



**synergy**

**New Mexico Mentorship Programs  
for Beginning Teachers  
Program Evaluation  
2002-03**



Fall 2003

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Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant  
Commission on Higher Education  
State Department of Education

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The views, opinions, and /or findings contained in this report are those of the authors and should not be construed as an official New Mexico State Department Education position or policy unless so designated by other documentation.

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## **Introduction**

Mentoring is typically defined as a relationship between an experienced and a less experienced person in which the mentor provides guidance, advice, support, and feedback to the protégé (Kerka, 1998). Mentoring is a way to help new professionals learn about the organizational culture, to facilitate personal and career growth and development, and to expand available opportunities to learn the skills and knowledge required in the career field. The benefits of mentoring are not only work related; it can provide both individuals, mentor and protégé, with the opportunity to enhance awareness, develop appreciation, and personal potential through the association with another in the profession.

During the 2001 legislative session, House Bill 47, Beginning Teacher Mentoring Programs, was passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor. HB47 mandates statewide beginning teacher mentoring programs.

All New Mexico Teachers holding a level 1 New Mexico teaching license and employed in a New Mexico public school district, charter school, or state agency shall successfully complete a one to three year beginning teacher mentorship program provided by the public school district, charter school or state agency [6.606.10.2 NMAC-N, 07-01-02].

All districts, therefore, must develop mentoring programs in accordance with the provisions of the law. One million dollars was appropriated by the 2001 legislature to the State Department of Education to assist local school districts in developing and implementing beginning teacher mentoring programs, and to enhance already existing beginning teacher mentoring programs. Each local mentoring program, adopted as policy by the local board of education, and approved by the SBE, must have the following components and characteristics:

- Align with and supports the district's long range plan for student success (EPSS)
- Align with the State Board's essential teaching competencies

- Was developed and is implemented with support from the local school board, district administrators, and other school district personnel
- Uses ongoing, formative evaluation for the improvement of teaching practice
- Has procedures for a summative evaluation of beginning teacher performance during the first 1-3 years of teaching, including an annual assessment of teachers seeking level 2 licensure
- Includes training for mentors
- Has a process for selection, training, and evaluation of mentors
- Includes incentives for mentors and beginning teachers
- Includes a program evaluation component
- Has a dispute/grievance process for addressing issues between mentors and beginning teachers

The following report summarizes mentoring program information from the 89 New Mexico school districts, eight charter schools and nine regional service centers in providing support to beginning teachers. The report draws from the methodology described in a separate section and includes information on the development of the mentoring law, assistance in mentoring program development, and specifics about the operation of programs in the 2002-03 school year. The results are presented in sections: developing the law, technical assistance programs, methodology for this study, results, summary, and finally, supporting research and documents in the attachments.

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## **Developing New Mexico's Mentoring Law**

Mentoring can take many forms. The traditional mentoring model is the apprentice learning from a master. It can focus on career advancement within the organizational hierarchy, or now with the demands of the information age, a wider range of cognitive, interpersonal and technical skills are its content. Preserving institutional memory, a need for a faster track to skill development, and need for a greater degree of learning on the job contribute to the need for formalized mentoring. In the past, mentoring just “happened” as experienced people recognized and developed new talent, or as beginners sought the counsel of knowledgeable elders. “Although protégés are better educated today, there is still a need for a mentor’s practical know-how and wisdom-craft knowledge only acquired through on-the-job experience” (Kerka, 1998).

Beginning teacher mentoring is, of course, not a new concept. The realization that beginning teachers need support is well documented; however, developing and providing such programs has not been universally incorporated into our state’s educational systems. Many school districts in New Mexico have provided beginning teacher assistance for decades prior to requirements in the law. Others have used loosely designed buddy systems, and some, however, continued with the traditional sink-or-swim introduction to the profession. Concerns about teacher quality and teacher shortages brought teacher needs to the forefront in recent years in state and national arenas, including identifying methods for supporting teachers as they enter their chosen career.

The Executive Director of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, Tom Carroll, recently stated that teacher attrition statistics remain shocking as almost a third of teachers leave the field within their first three years and half before their fifth (Stern, October 2003). A considerable body of research supports institutionalizing beginning teacher mentoring systems to lower this attrition. In New Mexico, formal discussions starting in 1999, led to many steps and ideas before

the final development of the state mentoring law. Through the collaboration and efforts of many educators, educational organizations, associations, taskforces, and committees, the law was passed in 2001. The chart below traces the major events leading to the development of New Mexico’s law on beginning teacher mentoring.

