

## Mentoring Program FAQ

### Improving Student Learning by Fostering Supportive Professional Relationships

#### **Question: What is the nature of the mentoring relationship?**

**Answer:** The mentoring relationship is a confidential partnership between a seasoned professional and a first year professional. It is a supportive relationship, NOT an evaluative one. The purpose of this relationship is to provide experienced support to new educators.

#### **Question: What do you mean by confidential?**

**Answer:** The mentors are instructed not to discuss their protégé with *anyone-ever*. This includes administrators and other teachers. There are only two exceptions to this rule. If the protégé agrees that the mentor should talk to a third party to help improve a situation, then is perfectly all right for the mentor to do so. Very, very rarely, there are situations in which a mentor must report a problem to administration, whether or not a protégé agrees. These incidents always involve the safety or well-being of students.

#### **Question: Why do we need a mentoring program?**

**Answer:** There are two important reasons. First, teaching is one of the few professions in which newcomers are expected to do everything the job entails right from the beginning. This can be overwhelming, even to those who have graduated from the best teacher preparation programs. Research shows that new teachers who participate in mentoring programs develop their skills faster than those who are left to figure everything out on their own.

#### **Question: How are mentors assigned?**

**Answer:** All the mentors in the Plymouth Public Schools have been trained, either through our district training program or through an outside program. All of the mentors have Professional Licensure. It is up to the building principals to assign mentors from the mentor pool. Mentors are assigned to all new hires with Initial or Provisional Licensure who are not working on one year contracts. We do everything possible to match mentors and protégés who work in the same building, and who have similar professional assignments. Matches are made when the new educator is hired and are much more likely to still be teaching after five years. Secondly, formal mentoring is a requirement for Professional Licensure in Massachusetts.

**Question: How many hours should mentors and protégés meet?**

**Answer:** The mentor and protégé will need to log at least 35 hours before the middle of May.

**Question: May we log hours that we talk on the phone or through email?**

**Answer:** Yes. Any contact between mentor and protégé can be logged.

**Question: What do we talk about?**

**Answer:** In general, the topics are determined by the calendar and the particular needs of the protégé. For instance, the beginning of the year is a good time to talk about classroom management, Open House, establishing routines, and building relationships with students. As the year progresses, the mentor and protégé may discuss relationships with colleagues, curriculum, addressing learning styles, time management, grading policies, or whatever seems important at any given time. While the meeting times and topics are recorded in the log, in order to maintain confidentiality, no specifics about the conversations are included.

**Question: Who should be keeping the log?**

**Answer:** The log is kept by the mentor. The [official log template](#) should be signed by both mentor and protégé prior to submission. Logs are submitted in May.

**Question: Do we ever get to see each other teach?**

**Answer:** Mentors are advised to visit the protégés classrooms in September, and one or two more times later in the year. These visits are not meant to be evaluations. They are friendly visits which give the mentor a better idea of the protégé's style, strengths and needs. The mentor and protégé should agree ahead of time on when these visits are to take place. They may also decide what the protégé may be looking for. For example, a new teacher might want feedback about his/her classroom management style. In addition, the protégé may want to visit the mentor's classroom. Mentors should ask their building principals for release time for these visits.

**Question: Do we have resources we can use?**

**Answer:** Yes. Each protégé and mentor will receive a guide book to help with conversations and practice prior to the opening of school. Additionally, each building has a "Rolling Library" for use between mentors and protégés. These rolling carts contain a variety of carefully selected professional literature with practical advice on how to deal with everything from Attention Deficit Disorder to differentiated learning. Ask your building principal where your Rolling Library is stored.

**Question: What if the match is not working?**

**Answer:** While the vast majority of mentor-protégé pairs are successful, there are times when it becomes apparent after a little while that it is not working out. In this case, either the mentor or the protégé should contact a member of the [Steering Committee](#) for advice.

**Question: Are mentors compensated?**

**Answer:** Yes. A stipend is paid to mentors at the end of the year, in accordance with the teachers' contract. In addition, mentors are awarded PDP's for their participation.

There are four major goals for the mentoring program:

- To provide you with information and support to make your first year in Plymouth successful.
- To bring you up to speed on district goals and initiatives.
- To fulfill the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requirement that you participate in an approved mentoring program in order to earn your Professional license.
- To foster a career-long habit of collaboration with other educators.

**Day of the week and time of hourly weekly conference:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dates and times of mentor's visits to protégé's classroom (minimum of 2):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dates and times of protégé's visits to mentor's classroom (Minimum of 1):** \_\_\_\_\_

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