Rhode Island Mentor Program Standards

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Rhode Island Mentor Program Standards
Introduction

Recognizing the need for standards and indicators for quality mentoring programs, the Rhode Island Department of Education convened the Mentor Program Standards Task Force. This committee was composed of teachers and administrators from across the state. Their goal was to define the essential elements of ongoing, successful mentoring programs. The initial work involved gathering data and reviewing research. The Task Force examined standards from numerous states, agencies and associations. This document of standards, indicators and is the result of this process. In viewing this document, the reader should keep in mind that this is a work in progress.

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Rhode Island Mentor Program Standards
Rationale

Ensuring that ALL Rhode Island children learn and perform at high levels requires excellence in teaching. Becoming an excellent teacher is a developmental process. Beginning teachers bring a variety of academic, social, and cultural experiences to their classrooms. As they learn more about themselves, their students, their schools and their communities, they are able to take their developing practice from a solid foundation to higher levels of expertise. For teachers to become expert, they must begin with an awareness of the kinds of knowledge and understandings necessary to develop as true professionals. Achieving, and then maintaining, excellence as a teacher requires a life-long commitment to continuous professional growth.

Teachers have always been collaborative and collegial. This sort of informal exchange will continue to be included as a part of our professional culture. However, we must recognize the importance of a formal process for professional induction to ensure that students have a quality teacher in every classroom. A mentoring program demonstrates a commitment to beginning teacher support. Professional development of this kind is crucial to retaining good teachers.

The purpose of the Rhode Island Mentor Program Standards is to provide the framework for implementing mentoring as an integral part of each district's Strategic Plan as required by Article 31. This framework allows school districts to examine and redesign mentoring programs that will best meet their own needs and goals as well as those of their beginning teachers. Individuals who participate in these programs will also be able to have credited experiences for professional development.

Carefully designed mentoring programs can: be used as a recruitment tool, improve teacher retention rates and help to improve the skills and knowledge of both new and veteran teachers. As part of this process that encourages reflective practice throughout the teaching career, the Rhode Island Mentor Program Standards is focused on producing experienced teachers with greater professional expertise, which should result in higher academic achievement among Rhode Island students.

Rhode Island Mentor Program Standards

STANDARD 1
Program Design

The Mentor Program is organized for quality, efficiency and consistency with collaborative partners from among all stakeholders.

Indicators	Potential Sources of Evidence
A. The Mentor Program is included as an integral part of the district's Strategic Plan as required by Article 31. (16-7.1-2 RIGL)	• Action and Implementation Plans for District/School Mentoring Programs
B. The Mentor Program's design is based upon research in teacher induction, development, and quality.	• Description of program • Documentation of rationale for program design
C. The Mentor Program is designed to promote increased understanding and application of the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards.	• Documentation of how the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards are incorporated into the program
D. The Mentor Program has clearly stated goals that support beginning teachers' strengths while addressing their needs.	• Documentation of program design for identifying strengths and needs of beginning teachers • Strategies for promoting beginning teacher development • Self-evaluations of strengths and needs • List of program goals
E. The Mentor Program has sufficient staff to design, implement, and sustain activities that support all beginning teachers. Staffing must include: ▪ Program coordinator(s) ▪ Building Level Coordinators ▪ Mentors ▪ Substitutes	• Staffing chart and time allocation • Job descriptions and postings • Collective bargaining agreement language pertaining to mentoring.

