

Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers

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VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

GUIDELINES FOR MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS FOR BEGINNING AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

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GUIDELINES FOR MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS FOR BEGINNING AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

Beginning to teach in a public school classroom may be one of the greatest challenges teachers face in their professional careers. Over the years, Virginia has offered a number of programs to assist school divisions as they help beginning teachers to become successful educators. A timeline describing the support and guidelines provided at the state level is available in an appendix to this document.

Mentor programs help beginning as well as experienced teachers make a successful transition into teaching by relying on the expertise of veteran educators to provide a clinical, real world training process. Research suggests that school divisions that provide effective support are likely to develop teachers who remain on the job longer and improve student academic performance. Mentor programs promote a climate of collaboration and professional learning within the school division and the teaching profession, starting with new educators, and assists in developing teacher and administrative leaders.

A mentoring program should be part of a larger system of teacher development, support, accountability, and evaluation. Qualified, carefully selected, and well-trained mentors are an important part of helping new teachers deepen their knowledge of rigorous content standards and their understanding of social and emotional learning, learner variability, and culturally responsive and inclusive educator practices.

Successful mentor programs are characterized by strong leadership and management, a commitment to teacher induction and improving student achievement in all schools, and adequate resources to deliver the planned program. *The Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers* provide the framework for effective mentor programs that assist teachers as they become experienced and dedicated professionals.

Since the mid-1990s, the Virginia General Assembly has funded various strategies that support beginning teachers and mentors. On October 17, 2019, the Virginia Board of Education prescribed new Standards of Quality (SOQ) for the Commonwealth's public schools. They included a commitment to support educator recruitment and retention with an increased emphasis on mentoring new teachers and principals.

The 2020 General Assembly did not provide adequate funding for the prescribed SOQ. As a result, on September 17, 2020, the Board unanimously re-prescribed the Standards of Quality from 2019.

If fully funded, the re-prescribed SOQ would provide for the establishment of a unit within the Virginia Department of Education that would develop guidelines for teacher leadership and mentorship programs and implement a statewide mentorship program to support new principals and principals of schools not meeting standards established by the Board. Also, they would provide funding to support full-time equivalent positions to serve as mentors for teachers in their early years of teaching as well as compensation adjustments for individuals serving as mentors.

LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS RELATED TO MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS IN VIRGINIA

Code of Virginia

§ 22.1-305.1. Mentor teacher programs.

A. The Board of Education shall establish, from such funds as may be appropriated by the General Assembly, mentor teacher programs utilizing specially trained public school teachers as mentors to provide assistance and professional support to teachers entering the profession and to improve the performance of experienced teachers who are not performing at an acceptable level.

The Board shall issue guidelines for such mentor teacher programs and shall set criteria for beginning and experienced teacher participation, including self-referral, and the qualifications and training of mentor teachers. Such guidelines shall provide that the mentor programs be administered by local school boards, with the assistance of an advisory committee made up of teachers, principals, and supervisors, and that mentors (i) be classroom teachers who have achieved continuing contract status and who work in the same building as the teachers they are assisting or be instructional personnel who are assigned solely as mentors; (ii) be assigned a limited number of teachers at one time; however, instructional personnel who are not assigned solely as mentors should not be assigned to more than four teachers at one time; and (iii) guide teachers in the program through demonstrations, observations, and consultations to promote instructional excellence. Local school boards shall strive to provide adequate release time for mentor teachers during the contract day.

B. The local school board shall serve as fiscal agent for the participating school boards in matters concerning the mentor teacher programs. The Department of Education shall allocate, from such funds as are appropriated, moneys to participating school divisions for the purpose of supporting such programs which shall include, but not be limited to, compensation for mentor teachers.

1989, c. 516; 1999, cc. 1030, 1037; 2013, cc. 588, 650.

Licensure Regulations for School Personnel

8VAC20-23-10. Definitions.

The following words and terms when used in this chapter shall have the meanings indicated unless the context clearly implies otherwise:

....

"Mentor" means a classroom teacher hired by the local school division who has achieved continuing contract status or other instructional personnel including retired teachers who meet local mentor selection criteria. The mentor should work in the same building as the beginning teacher or be instructional personnel who is assigned solely as a mentor. A mentor should be assigned a limited number of teachers at any time. Instructional personnel who are not assigned solely as mentors should not be assigned to more than four teachers at any time. Mentors guide teachers in the program through demonstrations, observations, and consultations.

GUIDELINES FOR MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS FOR BEGINNING AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

1. Vision, Mission, and Goals of Mentor Teacher Programs

The Mentor Teacher Program’s vision, mission, and goals focus on advancing student learning and accelerating beginning teacher effectiveness within a comprehensive system of development for all educators. Research, state and local policy, and effective practices guide program implementation and improvement.

