



Background

What is a Mentor Teacher?

CDE defines a mentor teacher as a teacher designated by a school district or charter school, or nonpublic school who has demonstrated outstanding teaching and school leadership and who can provide exemplary modeling and counseling to alternative teachers participating in an alternative teacher program to teachers participating in alternative teacher preparation programs or initial teacher license-holders participating in an approved induction program.

Mentors are used in a variety of contexts. They serve a critical role on support teams for teachers in alternative licensure preparation programs. They guide new teachers through the induction process. Implementation of these roles can look differently across the state. Program coordinators and administrators often want to know how they can improve their local mentor development programs. A resource bank has been created for this purpose and is available on the [CDE website](#).

How are Pathways Determined?

Career ladders, pathways, and other leadership opportunities are locally controlled in Colorado. This document provides some options for districts and schools to consider. When designing a career pathway, both the potential role and incentive should be considered. This document outlines options in both categories.

It is also worth noting that a Master Teacher added endorsement is currently in development. Once this endorsement is available, CDE recommends using this endorsement as a key eligibility criteria for mentor pathways.

Roles for Mentors

Induction Mentor

Mentors that participate in induction programs should be positioned as a key part of the program, rather than singular assignments as needed. They should receive ongoing professional learning and support. Their feedback should be used to inform program improvements on an annual basis. At a minimum, they should receive compensatory time in order to meet their mentoring responsibilities. It is recommended, however, that they also receive monetary compensation to recognize their contribution to the improvement of instructional services throughout the school.

Pre-Service Mentors

This role is referred to by a variety of titles, such as student teaching cooperating teacher and field experience mentor. All refer to an experienced teacher that is highly competent in guiding a pre-service teacher through their first weeks/months applying the skills they have been learning in a traditional educator preparation program. These preparation programs should have an ongoing relationship with these mentor teachers to not only communicate about pre-service teachers' progress in their field experiences, but to also develop the skills of the mentor teacher.

Alternative Licensure Program Support Team Member

There are more concrete rules regarding the training and compensation that mentors in these contexts should receive. Because the mentor teacher has primary responsibility for representing the faculty and parents in evaluating and making recommendations regarding the issuance of an initial teacher license, they must be provided with an articulated, mandatory, and intensive supervision training program for mentors and provisions to ensure the proper discharge of



their duties and responsibilities. These provisions include, but are not limited to, providing a substitute teacher, compensatory time, and/or other compensation.

Similar to student teaching mentors, alternative licensure mentors should have ongoing contact with the preparation program staff, which may include faculty. They play an important role in informing the preparation program of the alternative licensed teacher's progress. Therefore, it is recommended that the alternative license preparation program contribute substantially to the provisions described in the previous paragraph.

Content Expert Mentor

Think about your stellar teachers who may not have the time or capacity to take on the in-depth mentoring responsibilities of an induction or alternative licensure mentor. Who among them has invaluable content expertise? This could be in subject areas, such as math or science, or it could be working with special populations, such as Special Education or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse. What structures could be put into place to provide other teachers access to these teachers for content focused mentoring? What are the high-leverage skills these experts would need to develop as mentors?

An example could look like this: Angela has several years of demonstrated success accelerating growth in literacy with her students who are English Learners (ELs). The district has identified that a large number of teachers, both new and experienced, are struggling in this area. Some professional learning opportunities have been offered, but the budget for this is limited and hiring a dedicated instructional coach is not an option at this time. The district has decided to leverage Angela's strengths by offering her an additional weekly planning period and a stipend. During this planning period, she will have the ability make appointments with other teachers, both onsite and virtually in order to support other district schools, to have instructionally focused mentoring dialogues and engage in short-term teaching-coaching cycles. This support will be optionally available to all teachers and principals may require some teachers to participate based on their individual growth goals. The district will provide Angela with training that is focused on coaching and facilitating reflective conversations.

Mentor Coordinator/Lead Mentor

Some experienced teachers may be ready for the elevated responsibility of leading their peers. A mentor coordinator or lead mentor could be responsible for identifying and organizing professional learning opportunities for a mentor cadre. This position can also serve as a mentor to the mentors. Mentoring is a skill that needs ongoing refining and it can be beneficial to have an experienced peer to serve as a thought partner or coach.

Implementation of this type of role requires release time beyond that of what would typically be provided to other mentors. These responsibilities could easily comprise a full-time position, but flexibility is encouraged when qualified mentor teachers are interested but still want to remain in the classroom.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) Leader

Facilitators of effective PLCs must exercise many of the same skills as a mentor. Consider this pathway as an option for successful mentor teachers who want to be more involved with professional development and larger groups of their peers.

Options for Incentives

Pay

While we know pay is neither the primary reason teacher enter nor leave the profession, it is still a significant factor in one's choice to nurture a career in education. Program directors often ask the question, "what amount is effective for a mentor stipend?", but there is no single correct answer to this question. When making decisions about stipends or other pay structures for teacher career pathways, local context should be considered to identify an amount that honors



their time and effort. While most school and district budgets do not allow for stipends to be issued in amounts that would make a significant impact on a teacher's overall quality of life, they should be enough to show that their time, expertise, and contributions are truly appreciated.

Increased Responsibility

Teachers who demonstrate the dispositions of a quality mentor are often also seeking additional responsibilities beyond their own classrooms. The various roles described in the previous section illustrate many of the ways that mentors might take on additional responsibilities. This list, however, is not comprehensive. When considering options for adding responsibilities to a mentor teacher's job, care should be taken to ensure that these responsibilities will contribute to the success of the school community and the students. It is not recommended that existing administrative duties be re-assigned to mentor teachers.

Recognition

Positive recognition can come in many forms. At the most basic level, leaders should remember to verbally acknowledge mentor teachers' successes and express appreciation for the impact they have on new teachers. Make sure the school community knows who is in this role, why they were chosen, and what they will be doing. New teacher orientation is a great place to do this, but look for other opportunities as well. Clearly introducing the role and those who will fill it informally positions mentor teachers as leaders in the school community.

Is there an award that could be created for mentor teachers? Consider sharing positive survey data from new teachers with them and making a connection to their impact on these outcomes.