



TEACHER MENTOR PROGRAM

for the

**North Colonie Central
School District**

Background and Philosophy of Program

Since 1990 the North Colonie Central School District and the North Colonie Teachers' Association have joined forces to create a Mentor Program, which meets the needs of new teachers entering the profession. Both the District and the NCTA see the dual benefits of this program. For the new teacher he or she has the ability to work with an experienced professional; the seasoned educator, on the other hand, is recognized for his expertise in his field.

The Mentor Program allows veteran teachers to welcome new associates into the profession in a very collegial manner. Mentors share their skills and knowledge while building on the district's orientation programs. In addition, mentors assist new teachers in maneuvering through the intricate community of the school.

Mission Statement

The North Colonie Central School District and the North Colonie Teachers' School Association understand both the joy and complex nature of the teaching profession. It is this fact that is at the heart of the Mentor Program. Our program nurtures and helps our new teachers grow into consummate skilled educators through the guidance and care of seasoned proven professionals. We want to enhance our new teachers while giving them the support and understanding so they will continue to stay in the teaching world. Our program mentors our teachers in such a fashion that they will one day become mentors themselves.

Policies and Procedures

The Mentor Program is governed by a three-member committee: the assistant superintendent for the district and two teachers for the NCTA. One of the teachers shall always be the chair of the associations professional committee, while the other teacher will be appointed by the NCTA.

In the spring of each year, when vacancies are known throughout the district, the committee will contact building principals to solicit names of teachers who are felt to be good mentors. The committee will then meet to discuss and select the prospective mentors. When the selection is made, the building principal will then approach the teacher to see if he/she would volunteer his time to become a mentor. The teacher will then call the professional chair to offer his services as a mentor.

The Program

The combined mindset of the District and the NCTA towards mentors is that it is a volunteer position. Teachers who volunteer to mentor understand the importance of investing their time and expertise working with new colleagues. By helping to train our newest members we ensure a strong teaching base for our students to thrive in.

Teachers who become mentors are given a half-day orientation program. The morning session deals with the operational tasks of being a mentor. Such topics covered are:

- The confidential statement
- The understanding of various styles
- Successful strategies for being a mentor
- Panel discussions of mentors and former first year teachers (what worked and what did not)
- The mentor as a guide and not an evaluator

New Teacher Orientation

The orientation of teachers to the North Colonie Central Schools is a critical part of the mentoring program. In August, elementary teachers meet with the Principals and the Assistant Superintendent to focus on specific curriculum topics and other vital information. Included among the topics are an overview of the content areas of math, science, English/language arts, social studies, health and technology. Additional topics include parent communication and testing.

One week prior to the start of school, all teachers report for an intensive three-day session. During these three days, new teachers complete a comprehensive set of activities that orient them to the following:

- The assigned building through meeting with principals and other key individuals. Project SAVE components are included in this phase.
- Special services, pupil services, working with IEPs and best approaches and expectations working with special education teachers, teacher aides and other support staff.
- Use of technology through an overview of available resources, board policy and use of the system
- Discipline and class management through a review of actual case studies
- The North Colonie Central Schools' professional library and how to access information from it
- District policies on sexual harassment
- Benefits available to teachers through the district and independent plans (health insurance, term life insurance, dental plan, optical plans, tax-sheltered annuities, etc.)

It is during this three-day orientation that mentors and mentees meet and are oriented formally to the program. However, many mentors and mentees met prior to this day. Activities are scheduled to provide mentors with an orientation/reorientation to the process of mentoring. Then, mentors meet with their mentee, the mentor program co-coordinators and the Assistant Superintendent to overview the program.

Second Year Teachers' Instructional In-Service Workshop

In addition, the district sponsors a Second Year Teachers' Instructional Workshop. The purpose of this activity is to provide second-year teachers with the opportunity to spend some quiet time reflecting about best practices, and to develop an individual improvement plan.

