

New Principal Mentoring Program FAQs—Updated 11/1/2021

1. Are there statutes and rules that apply to the New Principal Mentoring Program?

Yes, please see Public Act 102-0521 and Ill. Adm. Code Part 35. These documents will answer most questions.

2. Is the New Principal Mentoring Program mandatory?

The New Principal Mentoring Program is mandatory for all principals new to the role. The mentoring requirement for new principals is contingent upon continued funding from the state. It is funded for fiscal year 2022.

If the State Superintendent of Education determines that appropriations are not likely sufficient to serve all anticipated first-year principals in any given year, then the New Principal Mentoring Program shall be voluntary, and priority access to mentoring services shall be given to first-year principals in the highest-need schools, as determined by the State Superintendent of Education.

3. Who must participate in the New Principal Mentoring Program?

All principals new to the role, meaning in the first year of a principal position, starting with the 2021-22 school year must participate. New principals who were formerly assistant principals for five years in the school where they will be principals during 2021-22 are not required to fulfill the mentoring requirement. However, school districts can require those individuals to complete new principal mentoring.

4. How many new principals will there be in the 2021-22 school year?

We do not have an exact number. Districts are still filling vacancies. We are anticipating around 400 new principals. For planning purposes, Illinois had 398 new principals in school year 2020 and 354 new principals in SY 2021.

5. What are the qualifications for becoming a mentoring entity?

Regional Offices of Education, Intermediate Service Centers, institutions of higher education in Illinois, statewide organizations representing principals, and school districts are eligible for certification by ISBE to provide mentoring services to new principals in Illinois. Entities

interested in providing mentoring to new principals must be committed to the purpose, goals, and objectives of the New Principal Mentoring Program. New principal mentoring entities will be identified and certified through a competitive grant process and will receive orientation training pertaining to new principal mentoring.

New Principal Mentoring Entity Qualifications

The entities must:

- Demonstrate they can fill priority needs of all new principals in Illinois.
- Demonstrate their capacity to serve principals in Illinois.
- Demonstrate they can meet “New Principal Mentoring Program Standards.”
- Demonstrate they can create a cost-effective budget.

“New Principal Mentoring Program Standards” are attached to the application. “Review Criteria” in the application provides more details on entity requirements.

6. Can my entity apply with other entities?

Yes.

7. How will entities be chosen and/or prioritized?

Applications scoring more than 60 points will be approved. Each approved entity will recruit its mentees.

8. Can my entity still apply if it already has a strong mentoring program in place?

Yes.

9. Are there specific mentoring strategies that the entity will be required to implement?

See attachment in application to review the “New Principal Mentoring Standards.”

10. If there are more applicants than the funding supports, will priority be given to any applicants? Which applicants are given priority?

The funding will support the number of mentees, not the number of approved applicants. Approved entities will recruit mentees to enroll in their program.

11. What if there are more first-year principals that the allocated funding could support?

If the State Superintendent of Education determines that appropriations are not likely sufficient to serve all anticipated first-year principals in any given year, then the New Principal Mentoring Program shall be voluntary, and priority access to mentoring services shall be given to first-year principals in the highest-need schools, as determined by the State Superintendent of Education.

12. Are school districts required to pay for mentoring?

No. Mentoring is only required if money is allocated and approved in the ISBE budget each year. Currently, \$1.2 million has been approved in the FY 2022 ISBE budget for new principal mentoring. Districts and entities are allowed to allocate funds to supplement programs.

13. Can a school district become a certified mentoring entity?

Yes. If a district wishes to implement its own mentoring program, it may apply to do so. For more information, please read the FAQs pertaining to mentoring entities above.

14. Who can be a mentor?

Experienced current and retired Illinois principals who have demonstrated success as instructional leaders will be selected to serve as mentors for Illinois public school administrators who are in their first year of service as building-level principals. Mentors will be selected by mentoring entities through a fair and open process.

15. New Principal Mentor Qualifications:

- A minimum of three years of experience as a building principal in Illinois.
- Strong, ethical character.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- A successful instructional leader is defined by, but not limited to:
 - Facilitating a vision of learning within a learning community.
 - Developing and sustaining a collaborative professional learning community.
 - Developing and sustaining a positive school culture and instructional program.
 - Making data-driven decisions that focus on the improvement of student performance.
 - Effectively managing the operations, resources, and safety of a school.
 - Positively influencing the greater political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context of learning communities to effectively advocate for their students.
 - Having the support of three professional references.

16. What are the responsibilities and time commitments of the mentor?

Mentors are expected to:

- Fully attend the initial training and all ongoing professional development activities.
- Dedicate sufficient time to mentoring to meet program requirements and serve the needs of the new principal.
- Be available to the new principal as specified by mentoring entity expectations and the needs of the new principal.
- Create, develop, and maintain an effective, professional mentoring relationship with the new principal.
- Make regular reports of status and progress in the mentoring process to the appropriate mentoring entity and ISBE.
- Complete final evaluation reports as required by the mentoring entity and ISBE.

Time commitment will be flexible based on funding and the current number of first-time principals. We anticipate the total time commitment for the FY 2022 to be 40 hours.

17. The grant states the cadre of mentors must be representative of the student population. What does that mean?

We are asking for the demographics of the approved mentors to be representative of the demographics of the student population across the state with regard to race, ethnicity, primary language, and gender.

18. Is there a prescribed mentor training program through ISBE that we need to use to train the mentors?

No. Training guidelines are in Ill. Adm. Code Part 35.50. We also attached resources for creating a quality mentor training program titled, "New Principal Mentoring References." Entities will be allowed to choose their own training programs.

19. Can we budget for our own trainer to train the mentors?

Entities can create their budget based on their needs to provide a quality principal mentoring program. Budgets need to be reasonable, allocable, and allowable.

20. Can we budget to pay the mentors to get trained?

This should be included in their stipend and under their hours worked. Estimated number of hours a mentor will work for Fiscal Year 2022 is 40.

21. Can we budget for a coordinator to match the mentors/mentees and administer the surveys?

Entities can create their budget based on their needs to provide a quality principal mentoring program. Cost effectiveness will be a factor in proposal scoring. Budgets need to be reasonable, allocable, and allowable.

22. Are the funds for mentors sent directly to the schools that need a mentor, or does it flow through the applicant?

Approved entities will receive funds. They are responsible for paying mentor stipends.

23. We are applying jointly with other organizations. Do we include the costs of trainers and training for the other organizations we are applying with?

Entities can create their budget based on their needs to provide a quality principal mentoring program. Cost effectiveness will be a factor in proposal scoring. Budgets need to be reasonable, allocable, and allowable.

24. Do we need to list each district we hope will participate or just list the co-applicants?

You would need to list the co-applicants/partners.

You do not need to provide documentation of agreements with districts in application. You should note your relationships with districts you plan on serving in the "District Partnership" section. If you do already have Memorandum of Understandings or other agreements, you could upload them in the "File Upload-Optional" section. You do not need to list principals by name in the application.

25. If the grant runs for three years, will there be a continuation grant we have to fill out each year?

Continuation proposals will be submitted prior to Years 2 and 3.

26. We hired a new principal last year in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is her first real year. Would she be eligible?

Ill. Adm. Code Part 35.10 states, "For purposes of this Part, a 'first-year principal' is an individual who either:

- 1) is in his or her first school year of employment as a principal in Illinois, if the employment began prior to January 1 of that school year; or
- 2) is in his or her second school year of employment as a principal in Illinois, if the employment began on or after January 1 of a prior school year."