



## The School Leader's Role in Mentoring for Quality Induction

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**Provisional teaching year:** a year of full-time teaching under provisional certification required of all novice teachers before they can be approved for standard teacher certification.

**Summative evaluation:** a formal evaluation procedure conducted at 30 weeks by a certified administrator during the provisional year, which must be submitted to the Provisional Teacher Program in the Department of Education.



### Key Resources

- Criteria for Selection of Mentor Teachers (R1)
- Sample Mentor Teacher Application and Assignment Forms (R2, R3)
- Provisional Teacher Program Matrix (R6)

### Responsibilities of School Leaders for the Mentoring Program

It will be important for school leaders to understand their responsibilities during the induction process.

State regulations require that the school leader:

- Inform novice teachers about the mentoring program and the New Jersey Provisional Teacher Program;
- Select mentors based on application criteria;
- Match mentors and novice teachers by considering years of experience, teaching assignment, proximity, and personalities;
- Respect the confidentiality of the mentor-novice teacher relationship; and
- Contribute to ongoing program evaluation.

It is suggested that the school leader also:

- Support and encourage qualified teachers to apply to become mentors;
- Support the mentor-novice teacher relationship by scheduling time to plan together, observe each other, and conference following observation;
- Factor the needs of the mentoring for quality induction program into decisions made at the school, such as: scheduling time for mentors and novice teachers to meet; determining class size; and assigning extracurricular activities to novice teachers;
- Hold harmless the mentor and novice teacher when the mentoring relationship does not work;
- Become knowledgeable through training about the components of the mentoring for quality induction program;
- Coordinate and participate in orientation and other training programs for novice teachers;
- Serve as first mentor to the novice teacher; and
- Create and support a learning community that enhances the mentor-novice teacher relationship.



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### Understand Mentoring as a Component of an Induction Program

Induction programs facilitate the transition of novice teachers into their own classrooms and the teaching profession. Effective induction programs have five common characteristics:

- Participation by all novice teachers
- Mentoring for at least one year
- Qualified mentors
- Reduced teaching loads for participants
- A summative review based on application of teaching standards (American Federation of Teachers, 2000).

Mentoring is a crucial component of an induction program. Mentoring provides support and guidance to novice teachers by experienced, qualified veteran teachers. The most effective mentoring relationships occur when mentors are matched to novice teachers by subject area/grade level.

The school leader plays a key role in the induction of the novice teacher by understanding and supporting the mentoring program. Careful selection of qualified mentors based on specific state and/or district criteria is crucial to success.

### Criteria for Selection of Mentors

According to state regulations, the minimum criteria for selection of mentors are:

- The district board of education may select a certified teacher with at least three years of experience who is actively teaching in the district or a retired teacher or administrator to serve as a mentor teacher. The district board of education shall provide training in current educational practices to the retired teachers or administrators;
- The teacher is committed to the goals of the local mentor plan;
- The teacher has agreed to maintain the confidential nature of the mentor teacher/novice teacher relationship;
- The teacher has demonstrated exemplary command of content area knowledge and of pedagogy;
- The teacher is experienced and certified in the subject area in which the novice teacher is teaching, if possible;
- The teacher is knowledgeable about the social and workplace norms of the district board of education and the community the district board of education serves;
- The teacher is knowledgeable about the resources and opportunities in the district and able to act as a referral source to the novice teacher;
- The teacher provides letters of recommendation from those who are familiar with the applicant's teaching experience and skills; and
- The teacher agrees to complete a comprehensive mentor training program.



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### Application and Selection of Mentors

Veteran teachers interested in becoming mentors should be invited to complete an application according to the requirements of the district mentoring plan. The application form could include information about areas of expertise, years of experience, answers to specific questions about the individual's desire to become a mentor, and letters of recommendations supporting the request.

Consider the following procedures to guide the selection process:

- Applicants must apply in writing for the position of mentor teacher.
- Applications will be submitted to the school and/or the LPDC in accordance with the district mentoring plan.
- Applicants will be screened by the school leader and/or the LPDC in accordance with the district mentoring plan.
- Recommendations can be made to the building principal, who will make the final decision on selecting mentors and matching them with the novice teachers.

Resources to assist the LPDC, the school leader, and the program coordinator in further understanding the application process are included in the Appendix.

### Matching Mentors with Novice Teachers

Successfully matching a mentor and novice teacher is essential to creating a positive mentor-novice teacher relationship. Suggested matching criteria include, but are not limited to: similar grade level or content area; common planning periods; close proximity of the classrooms of the mentor and novice teacher; and compatibility of both the mentor and novice teacher (Breux & Wong, 2003; Jonson, 2002). Personalities, communication styles, and gender might also be taken into consideration for matching. Convenience and availability should not be the only criteria.

