

KINGSTON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S

TEACHER

MENTOR INTERN PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

One of the wisest investments a school district can make is in the training, grooming, culturing and support of its new teachers. Each building, department, and the district as a whole must have a program in place to accomplish this. It should be the responsibility of every veteran member of the staff to have some role in the support of new teachers.

Beginning in 2000-2001 school year, the district began experiencing increases in new staff as a result of both retirements and new positions. This prompted the Kingston Teachers' Federation (KTF) and the district to formalize a mentor/intern program. Prior to this an informal teacher mentoring program existed. Both KTF and the district have long appreciated the value in pairing a respected, experienced teacher with a less experienced new teacher. From previous formal and informal participation in a mentor/intern program, both the KTF and the KCSD recognize that a mentor-intern program can be beneficial to all participants. Experienced teachers develop new skills and insights through mentoring. New teachers experience more productive and satisfying first years and also gain new skills and insights into the profession. Additionally, the experience assists them in becoming part of the school community. Although the formal mentor-intern experience may last only for a year, often a valuable, on-going professional peer relationship continues long afterwards.

The formal teacher mentoring program which was developed provides a mentor for all non-tenured teachers in the district. The district's Mentoring Committee, through the Director of Mentoring provides program oversight.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Director of Mentoring

The director must be currently teaching in the Kingston City school District. The director is paid a stipend to her/his salary for each school year, and has no supervision period and a schedule that allows her/him to travel to other schools.

Responsibilities:

- Meet as needed with mentors and interns
- Monitor journals/reflection sheets of mentors and interns
- Trouble shoot conflicts
- Direction professional development topics to be covered
- Report to mentoring committee
- Create and oversee the program evaluation

Mentors

The Mentoring Committee through principal recommendation, peer recommendation or self-nomination will select mentors. Mentors are paid a stipend each school year. Mentors must be permanently certified, tenured teachers with a minimum of five years of recent experience at the grade level they will mentor. Every effort will be made for mentors and interns to be in the same building with the same certification area. When necessary, mentors may be recent retirees. Where

possible, common planning time, and shared supervisions will be provided to allow for classroom observations. (The mentor, intern, director and/or principal can suggest these observations.)

Criteria for Mentors

In order to choose experienced, competent and highly respected teachers as mentors, the following qualities are desired:

- number of years and variety of teaching experiences
- professional and other training
- verbal and written communication skills
- interpersonal skills
- ability to work constructively with others
- ability to self analyze
- ability to view of his/her experiences and how these experiences contributed to his/her professional development
- ability to place him/herself in the intern's position
- ability to guide and be supportive to another person
- ability to evaluate teaching skills
- commitment to the teaching profession
- commitment to the mentor-intern concept

Selection Process

- Prospective mentors complete the Mentor Application (**See Appendix A**).
- Mentoring Committee Reviews Mentor Applications.
- If necessary, committee members will interview prospective mentors.
- Selected applicants will become members of the mentor pool

Role of the Mentor

The mentor's role is advisory and supportive in nature, based on a peer-coaching model. It will focus on providing moral support to the intern in areas of classroom performance and professional development by:

- helping the intern to learn about the complex job of teaching and to feel good about teaching
- helping the intern manage the workload
- helping the intern in becoming part of the school community
- helping the intern to set goals
- assisting the intern in understanding the classroom, building, district and community;
- giving information regarding procedures, routines, and policies of the building/district
- providing guidance in discipline management in accordance to building/ district guidelines
- providing information on locating materials and resources available in the building or through outside resources
- serving as a "sounding board" for the intern
- conferencing with the intern
- supporting the intern in problem solving

- assisting the intern in analyzing what worked and did not work in the classroom
- assisting the intern in recognizing his/her strengths and utilizing these strengths
- assisting the intern in recognizing skills that need development and through the Director of Mentoring and the Coordinator of Staff Development assist in formulating a professional improvement plan
- modeling planning, methodology and management as needed
- coordinating visits to observe other classrooms
- visiting and coaching the intern in classroom settings
- developing the potential for collaborative teaching
- assisting the intern in implementing district programs
- assisting the intern in implementing supervisor's suggestions

The Mentor will **NEVER** take on the role of formal evaluation, nor will the Mentor share evaluative information with the building principal or any district administrator. This confidentiality is crucial to the success of the mentor/intern relationship.

Mentor Responsibilities include:

- Providing guidance, support, and information for the new teacher
- Regularly scheduled meetings between mentor and interns (one per week)
- Maintaining a journal/log of discussions/meetings
- Attending mentoring training sessions as provided. (These meets will provide mentors with topics to cover with the interns.)

Mentors need to:

- Know that it is not easy for interns to trust. Trust is earned and is a process that requires much attention over time.
- Know that the intern likely feels concern about how he/she is seen; needing assistance or help is often threatening to ones self-esteem.
- Understand that each of us has a unique culture and history that contributes to our ability to share.
- Identify concerns and seek assistance from others if needed.
- Recognize that interns may see their concerns as too overwhelming or stupid to share.
- Offer clarity about the confidential nature of the relationship.
- Be nonjudgmental and supportive in conversation.
- Inquire as to the needs and expectations the intern has for the relationship and communication process.
- Establish a win-win relationship; clearly both the intern and mentor benefit from this relationship--the mentor is also a learner in this relationship.

Interns

Each new, first-time teacher will be provided with a mentor. Interns are required to meet regularly with their mentors. Interns are provided with information, professional development and support. Interns are expected to maintain a journal/log.