2. Mentor Teacher Program Administration and Leadership

The Mentor Teacher Program is administered by the local school board and demonstrates a commitment to teacher induction and academic achievement for all students in all schools. The Mentor Teacher Program has qualified leaders who implement the program within an administrative structure that effectively manages and delivers support and formative assessment services to beginning teachers.

3. Resources for Mentor Teacher Programs

The local school board consistently allocates sufficient resources to enable the Mentor Teacher Program to meet all requirements and deliver planned components to all beginning teachers consistent with the stated program vision, mission, goals, and design.

4. School Leader Engagement in Mentor Teacher Programs

The Mentor Teacher Program leaders work with division and school leaders to ensure that induction practices are integrated into existing division and school professional development initiatives. School site administrators provide the structure and create a positive climate for the program’s intensive support and formative assessment activities. Site leaders determine procedures and actions to support the success of beginning teachers through assignment practices that consider the novice status of teachers. They provide additional time and resources to teachers assigned to more challenging settings. School site administrators recognize the work of mentor teachers as valuable school leadership practice and offer them opportunities to interact with other school leaders.

5. Mentor Roles and Responsibilities, Selection, and Assignment

The Mentor Teacher Program selects mentors for beginning teachers using explicit criteria consistent with assigned mentor roles and responsibilities. Mentors are selected and assigned using a fair, well-articulated process that is monitored consistently. Mentors are assigned to beginning teachers in a timely manner, taking content, grade level, pedagogical needs, and local context into account.

6. Mentor Professional Learning

The Mentor Teacher Program leaders design and implement initial mentor professional development to ensure mentors have understanding of the program vision, mission, and goals and sufficient foundational knowledge and skills to establish initial trust and credibility with beginning teachers and school leaders.

7. Mentor Teacher Program Design

The Mentor Teacher Program incorporates a purposeful, logically sequenced structure of extended professional development that prepares beginning teachers to meet the academic learning needs of all K-12 students. It also provides graduated support for second- and third-year teachers and those who are new to a school or school division. The design focuses on the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*, and the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, in relation to the *Virginia Standards of Learning* and the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*.

8. Beginning Teacher Professional Learning

Each Mentor Teacher Program provides comprehensive, extended preparation and professional development for beginning teachers designed to support their attainment of the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, in relation to the *Virginia Standards of Learning* and the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*. Professional growth is guided by the development and implementation of an annual Individual Learning Plan. Professional development for beginning teachers integrates individualized support and assistance from mentors with formal professional development offerings.

9. Instructionally Focused Formative Assessment of Beginning Teacher Practice

Each Mentor Teacher Program's formative assessment system guides beginning teachers and mentors and informs beginning teachers about their professional growth. The formative assessment system is characterized by multiple measures of teaching, analysis of student data, collaboration with colleagues, a focus on classroom practice, and structured reflection with a prepared mentor. The purpose of formative assessment is to guide professional development and to improve teaching, as measured by each standard of the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, in relation to the *Virginia Standards of Learning* and the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*.

10. Mentor Teacher Program Evaluation

The Mentor Teacher Program has a comprehensive system of formative program development and evaluation that addresses all program requirements, involves program participants and other stakeholders, and leads to substantive improvements. The program provides meaningful opportunities for professional practitioners and a broad representation of school community members to become involved in program revision, development, and evaluation activities. Program sponsors participate in accountability processes designed to ensure program quality and effectiveness.

GUIDELINES FOR MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS FOR BEGINNING AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

1. VISION, MISSION, AND GOALS OF MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS

The Mentor Teacher Program’s vision, mission, and goals focus on advancing student learning and accelerating beginning teacher effectiveness within a comprehensive system of development for all educators. Research, state and local policy, and effective practices guide program implementation and improvement.

Program Elements for Vision, Mission, and Goals of Mentor Teacher Programs

- A. The local school board develops a vision, mission, and goals for its Mentor Teacher Program and revises them over time, as needed, based on program evaluation.
- B. Research related to mentor teacher programs, as well as effective practices, state and local policies, instructional priorities, and other local considerations guide the development of the vision, mission, and goals for the Mentor Teacher Program.
- C. The vision, mission, and goals are based on support required to assist beginning teachers in developing and enhancing their knowledge and skills to implement the *Virginia Standards of Learning* and to meet the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers* and the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*.
- D. The Mentor Teacher Program’s design aligns with and complements school- and division-level professional learning and teacher evaluation.
- E. The Mentor Teacher Program’s practices promote a climate of collaboration and the development of both teacher leaders and school administrators.
- F. Program leaders share evaluation findings of the Mentor Teacher Program with stakeholders for program improvement, accountability, and future decision making.

2. MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP

The Mentor Teacher Program is administered by the local school board and demonstrates a commitment to teacher induction and academic achievement for all students in all schools. The Mentor Teacher Program has qualified leaders who implement the program within an administrative structure that effectively manages and delivers support and formative assessment services to beginning teachers.

Program Elements for Mentor Teacher Program Administration and Leadership

- A. The local school board serves as the fiscal agent and demonstrates commitment to a well-funded and well-structured Mentor Teacher Program that supports early career development, sets the groundwork for long-term professional growth, and creates a climate for a professional community that values new educators.
- B. The local school board provides clear and appropriate allocation of authority, initiative, and sufficient resources to support its implementation.

- C. The local school board outlines clear roles and responsibilities for the Mentor Teacher Program advisory committee and leadership team as appropriate to the local program context.
- D. An advisory committee made up of teachers, principals, supervisors, representatives from colleges and universities where clinical faculty/mentor teacher partnerships exist, previous mentor program participants, and other stakeholders assists the local school board with the development and implementation of its Mentor Teacher Program to improve conditions that affect beginning teacher success and their students' learning.
- E. The advisory committee provides expertise and insight on the following:
 - 1. The vision, mission, and goals of the Mentor Teacher Program;
 - 2. The management and delivery of support and assessment services to beginning teachers;
 - 3. The development of beginning teacher participation requirements and expectations as a condition of employment;
 - 4. The details of program design and implementation;
 - 5. Criteria for the selection of mentor teachers and incentives for participation;
 - 6. The delineation of the roles and responsibilities of mentor teachers;
 - 7. The development of professional development for mentor teachers and a plan for implementation;
 - 8. The identification of building administrator responsibilities;
 - 9. The allocation and use of resources;
 - 10. The creation of an evaluation plan; and
 - 11. Other aspects of the Mentor Teacher Program as needed.
- F. The leadership team includes, at a minimum, representatives from professional development, human resources, selected school sites, and university or pre-service programs, as appropriate.
- G. The Mentor Teacher Program leadership team is responsible for the overall direction of the program and meets regularly to discuss program design, development, implementation, and formative evaluation.
- H. The Mentor Teacher Program has one or more qualified program directors whose roles and responsibilities are appropriate to the scope of the program. The program director is accorded adequate time, resources, and authority necessary to oversee the details of program design and implementation. The program director is a member of the leadership team.
- I. The Mentor Teacher Program leadership team and program director demonstrate the depth of knowledge and understanding necessary to be able to implement an induction program. They are knowledgeable about the *Virginia Standards of Learning*, the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*, the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, and the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*. The leadership team and program director actively participate in ongoing professional development, research, and related technical support activities.

3. RESOURCES FOR MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS

The local school board consistently allocates sufficient resources to enable the Mentor Teacher Program to meet all requirements and deliver planned components to all beginning teachers consistent with the stated program vision, mission, goals, and design.

Program Elements for Resources for Mentor Teacher Programs

- A. The local school board invests in the Mentor Teacher Program as a means to support teacher effectiveness and promote teacher retention.
- B. The local school board allocates resources to ensure adequate support for essential program components as defined and described in the Mentor Teacher Program design.
- C. The school division designates qualified and adequate personnel to lead and coordinate the program.
- D. The Mentor Teacher Program director:
 - 1. Accesses and coordinates existing site-based, division- and state-sponsored, and other professional development resources, as appropriate, to support beginning teachers.
 - 2. Collaborates and communicates with other educational entities, working both within and across organizational boundaries to develop a coherent, efficient, and effective Mentor Teacher Program.
 - 3. Monitors resource allocations on a regular basis and makes necessary adjustments.
 - 4. Convenes the leadership team on a regular basis to discuss program design, development, implementation, and formative program evaluation data.

4. SCHOOL LEADER ENGAGEMENT IN MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS

The Mentor Teacher Program leaders work with division and school leaders to ensure that induction practices are integrated into existing division and school professional development initiatives. School site administrators provide the structure and create a positive climate for the program’s intensive support and formative assessment activities. Site leaders determine procedures and actions to support the success of beginning teachers through assignment practices that consider the novice status of teachers. They provide additional time and resources to teachers assigned to more challenging settings. School site administrators recognize the work of mentor teachers as valuable school leadership practice and offer them opportunities to interact with other school leaders.

Program Elements for School Leader Engagement in Mentor Teacher Programs

- A. The Mentor Teacher Program leaders communicate clearly the program’s vision, mission, goals, and design to school division leaders and administrators, school officials, site administration and faculty, and others responsible for employing, assigning, and supporting beginning teachers.
- B. School administrators participate in an overview of the program to be sufficiently familiar with the model in order to provide administrative support.