### **Mentoring Law Development**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>1999</b>	TEAC (Teacher Education Accountability Council) was formed with a K-16 Partnership Committee.	Focus was teacher quality with a Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant (Federal Funding). Grants were given to districts with projects in mentoring, professional development, recruitment, and preparation.
<b>2000</b>	Legislature passed the Alternative Licensure Act.	Research committee considered the “mentoring requirements” and the “university requirements”.
<b>2000</b>	Mentoring research provided definition of mentoring programs required of districts intending to hire teachers with Alternative Licensure.	Records show 20 districts submitted proposals.
<b>2000</b>	An induction law with mentoring failed because the language was too vague.	
<b>2000</b>	Results of research and language changes were used to frame a rewritten law that was passed.	
<b>2000</b>	Legislative money (\$500,000) given to districts on basis of existing “projects” that included mentoring.	“Promising Practices” network gathered participants to share their work.
<b>2001</b>	Legislature passed induction/mentoring law.	SDE developed regulations effective July 2002.
<b>2001</b>	Money left over from Teacher Quality grant was available for technical assistance.	An initiative began to train districts (Fall 2001-Fall 2002) to set up and implement district programs, but no evaluation plans were established in the regulations. \$1 million was appropriated to support

		mentoring.
<b>2001</b>	36 districts had programs in place, as they were not yet required.	\$1 million was distributed to those districts with existing programs on the basis of the number of Level I teachers employed, approximately \$490 per beginning teacher.
<b>2001</b>	Discussion of revision of licensure framework continues in the context of mentoring.	
<b>2002</b>	Legislature appropriates another \$1,000,000 for mentoring	The request for \$2.4 million was rejected.
<b>2002</b>	All districts were required to submit mentoring plans to be in effect by Fall 2002. Approval was based on requirements of the law and SDE regulations.	\$1 million was distributed to <u>all</u> districts, approximately \$395.00 per beginning teacher.
<b>2002</b>	Required mentorship programs were in place for Fall 2002 in all districts that employed a beginning teacher(s).	Technical assistance continues, moving from program development to mentor training. Discussion of 3-tiered licensure continues, catching the attention of LFC and other groups. The Assistance Team participated in the development of a proposal on licensure for the January 2003 legislative session.
<b>2003</b>	Legislature passed 3-tiered licensure framework and revised the state salary schedule.	
<b>2003</b>	Mentoring becomes a fixed requirement for advancement to Level II licensure, so districts must now verify mentorship participation at Level I.	\$900,000 was appropriated for mentoring for 2002-03. Money was distributed in a similar way, approximately \$300 per beginning teacher.
<b>2003</b>	Districts completed first year of mentoring program.	No evaluation or information on the programs had been compiled or distributed. SDE, CHE, and TEAC personnel have shifted focus with the passage of 3-tiered licensure framework.
<b>2003</b>	Formal evaluation study of the first year of mentoring programs was completed	Synergy report submitted.

The effects of strong initial preparation for teaching can be enhanced through a strong induction and mentoring program supporting the first years in teaching. A number of studies have found that well-designed mentoring programs raise retention rates for new teachers by improving their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills. A growing body of research indicates that teachers who lack initial support in their first years of teaching are more likely to leave the profession.  
(Darling-Hammond, May 2003).

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## **Technical Assistance for Mentoring Programs**

Mentoring programs for teachers support much of what is currently known about how individuals learn, including the socially constructed nature of learning and the importance of experiential, situated, learning experiences. According to constructivists' theory, learning is most effective when situated in the context in which new knowledge and skills will be used. Individuals construct meaning for themselves but within the context of interactions with others. Mentors facilitate learning by modeling problem solving strategies, guiding learners in approximating the strategies while learners articulate their thought processes. Program coordinators indicated, "mentors coach learners with appropriate aids gradually decreasing assistance as learners internalize the process and construct their own knowledge and understanding" (NM program coordinator, 2003). This process is reflected in the roles beginning teachers identified in their mentor: those of "guide, advisor, coach, motivator, facilitator, role model, and colleague" (NM teachers, 2003). Mentors provide authentic experiential learning opportunities as well as an intense interpersonal relationship through which social learning takes place.

Mentoring programs will only have successful results if they are carefully designed and well supported. Passing the law was a major step. While many New Mexico school districts had developed support programs for beginning teachers, many other districts had not. Technical assistance for program development where none existed previously and enhancement for those in operation was provided to the districts over the past year and a half. Assistance was made available through collaboration with superintendents and district personnel throughout the state. All expenses (registration, travel, and materials) were paid for all participants. The focus of the assistance in all cases was to make the new law work more effectively and support beginning educators throughout New Mexico. The chart below lists the various activities that have been provided to the state's developing programs.

