Dr. Aleya Shoieb
Superintendent of Schools
ashoieb@rahway.net

Rahway Public Schools

Kline Place
P.O. Box 1024
Rahway, NJ 07065
(732) 396-1000

Novice/Mentor Handbook

Teachers Helping Teachers

Rahway Public Schools is committed to providing novice teachers and their mentors the support they deserve. We believe that a structured mentoring program will facilitate the development of a collaborative and reflective relationship between the novice teacher and the mentor that will encourage content mastery and deepen the understanding of pedagogical skills. This handbook will serve as one of the many resources available to guide our novice teachers, our mentors, and our administrators through the mentoring process.

The Mentoring Process

Mentoring is not a new concept, nor is it the newest fad in education. The success of most veteran teachers is due at least in part to having been "shown the ropes" by other veteran teachers during the first few years of teaching. Mentoring can be a buddy system, but it can also be much more than that. Mentors can help decrease the anxiety level of novice teachers during their first few months in the classroom. Mentors can help novices find missing resources, guide them through the maze of paperwork and planning, and give them the all-important "pep talk" when needed. Mentors help novices keep moving in the right direction.

New teachers deserve a guide and an advisor, someone who is trained and prepared to help new teachers succeed. The State of New Jersey, and the district of Rahway, have committed to this process and realize that a structured and formalized mentoring program invests in the retention of our new teachers and the achievement of all of our students.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT OF A MENTOR?

A mentor teacher will be:

- Skilled in the delivery and instruction of content
- Enthusiastic about the profession
- A confidant who listens and guides
- Willing to take risks and look for new approaches
- Respected and trusted by colleagues
- A team player
- Available for help and support
- A leader and a coach

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal/Assistant Principal/Supervisor

- Selects a mentor from the applicants for each novice teacher as soon as they begin their assignment
- Provides a list of all induction pairs to the mentoring coordinator
- Serves as facilitator for mentoring activities that can include meetings, observation and conferencing, and trainings
- Observes and evaluates new teachers according to state and district guidelines
- Participates in and supports mentor and novice teacher trainings
- Monitors ongoing activities of the mentoring pair

Mentor Teacher

- Serves as a role model in both professional and classroom practice
- Fosters a trusting, confidential relationship
- Serves as a critical friend
- Meets with the novice teacher according to state and district guidelines, as well as when the need arises
- May provide feedback after NON-EVALUATIVE observations
- May model effective instructional techniques for the novice teacher
- Orients the novice teacher to district and school policies, including first and last day procedures
- Provides a variety of resources to help the novice teacher develop a repertoire of effective techniques and strategies
- Participates in professional development that will assist in the mentoring process
- Encourages the novice teacher to record needs, questions, and descriptions, to be used for discussion purposes
- Helps the novice teacher identify best practices for portfolios
- Maintains involvement in professional growth opportunities

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: CONTINUED

Novice Teacher:

- Develops the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for optimal student learning
- Accepts and implements appropriate suggestions in a professional manner
- Asks questions
- Meets with mentor on a regular basis and documents the meeting times
- Observes mentors (and other teachers) in several teaching situations and discusses these observations
- Allows mentor to observe in a NON-EVALUATIVE manner to provide feedback and support
- Keeps a journal of experiences to share at meetings with mentor
- Develops a portfolio of best practices to share with other new teachers
- Demonstrates enthusiasm for and a commitment to the district and to the profession of teaching

A teacher who loves learning earns the right and the ability to help others learn.
– Ruth Beechek

WHO BENEFITS FROM FORMAL INDUCTION AND MENTORING?

The Novice Teacher

- Gains knowledge about the district policies, school culture, community, job responsibilities
- Gains emotional support that eases concerns and anxieties
- Engages in professional growth activities designed to enhance knowledge of effective teaching strategies
- Improves teaching performance and promotes student learning
- Builds on successful classroom practice
- Chooses to remain in the teaching profession and retains initial enthusiasm

The Mentor Teacher

- Becomes a more reflective practitioner
- Is more open to the challenges of systemic change
- Is able to transfer knowledge effectively
- Retains enthusiasm for teaching
- Becomes a teacher leader
- Is recognized for contributing to personal professional growth and the professional growth of others

The Administrator

- Is supported in efforts to improve teacher quality and effectiveness
- Has developed a team of teacher leaders
- Retains the "best and brightest" for the school
- Builds a feeling of collaboration within the school
- Promotes collegial problem-solving
- Is the staff leader promoting positive professional growth
- Identifies and resolves problems faced by new teachers

The School District

- Retains quality teachers who understand the district and culture
- Creates cohesive schools that promote teacher professionalism and learning communities
- Becomes known for its support of the professional staff and the achievement of its students

OBSERVATIONS

Observations by mentors are both **non-evaluative** and non-judgmental. The purpose of mentor observation is to help the participants view and react to the learning and teaching that goes on in the instructional setting.

The following procedures have been designed to make the observation meaningful and relevant.

