State Policy Review: New Educator Induction

Alabama

1. Educators Served

State policy should require that all beginning teachers, principals, and administrators receive induction support during their first two years in the profession.

State law does not require induction support for all new teachers. Under Alabama State Board of Education (ALSBE) codes § 290-3-2-.01(35) and § 290-3-2-.01(4), individuals seeking an Alternative Baccalaureate-Level Certificate, Career and Technical Alternative Baccalaureate-Level Certificate, Special Alternative Certificate, or Preliminary Certificate must have an assigned mentor. Additionally, the Alabama Teacher Mentoring (ATM) program provides optional mentoring support to first-year teachers within the first month of school. The ATM program, endorsed by an ALSBE resolution in 2007, began as a two-year program, with an option of a third year based on mastery of competencies. It has since been scaled back to a voluntary mentoring program for first-year teachers only.

The Alabama New Principal Mentoring Program is an optional two-year coaching and support program for new school principals, supported by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) through federal ESEA, Title II, Part A funding. The program was implemented for the first time in 2010. Each participating principal is assigned a trained mentor who will help him/her create a development plan and a “map” of various learning activities that will facilitate professional growth based upon the Alabama Continuum for Instructional Leader Development.

A 2009 state law requires new superintendents to participate in the one-year-long School Superintendents of Alabama’s Mentor and Executive Coaching Program. Each new superintendent is assigned an executive coach (an experienced superintendent), who makes a minimum of eight contacts during the year, in addition to required quarterly meetings. [Code of Alabama § 16-1-38.1(d)(3)(a)]

2. Mentor Quality

State policy should require a rigorous mentor selection process and foundational training and ongoing professional development for mentors. State policy should also establish criteria for how and when mentors are assigned to beginning educators and allow for a manageable caseload of beginning educators and the use of full-time teacher mentors.

State policy defines a mentor as “a teacher or instructional support employee of a local school system who: (1) Has at least three full years of successful teaching experience; (2) Has demonstrated effectiveness in the performance of his or her work; (3) Has demonstrated excellence in communicating and collaborating with colleagues; and (4) Is designated by the superintendent or administrator to provide guidance, support, and assistance in the development and improvement of the professional skills and understanding to a beginning teacher or instructional support person.” [ALSBE Code § 290-3-2-.01(35)]

Each new teacher mentor must successfully complete the Alabama Beginning Teacher Mentor Training or an equivalent locally developed training program. There are no state requirements for ongoing professional development or renewal of mentor skills.

State policy requires teacher mentors to hold “a valid certificate in the same teaching field or area of instructional support for which the individual to be mentored is seeking certification” [ALSBE Code § 290-3-2-.01(35)]. Active teachers may only mentor new teachers on a 1-to-1 basis. Retired teachers can mentor new teachers at no more than a 1-to-15 ratio.

3. Time

State policy should encourage programs to provide release time for teacher mentors and dedicated mentor-new teacher contact time.

The state encourages mentors and mentees to strive for an average of 2.5 hours of weekly contact time during the school year. The state recognizes that contact hours may vary from week to week, but believes that sufficient time should be scheduled to provide the mentee with the appropriate level of support and guidance.

4. Program Quality

State policy should address the overall quality of induction programs by requiring regular observation of new teachers by mentors, the provision of instructional feedback based on those observations, and opportunities for new teachers to observe experienced teachers’ classrooms. It should encourage a reduced teaching load for beginning teachers; and encourage the participation of beginning educators in a learning community or peer network.

While the Alabama Teacher Induction and Mentoring Manual includes various recommendations for program components, including protecting new teachers’ time, classroom observations, and post-observation conferences, state policy does not specifically require districts to implement these aspects of an induction and mentoring program.

New Teacher Center’s 2016 Review of State Policies on New Educator Induction provides comprehensive summaries for all 50 states. For each state, NTC reviews the presence or absence of policies related to nine key criteria that are most critical to the provision of universal, high-quality induction and mentoring support for beginning educators. The state summaries capture all relevant policies, statutes, regulations, induction program standards, and other guidance.
5. Program Standards

The state should adopt formal program standards that govern the design and operation of local educator induction programs.

The state does not have formal teacher induction program standards.

6. Funding

The state should authorize and appropriate dedicated funding for local educator induction programs; and/or establish competitive innovation funding to support high-quality, standards-based programs.

The state does not currently fund a teacher induction program.

7. Educator Certification/Licensure

The state should require beginning educators to complete an induction program to move from an initial teaching license.

The state does not make participation in an induction program a requirement to advance to a professional teaching license.

8. Program Accountability

The state should assess and monitor induction programs through strategies such as program evaluation, program surveys and peer review.

The state previously administered the Alabama Teacher Mentoring Program New Teacher Survey, but the survey has not been administered in several years and is not used for program accountability.

9. Teaching Conditions

The state should adopt formal standards for teaching and learning conditions; conduct regular assessments of such conditions; and incorporate the improvement of such conditions in school improvement plans.

State policy does not address teaching and learning conditions.

Links

Alabama Continuum for Instructional Leader Development: http://alex.state.al.us/leadership/Ala%20Continuum%20for%20Instructional%20Leaders.pdf

Alabama State Department of Education: Teacher Quality Enhancement Project Documents: http://web.alsde.edu/home/Sections/SectionDocuments.aspx?SectionID=75

Alabama New Principal Mentoring Program: http://alex.state.al.us/leadership/anpm.html

The Alabama State Department of Education reviewed an earlier version of this state summary.

This information is accurate as of January 2016.