## **Technical Assistance Initiatives**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Participants</b>
June 2001	<b>Best Practices in Mentoring and Induction</b> Dr. Rosalita Mitchell Dr. Jean Casey Albuquerque, NM	Programs receiving state grant money reported on the status of their programs (31 participants from 10 programs)
July 2001	<b>Mentoring Network</b> Dr. Rosalita Mitchell Albuquerque, NM	Experienced mentor coordinators met to design a statewide technical assistance program (10 participants representing 7 districts/institutions)
November 2001	<b>Mentor Training of Trainers</b> Barry Sweeny Albuquerque, NM	Districts with existing mentoring programs sent representatives for training (48 participants representing 12 districts/institutions)
February 2002	<b>Best Practices for Mentoring and Induction Programs</b> Barry Sweeny Albuquerque, NM	Districts that had no mentoring programs were assisted in program development (46 participants from 25 districts/institutions)
March 2002	<b>National Seminar on Mentoring</b> Suzi Heinz Flowing Wells, AZ	Program coordinators or representatives of existing programs attended (5 coordinators from 5 districts)
April 2002	<b>Evaluating Mentor Programs</b> Dr. Leslie Huling Albuquerque, NM	All districts were invited to send representatives (41 participants representing 34 districts/institutions)
June 2002	<b>Mentor Training of Trainers</b> Dr. Leslie Huling Austin, TX	Members of the Mentoring Network participated in a 3-day workshop (4 participants from 4 districts)
March-July 2002	<b>Individual District Support</b> Dr. Linda Lippett and Dr. Barbara Reider Santa Fe, NM	Districts requested individual assistance in the development of their mentoring plans for SDE approval (7 participants from 7 districts)

June 2002	<b>Mentor Training</b> Dr. Jean Casey Albuquerque, NM	Mentors and administrators from <i>all</i> districts were invited (65 participants representing 18 districts/institutions)
July 2002	<b>Mentor Training</b> Nancy Patterson Las Cruces, NM	Mentors and administrators from <i>all</i> districts were invited (55 participants representing 18 districts/institutions)
October 2002	<b>Mentor Training</b> Dr. Jean Casey Socorro, NM	Mentors and administrators from <i>all</i> districts were invited (48 participants representing 12 districts/institutions)
November 2002	<b>Assistance to REC's</b> Dr. Rosalita Mitchell Dr. Jean Casey Albuquerque, NM	Directors of REC/RCC's received support on mentoring issues in small or rural districts (12 participants representing 7 REC/RCC's)
December 2002	<b>Mentor Libraries</b>	Each REC/RCC received a library of professional development materials for mentoring, including the video training series <i>The Effective Teacher</i> with Harry Wong

Schools are the place for teachers to learn more. "Attracting, supporting, and retaining new teachers to staff the nation's schools will require a comprehensive strategy... Allowing the new teacher novice status, creating opportunities for collegial interaction, providing curricular resources and support, and establishing school-wide structures that focus students on learning will go a long way....It is at the school that new teachers meet the daily challenges of their work, hoping to achieve success with students and it is the schools that ultimately can provide the most effective support for new teachers." Source: What keeps new teachers in the swim? Schools that support their work, by Sarah Birkeland and Susan Moore Johnson, *Journal of Staff Development*, Fall 2002 23(4). Available online at [www.nsd.org/library/jsd/birkeland234.html](http://www.nsd.org/library/jsd/birkeland234.html).

The methodologies for the 2002-03 study were designed to address a broad range of evaluation questions, from the impact on participants to the impact on districts, and further, suggesting the possible impact on students. The researchers worked with an advisory team made up of state agency representatives and content advisors in the field of teacher mentoring and induction. The following means were utilized to gather and analyze the evidence of program status. Discussion of findings were drawn from analysis of all data sources

Literature Review. A review of pertinent literature grounded the research by providing an understanding of current teacher mentoring practices and recent research conducted and reported. Literature and data sources are listed in the reference section of this report.

Document Review. Preliminary program documents reviewed included all of the original work toward the creation of the mentoring law, each school district and charter school mentoring program application, with a particular focus on criteria and self-evaluation documents. Also reviewed was a previous unpublished evaluation report prepared for the New Mexico State Board of Education (April 2001). An extensive set of documents was reviewed for individual districts; a listing is contained in Attachment A.

Interviews. A sample of *program coordinators* identified as representative of the various sized districts and locations in the state were interviewed by phone or e-mail during the fall semester 2003. A selected sample of *mentors* from diverse grade levels and from a selected sample of representative districts in the state were interviewed. Mentors were questioned by phone or e-mail concerning their perceptions of program operation, value, successes, and suggestions for improvement. Finally, a sample of *beginning teachers* was interviewed by phone or e-mail representative of diverse grade levels and districts across the state. A protocol of questions was used in every interview to standardize data collection to gauge perceptions of experiences in their district mentoring programs.

Surveys. A three-page survey of 14 items, and 3 open-ended questions for collection of diverse responses, was developed and then juried with the state program experts. Questions were selected as they mirrored required program criteria, earlier findings, and self-evaluation focus areas. The survey and instructions were mailed to coordinators of programs in all 89 districts, eight charter schools, and nine service centers in August of 2003 (See Attachment B). Included in the mailing was a stamped return envelope for encouragement of data return and inclusions of additional district program paperwork. Districts not returning their survey data were contacted on subsequent occasions in additional attempts to prompt data return. Responses arrived from August through November.

