State Policy Review: New Educator Induction

North Carolina

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.

The state requires all beginning teachers to participate in a three-year induction program. Teachers with “three or more years of appropriate experience” are not required to participate. In addition, districts may request an exemption from this requirement for teachers with “equivalent non-public experience.” Non-public schools are required to adopt a Beginning Teacher Support Program and beginning teachers in these schools must participate in an induction program. [State Board of Education Policies on the Beginning Teacher Support Program (4.00)]

In January 2015, the University of North Carolina Board of Governors Subcommittee on Teacher and School Leader Quality published recommendations to strengthen teacher and school leader preparation. Among these was a recommendation to “improve support for early-career teachers by adopting and expanding statewide the North Carolina Beginning Teacher Support Program.”

The state does not require new school administrators to receive induction support.

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 law (§ 115C296(e)) requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to “develop criteria for selecting excellent experienced, and qualified teachers to be participants in the mentor teacher training program.”

The state’s Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards, Standard 2a, requires that a program’s mentor selection criteria include “input from a variety of stakeholder groups,” be “clearly articulated by program leadership,” and include a process for mentor application and selection that is “transparent and uniformly applied.”

State law (§ 115C296(e)) requires the SBE to “develop and coordinate a mentor teacher training program.” SBE Policies on the Beginning Teacher Support Program (4.55) require local school systems to provide training and support for mentor teachers. They may choose to use programs developed by the state Department of Public Instruction (DPI) or develop programs of their own. Any program not developed by the DPI must be based on the North Carolina Mentor Standards.

In addition, the state’s Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards, Standard 2c, require programs to provide initial training to mentors regarding their role and responsibilities, ongoing training “to advance their knowledge and skills,” and “opportunities to participate in professional learning communities of mentoring practice.”

North Carolina Mentor Standard 5 requires mentors to initiate contact with beginning teachers and learn about their needs “before or near the start of school or at the time of hire if later in the year” and to “meet regularly” with beginning teachers during the school year.

3. Time

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

The state’s Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards, Standard 3a, require programs to provide time for mentors “to work with beginning teachers during and outside of the school day” and to provide mentors and beginning teachers “protected time to engage in required mentoring and induction-related activities.”

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.

State law (§ 115C296(e)) requires the SBE to “develop a mentor program to provide ongoing support for teachers entering the profession.” SBE Policies on the Beginning Teacher Support Program (4.00) requires a three-year induction period to include “a formal orientation, mentor support, observations and evaluation.” Specific program requirements for beginning teachers include: SBE Policies on the Beginning Teacher Support Program (4.00-4.40, 4.60):

- Development of a Professional Development Plan in collaboration with his/her principal (or the principal’s designee) and mentor teacher.
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- Formative assessment conferences should be held regularly to reflect on the progress of the beginning teacher in meeting the goals established for professional growth.
- “Optimum” working conditions for beginning teachers, including assignment in the area of licensure; a mentor assigned early, in the licensure area, and in close proximity; orientation that includes state, district, and school expectations; limited preparations; limited non-instructional duties; limited number of exceptional or difficult students; and no extracurricular assignments unless requested in writing by the beginning teacher.
- An orientation “conducted prior to the arrival of students,” or within the first ten days of employment,” if a teacher is hired during the school year. It should provide the beginning teacher with an overview of the school’s/s system’s goals, policies, and procedures; a description of available services and training opportunities; the Beginning Teacher Support Program and the process for achieving a continuing license; the teacher evaluation process; the NC Standard Course of Study; local curriculum guides; the safe and appropriate use of seclusion and restraint of students; the State’s ABC’s (Goals) Program; and the SBE’s Strategic Priorities, and Goals.
- Classroom observation of the beginning teachers at least three times per year by a qualified school administrator or a designee and at least once annually by a teacher, and an annual evaluation by a qualified school administrator. [Also required by state law, the Excellent Schools Act (GS 115C-333).] Each observation must be for at least one continuous period of instructional time that is at least 45 minutes in length and must be followed by a post-conference. Observers must be appropriately trained. The Beginning Teacher Support Program Plan must specify the role of the beginning teacher’s assigned mentor in the observations. Whether or not the assigned mentor may conduct one of the required observations is a local decision.

The Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards provide five specific requirements for local teacher induction programs:
- Systemic Support for High-Quality Induction Programs—This standard is designed to provide the commitment of all stakeholders in helping induction programs to succeed. Key program elements include the creation of an institutional plan, demonstrating institutional commitment and support and principal engagement.
- Mentor Selection, Development and Support—This standard articulates the process and criteria for mentor selection, discusses mentor roles and responsibilities, and delineates foundational mentor training. Key program elements include mentor selection, defining the role of mentors and mentor professional development.
- Mentoring for Instructional Excellence—Mentors are given protected time to provide beginning teachers with support to achieve success in meeting the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. Key program elements include providing time for mentors and beginning teachers, ensuring mentoring is focused on instruction and addresses issues of diversity.
- Beginning Teacher Professional Development—Professional development is provided to beginning teachers that orients them to their new career and supports their efforts to meet the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. Key program elements include structured orientation to school site and professional development designed to meet the unique needs of beginning teachers and aligned with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation System.
- Formative Assessment of Candidates and Programs—New teachers and beginning teacher support programs are monitored and supported using a formative assessment system to guide their work. Key program elements include formative assessment systems and program evaluation.

In addition to induction program standards, North Carolina also has specific standards for mentors. The SBE approved the latest iteration in January 2010. The five mentor standards are:
- Mentors support beginning teachers to demonstrate leadership. This addresses Trusting Relationship and Coaching, Leadership, Communication and Collaboration, Best Practices, Ethical Standards, and Advocacy for Beginning Teachers and Students.
- Mentors support beginning teachers to establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students. This addresses Relationships with Students, Relationships with Families, Relationships at School and in Community, Honor and Respect for Diversity, Classroom Environments that Optimize Learning, Reaching Students of All Learning Needs.
- Mentors support beginning teachers to know the content they teach. This addresses the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and 21st Century Goals, and Content and Curriculum.
- Mentors support beginning teachers to facilitate learning for their students. This addresses Instructional Practice, Professional Practice, and Student Assessment.
- Mentors support beginning teachers to reflect on their practice. This addresses Allocation and Use of Time with Beginning Teachers, Reflective Practice, and Mentor Data Collection.

5. Program Standards

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

State law (§ 115C296[e]) requires the SBE to “develop and distribute guidelines which address optimum teaching load, extracurricular duties, student assignment, and other working condition considerations.” The SBE approved new Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards in January 2010, as recommended by the North Carolina Mentor Program Task Force. North Carolina now also has specific standards for mentors, recently updated by the SBE.
The program standards outline five standards: systemic support for high quality induction programs; mentor selection, development, and support; the use of mentoring for instructional excellence; beginning teacher professional development; and formative assessment of candidates and programs (as outlined in the Program Quality section).

Mentor standards outline the mentor role and responsibilities in supporting beginning teachers: to demonstrate leadership, establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students; know the content they teach, facilitate learning for their students, and reflect on their practice.

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.

State funding is not available to support local teacher mentoring programs during the 2015-2016 school year. Some districts use federal funds (Title II Part) and local funds to compensate mentors. State law (§ 115C296(e1)) requires the SBE to “allot funds for mentoring services” to local school districts. The funds must be used “to provide mentoring support” based upon a program plan filed with the state. As a result, North Carolina historically has provided state funding for new teacher mentoring at a level of $1,000 for each first-through-third-year teacher.

Since 2005, as per state statute, local school districts could use their state mentoring funds in the following ways to support new teachers:
- Implement full-time mentor plans previously approved by the SBE (which requires matching funds from the LEA);
- Employ full-time mentors;
- Contract services of full-time or part-time mentors; or
- Monthly supplements for practicing classroom teachers who serve as mentors.

7. Educator Certification/Licensure

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

The state requires “all teachers who hold initial licenses ... to participate in a three year induction period with a formal orientation, mentor support, observations and evaluation prior to the recommendation for continuing licensure.” [SBE Policies on the Beginning Teacher Support Program (4.00)]

8. Program Accountability

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

State law (§ 115C296(e1)) requires local school districts to develop a program plan that addresses “how all mentors in the local school administrative unit will be adequately trained to provide mentoring support.”