- C. The school division and school provide services and working conditions to increase opportunities for the success of beginning teachers. They make efforts to make assignments for beginning teachers that maximize their chances for success. Special support is offered to beginning teachers in hard-to-staff schools. Administrators should consider:
1. Reduced assignments (limited preparations or limited class size);
 2. Classrooms located in proximity to site administration, mentors, or other support;
 3. No (or very limited) extracurricular duties;
 4. Class assignments that take into consideration the developmental level of a novice teacher; and
 5. Additional resources for materials.
- D. The Mentor Teacher Program supports site administrators in integrating new teacher support processes with other school-wide reform or professional development initiatives. The program provides special support for site administrators in hard-to-staff schools, especially for administrators new to their roles. Site administrators have opportunities for professional development to familiarize them with program components, formative assessment processes, and development of the Individual Learning Plan. The content should include, but is not limited to:
1. Beginning teacher development;
 2. Working conditions that maximize opportunities for the success of beginning teachers;
 3. Effective steps that ameliorate or overcome challenging aspects of beginning teachers' work environments (as noted above);
 4. The mentor's role in the induction process; and
 5. Mentor/beginning teacher confidentiality.
- E. The Mentor Teacher Program site administrators work to establish a culture of support for mentor and beginning teacher collaboration. The responsibilities of the site administrator include, but are not limited to:
1. Conducting an initial orientation for beginning teachers to inform them about site resources, personnel, procedures, and policies;
 2. Introducing beginning teachers to the staff and including them in the school's learning community;
 3. Helping to focus the learning community on the *Virginia Standards of Learning*, the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*, the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, and the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*;
 4. Providing regular site-level professional development activities related to induction, including facilitating beginning teacher and mentor participation by providing conditions necessary to ensure success (substitute teachers, time, or stipends);
 5. Ensuring that beginning teachers have basic classroom supplies, textbooks, technology, and other resources for effective instruction; and
 6. Participating in the Mentor Teacher Program evaluation.

5. MENTOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, SELECTION, AND ASSIGNMENT

The Mentor Teacher Program selects mentors for beginning teachers using explicit criteria consistent with assigned mentor roles and responsibilities. Mentors are selected and assigned using a fair, well-articulated process that is monitored consistently. Mentors are assigned to beginning teachers in a timely manner, taking content, grade level, pedagogical needs, and local context into account.

Program Elements for Mentor Roles and Responsibilities, Selection, and Assignment

- A. The mentor roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in writing and communicated to all participants.
- B. The mentor roles and responsibilities focus on the advancement of beginning teacher practice, student learning, and teacher leadership.
- C. Mentor selection criteria are consistent with the mentors' specified roles and responsibilities. At a minimum, a mentor should:
 - 1. Be recognized as an exemplary classroom teacher and excellent professional role model.
 - 2. Have outstanding performance appraisals and be recommended by the principal.
 - 3. Be a current/former classroom teacher who:
 - a. Has at least three years successful teaching experience,
 - b. Has achieved continuing contract status or serves as instructional personnel, including retired teachers, who meet local mentor selection criteria; and
 - c. Works in the same building as the teachers he or she is assisting or is assigned solely as a mentor.
 - 4. Demonstrate effective interpersonal and communication skills.
 - 5. Demonstrate a commitment to equity by providing culturally inclusive and responsive learning environments and maintaining expectations of high academic achievement for all students.
 - 6. Demonstrate commitment to personal professional growth and learning.
 - 7. Be willing and able to:
 - a. Participate in professional preparation to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective mentor;
 - b. Engage in formative assessment processes, including non-evaluative, reflective conversations with beginning teachers about formative assessment evidence; and
 - c. Work collaboratively and share instructional ideas and materials with beginning teachers.
 - 8. Demonstrate knowledge of beginning teacher development.
 - 9. Have strong literacy and numeracy skills in elementary grades.
 - 10. Have strong subject matter competence in middle and secondary grades.
 - 11. Have strong knowledge of culturally responsive and inclusive education practices when presenting subject matter.
- D. The Mentor Teacher Program matches mentors with beginning teachers, taking into consideration credentials held, subject matter knowledge, orientation to learning, relevant experience, current assignments, grade level, pedagogical needs, local context, and geographic proximity. Mentors are assigned to beginning teachers in a timely manner, before they start teaching.

- E. Mentors should not serve as personnel evaluators and therefore should report to someone outside the evaluation loop, e.g., building-level mentor coordinator or central office staff. Discussions and feedback should remain confidential between mentors and beginning teachers.
- F. Clear procedures are in place for reconsidering assignments in a timely manner when either the mentor or beginning teacher is dissatisfied with the pairing.
- G. Mentors are released from other classroom assignments and responsibilities as possible and necessary to ensure adequate time to spend with the beginning teacher.
- H. The school division has established a continuous process of program improvement to ensure the quality and effectiveness of mentor recruitment, selection, and assignment.

6. MENTOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The Mentor Teacher Program leaders design and implement initial mentor professional learning to ensure mentors have understanding of the program vision, mission, and goals and sufficient foundational knowledge and skills to establish initial trust and credibility with beginning teachers and school leaders.

Program Elements for Mentor Professional Learning

- A. The Mentor Teacher Program provides professional development for mentors when they initially assume their roles, and offers regularly scheduled learning opportunities for them to acquire and enhance their knowledge and skills. Mentors perform their duties under the supervision of the program director.
- B. The Mentor Teacher Program leaders design and implement a curriculum of mentor professional learning that is guided by:
 1. The program’s vision, mission, and goals;
 2. Research on effective practices for mentoring beginning teachers;
 3. The school division’s and school’s instructional priorities;
 4. The developmental needs of mentors and beginning teachers; and
 5. The *Virginia Standards of Learning*, the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*, the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, and the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*.
- C. The Mentor Teacher Program mentor learning opportunities include the development of the knowledge and skills needed to:
 1. Identify and respond to diverse needs of beginning teachers;
 2. Respect cultural differences and communicate effectively with diverse individuals;
 3. Provide personal, emotional, and instructional support to adult learners;
 4. Help beginning teachers integrate into a supportive, encouraging community of colleagues within their school;
 5. Engage in mentoring conversations about teaching practices, including how to observe, give constructive feedback, and effectively use coaching language, stances, strategies, and techniques;
 6. Assist beginning teachers in understanding the local context for teaching, including such components as orientations to the school and the community;

7. Understand school culture and work closely with the entire school community including families, colleagues, instructional leadership teams, and the broader educational community to ensure the success of every student;
 8. Help beginning teachers utilize effective instructional practices, classroom management, time management, and organization;
 9. Apply culturally responsive and anti-biased lenses to teaching and learning;
 10. Prioritize the needs of vulnerable student groups by centering equity in all aspects of planning, instructional design, and teaching;
 11. Provide strategies for evaluating instructional materials and resources for cultural relevance and inclusiveness;
 12. Provide strategies to foster classroom environments that create equitable opportunities for access and achievement by acknowledging, valuing, advocating, and affirming cultural and social diversity in all aspects of the learning process;
 13. Provide instruction and classroom strategies that result in culturally inclusive and responsive learning environments leading to continuous academic, social, and emotional growth for all students, with attention to those in gap groups;
 14. Help beginning teachers to build relationships and communication skills that are anchored in respect and validation of social and cultural identity;
 15. Help beginning teachers to model and communicate high expectations for all students while building positive ethnic and cultural identities within students;
 16. Assist beginning teachers in dealing with difficult or resistant people and engaging in conflict resolution;
 17. Support beginning teachers in their participation in beginning teacher learning communities as a means for professional learning, problem solving, and collaborative inquiry;
 18. Support beginning teachers' use of instructional technology in the classroom to meet the diverse needs of every student;
 19. Use the evidence from formative assessments fairly and equitably with beginning teachers to assist them in developing Individual Learning Plans that align with the *Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and *Virginia's Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*;
 20. Assist beginning teachers in advancing the literacy of elementary, middle, and secondary students;
 21. Assist beginning teachers in helping secondary students access the academic curriculum;
 22. Disaggregate and analyze assessment, engagement, behavioral, and attendance data by student groups and apply differentiated strategies to address growth and learning needs of all students, with specific attention to students within gap groups; and
 23. Work successfully in leadership roles with school site administration.
- D. The Mentor Teacher Program provides professional development to prepare mentors in the appropriate use of the instruments and processes of the formative assessment system, including issues of bias and equity in conducting formative assessments.
- E. Mentors have time, supported by the program, to meet with each other to develop and refine needed mentor skills, to solve problems, to conduct assessments, and to reflect on teaching.
- F. Mentor Teacher Program leaders guide mentors in a system of continuous improvement that is based on ongoing formative assessments and informed by qualitative and quantitative data from mentor/beginning teacher interactions.

- G. The program assesses the quality of services provided by mentors to beginning teachers using multiple sources of evidence, including group and individualized data-informed formative and summative feedback, retaining in the program only those mentors who are successful.

7. MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAM DESIGN

The Mentor Teacher Program incorporates a purposeful, logically sequenced structure of extended professional development that prepares beginning teachers to meet the academic learning needs of all K-12 students. It also provides graduated support for second- and third-year teachers and those who are new to a school or school division. The design focuses on the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*, the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, in relation to the *Virginia Standards of Learning* and the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*.