Some districts might have a shortage of qualified mentors, thereby limiting the choices in the selection process. Selection of mentors might include teachers from a different content area/grade level, or a different school within the district. Mentoring might have to occur as a group of teachers working together rather than in a one-on-one arrangement.

### Supporting Mentors

Support from the school leader needs to be ongoing. He/she needs to be readily available to discuss issues with the mentor and provide resources as needed. Time is the most important resource that the school leader can provide. Time might be provided by having a substitute teacher release the mentor from his/her classroom in order to observe the novice teacher or by releasing the mentor from non-teaching responsibilities.



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Another way to show support for mentors is to provide rewards, incentives and recognition for their time and effort in supporting and guiding novice teachers. Some examples include:

- Stipends
- Professional development opportunities
- Credit for mentor experience toward advancement
- Increase in classroom supply budget
- Training on being a mentor
- Mentor support groups
- Articles spotlighting mentors
- Opportunities to take courses
- Tuition reimbursement (Saphier *et al.*, 2001, p. 132).

### Supporting Novice Teachers

The school leader needs to provide ongoing support for novice teachers as they make a transition to the teaching profession, adapt to the school culture, go through various stages of teacher development, and become proficient with the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers. The role of the school leader is to create the structure to ensure that novice teachers gain the knowledge and skills of effective teaching practices and apply them in order to impact student learning.

Some steps for school leaders to consider in supporting novice teachers include:

- Empathize with and support novice teachers by remembering what it is like to be a novice teacher. A teacher's first full-time position is often daunting. The responsibilities of new teachers often are stressful and take them on an emotional roller coaster through the cycle of anxious anticipation, survival, disillusionment, then rejuvenation and reflection.
- Consider less difficult teaching assignments, fewer extra duty assignments, and higher levels of support as novice teachers begin their new teaching positions, preferably in the appropriate designated grade or content areas.
- Provide curriculum guidance and support so novice teachers know what to teach and how best to teach it. This requires teachers to know the CCCS relevant to grade level/discipline, teaching materials, and assessments. Teachers need student achievement data for their students to guide what needs to be taught and how.
- Organize an orientation for novice teachers to review school curricula, policies, and procedures for the school and district, and the staff handbook. It is important for novice teachers to be fully integrated into the school community and culture.
- Create opportunities for collaboration and professional dialogue among teachers by providing time for teachers to observe, collaboratively plan lessons, meet in and across grade levels/content areas, participate in collegial coaching, and engage in action research.

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- Support ongoing professional growth activities that are responsive to their specific classroom teaching needs and aligned with teaching standards.
- Clearly articulate expectations so novice teachers know what is expected in terms of classroom performance, professional teaching standards, and participation in school duties. Novice teachers need to know expectations and procedures for formative and summative assessments that will be conducted by the school leader.
- Support novice teachers' active participation in the mentoring program, which includes working regularly with their mentors, attending training sessions, participating in appropriate professional development activities, and learning and applying professional teaching standards (Davis & Bloom, Nov./Dec. 1998).

### Training Components

A key element in designing and implementing a successful mentoring for quality induction program is provision for ongoing training and follow-up support for mentors and novice teachers. There are many published resources that provide information and tools to support the design of mentor training. It is not the purpose of this toolkit to promote any specific training program. Training needs to be designed based on the needs of the mentors and novice teachers within the district and aligned with the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers. Training for schools leaders, mentors, and novice teachers on one or all of the training components, in accordance with the district mentoring plan, may be provided by district personnel, national experts, colleges, or other mentor training providers.

The Department of Education recommends training components that support the mentor-novice teacher relationship and implementation of the state regulations, and are aligned with the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers. These components should be an integral part of the school leader support either by design, presentation, or participation.

### Monitoring Program Effectiveness

The New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers have been established to guide teachers in:

- Promoting reflection on the impact of teacher effectiveness on student learning;
- Facilitating formation of professional goals to improve teaching practice; and
- Monitoring and assessing progress toward professional goals and continuous improvement in teaching practice.

The school leader needs to collect data on novice teachers' proficiency in applying the professional standards for teachers in order to complete formative assessments and the summative review. These assessments will impact decisions for licensure. The school leader needs to support both the mentors and novice teachers as they work together for continuous professional growth aligned with the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers.



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### Understand the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers

State regulations for mentoring require that all novice teachers acquire the knowledge, dispositions, and performances defined in the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers. These standards describe what all teachers should know and be able to do.

