

Effective Instructional Mentoring Practices

In 2007, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 2574 authorizing the establishment of the Oregon Mentoring Program (OMP) with the goal to support beginning teachers, principals, and superintendents. The 2013 legislature established a Network of Quality Teaching and Learning to provide a comprehensive system of support for educators. The primary focus of the Network of Quality Teaching and Learning is to create a culture of leadership, professionalism, continuous improvement and excellence for teachers and leaders across the P-20 system. The Oregon Mentoring Program is a key component of this work.

The Oregon Mentoring Program supports a vision of induction and mentoring that addresses the following goals:

- Increase retention of beginning teachers and administrators
- Improve instructional and leadership practices for beginning teachers and administrators
- Increase student learning and growth

A priority of Oregon's educational system is to recruit and retain teachers and administrators of the highest quality. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) issues grants to support beginning teacher and administrator mentoring programs. These grants fund individual school districts or consortia comprised of school districts, ESDs, and universities. Mentoring projects are designed to support activities related to an evidence-based mentorship program for beginning educators. Grant-in-aid has been allocated yearly from 2008-2017.

The OMP is increasing long-term retention of beginning educators.

- 83% of the 2012-2013 mentored beginning teachers were still teaching two years later which is 3% more than the percentage of all beginning teachers in the state.
- This continues when following the same teachers for three-year and four-year retention rates (3% more mentored beginning teachers were retained compared to the state for both cohorts).
- And it is important to keep in mind that the data for all beginning teachers in Oregon includes the mentored beginning teachers. The two categories are not exclusive. Thus, as the retention rate for mentored beginning teachers increases, this positively contributes to the statewide beginning teacher retention rate.

What Mentors Do:

Research (Callahan, 2016; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) has found that beginning teachers, beginning principals and beginning superintendents benefit from a professional relationship with a skilled mentor. In a confidential and trusting partnership, the mentor supports the educator to transform practice through a process of reflection and inquiry. This collaborative and continuous partnership assists the acceleration of instructional practices; ensures equitable learning for all students; retains effective educators; and empowers educational leaders.

Mentors Assess Needs:

- Accurately assesses effective teaching and leadership practice and guides beginning educator development
- Gathers data and helps analyze and interpret data
- Makes connections and builds collaborative relationships

Mentors Establish Focus:

- Prioritizes educator needs based on best practices and student needs
- Links data and practice to professional teaching and leading standards
- Uses questions to promote reflective thinking and move practice forward

Mentors Support Movement Forward:

- Collaboratively plans and prepares by identifying best practices for increasing student learning
- Holds a vision of outstanding teaching/leading and articulates their knowledge of best practices (both content and pedagogy)
- Identifies and provides research-based resources to move professional practice forward
- Helps educators to develop a balance between work and personal life to promote resiliency

Mentors Promote Accountability:

- Identifies specific next steps based on data, immediate and long-term goals
- Agrees upon ways to measure outcomes and determines possible evidence for those outcomes

Thought Partner

"I appreciate the opportunity to talk through problems of practice/current areas of concern to make sure I've considered all angles and that my plans make sense from the point of view of an experienced administrator."

2016 Beginning Principal

"My mentor has given me a lot of feedback and strategies to help me maintain a calm, respectful learning environment. She has also helped me problem-solve issues such as planning and differentiation."

2016 Beginning Teacher

What Mentors Don't Do

In mentoring relationships maintaining confidentiality and building trust is critical. Achieving this means mentors do not engage in the following:

- Activities that educators may view as evaluative
- Interviewing teachers and/or principals
- Filling in temporarily for staff
- Sharing specific information about beginning educators' with leadership

The Oregon Mentoring Program for Beginning Teachers and Administrators is a key component to the revitalization of the education profession in Oregon.

References

- Callahan, J. (October 2016). Encouraging retention of new teachers through mentoring strategies. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 83(1). 6-11.
- Ingersoll, R. (May 2012). Beginning teacher induction: What the data tell us. *Kappan Magazine*, 93(8). 47-51.
- Ingersoll, R. and Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 681-714.

What We've Learned About Successful Mentoring Programs

When beginning educators understand and embrace the mentoring model, teaching/leading efforts are enhanced. ODE has learned through research, quantitative, and qualitative data that mentoring works best when the beginning educator and the mentor do the following:

- Meet for a minimum of one-two hour(s) each week, uninterrupted, for planning and problem solving (75-90 hours per year required by statute)
- Reflect regularly on their practice to improve instruction
- Use various mentoring tools to support gathering data, facilitating a collaborative conversation, and purposeful planning
- Identify next steps for what the beginning educator and mentor will do prior to the next mentoring meeting
- Build a trusting relationship that uses an instructional, collaborative and/or facilitative approach
- Participate in ongoing professional learning based on assessed needs to improve skills and practices

ODE Mentoring Informational Briefs

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