Role Descriptions

Building Administrators

- Create a supportive school environment for a Mentor Program
- Collaborate on scheduling and approval of release time for mentors and/or mentees
- Work with the mentor coordinators on the pairing of mentors and mentees

Mentoring Committee

- Address any program concerns
- Conduct an annual review and evaluation of the program
- Create and revise new program documents
- Work with the assistant superintendent to provide training and professional development opportunities throughout the year

Mentor

- Support and enhance the first year experience of the new teacher

Mentee

- Review, assess and modify needs with their mentor

Mentee Evaluation

Formal evaluations of district employees are an administrative responsibility. The mentor/mentee relationship is confidential. Any observation or appraisal of a mentee by a mentor is intended solely for the purpose of professional growth and will not be used as a formal evaluative tool.

Confidentiality Statement

Confidentiality is a critical component of the mentor and the new teacher partnership because trust is fragile. Trust comes from the security of knowing that your actions and words will not be public knowledge. This sharing of a confidence with an administrator or colleague can undermine the entire relationship. Therefore, all shared confidences should be kept between the mentor and new teacher. Mentors will never make evaluative reports about new teachers to administrators or colleagues and vice versa.

Activities Calendar

Pairings

May

- Review staffing needs for following year
- Contact between mentor committee and principals

June/July

- Identify prospective mentors
- Mentors contact new colleagues

Activities

August

- Week long new teacher orientation
- Mentor training and luncheon

March

- Mentor/mentee dinner

Release days

A total of two half days in release time will be allotted for various mentor/mentee activities. Examples of such activities include classroom observations and professional development. The release time will be scheduled as determined by the mentor/mentee team and the building principal.

Mentors and mentees are awarded two half days to be used to work on curriculum, classroom observations or other approved activities. These half days may be taken over two academic years, with both half days taken in the first year or one half day each year.

To request a half day, the applicant must fill out the Half Day Request for Mentor Program form. The form is then sent to the chairperson of the NCTA Professional Committee. After review by the chairperson, it is either approved or denied and then sent back to the teacher making the request. If for some reason the request is denied by the chairperson of the Professional Committee, the chairperson will contact the teacher and explain why it was not approved and how that request can be rethought.

If approved, the teacher making the request then takes it to their building principal for final approval.

Program Evaluation

The mentor program is evaluated informally as well as formally. During the year, sessions with the mentors, mentees, building principals and committee members provide an opportunity for informal evaluation and assessment of the program. This information is used at the May and June committee meetings to update and revise our program.

The North Colonie Board of Education, the North Colonie School District and the North Colonie Teachers' Association are committed to a mentor teacher program. This program will be evaluated by all parties and adjusted as necessary.

North Colonie School District

North Colonie Teachers' Association

THE MENTOR PARTNERSHIP



The relationship between the mentor and the new teacher differs from a student teacher – master teacher relationship in that both mentor and new teacher are professionals of equal rank. The program aims to promote friendship and trust which are basic to successfully working together. When two colleagues respect and trust one another, growth for both is possible.

MENTOR ORIENTATION

WHAT IS A MENTOR?

- an experienced professional educator with the will to facilitate the induction of a new teacher into a teaching career through a year of guided growth
- tenured in North Colonie Schools and has a minimum of three years experience in the certified area
- a teacher who has demonstrated mastery of pedagogical skills and subject matter
- a teacher who has demonstrated superior teaching ability
- a teacher capable of establishing rapport with a new teacher who has demonstrated superior interpersonal and communication skills

WHAT DOES A MENTOR DO?

- establishes rapport with new teacher
- encourages, supports, listens when needed
- guides, suggests when the time is right
- participates in activities such as shared classroom experiences, visitations, planning or other mentor/new teachers shared activities during released time
- grows professionally because of the dimensions of the mentor role
- keeps confidential all conferences and interactions with new teacher
- transmits awareness and accommodates new teacher needs using diverse skills learned in years of teaching experience
- helps the new teacher to become part of the school district, the building, the department, the grade level by familiarizing the new teacher with policies, procedures, resources, and support services
- is willing to follow the new teacher's lead in regard to needs and concerns
- thinks, talks, plans, shares in many flexible settings for the sake of the new teacher's growth and induction into teaching

CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT: MENTORING IS SUPPORTING*

CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT

Information

- sharing information related to procedures, guidelines or expectations of the school and district

Resources/Materials

- collecting, locating, disseminating materials, or referring to other resources

Instructional

- sharing information about teaching strategies or the instructional process
- incorporating “Peer Coaching”

Emotional

- offering support through empathic listening and by sharing experiences

Student Management

- sharing of ideas related to discipline and management of students in the classroom

Scheduling/Planning

- offer help in understanding the school day and planning the school day or schedule

Environmental

- share ideas about room arrangement, organization, or help analyze the physical set-up of the classroom

Teaching Strategies

- take time to observe each other teach. Share ideas on strategies used. It is a good idea to pre and post-conference observations

Parental

- share ideas related to parent conferencing and working with parents

*Source: Categories of Support for Mentoring Teachers derived from Mentor Teachers Program by Sandra J. Odell, NEA Professional Library, stock No. 1086-8-00

ENSURING SUCCESS

IN THE BEGINNING

1. Get to know your mentee outside class
 - Eat lunch together
 - Go for walks
 - Go for coffee after school
 - Plan to attend a conference together. Time spent socializing will help build the trust so critical to a successful relationship.
2. Make a schedule to
 - Observe one another
 - Meet to discuss professional concerns. What your intern needs to know will change as the year progresses.
3. Help your mentee get to know the faculty
4. Give suggestions for organizing and managing materials. You might share activities that you use during the first week to help get the class off to a good start.
5. Help the mentee understand both the written and unwritten rules and norms in the school and community.
6. Every new teacher wants to do everything all at once. Help the mentee prioritize what needs to be done immediately and what can wait. Pacing takes time to learn.
7. Don't say it all at once.

IN FULL SWING

1. Remember that the purpose is encouragement, not evaluation.
2. Encourage the mentee to try his/her own ideas, teaching style and classroom management plan.
3. Identify resource people, e.g. social worker, outreach worker, counsellors, nurse. Inform the mentee of each person's function.
4. Model and/or suggest techniques for conferring with parents.
5. Provide examples of unit plans, learning centers or specific lessons.
6. Let your mentee know what to expect when the supervisor or principal observes.
7. Listen more than you talk. Laugh together.
8. Encourage your new teacher to share "fresh out of college" ideas with you.

WHEN YOU'RE OBSERVING

1. Try to make at least two positive comments for each negative one.
2. Keep careful records of exactly what happens.
3. Describe rather than judge.
4. Share ideas rather than give advice.
5. Instead of pointing out problem areas, wait for the new teacher to ask for help. If necessary, ask questions about how the new teacher feels about the situation. If the new teacher asks for help:
 - Praise good things
 - Undercorrect rather than overcorrect
 - Demonstrate
 - Give an example
6. Remember that confidentiality is important. Any problem that the new teacher may have should remain between you and the new teacher. It should not be shared with other faculty or administrators.

THE ADVOCATE ROLE

- Offer a safe place for the new teacher to vent frustrations.

- Seek to understand the new teacher's perspective. Acceptance does not mean agreement.

- Point out when inappropriate demands are being made on the new teacher.

- Help the new teacher learn new perspectives.

- Help to mediate a resolution to problems.

- Acknowledge the success and accomplishments of the new teacher.

- Ensure that the new teacher has a voice in the life of the school.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- School schedule
- Emergency procedures
- Homeroom – attendance, excuses, early dismissal, tardy passes
- Opening day
 - Importance of opening day organization
 - Nurse/teacher, seating charts, class lists, passes, parent contact, bulletin boards
- Setting up grade book
- School rules
- Lesson plans and emergency plans
- Cafeteria lunch options, faculty room
- Homework
- Supervisory duties (what, when, where, expectations) Listings in handbook
- Block meetings (SJHS only)
- Discipline – see handbooks
- Role of Guidance Counselor

Other Issues:

