



New Teacher Mentorship Programs

District Leadership Forum

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1) Executive Summary

Key Observations

To the extent that resources allow, operate mentorship programs for all teachers new to the district that include a variety of components—especially 1:1 meetings and classroom observations. At all profiled districts, mentors and mentees meet 1:1 on a regular basis so that mentors can provide support and guidance. Across all profiled districts, contacts estimate that mentors spend between 15 and 30 hours each year meeting with mentees. In addition, at **District A** and **District D**, administrators provide substitutes so mentors can observe their mentees in the classroom. Contacts report that peer observations provide significant value for new teachers.

Provide mentors with relevant discussion topics and encourage mentors to focus on professional goals to ensure that mentors and mentees spend their time productively during meetings. At **District A**, **District C**, **District B**, and **District D**, administrators regularly provide mentors with lists of topics to discuss during 1:1 meetings with mentees. Administrators tailor these topics based on the events occurring at the district each month, such as parent-teacher conferences or teacher observations. In addition, contacts at District C, District D, and **District F** instruct mentors to focus meetings on their mentees' individualized goals (e.g., improving classroom transitions).

Provide professional development on mentorship frameworks and practice scenarios (i.e., potentially challenging mentorship situations) for new mentors to empower them to help new teachers improve pedagogy. All profiled districts provide mentorship training to new mentors. Profiled districts use various models to provide professional development (e.g., throughout the year, over the summer). At **District C**, contacts report that providing robust training about educational leadership can empower mentors to serve as instructional coaches for new teachers.

Maintain separation between mentors and school administrators to ensure that mentorship programs provide a low-pressure, non-evaluative experience for new teachers. At **District E**, mentors do not provide any information about their mentees to building administrators who evaluate new teachers. Further, contacts report that they encourage mentees to share their feedback from evaluations with their mentors—however, mentors should keep these conversations confidential. Similarly, at **District A**, program administrators encourage mentors and mentees to discuss any interpersonal issues with the program administrator, rather than with their school administrator, to prevent mentorship program participation from negatively affecting any teachers' evaluation.

Contacts cite social support, instructional improvement, and new teacher retention as benefits of mentorship programs, but contacts note that mentorship may not completely fulfill the needs of new teachers with no prior teaching experience. Contacts at all profiled districts report that mentors can help connect mentees to building- and district-level resources to ease their transition to the district. At **District B**, contacts cite the emergence of authentic relationships between mentees and mentors as the primary benefit of the program. Further, at **District C** contacts believe that mentors are well positioned to positively impact mentees instructional practices. However, at **District E**, contacts suggest that new teachers with no prior teaching experience require more support than mentorship alone can provide.

2) Program Design

Overview

All Profiled Districts Assign Mentors to New Teachers with No Previous Teaching Experience

Profiled districts balance budget and staffing constraints with the desire to offer enduring mentorship and other services to all new teachers, regardless of their prior teaching experience. However, at the minimum, all profiled districts assign mentors to new teachers with no prior teaching experience for at least their first year at the district. In addition, at **District A** and **District E**, administrators offer a second year of discussion-based, small-group meetings to extend one-year mentorship programs for new teachers without prior teaching experience. This approach provides continued support to many new teachers without straining the mentorship program's budget or other resources.

The [New Teacher Center](#) provides a variety of resources about induction programs. While not all states mandate mentorship or induction, the [policies](#) of those that do may help guide program design.

Further, most profiled districts complement mentorship programs with other initiatives targeted to new teachers, such as designated coaches or induction (i.e., a district-operated program that offers sustained support and professional development for new teachers). Research recommends that districts offer robust induction programs that incorporate a range of services including mentorship, to improve teacher retention rates.¹ Through participation in induction programs at profiled districts, new teachers receive several years of targeted professional development.

1) Mariana Haynes, "On the Path to Equity: Improving the Effectiveness of Beginning Teachers," *Alliance for Excellent Education*, (July 2014). <https://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/path-to-equity/>. Accessed July 2, 2019.

Mentee Eligibility, Mentorship Program Duration, and Complementary Initiatives at Profiled Districts



District



Program Duration



Complementary Initiatives



Mentor Eligibility

All teachers new to the district **without** prior teaching experience.

District A

Two years

- One year of 1:1 mentorship
- One year of informal, quarterly meetings in small groups of four mentor/mentee pairs

- District-wide new teacher orientation

District F

One year

- Three-year induction program for new teachers

District B

Three years

- None

District C

One year

- District-wide new teacher orientation
- School-specific new teacher orientations
- School-specific new teacher induction programs

District D

One year

- Two years of professional development programming for new teachers
- School-specific resources such as professional learning communities (PLCs)

District E

One to two years, based on experience level

- One year for mentees with and without prior teaching experience

Second year of small group meetings for teachers without prior teaching experience

- District-wide new teacher orientation
- Instructional coach for new teachers with 2-3 years of prior teaching experience