The ten teaching standards focus on:

1. Subject matter knowledge
2. Human growth and development
3. Diverse learners
4. Instructional planning and strategies
5. Assessment
6. Learning environment
7. Special needs
8. Communication
9. Collaboration and partnership
10. Professional development

### Understand the Provisional Teacher Program Evaluation System

Novice teachers are hired with either a Certificate of Eligibility (CE) or a Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS). The district must immediately enroll the newly hired novice teacher in the New Jersey Provisional Teacher Program at the Department of Education. The Department of Education will provide the district, the school leader, and the novice teacher with the appropriate forms for the provisional year. During the provisional year, the novice teacher is mentored and supervised according to state and district policies.

During the first year of teaching under a provisional certificate, teachers will be evaluated by a school leader three times using state forms which are copied and sent to the Department of Education.

- The first formative evaluation shall be completed at the end of 10 weeks.
- The second formative evaluation shall be completed at the end of 20 weeks.
- The final summative evaluation shall be completed at the end of 30 weeks.

After completion of the summative evaluation, the school leader will make one of the following three recommendations:

- Approved: State Department of Education issues a Standard Certificate.
- Insufficient: The CEAS remains in effect for a maximum of one more year.
- Disapproved: The CEAS is invalidated. The novice teacher may appeal this decision to the State Board of Examiners.

State regulations for evaluation of provisional teachers are in *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-8.6* and located online at <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/code/current/title6a/chap9.pdf>.



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### Use Standards-Based Formative Assessments

Many first-year teachers feel inadequate and unprepared, have limited knowledge of content and pedagogy, lack information regarding school/district policies and procedures, have limited knowledge and experience dealing with the diverse needs of their students, and have minimal competence in classroom management and organization.

Standards-based formative assessments can provide a confidential structure for interaction between a mentor and a novice teacher and allow for reflection on strengths and areas for growth. The mentor can guide and support the novice teacher in identifying the professional learning activities most appropriate for improving classroom teaching. The mentor can help the novice teacher identify and make progress toward his/her identified professional goals by focusing on what types of data to collect during classroom observations, collaboratively planning lessons, making suggestions, and modeling lessons for the novice teacher.

Because of the special relationship between mentor and novice teacher, the interaction is confidential. Therefore, it is important for the school leader to provide time for interactions between mentor and novice teacher and to honor the confidentiality between the two. In order to maintain the confidentiality and trusting relationship between the mentor and the novice teacher, the school leader should not ask or expect the mentor to provide information that would be considered “evaluative” or to influence the evaluation conducted by the school leader.

Formative assessments used in the mentoring relationship include the following characteristics:

- An ongoing measurement of growth over time
- Evidence of student learning and teacher practice to help identify areas of strength and for growth
- Objective and data-based
- Responsive to the teacher's developmental needs
- Interactive and collaborative
- Assessment tools that support inquiry and reflection (ETS, 2001, p. 28).

The school leader needs to conduct two state-required formative assessments during the novice teacher's first year of teaching as part of the Provisional Teacher Program. The formative assessments need to be conducted after 10 and 20 weeks of full-time teaching. The results of these formative assessments contribute to the final state-required summative review.

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### Provide Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback should enable the novice teacher to build on his/her strengths and work on identified areas of improvement, plus provide guidance for engaging in professional learning activities. For feedback to be productive, it should be given as soon as possible after the observation.

The most effective feedback allows the novice teacher to:

- Describe what went well and why;
- Understand what was least effective in order to make adjustments;
- Focus on key instructional components/issues;
- Use questions and prompts to promote reflection, discussion, and analysis; and
- Determine how the experience contributes to overall personal and professional development.

If the teacher does not recognize having difficulty with his/her teaching, then these guidelines in providing feedback might be helpful:

- Ask teacher how he/she felt about the lesson and/or ask clarifying questions before giving any feedback – let the teacher take the lead;
- Concentrate on student learning and the impact of teaching on the student performance;
- Illustrate points with examples from the lesson, such as highlighting what students said or did;
- Listen to what the teacher says but remain focused;
- Ask the teacher to reflect on what might have been effective and how he/she might have done it better;
- Be supportive and constructive, encouraging the teacher to observe a demonstration lesson; and
- Encourage the teacher to try new approaches/methods (Learning and Skills Council, October 2001, p. 80).



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### References

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### Appendix: Resources

#### Key Resources

- F6-R1 Criteria for Selection of Mentor Teachers
- F6-R2 Sample Mentor Teacher Application and Assignment Form 1
- F6-R3 Sample Mentor Teacher Application and Assignment Form 2
- F6-R6 Provisional Teacher Program Matrix

#### Additional Resources

- F6-R4 New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers
- F6-R5 Sample Five-Step Walk-Through Observation Structure