

Gardner Public Schools Mentor Handbook



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Gardner Public Schools



Vision Statement

We will have positive relationships and rigorous instruction for every child,
every day in every classroom!

Core Values:

Community

Appreciation

Responsibility

Excellence

MISSION STATEMENT

The Gardner Public Schools Mentor Program will provide the beginning educator the opportunity to receive the ongoing support, encouragement and understanding necessary to experience success as a classroom teacher. The program is an integral part of a teacher's first year of teaching and is the beginning of his or her professional development activities.

Mentoring provides the beginning educator with a one-on-one relationship with an experienced educator. While the beginning educator acquires support and a practical understanding of instruction through the mentoring relationship, the mentor is able to reflect upon and improve his/her own practice by sharing experiences and expertise.

Mentors will assist the mentees with the technical aspects of the position and support them through the initial phases of teaching and learning and acclimating to the school culture and environment. Through professional encounters, educators will receive guidance and support from a proven role model in the system. The pairing of the mentor and mentee will enhance competency, promote confidence, and provide new staff with optimal support to ensure their success in our schools. When new educators learn from veteran educators, schools increase the possibility of retaining strong, high-quality educators, and student achievement will ultimately increase.

GOALS and OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the mentor teacher program are to:

- Retain high-quality educators
- Enhance the skills and performance of new staff members
- Improve the quality of curriculum and instruction
- Promote effective, ongoing communication
- Support educator collaboration and collegiality to prevent isolation
- Build a sense of professionalism and positivity
- Facilitate a seamless transition for incoming staff
- Encourage self-reflection
- Improve student learning and achievement

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF MENTOR

Building principals will select teacher mentors based on the following criteria:

- Completion of a minimum of three (3) years of teaching within the district
- Must have completed *District Mentor Training*
- Must possess the knowledge of the state and common core standards and demonstrate the ability to support the new teacher in his or her teaching of the standards
- Must demonstrate exemplary content and pedagogical knowledge
- Must demonstrate a commitment to the profession and dedication to consistently improving teaching and learning
- Must possess knowledge of the school and district's policies, procedures, resources, and core beliefs
- Must have the ability to communicate clear, specific and constructive feedback
- Must be willing to make time to support the new teacher as required

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is essential in order to foster a trusting relationship between the mentor and the beginning teacher. A mentor will NOT discuss their mentee's teaching performance or personal information with anyone, including school and district administration, except under the following conditions:

- A. Mentors, with the mentee's knowledge and permission, may discuss the mentee's teaching performance with resource professionals whose job it is to assist teachers in improving their skills.
- B. Mentors, with the mentee's knowledge, may discuss the mentee's teaching performance with appropriate administrators if, in the mentor's professional judgment, the academic growth and development, social well-being, or physical safety of the mentee's students are at risk.
- C. Mentor teachers will be able to discuss in confidence any aspect of their mentee's performance with other members of the mentoring team.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

Mentor Coordinator:

Lead the monthly mentor/mentee peer support group and follow up on recommendations made by the group.

Ensure both mentors and mentees are meeting their responsibilities as outlined in the handbook and maintain appropriate documentation of the same.

Coordinate professional development opportunities for both the beginning teachers and the mentors.

Conduct an annual evaluation of the program's effectiveness and develop and implement improvements based on the data collected.

Meet monthly with the beginning teachers to answer any questions or address concerns that the beginning teacher may have, as well as to ensure the teacher is aware of the professional knowledge and skills required of all teachers.

Provide beginning teachers with necessary professional resources to ensure their success in the classroom (i.e. reference materials, curriculum frameworks, Common Core Standards, professional journals, etc.)

Troubleshoot any issues that may arise during the teacher's induction period.

Beginning Teacher/Mentee:

Set Professional Practice and Student Learning goals for teacher evaluation. At the first September meeting with a mentor, discuss potential challenges and create goals to address these areas. Revisit at monthly meetings and discuss and document progress toward attainment of goals.

Attend all scheduled mentoring meetings. These meetings are scheduled with consideration to state and district policies for beginning teachers.

Seek out help. The beginning teacher must understand that he or she must seek out support from mentor, administration and team members, be forthright in communicating classroom issues, and remain open to feedback in order to develop as a professional.

Observe experienced teachers at work. The beginning teacher should adhere to a schedule of observations of various experienced teachers. One with their mentor and one with a veteran teacher of their choice. The beginning teacher should reflect on the varied instructional and engagement strategies in their reflection form.