Data Collection. A variety of forms of statistical data was collected from the interviews, survey results, information submitted from districts, and from the program documentation review. Quantitative data were prepared for statistical analysis. Qualitative data were coded for multiple and repeated categories.

Data Analysis. Data analysis included analyses of both the quantitative and the qualitative data. The quantitative data (survey results) were compiled and compared. Qualitative data (interviews, documentation) were analyzed using a comparative method to determine overall trends and patterns. Data from all districts were aggregated, and triangulation methods were used where possible to verify the reliability of findings.

School hiring and support practices fall short. Harvard Graduate School of Education researchers say many schools are not organized to hire and support new teachers in ways that help them enter the profession smoothly and attain early success:

- 33% of new teachers are hired after the school year has already started
- 62% are hired within 30 days of when they start teaching
- Only 50% of new teachers interviewed with any of their future teacher colleagues as part of the hiring process
- 56% report that no extra assistance is available to them as new teachers
- 43% of new teachers go through their entire first year of teaching without being observed by a mentor or a more experienced teacher
- 77% of new teachers shoulder the same load of academics and administrative responsibilities carried by their veteran colleagues
- Only 23% have any sort of reduced load

These findings are part of a study from Harvard's Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, directed by Susan Moore Johnson (September 2003).

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## **Results**

A total of 106 surveys were distributed to 89 districts, 9 REC's, and 8 charter schools. Surveys were returned from 79 school districts, 1 REC, and 4 charter schools. A total of 30 interviews were conducted with program personnel or participants. Survey respondents are listed in Attachment C.

### Numbers of Beginning Teachers and Mentors

The total number of Level I teachers reported was **2340** for 2002-03. This is not a precise figure, since not all districts reported, and on any given day with hiring and transfers, the number changes.

The law stipulates that one year of mentoring is required during the beginning teacher's first three years as a Level I teacher. Presently, there are districts that provide three full years of mentoring and those that provide one year. Of the Level I teachers, 644 were reported as successfully completing a mentorship program. Another 641 beginning teachers were reported as retained by their districts to teach in 2003-04 having completed their mentoring.

The total number of mentors for beginning teachers was reported as **1243**, which includes, those working as full-time mentors to "occasional" mentors within district programs. Mentors were identified from a number of role groups:

- 61% classroom teachers
- 13% principals
- 13% instructional coordinators
- 3% curriculum specialists
- 10% "other" (superintendents, diagnosticians, program specialists, support teachers, etc.)

### Compensation

Compensation provided for mentors included stipends, release time, tuition credits, an hourly rate, professional development hours, increments, supplies, books, workshop attendance, and other rewards. Varying kinds of compensation were reported:

- 60% offered stipends ranging from \$25.00 - \$1,749.00
- 45% of the programs provided release time
- 16% identified other compensations
- 8% provided no compensation to their mentors

Some districts reported their program as “intertwined” with other professional development and district programs and were unable to sort out specific additional compensation.

### Activities

The mentoring law encourages development of a broad array of mentor-beginning teacher activities in support of the developing teacher. When asked about activities offered in their mentoring programs, 81% indicated their program offered/required specific activities for mentors and/or beginning teachers. Nineteen percent did not provide additional activities.

- 64% conducted workshops
- 7% provided coaching,
- 4% offered full credit classes or tuition reimbursement, and
- 79% of the activities were categorized as “other” (meetings, orientation sessions, video study, training, ceremonies/celebrations, observations, supplies and materials provided, policy and procedures review, newsletters, webcasts, and conferences)

Comparisons and conclusions cannot be drawn with no criteria in place to examine the activities in terms of length, depth of coverage, meeting of beginning teacher needs, delivery methodology, measurement of outcomes, content comparisons, and level of transfer to classroom application.

### Technical Assistance

During 2001 and 2002, the State Department of Education sponsored a number of technical assistance training sessions for program coordinators and mentors. Technical assistance sessions were offered to meet the needs of the developing programs including design, implementation, activities, and program evaluation. Sessions were held throughout the state to support regional attendance. Attendance ranged from one to five representatives from each district. Participation in technical assistance initiatives was reported by the following number of districts:

- 15 Mentor Training with Barry Sweeney (November 2001)
- 19 Developing Mentor Programs – Barry Sweeney (February 2002)
- 15 Evaluating Mentor Programs – Leslie Huling (April 2002)
- 7 Individual Support – Creative Collaborations (Lippitt/Ryder)
- 16 Mentor Training – Albuquerque (June 2002)
- 18 Mentor Training – Las Cruces (July 2002)
- 5 Mentor Training – Socorro (November 2002)
- 16 Training for REC Directors (November 2002)
- 26 Support from REC
- 20 Other (ENMU, videos, other state trainings, personal work with consultants, other workshops, books, materials, conferences, UNM Support, etc.)