Mentor Eligibility

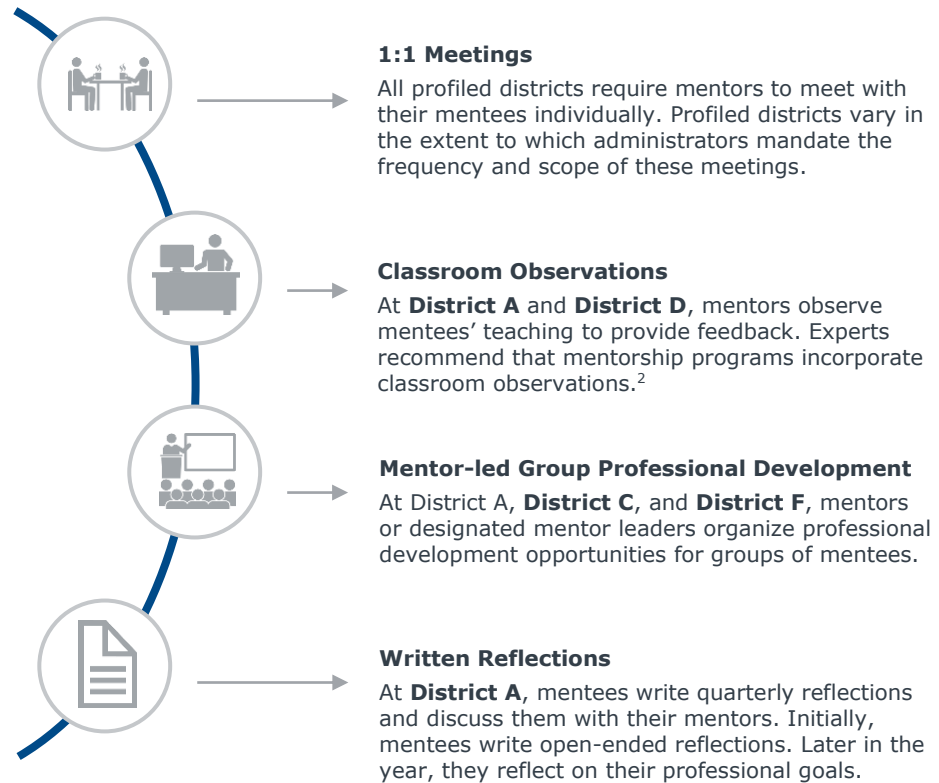
All teachers new to the district **with or without** prior teaching experience.

District D also offers mentors to teachers **new to their position** in the district.

Use Mentorship Programs to Deliver a Range of Services to New Teachers

Mentorship programs for new teachers contain a range of components across profiled districts. 1:1 meetings between new and veteran teachers comprise the central component of these programs at all profiled districts.

Components of New Teacher Mentorship Programs at Profiled Districts



1:1 Meetings

Consider Requiring Mentors to Schedule Regular Meetings with Mentees to Ensure Sufficient Time for Support

At **District D**, **District E**, and **District F**, administrators who oversee mentorship programs ask mentors to schedule an hour each week with their mentee. At **District A** and **District B**, administrators expect mentors and mentees to meet on an "on-demand" basis (i.e., whenever the new teacher needs support). However, at **District B**, both mentors and new teachers indicate on feedback surveys that they want to have more time to work together. Contacts suggest that mandating regular, scheduled meetings could address this issue.

Maintaining a scheduled time for 1:1 meetings (e.g., every Thursday after school) ensures that other commitments do not conflict with mentorship. However, program administrators at **District E** and **District D** also endeavor to ensure that mentorship does not burden mentors' schedules. Contacts at **District E** note that while

2) Joshua T.D. Alexander and M. Wayne Alexander, "Six Steps to an Effective Mentoring Program," *The School Superintendents Association*. <http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=10502>. Accessed July 2, 2019.

All profiled districts provide stipends to teachers who serve as mentors. Across profiled districts, these stipends range from less than \$500 to greater than \$1000.

administrators give mentors a stipend to incent mentorship, the stipend is relatively small (i.e., a few hundred dollars per year). Due to the relatively low monetary value of the stipend, program administrators aim to respect mentors' time and refrain from asking mentors to devote an excessive number of hours to mentorship. Therefore, program administrators empower mentors and mentees to opt not to use the time to meet each week or to shorten the time during some weeks if the mentee does not need support.

Consider Decreasing the Frequency of Meetings as the Year Progresses

At **District D**, administrators require mentors and mentees to sequence their meetings with decreasing frequency throughout the schoolyear:

