State Policy Review: New Educator Induction

Virginia

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 1999 Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act requires school districts to provide mentor programs for first-year teachers. State law requires the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) to establish, contingent upon state funding, “mentor teacher programs utilizing specially trained public school teachers as mentors to provide assistance and professional support to teachers entering the profession.” The same law requires the VBOE to issue mentor teacher program guidelines. Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs were adopted by the VBOE in 2000. [Code of Virginia § 22.1-305.1]

State law requires school boards to provide mentor support for new school administrators during the first year of their probationary period. [Code of Virginia § 22.1-294.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 law requires that mentor teachers be "classroom teachers who have achieved continuing contract status or be instructional personnel who are assigned solely as mentors." Local programs must utilize "specially trained public school teachers as mentors to provide assistance and professional support to teachers entering the profession." [Code of Virginia § 22.1-305.1] Virginia’s Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs allow for additional criteria that are “well-defined, justifiable, and consistent with mentor responsibilities,” including a history of proficient or outstanding performance appraisals, the recommendation of the school principal, three years of successful teaching experience, understanding of formative assessment processes, and possession of effective interpersonal and collaborative skills.


State law requires that new teachers be assigned mentors who work in the same building as the teachers they assist. The law also requires that mentors be assigned a limited number of teachers and restrict instructional personnel “who are not assigned solely as mentors” from serving more than four teachers at any time. [Code of Virginia § 22.1-305.1]

3. Time

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

State law requires local school boards to "strive to provide adequate release time for mentor teachers during the contract day." [Code of Virginia § 22.1-305.1] Virginia’s Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs state that program design must incorporate "provision of adequate release time for mentor teachers during the contract day." The Guidelines also require "provision of additional time... when beginning teachers are placed in more challenging settings."

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 requires that mentors guide new teachers in the program "through demonstrations, observations, and consultations to promote instructional excellence." [Code of Virginia § 22.1-305.1] Virginia’s Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs require the following program design elements:

- Opportunities for communication and feedback among program participants, including central office staff, school site principals, mentor teachers, and beginning teachers;
- Development of formal and informal linkages among participants, such as institutions of higher education, the Governor’s Best Practice Centers, professional organizations and associations, and Training Technical Assistance Centers;
- Provision of adequate release time for mentor teachers during the contract day;
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- Support services appropriate to the working conditions experienced by beginning teachers such as teaching assignments that optimize their chances for success, and provision of additional time and resources when beginning teachers are placed in more challenging settings;
- Professional development activities for beginning teachers that are designed to implement the Standards of Learning and Technology Standards for Instructional Personnel, that are responsive to individual teacher needs and concerns, and that are derived, in part, from formative assessment information; and
- Flexible support systems when a mentor with the content background or at the appropriate grade level is not available.

5. Program Standards

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

Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs require local school boards to meet the following program responsibilities: (1) Establish program objectives; (2) Manage the local mentor program; (3) Develop the program design; (4) Develop mentor selection criteria; (5) Establish school administrator responsibilities; (6) Develop mentor training; and (7) Evaluate the effectiveness of the mentor program.

The Virginia Department of Education’s Requirements of Quality and Effectiveness for Beginning Teacher Mentor Programs in Hard-to-Staff Schools (2004) features ten program requirements for mentoring programs in hard-to-staff schools: (1) Sponsorship, administration, and leadership; (2) Resources; (3) Program design; (4) Collaboration and communication; (5) Mentor selection and assignment; (6) Mentor professional development; (7) Roles and responsibilities of K-12 school organizations; (8) Individual learning plan; (9) Formative assessment system; and (10) Force roster.

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 Mentor Teacher Program and the Career Switcher Mentoring Program are now funded through the General Assembly. Full funding for grants depend on the availability of funds from the General Assembly. In the 2015-2016 school year, $1 million is available for the Mentor Teacher Program and $279,983 for the Career Switcher Mentoring Program. The funds for the Career Switcher Program are to support mentors assigned to individuals who have completed Level I of a Career Switcher Program and who have zero years of teaching experience. [Superintendent’s Memo #249-15, September 25, 2015]

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 complete an induction program in order 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.

Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs require local mentor program evaluations to be comprehensive, ongoing and include multiple criteria that are related to program goals and objectives. They must include three major components: [1] program evaluation, [2] definition of sources of data, and [3] standard document design. The Guidelines require the program evaluation to consist of two levels: [1] institutional (evaluates the school division’s success in the implementation of the mentor program); and [2] individual (assesses the performance of the new teachers and the mentors). Evaluation of the mentor teacher program should focus on its effectiveness in: retaining quality teachers; improving teaching performance; supporting teacher morale, communication, and collegiality; and facilitating a seamless transition into the first year of teaching.

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


Requirements of Quality and Effectiveness for Beginning Teacher Mentor Programs in Hard-to-Staff Schools: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/career_resources/mentor/mentoring_requirements.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/career_resources/mentor/mentoring_requirements.pdf)


Code of Virginia: [https://vacode.org/22.1-305.1](https://vacode.org/22.1-305.1) and [https://vacode.org/22.1-294](https://vacode.org/22.1-294)

*The Virginia Department of Education reviewed this state summary.*

*This information is accurate as of February 2016.*