Provide Documentation for: Inclusive Practice Course-Submit to certificate in Google Classroom; 2 Observations with observation forms; Monthly Reflections completed in Google Classroom before scheduled monthly meeting.

Mentor:

Ensure a strong start to the year. Mentors can help beginning teachers launch into a productive year by making sure they know where to obtain all needed materials and are familiar with routines and schedules. Mentors should also help their mentees formulate goals for the year that align with building and district goals and monitor their progress throughout the year.

Attend all required meetings. Attend school orientation at the beginning to meet mentee and set goals. Attend meetings scheduled by Mentor Coordinator for mentors and mentees. Attend all scheduled meetings with mentee as required per position.

Provide instructional support. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Regular observation of and conferencing with the beginning teacher.
2. Providing regular opportunities for mentee(s) to observe mentor teaching.
3. Support in teaching and learning standards of the state curriculum frameworks and common core.
4. Helping mentee implement and/or refine various teaching strategies. Model Rubric for Classroom Teacher Evaluation <https://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/rubrics/teacher-rubric.pdf>
5. Addressing issues such as classroom management and communicating effectively with parents.
6. Recognizing and addressing multiple learning styles and individual student needs.
7. Support in achieving proficiency as identified in the:

Provide professional support. Beginning teachers need to be informed of school policies and procedures, particularly regarding standards and procedures for teacher evaluation. Mentors should be a resource for information on evaluation and professional practice.

Provide personal support. Mentors can help relieve the stress on first time teachers by introducing them to other faculty members and helping the beginning teacher to put problems in perspective with support and encouragement.

Maintain a confidential relationship with the beginning teacher. It is important that the beginning teacher be able to discuss problems openly with the mentor, so that they may be addressed in a timely and informed manner.

Serve as a liaison. The mentor should have the knowledge and skills to refer the beginning teacher to other teachers and educational resources, so that the beginning teacher is exposed to a variety of perspectives and instructional practices.

Serve as a resource. Inform the beginning teacher of opportunities and supports provided by various professional associations.

Maintain documentation for mentor/mentee activities. Complete mentor log, mentee observation form, reflections to be turned in at the end of the school year.

Administrators:

Establish a school culture that is built on collegiality and supports professional collaboration among new and veteran teachers.

Participate in a support process for maintaining a mentor/mentee relationship. If an issue arises in the mentor/mentee relationship that they cannot resolve as a partnership, the mentee will request to meet with the principal and the mentor to reach a resolution to the issue.

Select appropriate mentors for new teachers. Ensure that mentors have received mentor training. Pair mentees with mentors that are compatible to grade level or subject area as often as possible.

NO FAULT EXIT POLICY

In the event that the strategies listed under Principal/Assistant Principal responsibilities regarding mentor/mentee relationship resolutions fail, and the relationship cannot remain positive for both parties, the following will take place:

Mentor:

- Will be removed as a mentor for mentee
- Will be reassigned if a mentee is available
- Will be removed from mentor list if this is deemed the most appropriate action

Mentee:

- Will be assigned to another mentor, if one is available
- Will be designated another school leader (dept. head, administrator, etc.) to work with on a temporary basis until another mentor can be assigned

YEAR ONE – MENTOR LOGS AND MONTHLY REFLECTIONS

The assessment is for the mentor and mentee only, and will not be shared with administrators unless the mentee chooses to do so as evidence for one of the rubric standards.

Year 1

30 Hour Mentor Logs for non-professional licensed mentees for educators new to the profession, this log is required by DESE as part of the application process for advancement in licensure.

15 Hour Mentor Log for professional licensed mentees.

Monthly reflections serve as a place where new educators can set goals for the upcoming month and plan next steps toward reaching those goals. When used with fidelity, the needs assessment helps both parties remain accountable to each other and documents their growth over time.

PEER OBSERVATIONS

Observation is an integral part of the mentoring process and a core activity of the MA DESE Guidelines for Induction Programs. It gives participants the opportunity to view techniques and strategies that enhance classroom practice, and it allows for coaching and tutoring. It also opens discussion and provides the avenue for problem solving and reflection. Veterans and novices alike find that learning from watching others—a demonstration of effective skills—is a two-way street.