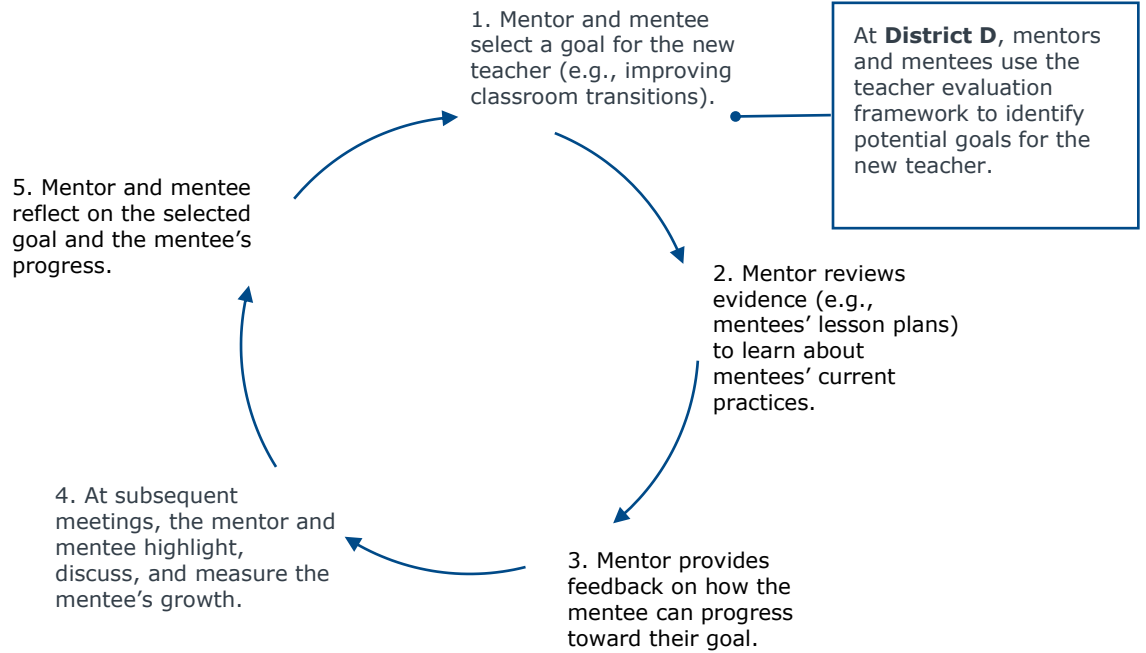
- Once a week for the first eight weeks
- Biweekly for the next several months
- Monthly at the end of the year

This format prevents mentorship meetings from overly taxing mentors' or mentees' schedules. The format also ensures that mentors and mentees spend their time in a meaningful way

Orient Mentor Meetings Around Mentees' Professional Goals to Maximize Time and Effectiveness

Program administrators at **District C**, **District D**, and **District E** ask mentors and mentees to continuously work toward the new teacher's improvement in the classroom. This approach helps build momentum from one meeting to the next, boost mentor and mentee engagement, and hold mentorship program participants accountable to stay on task. For example, at District C, mentors and mentees complete a series of goal-related exercises during their 1:1 meetings. Elevating goals as the central component of mentorship meetings allows mentors and mentees to use their time to achieve specific and actionable results.

Goal-oriented Mentorship Process at *District C*




Provide Resources to Encourage Mentors and Mentees to Discuss Timely and Relevant Topics

To achieve some oversight of the scope of mentor and mentee meetings, administrators at several profiled districts circulate standardized resources. At **District A**, **District B**, **District C**, and **District D**, administrators regularly provide mentors with lists of topics to discuss during 1:1 meetings with mentees. At District A and District D, administrators or mentor leaders provide these lists monthly, while at District B administrators provide these lists quarterly.

At the middle school level, mentor leaders at District D collaborate across multiple schools to create monthly e-mails that disseminate these lists to ensure that all mentors and new teachers receive standardized information. Similarly, at District B, administrators create different lists of quarterly topics for elementary school, middle school, and high school mentors.

Sample Monthly Email Template at *District D*



Monthly Topic

- Articles, tips, and resources
The body of the e-mail contains instructional practices and pedagogical support related to the monthly topic.
- Reminders and upcoming important dates
The e-mail concludes with dates and reminders for the program and the district overall (e.g., scheduled professional development days).

Potential topics at profiled districts include school climate, connecting with parents, backward planning, equity and achievement.

At **District A** and **District B**, administrators provide a monthly list of discussion points that mentors and their assigned new teachers should cover. For example, because new teachers' first observations occur in October, administrators ask mentors to discuss tips for observation during October.