Interns need:

- To see that the relationship is intern-driven.
- Mentors to be a trusted confidante.
- To know the limits of confidentiality in the relationship.
- To discover that their problems are universal.
- To know that the mentors role with them is not evaluative.
- A preliminary understanding clarifying the relationship and each party's responsibility and participation in solving problems.

Role of the Principal

The role of the Building Principal includes participation in the nomination, selection of mentors, and matching mentors and interns.

The building principal has an overall responsibility for instruction and other activities in his/her building. The building principal plays an important role in the mentor/intern relationship by communicating with mentors and interns without breaching confidentiality.

In providing support to the mentor teacher/intern program, it is envisioned that the building principal will do the following:

1. answer questions from parents and others about the intent and details of the program and how it will affect the district's education program
2. encourage the support of other faculty members and district resources in enhancing the mentor teacher-intern program opportunities;
3. through supervision, provide guidance and suggestions to the interns
4. assist with scheduling to allow the mentors and interns to share common lunch and preparation times when possible
5. work with the Director of Mentoring and the Coordinator of Staff Development to schedule training at appropriate times during the year for both the mentors and intern
6. be a resource for the mentor/intern program as an instructional leader
7. be available to meet with the Director of Mentoring to resolve conflicts and support the management of the program
8. participate in training sessions (as appropriate) with the mentors and interns to assure a common knowledge base of the program

Mentoring Committee

The committee is currently comprised of six teachers and four administrators representing all levels and various disciplines. The committee meets as needed throughout the year.

Responsibilities include:

- Canvassing teachers to find mentors
- Matching mentors with interns
- Assessing/evaluating the program
- Expanding the mentoring program
- Developing mentoring training

Topics for Mentors/Interns

Job responsibilities

Where to go to get...

Professionalism

- timeliness/meeting deadlines/paperwork
- quality of communications with student/parents/peers/public
- professional attire
- preparedness, timely to work, lessons ready
- curriculum planning, making connections
- classroom management/discipline
- grading policies/procedures
- record keeping-attendance, grades, parent contact, student discipline

Both mentors and interns are trained professionals with a wealth of skills and experiences. Although there are some basic training components that are necessary for all participants to be successful, mentors and interns will engage in a great deal of self-assessment to develop an unique professional improvement plan.

A first task of each team will be to set up a schedule for the mentor/intern process to establish individual goals for the internship. These goals should include items relating to educational background, classroom management, question asking and pedagogy. Focus should be placed on the intern's familiarity with such techniques as cooperative learning, alternative assessment, active listening, differentiation, and mastery learning. The team should develop an action plan for accomplishing the established goals.

The mentor will be instructed and trained to model behavior for the interns in areas that are perceived as weaknesses by the intern. In addition, after the mentor has had an opportunity to observe the intern, weaknesses perceived by the mentor will also be modeled. The mentor will be trained not to offer criticism, but rather only to offer objective feedback following all observations. The assessment of needs is on-going following the development of initial goals.

The interns will keep a personal journal. The journal will provide a means for the interns to reflect on their role as a teacher and to review growth during the year. Also, such self-reflection will assist the mentor and intern in identifying concerns and successes experienced by the intern, and developing activities (**See Appendix B**). These journals will be reviewed by the Director of Mentoring on a monthly basis.

Also, interns are encouraged to share administrator observations and suggestions with their mentor for the purpose of developing the professional improvement plan.

To assist the mentor/intern team in assessing needs, teachers have developed a checklist (**See Appendix C**). The checklist covers basic building/district policies and procedures that all teachers are required to know. The checklist will guide the intern in compiling information he/she must have to function in the classroom.

Some of this information the intern will be able to locate without mentor's assistance. Also, the checklist will serve as a springboard for discussions between mentor and interns to determine the areas that will be pursued by the team.

Seminars and Informal Meetings

During the year, the Director of Mentoring will conduct periodic meetings with program participants for their input to discuss the mentor-intern progress and concerns. Discussion may be with the mentor/intern pair or only the mentors or interns. Also, meeting opportunities for mentors and interns in general, or by grade/subject area can be arranged. These meeting will allow individuals in different building to share information on the mentor/intern process and other program concerns, as well as teaching and classroom management.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The main component of the program evaluation will be on-going internal assessment. This assessment will include progress reports:

1. The program participants will assess their skills at the beginning of the project and at the end of the project
2. The results from the Assessment Surveys will be compared to assess change in skills and identify any necessary changes in the program
3. Journals will be utilized by the mentors and interns and submitted to the Director of Mentoring to show skills worked on (**See Appendix B for sample of journal**).
4. Periodic meetings with program participants for their input. Discussion may be with mentor-intern pair, or with only mentors or interns. The Director of Mentoring will facilitate the meetings. Topics will include, but not be limited to, release-time, mentor training, intern training, program management;
5. Evaluations of individual training activities will be administered and tabulated by the Coordinator of Staff Development;
2. The Director of Mentoring will seek input from mentors and interns on the skills and knowledge necessary to make an effective mentor.

To assess the impact of the program on such factors as school climate, administrators, and nonparticipating teachers, questionnaires will be distributed to the following groups to obtain their perceptions of the program and its impact:

1. building principals;
2. mentors;
3. interns.

The Director of Mentoring working in concert with the district Central Office designee and the Professional Development Committee will review evaluative information to identify and propose improvements to the program. The results of this evaluation will be provided to the district's administration and the KTF.