Observation offers the chance to visually experience a new technique or an introduction to new concepts. From the observation, feedback and support are given to allow participants to gain a better understanding of the teaching practice. As one practitioner expressed, “It provides a mirror for me to view myself in actual practice.” Observation in the mentoring process is both **non-evaluative** and **non-judgmental**. Its purpose is to help the participants view and react to the learning and the teaching that occurs within the instructional setting.

Peer Observation Process and Protocols

Before an observation occurs, the mentor and mentee should have a short planning

conference to define the purpose of the observation – specifically, what the mentee would like the mentor to observe or what the mentee would like to observe when visiting the mentor's classroom. After the focus of the observation has been established, the mentor and mentee should determine the method of data collection that provides the most helpful information for the defined purpose.

A reflective conference is the final component of the observation, in which the mentor and mentee reflect on the lesson observed. The mentor's role, after observing in the mentee's classroom, is to guide the mentee's reflection and make proactive suggestions as appropriate. The focus of the reflective conference after the mentee observes the mentor is for the mentor to describe the underlying concepts and rationale for the lesson and to respond to the mentee's questions.

PRE-OBSERVATION – *Conducting The Planning Conference*

To clarify goals and context for the lesson you might say/ask...

- Tell me about this lesson and its context.
- How does it address the content and performance standards?
- What has led up to this lesson?
- How does it meet students' needs?
- Where does it fit in the curriculum?
- How will you determine evidence of success/student achievement?

To support the mentee in articulating a student learning objective, you might ask...

- What do you want your students to learn?
- How will your students know your expectations?
- How will you assess the learning?

To explore teaching strategies and ways to reach all learners, you might ask...

- How will you generate an interest in the lesson?
- How do the instructional strategies and resources support the goals of the lesson?
- How will you scaffold or differentiate instruction or expectations for ELL or special needs students?

To identify focus for data collection, you might say/ask...

- How can I focus my observation to support your learning?

- Let's agree on what data will be collected

OBSERVATION – *Conducting the Classroom Observation*

- Relate observation to the teacher's identified need(s).
- Link the observation to the teacher's goals and educator plan
- Keep the focus on the students.
- Collect only data agreed upon beforehand.
- Be focused.
- Reserve time for post observation reflection and feedback.

POST OBSERVATION – *Engaging in Reflective Conversation*

Mentor will meet with mentee to identify a targeted area of improvement from reflective conversation and suggest strategies and resources for implementation. Mentor will document in Mentor Log.

YEAR 2 – MENTORING REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL NEW EDUCATORS

Gardner Public Schools, as well as the MA DESE, requires that all educators log 50 hours of mentored experiences beyond the induction year. For educators seeking to advance in licensure, these 50 hours fulfill state requirements. Although educators are not assigned a formal mentor in Year 2, as they are in their first year, the second year educator should consider his/her experienced colleagues, department chair, department or curriculum director, and/or principal to be his/her community of mentors.

A suggested list of possible year two mentoring experiences may include:

- Conducting peer observations and reflections on learning.
- Videotaping oneself and reflecting with a colleague on successes and goals.
- Developing and submitting an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) in conjunction with the principal, department head or director.
- Participating in professional development opportunities aligned with your individual goals, building goals, and/or district goals.
- Scheduled meetings with the mentor coordinator, a principal or department head.
- District sponsored content or pedagogical workshops.
- Meetings with mentor facilitators that review topics of school system

culture, e.g., classroom management, parent conferences.

- Participation in lesson studies, learning walks or student work/tuning protocols.
- Taking an approved course to enhance your content knowledge or pedagogy.

SCHEDULE for MENTORS/MENTEES

- Mentors and Mentees should meet, minimally, at least every week for thirty (30) minutes to review mentee journals, portfolio and reflections and discuss concerns and successes. These meetings may be at a time agreed upon by both parties and the building administrator during the school day, or may be scheduled after school hours at an agreed upon day and time. These meetings must be documented, and documentation must be maintained by the mentee in the Mentor/Mentee Log Sheet.
- Mentor classroom observations should take place in the fall, preferably before winter vacation, and should be documented in the Mentor log, mentee will document in Mentor Observation Form. Peer observation is recommended after winter vacation and mentee will document in Peer Observation Form.
- Peer support meetings with Mentors, Mentees and Mentor Coordinator will take place monthly, beginning in September (location and time TBD by Mentor Coordinator).