

Ossining Union Free School District

District-Based Teacher Mentoring Program

1. Philosophy

The District-Based Teacher Mentoring Program is a joint effort of the Ossining Teachers Association and the District Administration to both meet the professional needs of our newest teachers as well as meet the February 2004 State Education regulation requiring school districts to implement mentoring programs for first-year teachers. It is the belief of both the Ossining Teachers Association and the Administration that the district would benefit from a program that provides support to teachers new to the district and gives recognition to the many outstanding veteran teachers on the faculty.

Mentoring is part of a teacher's continuum of professional development experiences, building on to teacher preparation programs, and anticipating continued professional development over the course of a teacher's career.

Research supports mentoring as an approach for achieving the highest quality of personalized support in welcoming new teachers to the profession and assisting them to practice effectively. This type of teacher support has consistently shown to be effective in stemming teacher attrition and to significantly impact the beginning teacher's movement along the continuum of school development and self-confidence as a teacher. The involvement of veteran teachers serving the role of mentors also adds a very valuable professional development opportunity for experienced teachers.

It is with enthusiasm that the Ossining Teachers Association and the Administration support a comprehensive mentoring program in the Ossining Union Free School District.

2. Development

The Ossining District-Based Teacher Mentoring Program has been developed with full participation and agreement of the District Administration and the Ossining Teachers Association. We recognize that professional development is most effective when it is planned with the input of representatives of the recipients being trained. District Administration and the OTA have a long history of respect and cooperation and view this mentoring program as an extremely important component of professional development in the District.

3. Mentor

The mentor can fulfill a variety of roles for a new teacher including that of a guide, advocate, confidante, subject expert, and reflective partner. The mentor will play a supportive role, a role which will remain non-evaluative and non-judgmental. Defining the mentor's role as guidance and support ensures confidentiality with the participant's interactions. This reflects a truly collegial relationship, inviting honesty, risk-taking, and self-reflection by the novice teacher about the practice of teaching.

4. Mentoring Model

Ossining's mentoring model consists of the following components.

- a. The first tier will be called "the consultant model." This model will include the use of outside consultants to work directly with novice teachers in and out of their classrooms.
- b. The second tier of the system will be called "One-To-One mentors." These One-To-One mentors are full-time teachers who will be providing valuable resources in a number of areas including school culture, parent/teacher issues, report cards, grading, and discipline. In addition, One-To-One mentors also assist new teachers with direct instructional support. They also help new teachers understand the process and procedures of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

5. Mentor Selection

It is important that mentors be master teachers. Mentors will be selected based on their mastery of pedagogical skills, content knowledge, teaching abilities, leadership qualities, organizational skills, interpersonal relationships, positive attitude, high expectations for all students, and a willingness to be a mentor. Grade level expertise shall also be a factor in mentor selection. Mentors shall be experienced in the general grade and/or content area as the new teachers they serve.

Other considerations for mentor selection shall include but not be limited to teachers with National Board certification, former experience with teacher mentoring, and course work or workshops related to mentoring.

Mentor selection will be conducted by an identified committee, which will include both representatives from the OTA and from the administration, with the majority of the committee being teacher representatives.

The committee will consist of:

OTA President or designee
Teacher Center Director
Elementary Teacher
Secondary Teacher
OAAS President or designee
Superintendent or designee
Mentor Coordinator(s)

Specific Selection Criteria

- Master teacher
- Tenured teacher
- Three years experience in the Ossining School District
- Content area specialist
- Expertise at the same grade level (if possible)
- Willingness to participate in additional training during the year of selection.
- Catalyst for implementing instructional change in the classroom
- Extensive knowledge of New York State Standards and Assessments
- Expertise in designing and implementing standards based instruction

D. Developing a Pool of Potential Mentors

Teachers will be encouraged to participate in mentor training for professional development and professional growth. Even excellent, highly skilled teachers need preparation as they take on the role of mentor to a colleague. Adult learning theory, teacher development, knowledge of beginning teacher needs, conferencing skills, coaching techniques, and establishing effective communication with parents and colleagues are all areas which are beneficial to include in mentor preparation programs. Preparation programs can be delivered as formal courses of preparation, for example, those offered by colleges or teacher centers or programs offered through the district. In addition, mentor support groups or monthly mentor meetings are important as on-going sources of support for mentors. A mentor's participation in such activities might all be considered as fulfillment of continuing professional development requirements to be instituted for maintenance of professional certification, effective February 2004.

E. Announcement of Opportunities to Mentor

All Mentor positions shall be posted. Mentors shall receive either a stipend or inservice credit as negotiated between the District and the Teachers Association.

