



The Mentor Teacher Stipends program supports first and second year educators by pairing them with dedicated, campus based mentors to drive high quality instruction, improve student outcomes, and boost teacher retention. Grounded in Texas Administrative Code standards, the initiative delivers comprehensive coaching, curriculum alignment, policy guidance, and specialized mentor training to ensure new teachers successfully transition and thrive in the classroom.

Key Findings

Implementation

- Mentors provided at least 12 hours of direct support per semester, incorporating classroom visits, structured coaching sessions, targeted feedback, and guidance on campus policies.
- Mentors completed ongoing professional development focused on mentorship best practices and documentation, supported by a \$430,000 General Operating budget allocation.
- Mentor and novice teacher cohorts shared similar demographic trends, with both groups identifying predominantly as female and primarily as Hispanic or African American.

Stakeholder Feedback

Mentor

- Mentors reported increases in overall program satisfaction and confidence in their coaching abilities from the fall semester to the spring semester.
- Central administration communication and structured monthly resources assisted mentors in maintaining daily or weekly contact with their mentees.
- Mentors identified their mentees' professional growth and the opportunity to give back to the profession as primary rewards. However, conducting classroom peer observations was limited by difficulties in securing substitute coverage.

Novice Teacher

- Novice teachers attributed their professional transition and year-end satisfaction to on-campus relationships, specifically referencing school administrators, grade-level teams, and peer mentors.
- The onboarding process involved a learning curve related to district acronyms and multiple software platforms. Teachers requested live, hands-on training for daily operations instead of video modules.
- Non-instructional paperwork and compliance tasks contributed to early-career strain. Additionally, the utility of mentorship was affected by instances of delayed pairings or a lack of physical campus proximity between mentors and mentees.

Stay Conversations

- Student academic progress and relational connections with classes served as the main reasons educators chose to remain at their campuses, supported by campus leadership and grade-level teamwork.
- Teachers identified student behavior, compliance paperwork, and scheduling adjustments as primary stressors, indicating a need for campus-wide discipline protocols and protected lesson-planning time.
- Novice teachers utilized mentors for administrative clarification and professional reassurance, and requested that future support include structured observation cycles, feedback, and instructional modeling.

Mentoring Outcomes

- A majority of participating mentors fulfilled the required milestones to meet program compliance standards.
- The program paired nearly two-thirds of tracked novice teachers, with most matches aligned by instructional job category.



Recommendations

- **Streamline Roster Synchronization and Centralize Data Management.**

While program findings reflect active mentorship across campuses, establishing baseline data during this inaugural evaluation highlights an opportunity to streamline tracking across personnel, pairing, and stipend records. Cross-file alignment indicates that decentralized manual entry can lead to minor data inconsistencies—such as unlinked teacher records, misaligned hire dates, or administrative delays in verifying stipend eligibility. To improve data consistency and reduce onboarding friction, consider transitioning toward a centralized, automated tracking process that regularly cross-references HCM hiring feeds with campus program rosters. Establishing automated validation checks for hire dates, campus assignments, and instructional job categories will help ensure all eligible novice teachers are promptly identified, verified for stipend processing, and paired with a mentor during their initial weeks on campus.

- **Allocate Strategic Release Time for Classroom Peer Observations.**

Survey results indicate a disconnect between novice instructional needs and daily operational execution. While new teachers explicitly requested live modeling and feedback, mentors reported that active coaching windows were severely restricted by a lack of available coverage. Furthermore, instances of delayed pairings or a lack of physical campus proximity between pairs continue to limit the frequency of these interactions. As budget allows, consider collaborating with School Leadership to allocate dedicated funding for floating substitute pools or coordinate flexible master schedule blocks specifically for peer observations. To ensure accessibility across all campus configurations, consider implementing structured cross-campus networks or digital observation tools - such as recorded lesson rehearsals or classroom video recordings - so that remote pairs can still collaborate effectively. Protecting these non-evaluative coaching windows will enhance novice teacher confidence and substantially lower early-career turnover rates.

- **Integrate Predictive Retention Metrics into Evaluative Surveys.**

The program currently utilizes campus stay conversations to capture rich qualitative insight regarding team cohesion and school attachment. However, the existing evaluative framework lacks a standardized, district-wide quantitative metric to systematically track overall contract persistence or turnover risks before the formal hiring window concludes. Consider embedding an explicit, standardized "intent-to-remain" question within the spring novice teacher pulse check survey. To transition the program from a reactive attrition model to a predictive mapping tool, consider using this baseline data to proactively identify high-risk regions or campuses requiring immediate administrative support.

- **Optimize Onboarding and New Teacher Training into Operational Labs.**

Novice teacher feedback highlighted a steep learning curve regarding district-specific acronyms, heavy compliance workloads, and multiple software platforms like SchoolCity and Lexia. The cohort explicitly indicated that passive, asynchronous video onboarding modules provide limited utility for navigating the rapid demands of daily school operations. Consider collaborating with Academic Service and School Leadership to redesign the new teacher onboarding curriculum into live, interactive "Operational Labs" during back-to-school professional development where new hires can physically practice grade-book entries and platform troubleshooting. To directly ease early-career strain, consider aligning mentor support to provide targeted compliance tutorials immediately preceding high-stress testing or ARD deadlines. Shifting toward active, challenge-focused mentoring interactions will build technical capacity and improve long-term professional persistence.