Some programs indicated attendance at more than one of the technical assistance offerings. Many added comments in terms of their appreciation for the support and encouragement, as well as materials, suggestions, networking, and operational details they received. A comment repeated often in relation to technical assistance was, "Please continue to give us help."

### Program Evaluation

Regulations require each mentorship program to conduct a yearly self-evaluation. Of those reporting, 74% utilized two or more methods. Several utilized all types of evaluation methodologies indicated. Another 15% utilized only one evaluation method or no final program evaluation was indicated.

- 64% Observations of beginning teachers
- 49% Surveys of mentor teachers

- 49% Surveys of beginning teachers
- 44% Interviews with mentor(s)
- 38% Self-evaluation by beginning teachers
- 38% Observations of mentors working with the beginning teachers
- 38% Summative evaluations
- 36% Interviews with beginning teacher(s)
- 30% Documentation/portfolio/written statement, etc.
- 29% Self-evaluation by mentors

More than half of those reporting included their program forms and surveys utilized. Many sent raw data gathered in the form of surveys completed, handwritten paragraph reflections, attendance logs, etc., while others submitted statistical and written summaries of the evaluation measures conducted. There currently exist neither templates nor criteria for measuring program outcomes or requirements for compiling analyzing and reporting self-evaluation data.

### Funding

Although the New Mexico Legislature funded mentorship programs for 2002-2003, many districts exceeded that appropriation in providing support for their mentoring initiative. Thirty-eight percent indicated that they did not utilize additional monies, while 30% indicated that additional money beyond the state's appropriation was spent, ranging from \$340.00 to \$74,857.00.

Although many districts listed an extra funding amount, not all listed the source for those funds. The variety of sources that were listed as providing the additional funding included: Title I funds, Special Education funds, university/district collaborative programs, partners and partnerships, Title II funds, operational funds, and travel funds. Of those reporting, 32% did not respond to this survey item.

### Use of Student Achievement Measures

When asked if student achievement measures were included in their program evaluation, 55% of reporting districts indicated that they did not. Eighteen percent indicated that student data were included in their program evaluation, Some of the

student measures identified as included in their self-evaluation were: standardized test data, NM standards assessment, district assessments, NRT for grades 3-9, student work, testimonials, and observations. Although asked, no references to collection methods were submitted. There was no response to this item in 27% of the returned surveys.

### Effect on Teacher Retention

The effect of the mentoring program on teacher retention drew responses from 83% of the reporting programs. Comments included;

- 48% indicated the program had a *positive effect* on retention,
- 21% said it had *no effect*, and
- 14% were *uncertain* as to the effect.

Some districts indicated they had no problem with teacher retention either because of their size or due to their location. Teachers in their districts tend to want to “be” in those schools and then stay. One district wrote:

Anecdotal records and testimony from beginning teachers indicate that the decision to remain in teaching was influenced by the mentoring program that provided: relief from isolation, access to experienced knowledgeable professionals, confidentiality of mentors, knowledge of operational details, as well as “big picture” issues, and access to instructional resources.

Other comments included:

- “Students benefit from beginning teachers having access to expanded recourses and support”
- “Better preparation = better students”
- “Increased competencies and success earlier in career”
- “Too early to determine”
- “No data collected – not in effect long enough to say”
- “5 years ago retention rate was 66%, currently it is 80%“
- “Believe effect is positive but not substantiated”
- “Life style and rural living is bigger effect.”

### Effect on Student Learning

In an attempt to determine deeper measures of evaluative criteria in making a direct link from teacher learning to student learning, all programs were asked how they believed the mentoring program has impacted student learning in their district. Of those reporting:

- 44% said their mentorship program had a *positive impact* on student learning
- 26% said there was *no impact* on student learning or the answer given to this question was not related to the question
- 15% said the *impact is uncertain*
- 15% did not respond

One program detailed the evidence in support of a positive effect as follows:

Documented observations of beginning teachers in this year's mentoring program suggest the following: beginning teachers move quickly through the early survival period by ability to balance large/new demands, fewer emotional outbursts, transfer focus from self to students, confidence, improved wellness, attendance at professional development activities voluntarily, improved questioning techniques, and development of classroom measures of student learning.

Beginning teachers demonstrate growth in: improved classroom practice by reinforcement of "best practices," time on task in the classroom, improved classroom management/discipline skills, focus on district and state standards, thoughtful/purposeful curriculum development, lessons around learning outcomes, meeting needs, and reflection.

Other comments included:

- "No actual data/criteria/evidence to prove direct relationship to student achievement"
- "Improved teaching performance naturally linked to increased student learning"
- "Too early to know, program only 1-3 years old."