6. Mentoring Activities

The Mentoring Program will stress the following:

1. Activities which include instructional practice
2. Workshops during the school year for new teachers and/or mentors
3. Assistance with the management of classroom routines. This could include record-keeping, report cards, parent communication, parent conferences, and other routine paper work.
4. Joint lesson planning
5. Observations and coaching
6. Curricula development around the New York State Learning Standards
7. Modeling instruction
8. Orientation to the school culture
9. Collaboration with the Ossining Staff Development Center
10. Help beginning teachers transition from preparation to practice
11. Increase the retention rate for beginning teachers
12. Help teachers understand their Collective Bargaining Agreement

7. Mentor Preparation and Development

We recognize that mentoring others is a skill that requires training and preparation. Even excellent, highly skilled teachers need preparation as they take on the role of mentor to a colleague. Preparation of mentors may include but not be limited to the study of adult learning theory, teacher development, knowledge of beginning teacher needs, conference skills, coaching skills, reflective practice, and establishing effective communication with parents and colleagues.

Preparation for mentors can be delivered as formal courses of preparation including those offered by colleges, teacher centers, school districts, or consortiums. Mentor support groups and mentor meetings can also be considered as on-going sources of support for mentors. A mentor's participation in these activities can be considered as fulfillment of requirements for the Ossining Union Free School District Professional Growth Plan or for the Continuing Professional Development requirements for maintenance of professional certification, which went into effect February 2004.

8. Time Allocation

It is vital to the Mentoring Program that a sufficient amount of time is allocated to both our newest teachers and to the mentors in order for appropriate support to occur. Under the District's mentoring system the following time allocation shall occur:

1. Consultant Model

- Introduced at New Teacher Orientation
- On-going mentoring and support

2. One-to-One Mentor

- Minimum - the equivalent of one period per week for mentoring
- Attend three mandatory meetings

3. Ideal mentoring plan

- Mentors and new teachers on the same grade level
- Mentors and teachers within the same content area
- Equivalent of one period per week devoted to mentoring throughout the year
- Flexibility of scheduling
- Building administration will coordinate appropriate schedules for mentors/interns

9. Selection of Interns

- a. First year teachers holding initial certificates – mandatory
- b. Other non-tenured teachers based on need and recommendation

10. Staffing and Other Resources

- a. Mentor Coordinator
- b. Mentor Consultants
- c. One-to-One Mentors
- d. Substitute Teachers
- e. Workshop Costs
- f. Materials and Supplies

11. Record Keeping Requirements

The District shall maintain documentation of the implementation of the Mentoring Program described above. This documentation shall include for each individual receiving mentoring pursuant to the Mentoring Program:

- a. The name of the individual
- b. His or her teaching certificate number
- c. The type of mentoring activities that s/he has been involved in
- d. The number of hours successfully completed in the mentoring activity
- e. The name of the individual (and teaching certificate identification number) who has provided the mentoring services

Mentor shall maintain documentation and submit monthly activity logs to Mentor Coordinator

Duties of the Intern:

Intern duties may include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- *Be open to developing an honest relationship with the mentor. Initiate and maintain regular communication.
- * Meet with your mentor for a minimum of 45 minutes per week. *Please refer to the Checklist for Possible Mentor/ Intern Discussions to assist you with topics for discussion.
- *Visit your mentor's class, as well as that of other educators to observe effective teaching and classroom management techniques through formal observations, team teaching, and/or model lessons.
- *Have your mentor visit your classroom for similar purposes; however, any teaching demonstrations in the classroom of the intern shall be by mutual agreement.
- *Participate in staff development and ask questions about professional development opportunities.
- *Attend scheduled intern meetings and staff development.
- *Keep a log of your reflections and questions. This will help prepare you for meetings with your mentor.
- *Realize that mentors are providing support and guidance. You must select from these discussions what works best for you.
- *Ask questions!!!!

Communicate any of your concerns or questions to your Mentor Coordinator(s) by GroupWise e-mail or phone.

Duties of a Mentor

The following list identifies the expectations for the mentor teacher in the mentoring relationship. Mentor Teachers duties may include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- *Help the intern socialize within the school. Discuss school norms, social traditions, introductions to staff, location of supplies, as well as a tour of the building would be helpful.
- *Meet with the intern for a minimum of 45 minutes per week. Please refer to the Checklist for Possible Mentor/ Intern Discussions to assist you with topics for discussion.
- *Keep mailing your Mentor/Intern Log of Activities Monthly. This record keeping form is due the first Monday of the following month.
- *Arrange for release time to observe or team-teach.
- *Demonstrate your own effective teaching and classroom management techniques through formal observations, team teaching, and/or model lessons, as well as, encouraging the observations of other educators.
- *Visit the intern's classroom for similar purposes; however, any teaching demonstrations in the classroom of the intern shall be by mutual agreement. Please refer to the attached Observation Techniques and Coaching Focus for additional assistance.
- *Model effective interpersonal communication skills to help prepare the intern for interactions with parents, administrators, faculty and students.
- *Encourage participation in staff development and provide advise about professional development opportunities.
- *Assist in developing class organization and management plans, as well as encouraging parental involvement.
- *Sharing materials, curriculum developments, teaching methods, long instructional goals and assessments.
- *Attend scheduled mentor meetings.

Communicate any of your concerns or questions your mentor coordinator(s) by GroupWise e-mail or phone.