

SURVEY BRIEF

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SEPTEMBER 2006

THE BEGINNING TEACHER MENTOR PROGRAM A SURVEY OF NEW MEXICO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

BACKGROUND

New Mexico public education regulation requires individual support be provided to beginning teachers by a designated mentors or support providers. These support activities must include collaborative curriculum alignment, design and planning; classroom observations, student assessment, individual instructional conferences and instructional resource development.

Legislative funding provided a total of \$900,000 state-wide for new teacher mentoring aligned to these requirements. During 2005-06 there were approximately 2,500 new teachers in the districts across the state, each requiring mentoring.

Districts across the state face the challenge of providing the necessary support for these beginning teachers while keeping these services within an affordable budget. In order to ensure quality mentoring services for beginning teachers, the \$365 per teacher allocation from the state must be subsidized with local funding.

The APS superintendent is leading an effort to work with the Legislative Education Study Committee to increase the current investment in beginning teachers. Understanding how districts across the state are meeting the regulation and providing quality mentoring services is a key factor in this effort.

A short 6-item questionnaire was constructed by the superintendent and delivered via email by the New Mexico Coalition of School Administrators. Completed surveys were received from 22¹ districts from the other 88 districts in the state. The responses provide information from about one-quarter of the state's districts, which are distributed geographically across the state and with a representation from smaller districts as well as the larger districts in the state. The information gathered is fairly representative of the state's school districts.

SURVEY RESULTS

MENTORING MODELS

All 22 respondents reported that mentoring is done by staff at the school level. One district provided some additional information about how that occurs, reporting that the school-level mentoring is carried out during whole faculty study groups.

Most districts have a school-based model of beginning teacher mentors with support from the district.

The majority of the districts (13) reports that mentors are **not** district-based. District-based was defined in the survey as the mentor teacher having a case load

¹ One survey returned by email had a modified format leaving some items without responses. So, not every item will have the full 22 responses.

and traveling to visit new teachers. Two districts described a combination of school-and district-based mentoring.

At least 6 other districts said they had a district based mentoring program after reporting that their mentoring was school-based. This response pattern suggests that either these districts also had a combination program or that the support and direction for the mentoring program was provided at a district level but delivered by school-based and school-selected mentors.

At least one district response suggested a different interpretation of these two items. This district's current mentoring program is delivered by school-based mentors but the goal is to have district-based mentors who have no classroom responsibilities. The respondent further explained that there are currently insufficient funds to support this model.

COMPENSATION AND TRAINING

COMPENSATION

Most districts (18 of the 22) provide some form of compensation for teachers who serve as mentors. The range of compensation was from \$150 to \$600 a year. The most frequent amount for stipends was \$500 while the average compensation was \$562, nearly 1 ½ times the state allocation for the mentor program.

Generally, this compensation is in the form of a stipend but there were some notable differences among a few districts.

Three districts do not compensate mentors at all. A fourth district will no longer pay stipends for mentoring duties beginning in 2006-07 school year.

Most frequently mentors are provided about a \$500 stipend, nearly 1 ½ times the state allocation for mentoring new teachers.

However, this district did not report the previous compensations.

Of the remaining districts that do compensate mentors in some fashion, 2 districts provide mentors days of personal leave and one district reports that the mentors rarely use these days. Another district has joined with a post secondary institution and a second source of funds and provides approximately \$8,855 compensation per mentor.

Compensation is offered to almost all mentors – stipends or personal leave days

At least two districts differentiate compensation between site coordinators and straight mentors. Typically, these differences were \$500 for the lead and \$300 for the mentor. A third district based compensation on the number of protégés for each mentor with the mentor receiving \$750 for mentoring up to 10 protégé and \$950 for up to 15.

TRAINING

16 districts provide training for the mentor. One district identified the model in use as the Santa Cruz model. Another of these districts reported that mentors attend 4 days of training for which they are compensated \$50 each day.

Two districts rely on a trainer-of-trainers model, providing training to a site lead person who in turn meets with and trained mentors.

Of the 4 districts reporting that training was not provided, at least one provides mentors with a manual to support their efforts with their protégés.

COORDINATION AND ADMINISTRATION

11 districts have an individual who serves as a program coordinator; one specified that the coordinator was part time. Only one district noted that the state allocation for mentoring did not underwrite the coordinator. None of the districts specified if these coordinators worked solely and full-time on the mentorship or if they were part time or had other duties in addition to the mentorship coordination.

At least one district relies upon the superintendent to coordinate and two have made the coordination a part of the Human Resources staff's job. One district has incorporated the coordination of the mentoring at the school site into the instructional coaches' job. And, two other districts collaborate with external entities to provide the mentorship and rely on these entities for coordination.

COSTS

The survey item asked the 'cost per beginning teacher' referencing the mentorship program. 17 districts responded with an actual value ranging from \$349 to \$8,855 per protégé teacher.

An average cost per program was calculated *excluding* the highest cost program that is a collaboration with a post-secondary entity.

17 of the 22 responding districts showed that the average cost to mentor a beginning teacher is significantly higher than the per-teacher allocation provided through the legislation.

The average cost to mentor a beginning teacher is about \$895 per teacher. This amount is nearly 2 ½ times the allocation provided in the legislation for

beginning teacher mentors (*State Regulations 6. 60.10.8*)

SUMMARY

The APS superintendent is interested in working with the LESC to increase the current investment in beginning teachers. In an effort to partner with other education groups and districts, a short survey was developed around the Beginning Teacher Mentoring program in our state.

The survey was distributed by NM Coalition of School Administrators and 22 districts provided information used in this summary. The respondents were fairly representative of the state's districts in geography and size.

The majority of respondents reported that their district has a mentoring program with some district coordination but that the program is essentially site-based. Only one district reported an effort to move towards a program in which mentors had no other duties but to mentor their protégé, but all other districts reported their mentors were classroom teachers or instructional coaches.

Most districts provide a stipend to mentor teachers and many have some district level coordination that the district funds. A few districts differentiate stipends by the number of protégés the teacher has or if the teacher has mentor coordinating duties.

Most districts provide some kind of training and support to the mentor teachers. Two districts use a trainer-of-trainers model to support mentor

teachers at the school and one provides each mentor with a guidebook or manual.

About half the districts report that there is an individual charged with the coordination of this program. There was insufficient information in their responses to determine if the coordinator was part time or had other district duties.

When respondents were asked to estimate the cost of mentoring a beginning teacher many included only the direct payments made to the mentor. At least one district provided a detailed breakdown of costs. That information is included at the end of this summary.

The average cost to mentor a beginning teacher is about \$895 or 2 ½ times the per-teacher allocation from the legislature (\$365).

At least two respondents noted that the legislation provided a state-wide \$900,000 allocation for mentoring programs and that the \$365 figure is based on dividing that amount by the new teachers. Their concerns were that for this current year their districts had hired many more new teachers and would have to disperse those funds across a greater number of teachers. The per teacher allocation will be reduced under these conditions

Respondents pointed out that the costs of the beginning teacher mentoring program was, in most cases, well beyond the funding provided by the legislation. However they also stated that the benefits of the program were well worth diverting funds from other district programs and services to support new teachers.

Sample Costs for New Teacher Mentoring

Activity	Cost	Fund
Mentor	\$500.00	Title II, PED Grant
New Teacher Supplies	90.00	PED Grant
Mentor Training Materials	35.00	Title II
Mentor Release time for training	90.00	Operational
Novice Release time for observation	90.00	Operational
Mentor Release time for Observation	67.50	Operational
Total Costs	\$872.50	