

# HIGH QUALITY MENTORING & INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PRACTICES



A resource for education leaders seeking to create and/or improve programs with practices that support teacher retention, teacher development, and improved student learning.

## MOVING TOWARD...

### **RIGOROUS MENTOR/COACH SELECTION BASED ON QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR/COACH**

Qualities may include: evidence of outstanding teaching practice, strong intra- and inter-personal skills, experience with adult learners, respect of peers, current knowledge of professional development.

### **ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT FOR MENTORS/COACHES**

Effective teachers don't always know what it is about their teaching that is effective. Many mentors/coaches are also surprised to find that translating knowledge to students is not the same as translating knowledge to adults. High quality and ongoing training, as well as a professional learning community, are needed to help mentors/coaches develop the skills to identify and translate the elements of effective teaching to teachers.

### **SANCTIONED TIME FOR FREQUENT MENTOR/COACH-TEACHER INTERACTIONS**

Mentors/coaches need sanctioned time to focus on teacher development. Mentors/coaches and teachers should have 1.25–2.5 hours per week to allow for the most rigorous mentoring/coaching activities. The time should be protected by teachers and administrators.

### **ALL EDUCATORS RECEIVE ONGOING SUPPORT MULTI-YEAR MENTORING/COACHING**

Mentoring/coaching should be intensive and ongoing (for at least two years) in order to improve teacher practice and consequently student achievement. Teachers should continue to receive regular coaching and feedback throughout their careers.

## MOVING AWAY FROM...

### **CHOOSING MENTORS/COACHES WITHOUT CRITERIA OR AN EXPLICIT PROCESS**

Without strong criteria and a rigorous selection process, there is a risk that mentors/coaches may be chosen based more on availability or seniority, rather than their qualifications to engage in meaningful interactions with teachers.

### **INSUFFICIENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT FOR MENTORS/COACHES**

Without initial, and ongoing, high-quality training to support their development, mentors/coaches miss out on the guidance and professional community they need to support the developing practice of teachers and address the challenges they face.

### **MEETINGS HAPPEN OCCASIONALLY OR "WHENEVER THE MENTOR/COACH AND TEACHER ARE AVAILABLE"**

Often both parties are so busy that meeting time gets relegated down the list of priorities. The short fragments of time that may be found are typically insufficient for fostering real relationships and growth.

### **SUPPORT FOR FIRST YEAR AND STRUGGLING TEACHERS ONLY**

One-year mentoring/coaching programs are great at providing the initial support first-year teachers need to survive but are insufficient to help teachers reach optimal effectiveness. Only providing coaching support for struggling teachers does not provide the job-embedded learning for all teachers to continue to develop over time.

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## MOVING TOWARD...

### **INTENSIVE AND SPECIFIC GUIDANCE MOVING STUDENT LEARNING AND TEACHING PRACTICE FORWARD**

Mentors/coaches who are trained to have an ever-present attention to equity and continuous academic, social and emotional growth focus support on concrete steps to help teachers improve their practice. Example: "Let's look at your assessment data and talk about what strategies will help you address the concern you had about reaching your struggling English Language Learner students."

### **PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS AND DATA-DRIVEN CONVERSATIONS**

Just like student learning, teacher learning should be data-driven and standards-based. To be effective, feedback to teachers must be grounded in evidence about their practice, including information gathered through classroom observations and student work. Use of standards, documentation of mentoring/coaching conversations, and data collection on various components of classroom practice ensures a solid structure for focusing on continuous instructional growth.

### **CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ADMINISTRATORS**

Administrators play a critical role in setting the stage for teacher and mentor success, creating time for support, and establishing a positive culture for teacher development in their buildings and in the system. Professional development for administrators and ongoing communication with them about the needs of new teachers, and the nature of the program ensures that they partner to provide teacher support aligned to the school vision.

### **COLLABORATION WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS**

Strong communication and collaboration among stakeholders, including administration, school boards, union/association leadership, and professional partners, creates a culture of commitment and ensures success.

## MOVING AWAY FROM...

### **NON-SPECIFIC, EMOTIONAL OR LOGISTICAL SUPPORT ALONE**

Emotional support is important, but alone is not sufficient to improve teacher practice. Without specific instructional feedback, mentoring/coaching can not impact student learning. Example: "You're doing a great job, Jane. Keep it up!"

### **INFORMAL AND NON-EVIDENCED BASED FEEDBACK**

The rigor of the program may be compromised when interactions are too often based on informal conversation and opinions not drawn from evidence. Without a structure and focus on realtime data derived from teacher practice, interactions may not result in improved teaching practice.

### **LACK OF TRAINING/COMMUNICATION WITH ADMINISTRATORS**

Without clearly articulated strategies to support teachers, and protected time, principals may inadvertently undermine the prospects of teacher success (e.g., assigning beginning teachers the most challenging classes, assigning additional responsibilities pulling teachers for other activities instead of meeting with their coach/mentor.

### **ISOLATED PROGRAMMING AND LACK OF ALIGNMENT**

Without strong partnerships and alignment, instructional initiatives can be undermined. Teachers may receive mixed messages from varying support providers, and feel overwhelmed, confused and frustrated by all the different layers of information coming at them.



**PARTNER WITH NTC** TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TAKE YOUR INDUCTION PROGRAM TO THE NEXT LEVEL. CONTACT US AT: 831.600.2200 OR PARTNERSHIPS@NEWTEACHERCENTER.ORG