Program Elements for Mentor Teacher Program Design

- A. Mentor Teacher Program leaders collaborate with appropriate school and division leaders to develop and implement a comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers.
- B. The Mentor Teacher Program rationale articulates a clear understanding of teacher induction and describes how the selected design supports beginning teachers beyond the first year of teaching and is responsive to local contexts, including school and division educational priorities and goals for student learning.
- C. The design of the Mentor Teacher Program is based on a clearly defined set of learning outcomes for beginning teachers so that all students can meet or exceed the *Virginia Standards of Learning* and the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*.
- D. The Mentor Teacher Program implements beginning teacher learning communities for professional learning, problem solving, and collaborative inquiry.
- E. Mentor Teacher Program goals are explicitly focused on meeting the needs and improving achievement of all students. Goals and intended outcomes are reviewed and revised as necessary, based on formative program evaluation data. Program goals include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Improving beginning teachers' skills and performance, especially as they relate to utilizing research-based effective practices in the classroom;
 - 2. Providing a seamless transition into teaching;
 - 3. Applying new learning from beginning teacher professional learning and learning communities;
 - 4. Putting theory into practice;
 - 5. Building a sense of professionalism and positive attitude;
 - 6. Building the capacity for self-reflection;
 - 7. Supporting teacher morale, communication, and collegiality;
 - 8. Preventing teacher isolation; and
 - 9. Retaining quality teachers from underrepresented minority groups and diverse cultural backgrounds.

- F. Mentors help beginning teachers proactively more than reactively. They guide teachers in the program through demonstrations, observations, and consultations to promote instructional excellence. Mentors act as:
1. Information providers;
 2. Thought partners; and
 3. Skill developers.
- G. Mentors and beginning teachers should have sufficient protected time to engage in supportive activities and discussions. To the extent possible, mentors should be fully or partially released from classroom responsibilities, and sufficiently prepared and adequately supported in their roles and responsibilities. Time should be provided regularly for mentors to meet with beginning teachers to solve problems, reflect upon teaching practices, and acquire skills. Every effort should be made within the program design to provide opportunities for beginning teacher reflection.
- H. Mentors should be assigned a limited number of teachers at one time. Instructional personnel who are not assigned solely as mentors should not be assigned to more than four teachers at one time. In a full release model, the mentor to beginning teacher ratio should not exceed 1:12; for fewer beginning teachers, proportionately less release time may be required.
- I. The Mentor Teacher Program design provides professional development opportunities that focus on equitable, culturally inclusive and responsive learning environments that embrace and build on students' ethnicity, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, giftedness, and socio-economic, cultural, academic, linguistic, and family backgrounds, and may include:
1. Awareness of institutionalized racism and systemic inequity;
 2. Normalizing conversations about racism and equity;
 3. Pedagogical approaches that meet the needs of diverse learners;
 4. Meeting the needs of English language learners;
 5. Strategies to disaggregate assessment, engagement, behavioral, and attendance data by student groups to address growth and learning needs of all students;
 6. Strategies and resources to help teachers understand the local culture and community;
 7. Knowledge of how to utilize students' cultures as vehicles for learning;
 8. Critical reflections of beliefs, behaviors, and practices impacting inclusive learning environments and equity for students; and
 9. The ability to embed the critical equity competencies included in the Virginia Department of Education's EdEquityVA Compass:
 - a. Continuous Reflection
 - b. Courageous Leadership
 - c. Curriculum Reframing
 - d. Compassionate Student and Family Engagement
 - e. Cultural Responsiveness.

8. BEGINNING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Each Mentor Teacher Program provides comprehensive, extended preparation and professional development for beginning teachers designed to support their attainment of the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, in relation to the *Virginia Standards of Learning* and the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*. Professional growth is guided by the development and implementation of an annual Individual Learning Plan. Professional development for beginning teachers integrates individualized support and assistance from mentors with formal professional development offerings.