- Contract, professional committee (tuition waivers, personal days, funerals, etc.)
- Pay days
- Sick and personal days
- Review end-of-the-year evaluation form and criteria
- Students with alternate expectations
- Specialists – speech, reading, LRA, psychologist, ESL
- Pupil Services Team
- Library
- Observations
- Grading (how many, weighting, homework, five week reports)
- Organizational (lessons, units, objectives, supplemental activities/materials)
- Peer observation/coaching
- Set times to meet

DEVELOPING A SPECIFIC PLAN

OPENING WEEK OF SCHOOL:

- ✓ Securing teaching materials and equipment
- ✓ Policies and procedures (attendance, homeroom, bus duty, playground duty, seating charts, etc.)
- ✓ Classroom discipline
- ✓ Students needing special assistance
- ✓ District picnic

INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION:

- ✓ Instructional strategies
- ✓ Motivation techniques
- ✓ Providing for individual student differences
- ✓ Teaching students (mainstreamed, remedial, gifted)
- ✓ Assessing and evaluating student achievement

OTHER INFORMATION NEEDED:

- ✓ Scheduling field trips
- ✓ Faculty meetings
- ✓ After-school activities
- ✓ Parties in the classroom
- ✓ Substitute procedures
- ✓ Teacher attendance
- ✓ District-wide/school-wide committees
- ✓ Testing procedures

SCHOOL CALENDAR:

- ✓ Religious holidays – homework and test policies
- ✓ Back-to-School Night
- ✓ Halloween
- ✓ Progress reports
- ✓ Parent-Teacher conferences
- ✓ School pictures
- ✓ November district-wide conference day
- ✓ Holiday concerts
- ✓ March district-wide conference day
- ✓ Orientations
- ✓ Award assemblies
- ✓ End-of-the-year procedures
- ✓ Summer programs

*Linda Wagner
Updated June 2004*

First Day Considerations

- Be over-prepared.
- Make all students feel welcome in your classroom.
- Be sure everyone in your classroom knows the layout of the school, playground, and where to line up.
- Be as aware as you can of what is going on in your classroom throughout the day. Don't let behavior problems begin.
- Begin to talk about rules.
- Celebrate your successes.

Source: Oregon Department of Education, *The Beginning Teacher Handbook*, (Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education, 1990), n.p.

First Week Considerations

- Gear plans so that all students will feel successful.
- Make time each day to teach and reinforce rules and procedures.
- Spend time discussing when to talk and when not to talk.
- Go over hallway and assembly expectations.
- Be over-prepared.
- Write the daily schedule on the board.
- Reinforce expectations.
- Post basic procedures or expectations.
- Celebrate your successes.

Source: Oregon Department of Education, *The Beginning Teacher Handbook*, (Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education, 1990), n.p.

First Month Considerations

- Celebrate your successes, feel confident that you are capable and in charge.
- Implement your rules, procedures, and management systems during the entire month.
- Reinforce expectations.
- Respond quickly when expectations are not met.
- Be consistent.
- Model what you expect from your students.
- Grade, record, and return those papers you feel important for feedback as soon as possible.
- Teach skills of independence as the need arises, e.g., what to do when students need help and the teacher is not available, when to sharpen pencils and renew supplies.
- Give concise and accurate directions before starting lessons or assignments.
- Provide options for learning, teaching, and student practice.
- Enjoy your new career and class.
- Take care of yourself.

Source: Oregon Department of Education, *The Beginning Teacher Handbook*, (Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education, 1990), n.p.

BEGINNING TEACHER CALENDAR CHECKLIST

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

School and Its People

- _____ Meet with administrator and mentor teacher to discuss questions.
- _____ Meet grade level/department members and key resource people (team leader, department chair, mentor teacher, librarian, office manager, aides, secretaries, counselors, custodians, etc.).
- _____ Acquire copies of pertinent school materials (faculty handbook, student handbook, school calendar, student policy materials, school map, bell schedules, etc.).
- _____ Acquire copies of necessary forms (referrals, attendance, hall passes, etc.).
- _____ Know the physical set-up of the school and the location of key facilities (staff restrooms, staff phones, AV areas, professional library, copy machines, staff lounge).
- _____ Ask about procedures for lunch, coffee, smoking, etc.
- _____ Obtain copy of class/teacher schedules, extra duty responsibilities.