SBE Policies on the Beginning Teacher Support Program (4.120) requires each LEA to develop an annual plan and provide a comprehensive program for beginning teachers. The plan must meet the state’s Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards and be assessed according to a state induction program continuum. This plan must be approved by the local board of education. (Charter schools must submit a Beginning Teacher Support Program Plan to the state board of education for approval as well.) The plans must:
- Describe adequate provisions for efficient management of the program.
- Designate a local official to verify eligibility of beginning teachers for a continuing license.
- Provide for a formal orientation for beginning teachers.
- Address compliance with the optimum working conditions for beginning teachers.
- Address compliance with the mentor selection, assignment, and training guidelines.
- Provide for the involvement of the principal or the principal’s designee in supporting the beginning teacher.
- Provide for a minimum of 4 observations per year and specify a date by which the annual summative evaluation is to be completed.
- Provide for the preparation of a Professional Development Plan for each beginning teacher.
- Provide for a formal means of identifying and delivering services and technical assistance needed by beginning teachers.
- Provide for the maintenance of a cumulative beginning teacher file. Provide for the timely transfer of the cumulative beginning teacher file to successive employing LEAs, charter schools, or non-public institutions within the state upon the authorization of the beginning teacher.
- Describe a plan for the systematic evaluation of the Beginning Teacher Support Program to assure program quality, effectiveness, and efficient management.
- Document that the local board of education has adopted the LEA plan, or that the charter school has been approved by the state board of education.

SBE Policies on the Beginning Teacher Support Program (4.130) requires each LEA and charter school with an approved Beginning Teacher Support Program plan to submit an annual report on its Beginning Teacher Support Program to the DPI by October 1.
report must include evidence of demonstrated proficiency on the Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards and of mentor success in meeting Mentor Standards.

Every fifth year the DPI will formally review Beginning Teacher Support Programs to review evidence and verify that program proficiency is demonstrated on all Program Standards. The monitoring team reports any standards and key elements where programs are not deemed at least proficient to the DPI. Programs that are rated developing on the standards continuum will be provided technical assistance to ensure that all beginning teachers are supported.

In order to assist LEAs in progressing along the state’s Beginning Teacher Support Program continuum to provide the highest quality support to beginning teachers, LEAs will participate in a regionally-based annual peer review and support system.

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.

North Carolina was the first state to adopt statewide teaching conditions standards (2001) and was the first state to administer a statewide teaching conditions survey, beginning in 2002. The survey has been administered biennially ever since, with responses from as many as 100,000 educators each iteration.

Starting in 2010, New Teacher Center began to administer North Carolina Teaching Working Conditions Survey, continuing the online survey of school-based licensed-educators previously used in the state. The survey includes questions regarding: community engagement and support, teacher leadership, school leadership, managing student conduct, use of time, professional development, facilities and resources, instructional practices and support, and new teacher support. NTC’s Teaching and Learning Conditions Initiative consists of two parts: 1) the anonymous, online survey about teaching conditions in year one, and 2) working with the client in year two to utilize results from the survey in school improvement planning and policies. North Carolina, having the longest history of this work in the nation, has embedded the use of the survey results into a variety of its school improvement efforts, including:

- Requiring the use of the survey data in the annual school and district improvement plans;
- Requiring administrators to demonstrate use of the survey data in their annual evaluation instrument;
- Providing training to IHEs to include in their MSA programs;
- Requiring the use of the survey data in the plans that are developed to assist persistently low achieving schools; and
- Legislation on mandated planning periods and allocation of time.

In the spring of 2014, the seventh statewide survey was administered, with participation from more than 89% of the state’s school-based educators. Results and research may be viewed at www.ncteachingconditions.org.

The state’s teacher-equity plan, approved by the U.S. Department of Education in 2015, includes various strategies to improve teaching and learning conditions.

Links

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction—Educator Effectiveness: http://www.ncpublicschools.org/educatoreffectiveness/


North Carolina General Statutes § 115C-296. Board sets license requirements; reports; lateral entry and mentor programs—http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_115c/gs_115c-296.html


The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Educator Effectiveness Division has reviewed this state summary.

This information is accurate as of January 2016.