

# Strengthening Teacher Mentoring & Induction



## Problem Overview

The Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program provides a significant opportunity for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to address their current staffing challenges while strengthening their long-term teacher pipeline. LEAs can use the funds that are available to create high-retention pathways to address staffing challenges at the district level or develop equitable access strategies aimed at specific district schools.

Evidence-based strategies pertaining to strengthening teacher mentoring and induction for teachers are provided in this document as part of the effort to achieve these objectives. Research shows that the strategy of strengthening teacher mentoring and induction programs in LEAs assists in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. The strategies are based on best practices, research, and experiences from successful programs nationwide.

## Strategy Summary

Mentoring and induction programs are common strategies for addressing equity gaps in teaching, as they can potentially improve both teacher effectiveness and retention rates. These programs offer new teachers individual guidance, support, and mentorship as they transition from preservice preparation to in-service practice, typically pairing them with more experienced teachers.

Along with orientation to the school and community, mentoring and induction may include:

**Ongoing professional development**

**Administrative support**

**Reduced workloads**

**Other supports**

The New Teacher Center (2016) identifies several key practices that can support teacher retention, development, and performance in these programs, including:

**Rigorous mentor selection**

**Ongoing professional development support for mentors**

**Multi-year mentoring**

Mentoring programs should last at least one year (Vittekk, 2015). It should be noted that multi-year programs are more effective. (Barron & Albers, 2022; Billingsley, 2004; Brownell et al, 2004; Hirsch et al., 2009).



Consideration should be given regarding the **selection and matching of mentors/mentees:**

- Mentors should be matched to mentees based on fit and shared background (Billingsley et al., 2009; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Madigan & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012).
- When possible, it is best for mentors and mentees to work in the same building and to work with students of the same type and grade level (White & Mason, 2006).

**Mentor training** is key to the success of a strong mentoring and induction program:

- Mentors should be trained to identify and address work-related stress (Barron-Albers, 2022; White & Mason, 2006).
- Mentors also should have training in classroom observation (Barron-Albers, 2002) and be granted adequate leave time to observe their mentees in the classroom (Billingsley et al., 2009).
- Mentees should be granted release time (Billingsley et al., 2009) to observe other teachers in their classrooms (Barron-Albers, 2002; Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009).
- At a minimum, mentors and mentees should have weekly check-ins (Barron-Albers 2002; Bay & Parker-Katz; Billingsley et al., 2009; Madigan, & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012), and these check-ins should happen by thoughtful design that best meets the needs of mentoring team.
- To foster trust, it is imperative that the mentor/mentee relationship be non-evaluative (Billingsley et al., 2009; Madigan, & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012).

Stanulis & Floden (2009) found that new teachers who received intensive mentoring remained in the profession, resulting in 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.

## Examples

The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching shared findings from Louisiana and Texas Mentor Programs in a report from 2021: [Why New Teacher Mentoring Falls Short, and How to Fix It](#).

## Strategies and Action Steps to Support New Teachers

### Strategy 1:

Focus mentoring on instructional improvement

- The Teacher Mentor Program has a series of research-based requirements to be completed by the mentor and mentee that strive to enhance professional practice.
  - Observations of professional practice
  - Reflective, learning-focused conversations
  - Teacher Appraisal Plan and portfolio support
- The Teacher Mentor Program utilizes quarterly meetings to provide differentiated support connected to [Danielson's Framework for Teaching](#).

### Strategy 2:

Support mentors to be more effective by providing training, tools, and protocols for the role.

- Mentor teachers are selected through peer, self-nomination, or administrator nominations.
- Mentors enroll in a Canvas Course called "New Mentor Training"; complete the application process, including letters of recommendation; and complete a one-hour, virtual training.
- Mentors are matched through request or a matching process, which identifies mentors who are in the same building, at the same grade level, and/or in the same department.
- Protocols are included for matching mentors with experienced teachers who are new to the district or teachers who are new to the profession. The mentoring timeline is longer for supporting brand-new teachers.

### Strategy 3:

Align the mentoring program with district and school systems and goals.

- The program's [mission and vision](#) and [values and beliefs](#) are identified and align with the [U-46 mission and vision](#).

School District U-46 in Elgin has incorporated these strategies into its established [Teacher Mentor Program](#). The program includes the incorporation of these strategies to form a cohesive mentoring program for teachers.

### Other Considerations and Next Steps

The [Illinois Virtual Instructional Coach and Building Mentor Program](#) offers the following comprehensive supports:

- A virtual instructional coach, certified in the same area of instruction, who is trained to provide support for beginning teachers in instructional practices (including virtual instruction), social-emotional learning, and trauma-informed practices;
- A trained and certified building mentor whose sole responsibility is to make the new teacher feel welcomed, supported, and connected in their new school;
- Access to a robust virtual coaching platform with an online library of resources and a way to connect to other first year teachers; and
- Support and feedback via one-on-one and small group virtual coaching sessions.

The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders provides a [toolkit](#) for the equitable implementation of mentoring strategy that districts may consider utilizing as they implement this strategy.

#### The [toolkit](#) includes the following training modules:

- ✓ Introduction to the Toolkit
- ✓ Mentor: Recruitment, Selection, & Assignment
- ✓ Mentor: Professional Learning, Development, & Assessment
- ✓ Beginning Teacher: Professional Learning & Development
- ✓ The Principal's Role in Mentoring & Induction
- ✓ Mentoring & Induction Supports for Educators of Students with Disabilities
- ✓ Collecting Evidence of Program Success
- ✓ Data-Driven Conversations for Equitable Access

#### Each module includes:

- ✓ An anchor presentation that summarizes research and best practices,
- ✓ Handouts that provide supplemental information, and
- ✓ Team tools to facilitate discussion.

## Sources

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