***District C* Provides an Optional Mentorship Curriculum**

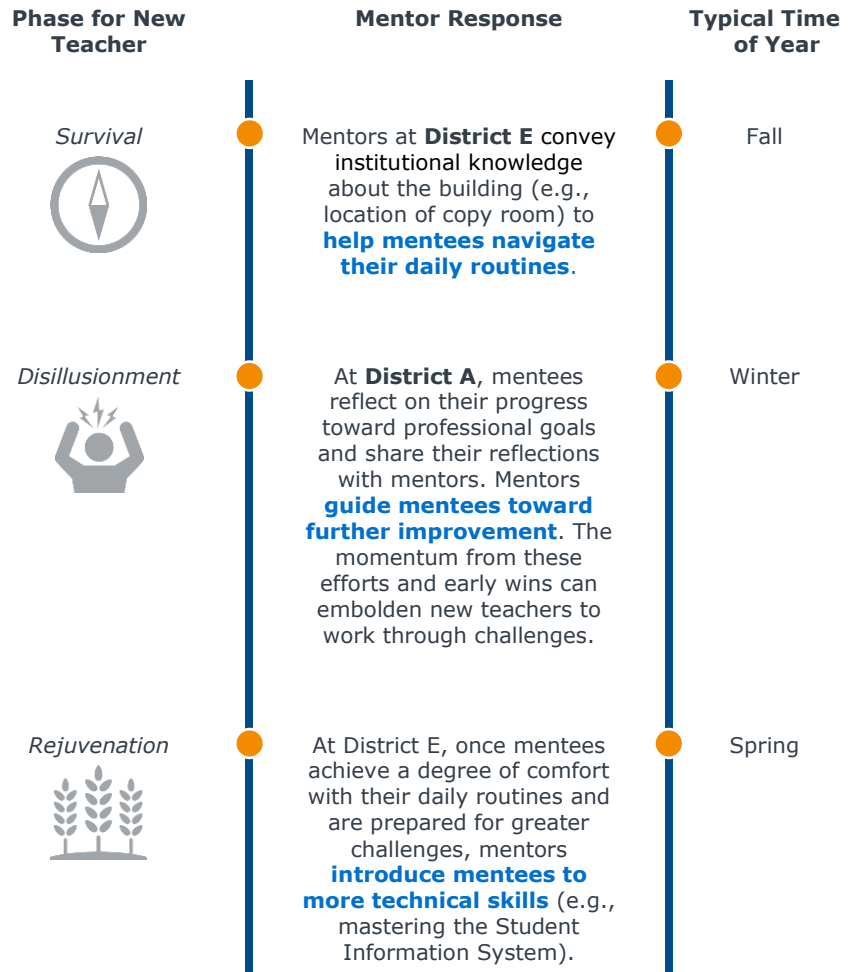
Mentorship program administrators at **District C** consulted content area specialists, technology specialists, and behavioral specialists to create a series of 22, 30-45-minute lesson plans for mentors to use. The lesson plans cover topics such as culture and expectations, classroom management, and instruction. Mentors can download these lesson plans from an online repository to guide their 1:1 meetings with mentees. However, the large size of the district results in a highly decentralized mentorship program, so program administrators do not mandate the use of the document or any other standardized procedures.

Encourage Mentors to Calibrate Meeting Topics with the Typical Phases of a Teacher's First Year of Teaching

At **District E** and **District F**, mentors tailor conversations during 1:1 meetings in response to the experiences of their mentee. This standardized approach, which mentors learn during trainings, further contributes to program administrators' ability to maximize time during 1:1 meetings. Contacts at these districts report that new teachers experience a progression of emotions, challenges, and perspectives during their first year. Effective mentors adapt their approach in response to these changes.

At **District F**, contacts notice that new teachers progress from survival, to disillusionment, to rejuvenation throughout their first year.

New Teacher Experiences and Mentor Responses at Profiled Districts



Observations

Require Mentor Observation to Provide Opportunities for Targeted Guidance and Prepare Mentees for Official Observations

Experts recommend that new teacher mentorship programs allocate time for mentors to complete classroom observations for mentees.³ New teacher mentorship programs at **District A** and **District D** incorporate mentor classroom observations.

3) Joshua T.D. Alexander and M. Wayne Alexander, "Six Steps to an Effective Mentoring Program," *The School Superintendents Association*. <http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=10502>. Accessed July 2, 2019.

Benefits of Mentor-Mentee Classroom Observations



Evidence-based Goal Setting

Mentors use classroom observations to gather data about mentees' current teaching practices. This ensures data and actual practice inform the goal-setting process.



Preparation for Evaluator Observations

Mentorship program administrators ask mentors to conduct mock observations in the weeks before mentees experience their first official observation from the principal. This opportunity to practice increases new teachers' confidence during official observations.

To help new teachers feel fully prepared for their first observation, mentors and mentees at **District A** practice the entire observation process, which involves pre- and post-observation conversations.

Enhance Observation Exercises Through Reciprocal Mentee Observation of Mentors

To provide additional benefits to both mentees and mentors, administrators at **District D** require mentees to observe their mentors. If the new teacher has no prior teaching experience, they use this opportunity to learn from their mentor's teaching. If the new teacher has prior teaching experience, they provide feedback to their mentor. This feedback can help mentors improve, increasing the value of the mentorship partnership for the mentor.

At **District A**, after the mentor observes their mentee, the mentor arranges a time for the mentee to observe another classroom. The mentor identifies a teacher with strong skills in the mentee's growth area. For example, if the mentor notices during their classroom observation that the mentee does not effectively manage transition time, the mentor arranges for the mentee to observe a teacher who successfully manages transition time. This exercise can contribute to mentees' progression toward professional goals.



Provide Substitute Teachers to Facilitate Observations

At **District E**, mentors and mentees identify the lack of time available for mentors to observe new teachers as the greatest weakness of the mentorship program. Contacts report that mentors cannot observe their mentees because they often must instruct their own classes at the same time as new teachers. To overcome this challenge at **District A** and **District D**, principals provide substitutes for teachers to observe other classrooms.

Additional Components

Consider Leveraging Mentors to Provide Group Professional Development Sessions for New Teachers

At **District A**, some schools at **District C**, and at middle and high schools at **District D**, mentors lead professional development sessions for all of the district's new teachers. At **District C**, these meetings focus on helping new teachers acclimate to their building.

Mentor-led Professional Development Sessions at *District A*



Topics

Multiple topic presentations occur concurrently in different rooms. Administrators send new teachers a list of the 40 topics (e.g., inclusive classroom design) that the sessions will cover throughout the year. New teachers must attend seven topic presentations.