Some of the evidence of student learning in use were: standards and benchmarks met, score comparisons (beginning teachers/veteran teachers), investigation of student work, and meeting student needs.

### Program Coordinators

Coordinators reporting were those with extensive experience coordinating this and other programs, and those who had only one to two years of any sort of program coordination, a bimodal grouping. The majority of those interviewed as well as those reporting were new to coordinating the district/school/or REC mentoring program indicating a high turnover rate in this role. The evaluators experienced a degree of difficulty in reaching the “current” program coordinator, since the previous coordinator was no longer responsible. Often the superintendent had to be contacted to discover where the responsible person was located in the district, or the superintendent was the acting coordinator.

Coordination of mentoring programs can be found at various levels in the system, depending upon the size and organizational structure in the district/school or REC. The titles of those coordinating the program were found to be from superintendent to classroom teacher, with title and level of coordination also dependent upon the size and organizational configuration. Coordinators were found in full time roles with responsibilities for mentoring exclusively, and others had multiple roles and other programs to oversee. Many asked for program help in the form of consistent reporting dates, the specific procedures and regulations to follow, and templates for reporting or documenting program operation. They listed continuing needs in coordinating their mentorship program as:

- more time
- continued funding and technical assistance
- networking for problem solving and help
- program models and help identifying resources needed
- resources
- training for working with mentors
- training of trainers
- administrative details
- finding qualified mentors
- assistance in mentor training

One program coordinator said,

To strengthen our program, we feel we need to stay up with current practices, evaluate data for further decision making, receive continued monetary support from the state, and most of all, we need an opportunity to educate administrators in the field about the what and why we are doing this, and how, and then work together to discover their roles as evaluators. Help them see how success of this type of program can benefit them at the site, besides the obvious.

Program complexity, integration with other system mechanisms, and depth of offerings was not necessarily related to size or structure of the district. Fully developed and systematically integrated programs were found in large and small districts. In turn, loosely constructed programs with little structure were also found in both large and small districts.

### Mentors

Documentation and reporting indicates mentors work with from one to 20 teachers each. In some school districts each beginning teacher has one assigned mentor. In others, one mentor is released full-time and mentors several teachers. Additionally, districts were found where various central office personnel occasionally mentored one or more beginning teachers. Teaching experience reported for mentors ranged from two to 30+ years. Time served as a mentor ranged from 2 to 10 or more years. Some mentors serve in a single school and often for a single grade level or subject, while others provide assistance to beginning teachers in multiple locations and multiple grade levels. Size of district was a factor in the configurations. Mentors identified their needs as:

- additional time to work with beginning teachers
- assistance of all types including additional resources
- continued training for the role, as well as training in “best teaching practices”
- increased administrative support
- easy-to-complete record keeping and documentation requirements

Mentors easily described their successes with their novices and the difference it was making in the life of the beginning teacher, the teachers around them, their students, and in their building. All commented on how much they were learning as well. “New teachers need mentors and opportunities for professional development, yes, but more important, they need an ongoing celebration of their willingness to struggle and survive through the frustrations and disappointments of first-year teaching, And they need to know that just surviving, they have made a difference,” remarked a mentor.

### Beginning Teachers

An overwhelming response of appreciation for the mentorship program and their mentor’s abilities came from participating beginning teachers. The mentorship was often described as “essential” to their progress and even “critical” to their survival in their early year(s) of teaching. Learning from their mentor was mentioned often. In terms of needs identified, beginning teachers reported a desire for more time to work with their mentor. “Too many meetings” was a common complaint, and the desire for “applicability” in all aspects of the required activities was requested.

Most of the novices expressed a strong desire to have a mentor who could guide, inform and encourage them from the very beginning, “someone who could shadow me, someone who could slowly walk me thorough orientation and all of this information over time and throughout the year.” Most of the novices wanted a mentor in the same subject areas or grade level as the one in which they were teaching, someone who could give them feedback, observe them, and share common preparation time. “So much of teaching is on the job training. You need someone with experience to give you some ideas on what works and doesn’t work,” was a familiar theme of the beginning teachers’ comments.

Beginning teachers described their mentors as:

- “dedicated educators”
- “knowledgeable”
- “full of resources”

- “caring”
- “checking in often and identifying progress”
- “good examples/role models”
- “supportive”
- “excellent teachers”

### Programs/Structure/Personnel

Mentorship programs for beginning teachers around New Mexico were found ranging from those with no formal structures to those that were institutionalized and highly structured. Those that were described as becoming a part of the district’s system structures and integrated with other accountability systems often have specific program names, explanatory brochures, and handbooks of procedures. Many are new programs having been developed in just the past school year following the passage of the state mandate. Other programs have a decade of developmental history. All programs seem to be evolving as needs are identified or as research and best practices for beginning teacher support and student learning continue to expand and are disseminated through the mentoring network.

