State Policy Review: New Educator Induction

Alaska

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.

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 policy does not require all new teachers to receive induction support, but does require that teachers who have a subject-matter expert limited teacher certificate be provided a mentor during their first year of teaching. [Alaska Statutes 14.20.022]

The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development has partnered with the University of Alaska to create the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP), built on the New Teacher Center’s mentoring model, to support early career teachers and principals throughout the state. The project provides individualized support to first- and second-year teachers in districts that invite ASMP to serve their early career teachers. Requests are fulfilled according to the priority of highest-needs districts set by the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development until capacity is reached. The ASMP launched during the 2004 – 2005 school year with 22 full-time mentors serving 332 new teachers from around the state. Forty mentors served more than 500 new teachers during the 2014-15 school year. Overall, the ASMP has served over 2600 new teachers in 48 out of 54 Alaska school districts.

State policy does not require induction support for new school administrators. New principals in schools that participated in the Alaska Administrator Coaching Project (AACP) — the sister program to the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project — received coaching. The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development established AACP in January 2005. The AACP focused on helping administrators develop in four critical areas: interpersonal and facilitation skills, teacher observation and feedback, effective school-level practices and classroom-level practices, and using data to improve instruction. Eight AACP coaches served 70 principals during the 2014-15 school year. The new-to-position superintendent program was eliminated in 2014. The new-to-position principal program was also eliminated by the Alaska State Legislature in 2015.

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 does not address mentor selection. However, for teacher mentors, the ASMP provides protocols for a rigorous mentor selection process. As mentors, the program utilizes both retired teachers and those who are on loan from school districts who have proven expertise in the Alaska classroom. AACP uses retired principals and superintendents who are selected through a rigorous application process that concludes with interviews conducted by the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners.

State policy does not address mentor training. However, the ASMP provides eight 3-day extensive trainings for all mentors over a 2-year period, including foundational training, ongoing professional development, and protocols for documentation and formative assessment of teachers. Further, ASMP continues to develop local trainers for mentor professional development.

State policy does not address mentor assignment and caseload, except with respect to new teachers who have a subject matter expertise limited teacher certificate. Those teachers must be paired with a mentor who has experience in the subject area being taught. ASMP research has identified best practices for caseload and placement assignments and employs such a structure at the start of each academic year. Experienced mentors are assigned to serve the lowest performing districts with an attempt to match mentor to new teacher based on special education, content, and grade level. In the ASMP, each mentor works with approximately 15 early career teachers.
3. Time

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

State policy does not address induction program elements. In the ASMP program, full-time mentors visit new teachers in person every month and communicate weekly by distance methods such as Skype, e-mail, or phone. ASMP mentors are trained to use a formative assessment system co-developed by the ASMP and the New Teacher Center. This system includes classroom observations during face-to-face visits, goal setting, data collection tools, and a structure of reflective practice.

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; encouraging a reduced teaching load for beginning teachers; and encouraging participation of beginning educators in a learning community or peer network.

ASMP uses a formative assessment system, standards, and monthly classroom observations and visits. Individual districts assign teaching loads; reduced teaching loads are not a common practice. Distances between teachers in Alaska are a challenge for professional learning communities. Instead, ASMP hosts 8 online evening forums for early career teachers. A special education grant also allows special education teachers to attend a state pre-conference, planned and presented by ASMP mentors and the EED special education staff focused entirely on the needs of new special education teachers.

5. Program Standards

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

The state has not adopted formal standards for teacher induction programs. The ASMP follows program standards developed by the New Teacher Center to support induction program design and implementation.

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 provides dedicated funding to support induction programs for new teachers. The Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP) is funded through multiple revenue sources, including state and federal funds. ASMP is funded by the state through a partnership with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and the University of Alaska. Additional federal grant support exists. The state secured an “Investing in Innovation” (i3) Grant from the U.S. Department of Education starting January 2012. The grant expanded the mentoring services to urban districts. The Alaska Humanities Forum fosters the Alaska cultural component of ASMP through its federal grant funding.

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 require new teachers to participate in an induction program to advance to a professional teaching license except in the case of those holding a subject matter expertise limited teacher certificate.

8. Program Accountability

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

State policy does not require program accountability. However, the ASMP undergoes rigorous assessment.

The ASMP is highly involved in program assessment and monitoring. Through the partnership with the University of Alaska, research is funded, supported and distributed to stakeholders on an ongoing basis. This research includes: evaluations of mentor professional development; surveys of new teachers, mentors, and principals; summaries of new teacher growth and practice; and investigations into teacher retention. In 2010, a statistical analysis of mentoring and student achievement gains was conducted and results distributed.

Furthermore the i3 Grant from the U.S. Department of Education funded a research endeavor to assess the impact of the ASMP mentoring model on teacher retention, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement.
9. Teaching Conditions

States 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 elements of teaching and learning conditions.

Links

Alaska Statewide Mentor Project: http://asmp.alaska.edu

Connecting Mentoring to Student Achievement in Alaska: Results and Policy Implications: www.alaskamentorproject.org/docs/ConnectingMentoringToStudentAchievement_4-12-10.pdf


The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development has reviewed this state summary.

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