunities to deepen their knowledge of standards and content. Deconstructing teaching practices helps mentors improve their own instructional pedagogy.
- **15 Minute Observation Process**

# How will we train and support these mentors?

Created checklists and pacing calendars for mentors to give them concrete guidance and ways to self- monitor. Align these tools with common stages that teachers experience during their first year and the needs of students.

**Most importantly, we emphasize listening. Do not stick to the list or the plan for the day if your mentee has other needs. Be flexible and make it personal.**

# How will we accommodate the process?

The How and When of Mentoring  
Mentors are already busy in their professional role as classroom teachers, oftentimes feeling completely overwhelmed. If mentoring duties are simply tacked on top of these teaching duties, it limits the time and energy available for quality mentoring — resulting in new teachers who receive inconsistent and *compliance-driven support*.

We wanted our mentors to feel valued.

Small stipend

Helped to arrange class coverage during observations.



# How will we accommodate the process?

- Concerns: Providing protected time that does not make the mentor feel overburdened.
- Provide time for them to plan for their mentorship

*Much research suggests an extra planning time for mentors, but this does not logistically work for our district. We are still seeking solutions.*

# What will be the expectations for both participants?

We do not want it to just be extra work and more duties to complete for the learning partners, which would lead to resentment towards the process and program. We wanted it to be something they embrace.

Keep our expectations minimal and show trust in our learning partners.

Meet the required number of hours

Use the time to achieve the identified goals

Document time and tasks (minimize paperwork)

Report any conflicts or challenges to Coordinator

# Upcoming Title II Trainings & CoPs

- **CoP**
  - February 23<sup>rd</sup>
  - Topic: **Hobbs Recruitment**
- **Title II Training**
  - March TBD
  - Topic: Title II application/Planning Allocations
- *All meetings will be on Thursdays at 1:30 pm*

# Surveys

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Please provide feedback for today's CoP

*Link will be provided via zoom*

