

TEACHER MENTOR PROGRAM

I. Statement of Purpose

The Board of Cooperative Educational Services seeks to assure that a teacher Mentor Program is established for new teachers that will positively support the recruitment and retention of new teachers, strengthen teaching practice as grounded in the New York State Teaching Standards; the New York State Learning Standards; and the P-12 New York State Common Core Learning Standards for ELA/Literacy and Mathematics, and provide opportunities for experienced teachers to grow as mentors. It is the intent of the Board that the teacher Mentor Program will align with the Commissioner's guidance document on New York State Mentoring Standards.

The Board recognizes that new teachers may experience difficulties during their first year of teaching which, if not addressed, may prevent them from reaching their full potential as professional educators. Mentors can provide experience and guidance to lead and support new staff in instructional, curricular, behavioral and educational issues, facilitating a new teacher's transition from teacher preparation to practice. Mentors also can introduce new teachers to organizational protocols and give suggestions for teaching strategies that have proven particularly successful with Questar III students. Mentors will offer wisdom and best practices so that students in Questar III will have the best possible education. Mentors will have an opportunity to grow professionally while assisting new teachers to develop into skilled educators who demonstrate tenacity to help Questar III students achieve to their greatest ability.

This policy authorizes and directs the establishment of a teacher Mentor Program at Questar III, both to fulfill regulatory requirements and to enhance retention of well-qualified teachers and certified support staff. An effective teacher mentor program will require the active participation in and support of the RCG Teachers' Association and it is the Board's expectation that the support of the Association will be sought in the development of the teacher mentor program.

II. Application of Policy

This policy directs the establishment of a Mentor Program for persons in their first through third year of teaching or serving as a certified support staff member at Questar III. First year teachers shall participate in the Mentor Program. Second and third year teachers will be provided continuing support within a tiered system of mentoring. All references made herein to "teacher" shall be deemed to include eligible, certified support staff. The Mentoring Committee may make any additional mentorship assignments as it deems necessary. This policy and the Mentor Program adopted

pursuant to it will not prohibit or otherwise limit the District Superintendent or his or her designee to assign mentors to any teacher pursuant to an improvement plan.

III. Professional Development Plans

The program established pursuant to this policy shall be included in the professional development plan for Questar III. Documentation of participation in the Mentor Program will be maintained for purposes of allowing new teachers to meet certification requirements.

IV. Standards for the Mentor Program

The Mentor Program will align with the ten standards for effective mentoring as set forth in the New York State Mentoring Standards:

A. Program Philosophy and Purposes: The philosophy of the Mentor Program upholds the assertion that induction is a crucial transition between teacher preparation and continuing professional development. The Mentor Program will facilitate the transition of the beginning teacher from success in his/her teacher preparation program to effective practice in Questar III classrooms.

B. Program Design: The mentor program is designed as a crucial component of a comprehensive induction plan and is embedded in an integrated professional culture. The Mentor Program will support the Questar III mission and vision as set forth in the Questar III Strategic Plan.

C. Program Implementation: The Mentor Program is implemented to meet New York State Teaching Standards and sustain program activities that support the development of all beginning teachers. The Mentor Program will identify and assure that the resources, time, and staff will be dedicated to help ensure that beginning teachers receive a continuum of support and development in order to foster effective teaching and learning.

D. Mentor Selection: Mentors are recruited and selected through a rigorous and transparent process guided by criteria that consider the mentor candidate's commitment to the profession and teaching experience. The Mentor Program will utilize the National Education Association Foundation's Criteria for Selecting Mentors when considering selection of mentors.

E. Mentor Development: Mentoring is a professional practice with its own knowledge and research base, strategies, and best practices. The Mentor Program will provide for initial and continuing professional development for mentors.

F. *Mentors Have Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities*: The role of the mentor is to engage, inspire, assist, encourage and advance the professional learning of a beginning teacher and to model professional conduct. The Mentor Program will include clear roles and responsibilities for mentors that will include but are not limited to expectations for contact time with mentees, development of joint activities that support integration of the New York State Common Core Standards and are aligned with the New York State Teaching Standards. Mentors' roles are non-evaluative and focused on assisting the mentee to develop as and continue on the path of their teaching career.