Program Elements for Beginning Teacher Professional Learning

- A. The Mentor Teacher Program provides an array of professional development offerings for beginning teachers that support their attainment of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, in relation to the *Virginia Standards of Learning* and the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*. Professional development for beginning teachers focuses on skills and practices specific to content, language, and literacy development, and incorporates school site priorities.
- B. The Mentor Teacher Program includes a planned process for advising beginning teachers about their involvement in the program and a clear set of expectations for their participation.
- C. The design of the Mentor Teacher Program supports beginning teachers in:
 - 1. Attaining proficiency in the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*;
 - 2. Understanding the climate and expectations of the school and school division;
 - 3. Learning about the community and working and communicating successfully with colleagues and families;
 - 4. Using culturally inclusive and responsive pedagogical practices to provide every student with equitable access to academically and intellectually challenging grade-level content; and
 - 5. Gaining proficiency in meeting the diverse needs of every student, including students with diagnosed and undiagnosed learning differences, and to uphold related laws and regulations.
- D. Mentors help beginning teachers develop and implement an annual Individual Learning Plan based on their prior preparation, training, experience, student achievement data, and site needs. Mentors assist beginning teachers in applying new learning from their professional learning and learning communities. Formative assessment evidence guides the development, monitoring, and on-going revisions of the Individual Learning Plan.
- E. The Individual Learning Plan includes professional growth goals linked to student learning goals and strategies for achieving those goals. The goals are also linked to Virginia's *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*. School site priorities and student achievement needs also influence goal development.
- F. Beginning teachers' progress in meeting the goals is monitored and revised at intervals or as additional needs are identified from student assessment data and teacher formative assessment data. The Individual Learning Plan can be shared with others, including the site administrator, at the discretion of the beginning teacher.

- G. The Mentor Teacher Program allocates mentors and beginning teachers sufficient time to consider formative assessment evidence and to develop planned, systematic opportunities to improve teaching.
- H. Beginning teacher are able to participate in learning communities for professional learning, problem solving, and collaborative inquiry.
- I. The Mentor Teacher Program design provides clear models for communication between mentors and site administrators to contribute to a seamless linkage between the Mentor Teacher Program and local, site-based professional development or reform initiatives.

9. INSTRUCTIONALLY FOCUSED FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT OF BEGINNING TEACHER PRACTICE

Each Mentor Teacher Program’s formative assessment system guides beginning teachers and mentors and informs beginning teachers about their professional growth. The formative assessment system is characterized by multiple measures of teaching, analysis of student data, collaboration with colleagues, a focus on classroom practice, and structured reflection with a prepared mentor. The purpose of formative assessment is to guide professional development and to improve teaching, as measured by each standard of the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, in relation to the *Virginia Standards of Learning* and the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*.

Program Elements for Instructionally Focused Formative Assessment of Beginning Teacher Practice

- A. Formative assessment results are used to guide mentoring and professional development and are not appropriate for teacher evaluation or employment decisions. Formative assessment data should not be confused with formative evaluation for personnel purposes.
- B. The Mentor Teacher Program uses an instructionally focused formative assessment system that offers multiple opportunities for beginning teachers to learn and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, and to apply the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers* in relation to the *Virginia Standards of Learning* and the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*, in the context of their teaching assignments.
- C. Multiple formative assessment measures should include some or all of the following:
 - 1. Peer observation;
 - 2. Assessment of student needs;
 - 3. Self-analysis;
 - 4. Reflective feedback, e.g., interactive journals;
 - 5. The process of inquiry;
 - 6. Disaggregation and analysis of student data;
 - 7. Analysis of student work products; and
 - 8. Review of teacher work samples.
- D. The formative assessment measures selected should align with any existing school or school division data review and analysis protocols used.

- E. The Mentor Teacher Program includes a process for developing and implementing an Individual Learning Plan for each participant, based on formative assessment evidence, to document his or her professional growth.

10. MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Mentor Teacher Program has a comprehensive system of formative program development and evaluation that addresses all program requirements, involves program participants and other stakeholders, and leads to substantive improvements. The program provides meaningful opportunities for professional practitioners and a broad representation of school community members to become involved in program revision, development, and evaluation activities. Program sponsors participate in accountability processes designed to ensure program quality and effectiveness.

Program Elements for Mentor Teacher Program Evaluation

- A. Local Mentor Teacher Program goals and the program requirements are the criteria for program evaluation. These criteria include an examination of beginning teachers' use of instructional strategies based on the *Virginia Standards of Learning*.
- B. Ongoing program evaluations include formative and summative processes using information from multiple internal and external sources, such as teachers, collaborating partners, site administrators, program staff, previous mentor program participants, and the program leadership team. Program directors oversee the development of research mechanisms and data collection strategies to track teacher retention, student achievement, and exit interview results.
- C. The Mentor Teacher Program regularly collects feedback about program quality and effectiveness from all participants, using both formal and informal measures. Program leaders analyze data, systematically share them with program sponsors and others, and use data to improve the Mentor Teacher Program and school or district policies related to teacher development.
- D. The results of program evaluation, the implications of new knowledge about teaching and learning, and the identified strengths and needs of beginning teachers form the basis for adjustments and improvements in program design.
- E. Mentor Teacher Program sponsors participate in external peer reviews designed to examine program quality and effectiveness.
- F. The ultimate measure of the success of the mentoring program will be improved academic achievement for all students and the retention of high quality and culturally diverse teachers.