- A request must be made to an administrator of your intent to participate in an observation if release time is needed. The administrator will set up the observation based on funding, substitute availability, and the specific needs of the participants.
- Upon completion of the observation, the participants must conference. It is suggested that the novice teacher record the goals of the lesson, the results of the discussion, and possible implementation plans.

OBSERVATION PROMPTS

There are many useful questions to help teachers reflect on their lessons after an observation has been completed. Here are several sample questions to help foster meaningful non-judgmental discussion and reflection.

- How do you think the class went, in light of the objectives you set?
- Do you feel your students grasped the concepts? Can you give examples that speak to that point?
- Did you need to alter your lesson plans at any point during the lesson? Why? How did you accomplish that?
- Was there any one part of the lesson you would like to teach differently? How would you change it?
- Can you describe a strength of this lesson?
- Can you describe a concern of this lesson? What could be done to change the outcome?
- How did you vary teaching techniques to address the needs of all the students?
- How will you follow up the lesson?

READY, SET, GO!
The first week of school

If possible, before the school year begins, a novice teacher should:

- Learn the context of the school and district.
- Learn the name of your mentor teacher.
- Find out the daily logistics: how to sign in and out, how to write passes, and how to call the office from the classroom.
- Learn the layout of the school-the office, the nurse's office, the bathrooms, the cafeteria, the gym, and the faculty room. Know how to get from your classroom to wherever you are going.
- If you are a traveling teacher, find out how you will get from floor to floor with resources. Will you need an elevator key?
- Get to know the principal, vice principals, and supervisors. They will guide you through your first days at school. Meet with your administrative supervisor to make sure the expectations of classroom practice are clearly defined.
- Get to know the secretaries and custodial staff.
- Know the school dress code for teachers **and** students.
- Check supplies and make sure you know how to get things you need for your classroom.
- Familiarize yourself with the clerical aspects of the job such as the grading system, attendance, and copy room procedures.
- Write lesson plans for the first week of school.
- Establish routines for classroom procedures, attendance, and homework.
- Write class rules and a positive introductory letter home to parents.
- ASK QUESTIONS!
- Take time for yourself. Stay excited! Teaching is an adventure!

AM I READY? A CHECKLIST FOR NOVICE TEACHERS

☐ I have prepared my letter to parents.

☐ I have prepared a course syllabus that includes:

- o Course title and number
- o Classroom number
- o Information on how to get in touch with me via school email and/or phone
- o Titles of textbook, workbook, and supplementary readings
- o Materials needed, such as notebooks and dictionaries
- o Course description, with goals and objectives
- o Content to be covered
- o Policies and/or rules governing classroom behavior, tardies, attendance, cheating, grading, class participation, and missed assignments.

☐ I have explained the following points of my GRADING POLICY to parents and student in writing:

- o How I (or my department) calculate percentages for each grade
- o That I will/will not round up grades
- o How each marking period and final year grade will be calculated
- o How much weight each category will have
- o The school/district's policy for what constitutes A, B, C, D, and F.

The following have been completed:

☐ **Positive** classroom rules, limited to essentials and aligned with school policies

☐ Well-developed lessons that will keep my students engaged for the entire period.

☐ Lesson plans that are paced appropriately and have a back-up plan for any remaining time, to minimize classroom management issues.

☐ A SEATING ARRANGEMENT that will encourage collaboration and communication.

☐ If I am not in one classroom for all my classes, I have developed a system to help me stay organized while I travel:
  - o I have worked out a system with the teacher who also uses the classroom
  - o I have a bookcase or file cabinet, section of the board and/or bulletin board, and/or place to store my materials
  - o I have a traveling cart with all my materials for each class
  - o I know how to contact the office from each classroom

☐ I have decorated my bulletin board(s) so that students will feel welcome and enthusiastic about learning.

☐ I have checked all equipment to make sure everything is operational.

☐ I have developed THREE DAYS of emergency lesson plans and:
  - o My lessons can either be used for any class or are marked for the specific grade/level
  - o My lessons are written so that a substitute can follow them
  - o I have provided materials and copies of handouts
  - o My lessons allow students to continue to learn in my absence

☐ I have a copy of emergency procedures, including lockdown and natural disaster procedures, with me at all times.

☐ I have collaborated with my mentor and with colleagues and feel I have my immediate questions answered.

☐ I have selected clothing that is appropriate for my professional position.