G. *Mentoring Skill and Knowledge*: Mentors must be familiar with research-based practices, data analysis, and technological advances that promote student learning and growth at the various stages of development. The Mentor Program will identify and make provision for professional development for mentors and selection of mentors will take into account potential mentors' familiarity with research-based practices, data analysis, and technological advances that promote student learning.

H. *Shared Leadership and Administration*: Leadership of the mentoring program is a shared responsibility among all stakeholders. The Mentor Program will include administrative processes to provide support to mentees and mentors which may include classroom visits and opportunities for joint attendance at conferences and workshops.

I. *Beginning Teacher Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions*: Beginning teachers bring valued knowledge, skills, and dispositions to the new context of the classroom, school, and districts where they are first employed. The Mentor Program will encourage and expect mentees to display a readiness to continue learning about teaching and will provide opportunities for them to invite support and guidance.

J. *Program Evaluation*: The mentor program includes a comprehensive system of formative and summative assessments. The Mentor Program will provide for periodic review and assessment in order to evaluate and analyze the program's effectiveness and lead to continual improvement.

V. Mentoring Committee

The District Superintendent, or his or her designee, shall assure the annual establishment of a Mentoring Committee, to be composed of the Mentor Coordinator, five representatives of Questar III and five representatives of the Teachers Association. The Committee shall be chaired by a Mentor Coordinator, who shall be chosen mutually by the Teachers Association and Questar III administration. The Committee shall meet on a regular basis as necessary or desirable to carry out its responsibilities set forth by this policy.

The Committee shall be responsible for developing and recommending the mentor program as part of the professional development to be submitted to the Board. The Committee receiving applications for teachers to become mentors; recommending the selection of mentors to the District Superintendent or his/her designee; assuring that mentors are carrying out the responsibilities accorded them by their appointment as a mentor; assisting with the resolution of any issues which may arise concerning the mentoring relationship; carrying out formative and summative evaluation of the Mentor Program; and making recommendations for continuous improvement..

The Committee shall prepare informational material as it deems necessary or desirable to assist mentors and mentees.

VI. Qualifications of Mentors

The Board recognizes that both Questar III and new teachers will be best served through the appointment of mentors who will be committed to the successful undertaking of a mentoring assignment. The Committee will be responsible for preparing an application form and evaluative instruments that will allow the Committee to ascertain whether potential mentors exhibit the following personal and professional qualities:

- A. Demonstrated personal commitment to the role of mentoring, including an agreement to commit to a professional training relating to mentoring during the school year as provided in the Mentor Program;
- B. Permanently certified (or, where appropriate for support staff, licensed) to the extent practicable and rated as effective or highly effective (or its equivalent) in annual professional performance reviews;
- C. Highly respected with demonstrated classroom success.
- D. Strong interpersonal skills;
- E. Demonstrates consistent enthusiasm for teaching;
- F. Is tenured at Questar III;
- G. Demonstrates excellence in pedagogy and subject matter knowledge;
- H. Can demonstrate evidence of commitment to life-long learning;
- I. Demonstrates excellent leadership and communication skills; and
- J. Possesses a high degree of knowledge about the organization, its policies and procedures

VII. Application Process

Potential mentors must complete and file an application with the Director of Human Resources, for transmittal to the Committee. The Committee shall review and evaluate each application presented.

VIII. Identification of New Teachers

The Director of Human Resources shall notify the Mentor Coordinator of each newly hired teacher. The Mentor Coordinator shall provide the information on newly hired teachers to the Mentoring Committee for potential assignment of a mentor.

IX. Selection and Assignment of Mentors

The Committee shall recommend mentors, after reviewing and evaluating applications as provided by this policy. The Committee will utilize the National Education Association Foundation's Criteria for Selecting Mentors when evaluating applications. The Committee shall provide the Director of Human Resources with its recommendations on the selection of mentors. The Director of Human resources shall provide the District Superintendent or his/her designee with its recommendations.