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APPENDIX

TIMELINE OF STATE-LEVEL PROGRAMS AND GUIDANCE FOR MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS IN VIRGINIA

Since 1985, a variety of programs have been implemented throughout Virginia to support beginning teachers.

1985 -1991

The Beginning Teacher Assistance Program (BTAP), initiated in 1985 as the first support program for beginning teachers, evolved into a performance assessment required for licensure. BTAP was rescinded by the General Assembly in 1991.

1985

The Colleague Teacher Project for Chesterfield and Fairfax Counties piloted the concept of the colleague or mentor teacher.

1987

The Virginia General Assembly passed House Bill No. 1085 that established guidelines for the training of cooperating teachers in the supervision of student teachers. The bill also proposed that cooperating teachers be designated as “clinical faculty,” and be granted special status by colleges or universities.

1988

The General Assembly allocated funds to the State Council on Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to implement and evaluate clinical faculty programs that operated over a three-year period.

1991

The Department of Education commissioned a qualitative field study of the three-year, clinical faculty projects. The ensuing report suggested that “clinical faculty training is similar to preparation for mentor teachers. It would be cost-effective to combine the two programs giving classroom teachers an opportunity to assist either new teachers or student teachers.”

1996

The 1996 session of the General Assembly appropriated funding for the 1996-1998 biennium that allowed 31 school divisions to establish mentor teacher programs that supported more than 2,000 new teachers during the two-year period.

1997

The General Assembly appropriated funds for the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) to request proposals from “Clinical Faculty Partnerships” between institutions of higher education and local school divisions. Awards were issued to the Mid-Valley Consortium for Teacher Education and the Regional Clinical Faculty Program in northern Virginia.

1998

The General Assembly appropriated funding for the 1998-2000 biennium for Clinical Faculty and Mentor Teacher Programs. Twenty partnerships between local school divisions and institutions of higher education were funded.

House Joint Resolution (HJR) 117 was enacted requesting the Department of Education to study the feasibility of implementing a statewide, one-year induction program as the first year of teaching following the completion of a teacher education program. A study issued in response to HJR 117 stated that, if appropriately funded, a year-long induction program for new teachers was feasible.

1999

The Virginia General Assembly appropriated additional funds for mentor teacher programs. The Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act of 1999 was enacted. The legislation required a mentor for every beginning teacher and also required the Board of Education to issue guidelines for mentor teacher programs. The Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed a Task Force on the Establishment of a Statewide Mentor Teacher Program to develop guidelines for the implementation of mentor programs on a statewide basis. The guidelines, which were presented to the Board of Education for first review on November 18, 1999, outlined essential components of a mentor program.

2000

On June 22, 2000, the Board of Education approved the *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers*.

2002

The U.S. Department of Education awarded Virginia a three-year, \$13.5 million Teacher Quality Enhancement (TQE) State Grant. A portion of the funds was used to fund Mentor Teacher program development.

2004

Funding from the TQE grant was used to convene a Task Force on Teacher Mentor Programs in Hard-to-Staff Schools. The New Teacher Center, then housed at the University of California Santa Cruz, served as a consultant on the Task Force’s work to develop *Virginia Requirements of Quality and Effectiveness for Beginning Teacher Mentor Programs in Hard-to-Staff Schools*.

2018

The New Teacher Center, which is now a non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening the practice of beginning teachers, published its *Teacher Induction Program Standards* and its *Mentor Practice Standards*, based on almost 20 years of work and research in the area of teacher induction and mentoring.

2019

On October 17, 2019, the Virginia Board of Education prescribed new Standards of Quality (SOQ) for the Commonwealth's public schools, which included a commitment to support educator recruitment and retention with an increased emphasis on mentoring new teachers and principals.

2020

The 2019 SOQ were transmitted to the General Assembly to review and revise during the 2020 legislative session; however, the 2020 General Assembly did not provide adequate funding for the prescribed SOQ. Consequently, on September 17, 2020, the Board unanimously re-prescribed the Standards of Quality from 2019.

If fully funded, the re-prescribed SOQ would provide for the establishment of a unit within the Virginia Department of Education that would develop guidelines for teacher leadership and mentorship programs and implement a statewide mentorship program to support new principals and principals of schools not meeting standards established by the Board. Also, the SOQ would provide funding to support full-time equivalent positions to serve as mentors for teachers in their early years of teaching as well as compensation adjustments for individuals serving as mentors.

Also in 2020, Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) delivered a report, *Operations and Performance of the Virginia Department of Education*, in which it recommended that the Board of Education update its guidance on how to implement effective teacher mentorship programs.

2021

Virginia's *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers* were updated using concepts and language from the New Teacher Center's work, Virginia's revised (2021) *Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*, other state and national mentoring programs, and current research on teacher mentoring.