Mentor Responsibilities

A team of three mentors works together to present each topic to new teachers.



Frequency and Logistics

The district provides three sessions each month. The sessions occur after school at the central office.



Time of Day

Mentorship program administrators stagger the start times of the different topics—for example, topics more relevant to elementary school teachers start earlier in the afternoon, because elementary school ends first.

Contacts at District A note that, at a smaller district, administrators may prefer to offer the same sessions for all new teachers, rather than offer multiple sessions each month.

At District D, mentors invite colleagues from throughout the district (e.g., special education administrators, curriculum administrators, inter-district desegregation program administrators, the principal) to speak at monthly meetings with new teachers. The speakers introduce the new teachers to their role so that new teachers can learn about the resources available to support them.

Include Mentors in Induction Programming to Align Mentorship Goals with District-Wide Initiatives

At **District F**, mentors and mentees both receive substitutes to attend four, full-day professional development sessions targeted toward new teachers. These sessions include goal-setting exercises and cover topics that reflect district priorities for new teachers, such as instructional strategies. Mentorship program administrators ask mentors to volunteer to attend these professional development sessions to learn about the district's expectations for new teachers.

Subsequently, mentors can align their mentorship approach with the district's overarching approach. Administrators do not require that mentors attend these sessions, which are mandatory for new teachers. However, contacts report that every mentor chooses to attend, which demonstrates their commitment to their mentee's professional development. The district provides substitute teachers for mentors during these sessions to encourage this commitment.

3) Program Administration

Staffing

Select a Staffing Model Based on District Size, Program Components, and Budget Availability

Profiled districts range widely in size (i.e., 1,000 to 180,000 student enrollment) and in the breadth of their mentorship programs (i.e., some mentorship programs involve only 1:1 meetings while others involve additional components). As a result, profiled districts operate several different staffing models to oversee mentorship programs.

At **District C**, **District D**, and **District E**, administrators select mentor leaders to organize the program at their buildings. At **District B**, a full-time staff member collaborates with the district- and school-level administrators to oversee the program. At **District A** and **District F**, one district-level administrator handles all responsibilities of operating the program alongside other professional development programs.

Three Models to Oversee Teacher Mentorship Programs

Mentor Leaders



One teacher serves as a liaison between the mentorship program administrator at the district level and all of the mentors at a single school or a group of schools. **District C**, **District D**, and **District E** use this model.

Selection

Mentorship program administrators work with principals to identify teachers with demonstrated leadership skills for the role.

Mentor leaders receive a larger stipend than mentors.

Training

At **District E**, the mentorship program administrator requires mentor leaders to attend a 2.5 hour professional development session before the beginning of the school year. They discuss education expert Jim Knight's [learning partnership approach](#) and practice mentorship scenarios.

At **District C**, after an initial professional development session, mentorship program administrators require mentor leaders to attend a monthly, two-hour meeting to discuss mentorship best practices.

Responsibilities

- Select mentors
- Pair mentors and mentees
- Train mentors
- Ensure that mentors and mentees check in regularly
- Circulate monthly resources

Administrators at **District F** also involve an oversight committee of 3-4 veteran mentors who help to plan the new mentor training.

District Administrator for Professional Development



At **District A** and **District F**, the administrator responsible for organizing all teacher professional development oversees the teacher mentorship program.

Function

The administrator mostly operates independently from school-level administrators. This division between the program administrator and principals allows the program administrator to maintain a completely confidential, non-evaluative role in new teachers' first year experiences.

Responsibilities

- Select mentors
- Pair mentors and mentees
- Train mentors
- Manage mentor and mentee relationships
- At District A, the District Administrator provides a list of monthly topics to discuss

Full-time Program Coordinator with Administrative Support



At **District B**, one central office staff member serves as the new teacher mentorship program coordinator. In addition, a district-level administrator who manages the coordinator and school-level administrators participate in some stages of the program, as described below.

Function

The program coordinator forms connections with the mentors and mentees to support them throughout the new teachers' first year.

Responsibilities

- Select mentors with district-level and school-level administrator input
- Train mentors
- Compile and disseminate quarterly topics, differentiated by school level and time of year
- Ensure school-level administrators check in with mentor and mentee pairs at the beginning of the year and once each semester to support the new teacher's growth

Mentor-Mentee Pairing

Select Teachers with Demonstrated Commitment and a Strong Educational Philosophy to Serve as Mentors

While **District A** relies on an application and interview process to select mentors, all other profiled districts select mentors through informal conversations between key stakeholders such as principals, instructional specialists or coaches, and mentorship program administrators. Notably, administrators at **District D** used an application process to select mentors in the past but have stopped doing so. Contacts cite the volume of mentors across many schools, which complicated the process of systematically screening applicants, as the reason for abandoning the application method. Regardless of the selection method, administrators select teachers based on certain criteria.

Qualities of Effective Mentors at Profiled Districts

Objective Qualities



Willingness

At all profiled districts, mentors volunteer to receive a mentee. At **District B**, if not enough teachers volunteer to be mentors, administrators meet with potential mentors to encourage them to volunteer.



Strong Evaluations

Administrators at all profiled districts select teachers who have demonstrated effective pedagogical skills in their classrooms, as indicated by their teacher evaluations.