The Committee shall assign approved mentors to new teachers as needed. The Committee will recommend matches of mentors and mentees, taking into consideration their certification areas, assignments, and location of teaching or professional assignments. Selection and assignment of mentors shall be subject to review and approval by the principals, the Director of Special Education, and the District Superintendent or his/her designee. Any issues relating to the mentoring relationship, including requests for new assignments, shall be made to the Committee.

X. Training for Mentors

The Committee shall be responsible for recommending to the District Superintendent, or his or her designee, training needs for mentors that may be fulfilled by Questar III. Mentors will receive training on mentoring at Orientation Day or Professional Development Day, and at other times as may be arranged.

The Committee shall offer, or arrange to offer, after school programs and workshops for mentors and mentees in accordance with the approved Mentor Program, needs identified by mentors and mentees, and needs identified through periodic program evaluation.

XI. Mentoring Activities

The mentor shall be responsible for providing guidance and support to the teacher assigned to him or her as a mentee. Mentors may advise their mentees on matters relating to classroom management, classroom set up, pedagogical matters, lesson plans, issues relating to the mission and organization of Questar III and any other

matter relating to the mentee's role at Questar III. Mentors are expected to respond to questions posed by mentees with the utmost professionalism and, where necessary, provide the mentee with an appropriate referral.

The team will participate in orientation on mentoring offered by Questar III. During this time, mentees will engage in a self-assessment of their professional development needs as related to the Regents Reform Agenda; Common Core Learning Standards; use of assessments utilized by Questar III; data-driven instruction; developing student learning objectives and other relevant areas that may be identified by Questar III or required by the New York State Education Department. Activities and professional development also will take into consideration the various key events throughout the year on the Questar III calendar (e.g. TCI training, parent conferences, and building events). Each mentor/mentee team will use the self-assessment data and the calendar of key events during the academic year to determine the focus of their jointly planned activities and to identify significant learning opportunities during the year.

Mentors are expected meet with mentees on a regular basis, but no less than as follows:

- A. Once a week during the first three weeks of school; and
- B. Twice a month for the remainder of the school year.

The mentor's role shall not be evaluative. Information obtained by a mentor cannot be used for purposes of evaluating or disciplining a new teacher, with the following exceptions, where it will be the responsibility and duty of a mentor to immediately advise the District Superintendent or his/her designee;

- A. Where withholding information poses a danger to life, health or safety of an individual; or
- B. Where the information indicates that the new teacher has been convicted of a crime or has committed an act which raises a reasonable question as to the new teacher's moral character.

Notwithstanding the above, willful failure of a new teacher to participate in a Mentor Program may constitute insubordination and may result in disciplinary action and/or termination.

XII. Documentation of Mentoring Activities

It is the responsibility of the mentor and the mentee to provide the Mentor Coordinator with timely documentation of mentoring activities. The District Superintendent, or his or her designee, is authorized to promulgate forms, to be executed by the mentor and the mentee, for the purpose of documenting that such activities have taken place. Such

documentation will be utilized for purposes of assuring completion of both a mentor's and mentee's respective professional development activities and for purposes of assuring that the mentee has participated in a qualifying Mentor Program for certification purposes. Such forms shall include the following information:

- A. The name and New York State Teach ID number of the teacher being mentored;
- B. The name and New York State Teach ID number of the mentor.
- C. A description of the mentoring activity (e.g. classroom observation, consultation);
and
- D. The number of clock hours successfully completed in the mentoring activity.

The Mentor Coordinator shall monitor each mentorship relationship in order to be assured that the mentor and the mentee are consulting, each is observing the other's classroom on a monthly basis, and that appropriate documentation of mentoring activities is being maintained and submitted to the Committee. The Mentor Coordinator shall report such matters to the Committee. The Committee shall refer any information relating to the failure of a mentee to participate in the mentoring relationship to the Director of Human Resources.

XIII. Annual Review

The Committee shall review mentorship relationships and Mentor Program activities at the end of the school year in order to determine whether the purposes of this policy were met. Additionally, the Mentor Program will undergo formative and summative assessment using a mixed-method design. The Committee will make such recommendations to the District Superintendent regarding the mentorship program as it may deemed necessary or desirable.