Program personnel included novice educators to seasoned administrators. A scattering of retired teachers or teachers on leave was mentioned, as well as university staff and community partners in various program responsibilities. Programs in some large districts employ full-time mentors and program coordinators, while most districts have mentors or coordinators with multiple responsibilities. School districts that are located in the service area of post-secondary institutions have formed partnerships. Forms, logs, and a multitude of scheduling and documenting mechanisms are in use across the districts. Inconsistencies in documentation are found across the state’s programs.

Those involved in mentoring were asked what they considered to be the components of effective programs. The most frequently mentioned topics for formal and informal activities were *orientation to the district/ school/ grade/ subject*, and *classroom management*. Keys to effective programs most often mentioned were:

- broad communication of program operation with participants and district personnel,
- continued state funding,
- networking (and sharing of ideas) with other mentoring programs and state mentoring/induction experts,
- administrative support, and
- access to available resources.

Responses received from a few districts indicated difficulty in compiling data for the survey due to changes in personnel or offices within the district, thus, making it difficult to determine what documentation was available from last year's program operation.

The survey results from The Status of Teacher Supply and Demand in New Mexico (2000-01) underscore the importance of gathering clear data on teacher supply and demand in New Mexico. In addition, the results emphasized the importance of improving the ways New Mexico goes about recruiting, preparing, inducting, and providing professional development for teachers. School districts made a number of suggestions for improving teacher recruitment and retention including improving mentoring programs. (Survey conducted by the New Mexico Teacher Education Accountability Council: A K-16 Partnership on Quality Teacher Preparation and Development).

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## Summary

In an assessment of one of the oldest programs, California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program, early pilots featuring carefully designed, mentoring systems found rates of beginning teacher retention exceeding 90 percent in the first several years of teaching. As the program has scaled up across the state, however, only half of districts have provided mentors with time to coach novices in their classrooms (Shields et al., 2001).

All students deserve competent and caring teachers; all beginning teachers deserve competent and caring mentors, and few would argue that teacher development is a key to student success. In addition to establishment of mentoring programs, the No Child Left Behind Act requirement that schools staff all classrooms with "highly qualified teachers" represents a major challenge facing our state, especially for schools in the larger cities and in some of the poorer or rural areas. The hard part is keeping the teachers we prepare. Since the early 1990's nationally, the annual number of exits from teaching has surpassed the number of entrants by an increasing amount. Steep attrition in the first few years of teaching is a problem and bears enormous costs. Several researchers have identified specific factors currently influencing this teacher attrition. The top four major factors strongly influencing whether and when teachers leave specific schools or the education profession entirely are 1) salaries, 2) working conditions, 3) preparation, and 4) mentoring support in the early years.

NCTAF report – We have a bucket with huge holes in it. They are leaving as fast as we pour them in. In the 1990's, for the first time, the number of teachers leaving the profession exceeded the number entering. The price associated with such high turnover is tremendous. In Texas, for instance, the loss of 40 percent of new teachers during their first three years is estimated to cost the state between \$329 million and \$2.1 billion in termination, recruiting and training expenses (Stern, October, 2003).

Beginning teachers entering schools for the first time face many challenges ranging from nervous anticipation to the responsibilities and duties expected of all

experienced teachers. Taken together, “leavers and movers” particularly affect most the schools that serve poor and minority students. Teacher’ turnover is 50% higher in high-poverty than in low-poverty schools, and new teachers in urban districts exit or transfer at higher rates than their suburban counterparts do (Ingersoll, 2001). High-poverty schools suffer higher rates of attrition for many reasons; salary plays a part, fewer resources, poorer working conditions, and the stress of working with many students and families with a wide range of needs are underlying causes found in some research. More teachers in these schools are under prepared and unsupported, factors that strongly influence attrition (Darling-Hammond, 2000a). New Mexico is just beginning its statewide implementation of uniform expectations for teachers at all levels and stages of their career. The findings from this study support the inclusion of mentoring programs within the accountability reforms establishing a foundation for induction and licensure of our state’s teachers.

The results of data gathered and analyzed in the review of the 2002-03 mentoring programs for beginning teachers in New Mexico suggests:

- Program parameters, criteria, definitions, standards, rules, etc., are being interpreted in a variety of ways. A standard guide to program operation would be helpful in the face of the turnover discovered in the coordinator role. Those program coordinators who received initial program information and requirements may not now be those trying to implement or oversee the program.
- Some programs lack structure and have only “haphazard” support for beginning teachers.
- The system for identification of beginning teachers, in order to determine program funding when it is distributed, is not as “user friendly” as it might be.
- A mentoring section on the Teach NM website with a FAQ section would be helpful to everyone.

