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| **Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item** | **Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia** |

# Agenda Item: I

## Date: September 23, 2021

### Title: First Review of the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure Recommendation for Revisions to the *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers*

#### Presenter: Dr. Joan Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Teacher Education and Licensure

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## Purpose of Presentation:

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

**Executive Summary:**   
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. [Section 22.1-305.1](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter15/section22.1-305.1/) of the *Code of Virginia* requires the Board of Education to issue guidelines for mentor teacher programs. *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.

The *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers* were first developed in response to the Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act of 1999, and were approved by the Board on June 22, 2000. The guidelines have not been revised since the original publication in 2000.

In 2004, funding from the Teacher Quality Enhancement (TQE) State 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*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/career_resources/mentor/mentoring_requirements.pdf)*.* While not a revision to the 2000 *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced* *Teachers,* this document served a supplement to assist divisions with mentor programs in hard-to-staff schools.

Since the mid-1990s, the Virginia General Assembly has funded various strategies that support beginning teachers and mentors. On October 17, 2019, the Board 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.

In October 2020, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) delivered a report, [*Operations and Performance of the Virginia Department of Education*](http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt538.pdf), in which it recommended that the Board update its guidance on how to implement effective teacher mentorship programs. As a result of this guidance, the Department of Teacher Education and Licensure, in collaboration with Dr. Linda Wallinger, began the process for revisions to the *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers*.

Dr. Wallinger merged the principles and guidelines from both the 2000 *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers* and the 2004 *Virginia Requirements of Quality and Effectiveness for Beginning Teacher Mentor Programs in Hard-to-Staff Schools* and incorporated the *Teacher Induction Program Standards* and *Mentor Practice Standards* from the non-profit organization, the [New Teacher Center](https://newteachercenter.org/). In addition, Dr. Wallinger surveyed other states’ current practices for providing guidance and support to new teachers and researched current practices among divisions across Virginia.

VDOE executive leadership staff reviewed the draft document along with feedback from the Office of Equity and Community Engagement. Once the internal review was completed, the draft was reviewed and vetted by representatives from the Virginia Education Association (VEA) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). The draft *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers* was presented to the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) on April 26, 2021. ABTEL recommended that guideline 8, “Beginning Teacher Professional Learning”, include language to reflect not only working with, but *communicating* successfully with colleagues and families. This single edit was made to the guidelines.

## Action Requested:

Action will be requested at a future meeting. Specify anticipated date below:

October 21, 2021

## Superintendent’s Recommendation: The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education receive for first review ABTEL’s recommended revisions for the *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers.*

**Background Information and Statutory Authority:**  
The *Code of Virginia* requires the Board to issue guidelines for mentor teacher programs.

**§ 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.

8VAC20-23-10 of the *Licensure Regulations for School Personnel* provides a definition of mentor:

***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.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**  
It is anticipated that this item will come back to the Board for final review at the October 21, 2021, meeting. Following Board approval, this item will be posted in Town Hall for a 30-day public comment period pursuant to the Administrative Process Act. Additionally, the Office of Teacher Education will prepare and disseminate a superintendent’s email to communicate the revised guidelines and provide technical assistance to school divisions. The guidelines will also be posted to the Virginia Department of Education’s website.

**Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:**

The 2021 General Assembly allocated funding for three full-time equivalent positions to be used for teacher recruitment and retention in the Department of Teacher Education and Licensure. The coordination of the New Teacher Data Collection, Mentor Teacher grant, and the new *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers* will be subsumed in one of these positions, with a specific focus on teacher retention.