Materials

- _____ Acquire course guides, curriculum guides, class outlines, goal statements, etc., for each subject assigned.
- _____ Ask department members for details about particular units, texts, etc.
- _____ Locate needed textbooks and supplementary materials.
- _____ Get the necessary supplies to begin the year (tape, staples, construction paper, etc.).

Source: Oregon Department of Education, *The Beginning Teacher Handbook*, (Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education, 1990), n.p.

Planning

- _____ Become acquainted with the district school philosophy and policy about discipline.
- _____ Formulate a standard for student behavior in the classroom.
- _____ Establish a set of procedures for classroom routines (passing out materials, taking attendance, collecting assignments, etc.).
- _____ Set up the classroom (seating arrangement, supplies area, assignment baskets, bulletin boards, etc.).
- _____ Develop long-range general plans for the first quarter (units, timelines, film orders, etc.).
- _____ Choose a workable plan book format.
- _____ Outline specific first week lesson plans.

Grades and Records

- _____ Become acquainted with school and district philosophy/policies regarding grading, homework, tardies, etc.
- _____ Set up a grade book, include all necessary areas: daily grades, test grades, attendance, etc. (use a permanent class list).
- _____ Inquire about any other records needed.
- _____ Develop a system for keeping track of parent contacts, discipline referrals, etc.

Community Relations

- _____ Consider ways to communicate with parents on a regular basis.
- _____ Become aware of the many ways parents are involved with the school, i.e., volunteers, parent club, local school advisory committee.

Professional Growth

- _____ Attend new/beginning teacher district meeting.
- _____ Know about the staff development opportunities.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

School Schedule

- _____ Teacher workdays for planning or grading
- _____ Holiday preparations –decorations, parties, projects, assemblies
- _____ Home/school communications – open house, parent conferences.
- _____ Be aware of additional duties –holiday programs, student activities.

Student Progress

- _____ Check the timelines, format, and procedures for reporting mid-term student progress.
- _____ Pupil assessment, records, grades
- _____ Report card procedures
- _____ Student referral procedures

Professional Development

- _____ State-wide in-service activities
- _____ New teachers’ workshop
- _____ Membership in professional organizations

JANUARY

End of Semester

- _____ Semester exams
- _____ Recording semester grades/report cards.
- _____ Reflect on the first semester.
- _____ Prepare long-range general plans for second semester.
- _____ Streamline planning activities and assembling instructional materials.
- _____ Make plans for spring break.

FEBRUARY/MARCH/APRIL

School Schedule

- _____ Prepare for patriotic holiday observances.
- _____ New teachers' workshop
- _____ SPRING VACATION

Standardized Testing

- _____ Examine copies of testing materials and teacher editions.
- _____ Know the school's testing schedule and the teacher's role in administering the tests.
- _____ Become aware of the test data and how you will be expected to interpret it.

MAY/JUNE

School Schedule

- _____ School/district policies regarding special end-of-year activities, assemblies, and parties.
- _____ School schedule for the final weeks of school.

Pupil Assessment

- _____ Recording procedures for second semester/end of year grades and student records
- _____ Review school policy and procedures for student promotion.

Closing School

- _____ Room preparation for summer
- _____ Storage of materials and equipment
- _____ Return of textbooks
- _____ Fees and fines
- _____ Celebrate your survival

Professional Development Pursuits

- _____ Summer workshops, coursework, certification requirements
- _____ Material preparation for next year
- _____ Refinement of instructional plans to be delivered again

Source: Oregon Department of Education, *The Beginning Teacher Handbook*, (Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education, 1990), n.p.

NORTH COLONIE CENTRAL SCHOOLS
LATHAM, NEW YORK

HALF DAY REQUEST FOR MENTOR PROGRAM

Name: _____ School: _____

Date Substitute is needed: _____ Time Substitute is needed: _____

Plan for the half day:

Teacher Coordinator's Signature

Principal's Signature

Date

Date

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