Experience

All profiled districts require mentors to have at least five years of teaching experience.

Subjective Qualities



Commitment

Contacts at **District A** report that requiring potential mentors to fill out an application helps to ensure only committed teachers take on mentees.



Educational Philosophy

Administrators at **District F** select mentors who will support and guide mentees, not mandate their instructional approaches.



Collaborative Mindset

At **District E**, mentorship program administrators encourage mentor leaders to select mentors who work well with their colleagues.

Consider Logistics, Grade Level, and Content Area When Pairing Mentors and New General Educators

Once administrators at profiled districts select mentors, they consider several criteria to pair mentors with new teachers assigned to general education classrooms. Mentor leaders at **District C** account for logistics such as common planning time and location within the building when assigning mentees to mentors.

Administrators at **District E** and **District F** consider grade level and content area. Administrators at these districts prefer to align mentors and mentees with similar but non-identical grade levels and content areas. For example, administrators might pair a sixth-grade core curriculum teacher (e.g., an English teacher) with a seventh-grade teacher who is also a core curriculum teacher, but for a different subject (e.g., a science teacher). Contacts at District E explain that with this approach, mentors can serve as an unbiased outsider if mentees experience challenges with the other teachers in their grade level or content area. Further, contacts at District F note that a mentor from a different content area can guide a new teacher toward generally effective pedagogical tactics. In contrast, a mentor from an identical content area may tend to dictate that the new teachers mimic their own instructional approach.

At **District B**, district administrators learn about new teachers' personalities during their hiring and onboarding process and help to pair mentors with mentees

accordingly. They use their knowledge of new and veteran teachers' personalities to pair mentees with a mentor whose personality type complements the new teacher's.

For New Specialist Teachers, Consider Dividing Building Support and Instructional Support Across Two Mentors

Administrators at all profiled districts endeavor to offer mentors to school counselors and new teachers in specialized areas such as special education, physical education, or art. For these new teachers, contacts report that it is challenging to find job-alike mentors who exhibit strong mentorship qualities and who work in the same building. To respond to this challenge, administrators at **District D** assign two mentors for new specialists. One mentor serves as the new specialists' in-building support—this person helps the new specialist acclimate the building's culture, practices, and resources but likely works in an unrelated area. The second mentor works elsewhere in the district, but teaches in the same content area (e.g., special education, physical education, art). This person helps the new specialist work toward job-specific goals.





Professional Development

Offer Training on Effective Mentorship to First-Time Mentors

All profiled districts offer training to mentors. At **District B**, program administrators offer the training approximately every other year to ensure that all new mentors receive the training. At both District B and **District E**, after mentors receive mentorship training, they do not attend the training in subsequent years. At **District C** and **District D**, some mentor leaders organize professional development for mentors at their schools. However, mentorship program administrators at these districts operate decentralized mentorship programs, and so contacts did not provide specifics about these school-level trainings.

At District E, **District A**, and **District F**, program administrators incorporate mock mentorship scenarios and educational frameworks into a robust training program for new mentors.

Three Channels to Deliver Professional Development to Mentors

SUMMER TRAINING		PERIODIC TRAINING	REFRESHERS
			
Logistics	Curriculum	Quarterly Sessions	Annual Recaps
<p>At District F, instructional coaches select strong teachers to participate in the mentor training program. Once trained, these teachers become eligible to mentor new teachers if administrators select them.</p> <p>Administrators pay participants to attend this training over the summer. The training lasts for six hours across three days.</p>	<p>Mentorship program administrators or outside experts present a research-backed framework for mentorship. In addition, the administrator facilitates group discussions about mentorship scenarios.</p>	<p>At District A, mentors attend quarterly meetings to share challenges, workshop solutions as a group, and read articles about educational leadership. Administrators develop mentors' educational leadership skills throughout the course of the year. At the end of the year, mentors contribute to the planning for next year's program.</p>	<p>At District F, teachers who attend initial three-day mentor training must attend one-day sessions in subsequent summers to remain eligible for mentorship.</p>

Emphasize the Confidentiality of Mentorship Relationships During Professional Development Sessions

To ensure that mentors and new teachers build a constructive relationship, administrators at **District B** and **District E** require that mentors avoid sharing information about their mentees with colleagues and school administrators. For example, at **District E**, school administrators occasionally ask mentors about their mentees. In order to preserve their non-evaluative role, mentors do not provide any specific information in response.

During professional development sessions, mentorship program administrators provide mentors with sample talking points to dissuade school administrators from asking specific questions about their assigned mentees. For example, program administrators encourage mentors to respond in general terms (i.e., "we meet regularly" and to suggest that the school administrator reach out to the new teacher directly for any further information).

Other Considerations

In their initial training, mentors at **District F** study the text [Mentoring Matters](#) by education experts Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman.

Hold Mentors and Mentees Accountable Through Incentives and Tracking

Administrators at **District A**, **District D**, and **District F** ask mentors and mentees to collaboratively keep a log of their 1:1 meetings. At District F, mentors submit this log electronically to the mentorship program administrator via Google Docs. In the log, mentors describe how they approached their mentee—as a consultant, a collaborator, or a coach. These three approaches, or stances, originate in the text that mentors study in their initial training. Mentors learn that adopting the coaching stance represents the most effective type of mentorship. Recording and submitting their mentorship stance encourages mentors to adopt the most effective stance whenever possible.

