



# HIGH QUALITY MENTORING & INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PRACTICES

A resource for education leaders seeking to create and/or improve programs with practices that result in improved student learning, equity-focused teaching practice, and teacher retention.

## MOVING TOWARD...

### RIGOROUS MENTOR/COACH SELECTION BASED ON QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR/COACH

Qualities may include: evidence of outstanding teaching practice, evidence of ability to deliver rigorous, standards-based instruction that addresses students' academic, social and emotional learning needs, strong intra- and inter-personal skills, experience with adult learners, respect of peers, and evidence of teacher leadership.

### ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND FEEDBACK FOR MENTORS/COACHES

Effective teachers don't always know what it is about their teaching that is effective. Many mentors/coaches are also surprised to find that translating knowledge to students is not the same as translating knowledge to adults. High quality and ongoing professional learning, in-field coaching, as well as a professional learning community are needed to help mentors/coaches develop the skills to identify and translate the elements of effective teaching to teachers.

### SANCTIONED TIME FOR FREQUENT MENTOR/COACH-TEACHER INTERACTIONS

Mentors/coaches needs sanctioned time of a minimum of 60–90 minutes per week to focus on teacher development. Mentors/coaches and teachers engage with teachers for a minimum of 60–90 minutes per week to allow for the most rigorous mentoring/coaching activities. The time is protected by teachers and administrators.

### ALL EDUCATORS RECEIVE ONGOING SUPPORT MULTI-YEAR MENTORING/COACHING

Effective instructional mentoring/coaching is intensive and ongoing (for at least two years) in order to improve teaching practice and consequently student achievement. Teachers should continue to receive regular coaching and feedback throughout their careers.

## MOVING AWAY FROM...

### CHOOSING MENTORS/COACHES WITHOUT CRITERIA OR AN EXPLICIT PROCESS

Without strong criteria and a rigorous selection process, there is a risk that mentors/coaches may be chosen based more on availability or seniority, rather than their qualifications to advance teaching practice and student learning.

### INSUFFICIENT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND FEEDBACK FOR MENTORS/COACHES

Without high quality, and ongoing, professional learning, mentors/coaches miss out on the guidance and professional community they need to support the developing practice of teachers and address the challenges they face.

### MEETINGS HAPPEN OCCASIONALLY OR "WHENEVER THE MENTOR/COACH AND TEACHER ARE AVAILABLE"

Often both parties are so busy that meeting time gets relegated down the list of priorities. The short fragments of time that may be found are typically insufficient for fostering real relationships and growth.

### SUPPORT FOR FIRST YEAR AND STRUGGLING TEACHERS ONLY

One-year mentoring/coaching programs are great at providing the initial support first-year teachers need to survive but are insufficient to help teachers reach optimal effectiveness. Only providing coaching support for struggling teachers does not provide the job-embedded learning for all teachers to continue to develop over time.

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## MOVING TOWARD...

### **INTENSIVE AND SPECIFIC FEEDBACK MOVING STUDENT LEARNING AND TEACHING PRACTICE FORWARD**

Mentors/coaches who are trained to have an ever-present attention to equity, rigorous standards-based instruction and continuous academic, social and emotional growth focus support on concrete steps to help teachers improve their practice. Example: "Let's look at your assessment data and talk about what strategies will help you address the concern you had about reaching your struggling English Language Learner students."

### **PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS, CONTENT STANDARDS AND DATA-DRIVEN CONVERSATIONS**

Just like student learning, teacher learning should be data-driven and standards-based. To be effective, feedback to teachers must be grounded in evidence about their practice, including information gathered through classroom observations and student work. Use of standards, documentation of mentoring/coaching conversations, and data collection on various components of classroom practice ensures a solid structure for focusing on continuous instructional growth.

### **CLEAR ROLES FOR AND ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOL LEADERS**

School leaders play a critical role in setting the stage for teacher and mentor success, what is aligned to school and district instructional priorities, creating time for mentoring and coaching, and establishing a positive culture for teacher development in their buildings and in the system. Professional learning for school leaders and ongoing coordination with them about the needs of teachers, and the nature of the program ensures that they partner to provide teacher support aligned to the school vision.

### **ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION WITH BROADER IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES**

Strong alignment with school and district improvement efforts and initiatives result in improved teaching and learning. Communication and collaboration among stakeholders, including school and district leaders, school boards, union/association leadership, and professional partners, creates a culture of commitment and ensures success.

## MOVING AWAY FROM...

### **NON-SPECIFIC, EMOTIONAL OR LOGISTICAL SUPPORT ALONE**

Emotional support is important, but alone is not sufficient to improve teaching practice. Without specific instructional feedback, mentoring/coaching can not impact student learning. Example: "You're doing a great job, Jane. Keep it up!"

### **INFORMAL AND NON-EVIDENCED BASED FEEDBACK**

The rigor of the program may be compromised when interactions are too often based on informal conversation and opinions not drawn from evidence. Without a structure and focus on realtime data derived from teacher practice, interactions may not result in improved teaching practice.

### **LACK OF ENGAGEMENT AND COORDINATION WITH SCHOOL LEADERS**

Without clearly articulated strategies to support teachers, and protected time, principals may inadvertently undermine the prospects of teacher success (e.g., assigning beginning teachers the most challenging classes, assigning additional responsibilities, pulling teachers and mentors/coaches for other activities instead of prioritizing the mentoring/coaching meetings.)

### **ISOLATED PROGRAMMING AND LACK OF ALIGNMENT**

Without strong partnerships and alignment, instructional initiatives can be undermined. Teachers may receive mixed messages from varying support providers, and feel overwhelmed, confused and frustrated by all the different layers of information coming at them.



**PARTNER WITH NTC** TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TAKE YOUR INDUCTION PROGRAM TO THE NEXT LEVEL. CONTACT US AT: 831.600.2200 OR [PARTNERSHIPS@NEWTEACHERCENTER.ORG](mailto:PARTNERSHIPS@NEWTEACHERCENTER.ORG)