- There is no consistent accountability system in place for program evaluation. Gaps between the requirements in the law and the program operation in some districts are apparent.
- Retention of highly qualified teachers is an important investment for our state. With more accurate data collection, teacher retention can be tracked and studied systematically. Districts responded that the mentorship program, in most cases, had a positive effect on teacher retention.
- The mentor position is pivotal. The relationship between mentor and protégé can help or hinder the development of the beginning teacher, indicating the need for ongoing training for those taking on the influential role of mentor teacher. Some districts reported difficulty in finding mentors; many expressed the need for training of mentors. Mentorship programs and practicing mentors are a needed bridge to the resources and the best practices of teaching/learning.
- The need for this program is “real.” All participants from superintendents to novice teachers expressed their support for continuing to develop a well-structured mentorship program for their beginning teachers.
- It is clear that “on-the-job” training is necessary for developing high quality teachers. The current practice of training teachers ahead of placement in a classroom does not meet all the needs of the beginning teacher or their students. “Sink-or-swim” induction is no longer acceptable.
- The incentives mentors receive are small, leaving mentor’s dedication as the primary factor for accepting this role. Districts did not indicate an overwhelming number of teacher applicants for mentoring positions.
- The levels of support around the state vary widely. Mentoring is taking many forms from periodic discussions with the building principal to sophisticated development systems with several mechanism of support. A mentorship program provides valuable networking and fosters a “learning environment” when everyone is willing and the system embraces the “learning environment” philosophy.

- A multitude of activities is being offered across the state for beginning teachers. Often the mentoring activities are in addition to an array of mandated professional development activities all teachers must attend. Mentors reported little time available for the planned beginning teacher activities. Beginning teachers reported having overloaded schedules and seek more time to work with their mentors.
- The coordinator position for the mentorship programs is an important position and should be recognized as such by the districts. Data maintenance, personnel decisions, documents, forms, policies, etc., need yearly attention. The data indicated a high turn over for this role, which affected the data submitted.
- Districts are in the beginning stages of exploring the link between student achievement measures and tracking beginning teacher development. Some districts reported utilizing student achievement measures with beginning teachers; however, most are in exploratory stages.
- Most districts reported their mentorship program as having a positive effect on student learning. The link is stated as an obvious connection between beginning teacher development of skills and knowledge to increased student learning.

### Final Comments

- The mentorship programs are proving to be essential to beginning teacher development. The need for support was stressed by all survey and interview participants.
- The assistance in funding and technical assistance from the state and other sources is not just appreciated, but thought of as necessary for program development, implementation, evaluation, and improvement.
- There is a need to identify specific program output indicators for analysis; such as, an accurate count of beginning teachers receiving services, an accurate count of beginning teachers with continuing contracts at the conclusion of participation in the programs, evidence indicating a positive

effect of the elements of mentoring and or training on teacher attitudes and performance, the overall impact on professional performance of beginning teachers, and the link to impact on student learning.

- As new programs are developing, weaknesses exist most often in the documentation, compiling and analyzing of program data collected. Measures from pre-test/post-testing were rare, and often surveys were administered with no results compiled. Further, the criteria for evaluative methods employed were not always apparent.

Mentoring can represent a two-way transfer of skills, with the beginning teacher trained in new research and technologies and the experienced teacher well versed in local institutional culture and practical techniques. There is also a growing trend toward group or team mentoring where members form learning groups, where all can learn from each other, as well as, from the learning leader/mentor.

On-line mentoring (telementoring) is emerging as a potential way to pair teachers with those who can provide specific expert advice, guidance, feedback, and suggesting practical approaches even though they may not be in their school or district. Technology is also assisting mentors in connecting to novices via telephones and electronic mail. As the technologies available in schools progress, we may also see video conferencing, and distance learning utilized.

Bridging the gap between what was learned in the university classroom or professional development session and what is needed in the school classroom is critical. The review of the mentoring programs for beginning teachers in New Mexico identifies program status one year following enactment of the state's mentoring law. Although programs were found in various stages of development, results indicate a system of support is essential for those entering the teaching profession. The building of an effective teacher occurs within the active classroom through the relationship between a novice and an experienced educator. Effective beginning teacher mentoring programs are an important component in the teacher accountability process now in development.

Agenda for leaders: Retain excellent teachers! Keeping good teachers is one of the most important agenda items for all school leaders. Substantial research evidence suggests that well-prepared, capable teachers have the largest impact on student learning. Seeking out and hiring better prepared teachers has many payoffs and savings in the long run in terms of both lower attrition and higher levels of competence. When the high costs of attrition are calculated, many of the strategic investments needed to keep good teachers such as providing mentoring for beginners and creating ongoing learning and leadership challenges for veterans actually pay for themselves to a large degree.

Darling-Hammond, L. (May 2003). "Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do." Educational Leadership.

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## **Attachments**

**A. Documents Reviewed**

**B. Survey 2003**

**C. Survey Respondents**

**D. References**