At District D, mentors and mentees use their log to record progress toward goals. At the beginning of each meeting, the mentor and mentee select a goal to achieve during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, they reflect on their progress toward the goal and set a new goal. The mentor and mentee write down these goals and reflections in the log. These procedures provide administrators with a degree of oversight into the mentor and mentee meetings. While most profiled districts offer stipends to mentors, no contacts report connecting the stipends to completion of the log.

If Conflicts Arise, Re-Assign New Teachers to a Different Mentor with No Negative Repercussions for the Original Mentor

Contacts at most profiled districts emphasize that district-level program administrators should handle the interpersonal elements of mentorship programs. Because school-level administrators (i.e., principals) have an evaluator role in their buildings, mentorship program administrators at most profiled districts do not involve principals in circumstances that could cast any teachers in a negative light. This precaution prevents concerns about their evaluations from dissuading prospective mentors.

For example, at **District E**, the administrator who oversees the mentorship program encourages new teachers and mentors to share with him any significant communication style differences, personality differences, or schedule conflicts. The program administrators can subsequently arrange a different mentor for the new teacher if necessary. At **District D**, District E, and **District F**, administrators or lead mentors use value-neutral and judgement-free language if they reassign new teachers to a different mentor (e.g., “It just didn’t work out” or “It wasn’t the right match.”)

Notably, contacts report that interpersonal conflicts in mentorship relationships rarely occur at profiled districts. Contacts at **District B** and **District A** report that administrators have never had to re-assign a new teacher to a different mentor. At profiled districts where re-assignments have occasionally occurred, contacts report that scheduling conflicts usually account for the change (i.e., new teachers and mentors do not have a shared, convenient time to meet.)

Use Mentors to Lay the Groundwork for Future Efforts of Instructional Coaches

Most profiled districts reserve instructional coaches' time for teachers who are not already receiving support from mentors. This prevents the districts from deploying redundant resources, especially for new teachers who might not be ready for instructional coaching. For example, contacts at **District C** believe that new teachers should not need support from instructional coaches during their first year if they work with a mentor. Administrators at District C empower mentors to provide pedagogical support, such as reviewing lesson plans, creating worksheets, and explaining effective instructional practices. Conversely, at **District D**, any teacher—including new teachers—may work with instructional coaches as needed. This is because administrators at District D provide all teachers, regardless of tenure, access to the same resources.

At **District E** and **District A**, contacts report that new teachers tend to experience a sequence of increasingly targeted needs during their first few years of teaching. At District E and District A, mentors support new teachers as they progress through the first two phases of their development. Because new teachers do not usually progress past these first two phases during their first year, new teachers with mentors do not require instructional coaching. In subsequent years, when new teachers progress to learning content-specific, pedagogical tactics, instructional coaches replace mentors as the source of support.

Example Progression of Teachers' Needs and Provided Support

1	2	3
<p>Basic Needs <i>First Year</i></p> <p>Primary Support: Mentors</p> <p>First, new teachers require social-emotional support and “cultural exposure” to their building (e.g., learning where to find paper to refill the copy machine). Mentors, who are familiar with their building, transfer this institutional knowledge to new teachers.</p>	<p>Intermediate Needs <i>First Year</i></p> <p>Primary Support: Mentors</p> <p>Next, new teachers progress to learning about general instructional practices (e.g., how to call on students equitably). Mentors, as experienced teachers, transfer their professional expertise in these areas to new teachers.</p>	<p>Advanced Needs <i>Subsequent Years</i></p> <p>Primary Support: Instructional Coaches</p> <p>Last, new teachers exhibit readiness to learn content-specific, pedagogical tactics. Instructional coaches have the qualifications, content-specific knowledge, and educational expertise to guide new teachers through this phase of their development.</p>

4) Program Assessment

Feedback

Distribute Surveys to Gauge Mentorship Programs' Strengths and Areas for Improvement

At **District B**, **District D**, and **District E**, mentors and mentees take a survey at the end of the year to indicate their perceptions of the mentorship program. Administrators review these survey responses to understand areas of improvement for subsequent years. For example, contacts at District B report that they are considering adding time outside of the school day to mentors' and mentees' contracts in future years, because survey responses indicate that mentors and mentees do not have enough time to meet.

Administrators at profiled districts circulate the survey electronically through platforms such as Google Forms or Survey Monkey. To ensure a high response rate, administrators at District D withhold stipends from mentors until mentors complete the end-of-the-year survey. Contacts report that new teachers tend to feel motivated to impress administrators, so new teachers usually fill out the survey despite the lack of incentives for them.



Share Success Stories

Administrators at **District B** provide the opportunity for mentors and mentees to share open-response anecdotes and feedback at the end of the survey. The superintendent hosts an end-of-the-year celebration for mentors and mentees at a local restaurant, where he shares positive stories that mentors or mentees submit in this section.