IS MY NOVICE READY? A CHECKLIST FOR MENTORS

- ☐ I know who my novice teacher is and have contacted him/her on the first day back to introduce myself.
- ☐ I have welcomed the novice teacher to Rahway Public Schools.
- ☐ I have given my novice teacher my contact information, including best times to reach me.
- ☐ I have made sure my novice teacher knows the layout of the school, including the bathrooms, teachers' cafeteria, and teachers' lounge.
- ☐ I have shown the novice teacher his/her classroom (s), and introduced him/her to any teachers with whom he/she may be sharing a room.
- ☐ I have shown the novice teacher how to communicate with the office in each classroom where he/she is teaching.
- ☐ I have shown the novice teacher the sign-in procedures, introduced him/her to office staff, and showed him/her how to get supplies for the first day of school.
- ☐ I have made sure my novice teacher knows first day procedures, including attendance taking, homeroom procedures, and dress code expectations.
- ☐ I have assured the novice teacher that I am an available and willing source of support, including NON-EVALUATIE observations, if desired.
- ☐ I have set up a schedule to meet with the novice teacher on a regular basis, according to state guidelines.
- ☐ I have offered to look at his/her classroom procedures, letter to parents, and any materials he/she will be distributing and will give suggestions and "critical friend" advice, where needed.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management is an important and complex area of a novice teacher's first days. Even experienced teachers can struggle with new classes, as they develop an atmosphere of respect and learning. Although situations vary and there is no one "tried and true" method of classroom management, certain criteria can be followed to minimize problems in the classroom, including:

- Having clear expectations from the first day
- Making sure there is no "down time" for students to move off-task
- Creating interesting and relevant lessons
- Changing activities to keep students engaged
- Avoiding "busy work"
- Following through with consequences from the first day
- Treating all students equally
- Communicating with parents
- Following my own rules
- Making sure I am the authority figure in the classroom and not a friend
- Responding calmly and immediately to discipline infractions
- Avoiding conflict with students
- Closing each lesson on a positive note
- Never using sarcasm
- Not responding verbally while I am angry
- Displaying a sense of concern for students and offering to help, if needed
- Rewarding positive behavior

COMMUNICATING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

It is important to communicate with parents and administrators and to keep relevant parties informed about developing classroom situations. Of course, it would be wonderful if all such interactions were positive, but this is not always the case. Here are a few tips for communicating with others outside your classroom. If you are writing, emailing, or calling a parent, guardian, or administrator regarding a disciplinary issue:

- Make sure you know to whom you are responding
- Do not wait until the second or third disciplinary issue to contact parents. Be proactive in the first weeks of school.
- Take into account the addressee's apparent knowledge of the issue at hand.
- If the correspondence is in letter or email, it is especially important to respond in a professional manner. Treat your correspondent with respect no matter what the issue.
- Be firm, but professional.
- Consult your mentor and ask for advice from colleagues.
- Do not call parents from your home or a cell phone. Use the school phones.
- Be clear and concise as to the nature of the incident. Do not use emotionally charged language.
- In the case of a disciplinary infraction, follow-up to make sure the appropriate action has been taken with a vice principal, guidance counselor, or student assistance counselor.

If you attending a **parent conference:**

- Make sure a guidance counselor or administrator is also present.
- Be calm and professional, and do not belittle the student in front of their parent(s) or guardian(s). Where possible, begin on a positive note.
- Emphasize the importance of the academic success of the student.
- Display a true sense of concern and offer help.
- Close on a positive note, thanking the parent(s) or guardian(s) for their time and input.

CHEERS AND FEARS

Please use this document as a resource to guide your mentor/novice meetings.

Mentor: _____ ***Novice:*** _____ ***Date:*** _____

Cheers: (things that went well, areas improved, or any positive experiences to share)

Fears: (things that make you nervous, concerns, areas you may perceive as weak)

Anything else you may want to share at this upcoming meeting:

MENTORING LOG TEMPLATE

Instructions: Please log each session with your mentee. Submit this log form to the district office on the last working day of each month for the duration of your mentorship. Please keep a record for yourself as well.

Month: _____ **Year:** _____

School/District: _____

Mentor Name: _____ **Mentor Signature:** _____

Mentee Name: _____ **Mentee Signature:** _____

Total number of mentoring hours this month: _____

Date	Time From:	Time To:	Description of Activities	Total Time

Duplicate this form before using.
Return to Human Resources by January 31st and May 31st.

OBSERVATION TEACHER REQUEST FORM

Date:

Permission is requested to observe the following teacher:

Requesting Teacher	Teacher to be Observed	Date	Starting time	Ending Time

Coverage Needed for Requesting Teacher			
Yes:		No:	

Observation has been approved			
Yes:		No:	

Administrator Signature *Date*

Please submit this to your building principal at least one week prior to the observation so that they may provide classroom coverage for you.

Thank you.

Rahway Public Schools
Principal Checklist for Novice/New to District Teachers
2025-2026

- ☐ Make sure all novice teachers have a trained mentor
- ☐ Assign all teachers new to district at "buddy"
- ☐ Complete the State of Acknowledgement Regarding Mentoring Services for Novice Teachers
- ☐ Have copies of the Peer Observation Form available to all mentors and novices
- ☐ Complete and return the 10, 20, and 30 week evaluations to the Superintendent's Office for submission to the Department of Education

FOR FURTHER READING

New Jersey Department of Education. *New Jersey Professional Standards for teachers and School Leaders.* www.njdoe.com