Sample Mentorship Program Survey Questions at Profiled Districts



- Was this relationship helpful?
- What did you gain from this relationship?
- Which provided resources were helpful?
- What would you improve about the program?
- Did you have the opportunity to connect frequently enough with your mentor/mentee?
- How often did you:
 - Discuss individual students?
 - Look at student work?
 - Observe each other?



Survey Responses Indicate Mentorship Alone Does Not Satisfy Needs of Inexperienced, New Teachers

New teachers with no prior teaching experience at **District E** indicate that they require more support during their first year than their mentors can provide. Research confirms that mentorship may not increase retention rates for all groups of teachers and indicates that providing wraparound supports, in addition to 1:1 mentorship, can increase the effectiveness of mentorship programs.⁴ At several profiled districts (i.e., **District A**, **District D** and **District F**), 1:1 mentorship complements a variety of support services offered to new teachers (e.g., induction programs with regular professional development opportunities).

Aggregate Survey Responses and Teacher Retention Indicators to Determine Benefits of Mentorship Programs

Contacts at profiled districts use trends from survey responses to learn about some of the benefits that teacher mentorship programs provide. In addition, contacts at **District D** and **District E** track the number of new hires to the district each summer to illustrate broad trends in retention rates (i.e., assuming a constant retirement rate, administrators can conclude from a decreasing number of new hires that retention rates are improving).

Contacts at all districts caution that it is difficult to isolate the impact of mentorship programs. However, contacts believe that teacher mentorship programs provide several benefits to the school community.

4) Michael B. Allen, "Eight Questions on Teacher Recruitment and Retention: What Does the Research Say?" *Education Commission of the States*, (September 20015). Pg. 117. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED489332.pdf>. Accessed July 2, 2019.

Benefits of Teacher Mentorship Programs at Profiled Districts

For Teachers

Comradery

Research finds that the siloed structure of schools and classrooms in the United States contributes to the feeling of loneliness among teachers.⁵ Contacts at **District B** note that new teachers in particular feel isolated, even during group events. Mentorship programs alleviate some of this loneliness by facilitating friendships between mentors and mentees.

Leadership

At **District A**, mentorship provides an opportunity for veteran teachers to engage in a leadership role. Contacts note mentorship represents a good engagement option for a strong leader who does not want to pursue administrative roles.

For Administrators

Teacher Retention

Based on anecdotes or other indicators (i.e., decreasing number of new hires) and some research, contacts at **District A**, **District D**, and **District E** believe that teacher mentorship programs positively impact new teacher retention rates.⁶

Dissemination of District Priorities

At **District D**, mentorship program administrators ask mentors to consider the district's strategic priorities and goals when working with their mentees. Contacts report that this allows District Administrators to more quickly introduce new teachers to the philosophy of the district.

For Students

Equity of Experience

Contacts at **District C** and **District D** cite standardization of classroom instruction as a key motivation behind the teacher mentorship program. Mentorship can help new teachers improve their instruction, which ensures that students with new teachers receive the same, high-quality instruction as their more tenured peers in other classrooms.

5) Boston College, "For many US teachers, the classroom is a lonely place," *ScienceDaily*, (April 2015) <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/04/150419193914.htm>. Accessed July 2, 2019.

6) Julie Rowland Woods, "Mitigating Teacher Shortages: Induction and Mentorship," *Education Commission of the States*, (May 2016). <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Mitigating-Teacher-Shortages-Induction-Mentorship.pdf>. Accessed July 2, 2019.

5) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- What are the main components of teacher mentorship programs at contact districts?
- How do administrators at contact districts allocate time to facilitate teacher mentorship programs?
- How frequently do mentors and mentees meet at contact districts, and where do these meetings occur?
- What topics do mentorship programs cover at contact districts?
- How do contact districts sequence these topics throughout new teachers' time as mentees?
- Which staff members at contact districts select mentors and oversee teacher mentorship programs?
- What selection criteria do these administrators use?
- How do contact districts incent mentors to participate meaningfully in the teacher mentorship program?
- What training or professional development opportunities do contact districts offer for mentors?
- What role do administrators play in the mentor/mentee relationship at contact districts?
- How do contact districts respond to conflicts between mentor and mentee teachers?
- How do teacher mentorship programs complement any other support services that contact districts offer to first- and second-year teachers?
- If contact districts also use instructional coaches, how do administrators divide responsibilities between instructional coaches and teacher mentors?
- How do contact districts evaluate the success of teacher mentorship programs, and what benefits do contact districts report?
- How do contact districts identify areas for growth of teacher mentorship programs?
- How have contact districts overcome challenges from teacher mentorship programs?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

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- Allen, Michael B. "Eight Questions on Teacher Recruitment and Retention: What Does the Research Say?" *Education Commission of the States*. (September 20015). Pg. 117. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED489332.pdf>. Accessed July 2, 2019.
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- EAB’s internal and online research libraries.
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Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed administrators who oversee teacher mentorship programs at the following districts.

A Guide to Districts Profiled in this Brief

District	Location	Enrollment Range
District A	Midwest	<1,000
District B	Midwest	1,000-4,999
District C	South	150,000-199,999
District D	Northeast	10,000-19,999
District E	Northeast	5,000-9,999
District F	Northeast	10,000-19,999