F. The Mentor Program is sufficiently funded to support all beginning teachers. Such funds must provide: • Training for mentors • Materials • Meeting expenses • Ongoing professional development for mentors and mentees • Release time for mentors and mentees to engage in conferencing and observation • Stipends for mentors • Stipends for coordinators	• Annual mentoring budget • Collective bargaining agreement language pertaining to mentoring • Financial records • Grant awards that support mentoring • School Improvement Team meeting minutes pertaining to mentoring • Schedules • Training provisions
G. The Mentor Program provides for clear oversight by a governance structure that has written policies and procedures and is supported by union leadership and central office administration.	• Formal document of governing structure • Collective bargaining agreement language pertaining to mentoring • Policies that address roles and responsibilities of all program participants
H. The Mentor Program establishes partnerships with all district stakeholders , statewide mentoring networks, and university teacher preparation programs to collaborate in the support of beginning teachers: • Governance structure • Links to university teacher prep programs supporting cooperating teacher/mentor training • Partnerships between union leadership and central office administration • State-wide regional network support	• Collective bargaining agreement language pertaining to mentoring • Partnership agreements • Evidence of collaboration with partners
I. The Mentor Program supports clear communication between and among program partners and district/school community members.	• Added assistance documents • Assessment activities • Flyers • Handbook • Journals/logs • Minutes of meetings • Newsletters • Professional development support • Program evaluations • Program guidelines • Web sites, list serves

J. The Mentor Program has a code of conduct that ensures: ▪ Professionalism ▪ Confidentiality ▪ Ethical behavior	• Commitment/confidentiality support agreements

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STANDARD 2
Program Implementation

The Mentor Program is implemented in a way that assures quality mentors, effective mentoring relationships, and provides ongoing professional development for all stakeholders.

Indicators	Potential Sources of Evidence
A. The Mentor Program includes a process for recruitment of high quality mentors.	• Agendas • Application form • Brochures • Data reflecting number of mentors recruited • Flyers • Handbook • Job descriptions • Postings
B. The Mentor Program has a mentor selection process that is based upon written criteria which include, but are not limited to demonstrated: ▪ Ability to work with adults ▪ Commitment to participate in all activities outlined in program ▪ Commitment to the school community ▪ Teaching experience of a minimum of five years ▪ Knowledge of and commitment to standards-based instruction in the classroom ▪ Professional growth ▪ Teaching experience in the district	• Applications from potential mentors • Data verifying that the established criteria were used to select and screen potential mentors • Documentation of the selection process • Written selection criteria
C. The Mentor Program provides an initial, quality training of mentors that is a minimum of 10 hours and includes, but is not limited to: ▪ Adult learning ▪ Reflective questioning ▪ Role of the mentor ▪ Setting expectations ▪ Stages of teacher development ▪ Trust and confidentiality	• Attendance forms • Participant evaluation of the training • Registration forms • Training materials

D. The Mentor Program also provides ongoing training for mentors which includes, but is not limited to: ■ Cognitive coaching ■ I-Plan support ■ Parent connections ■ Performance assessment ■ Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards ■ Standards-based instruction ■ Trust and confidentiality	• Attendance forms • Participant evaluation of the training • Registration forms • Training materials
E. The Mentor Program includes criteria and a clearly delineated process for successfully matching mentors and mentees.	• Documentation of the matching process • Feedback from mentors/mentees regarding the effectiveness of the match • List of matched mentor/mentee pairs • Matching criteria • Policies governing problems that might arise in the mentoring relationship, e.g. dispute resolutions, ethical concerns, etc.

F. The Mentor Program structures adequate time and opportunities for mentors and mentees to engage in meaningful::
■ Regularly scheduled mentor/mentee networking sessions
■ Conferencing
■ Observation
■ I-Plan support
■ Shared professional development
	• Activity logs
	• Attendance forms
	• Participant evaluation of professional development
	• Professional development activities and materials
	• Documentation of mentor/mentee contact
	  - Calendars
	  - Journals
	  - Schedules

G. The Mentor Program provides ongoing support and professional development for all stakeholders.	• Attendance forms • Participant evaluation of the professional development • Registration forms • Professional development activities and materials • Agendas • Calendars • Newsletters • Web sites • Activity logs

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STANDARD 3
Program Development

The Mentor Program uses a comprehensive, ongoing system of program evaluation and improvement.

Indicators	Potential Sources of Evidence
A. The Mentor Program conducts an annual program evaluation that is based on the Rhode Island Mentor Program Standards.	• Evaluation forms • Needs assessment forms • Links between the evaluation and assessments and the Rhode Island Mentor Program Standards
B. The Mentor Program's annual program evaluation is designed to provide information for setting goals and ongoing program improvement.	• Anecdotal information • Data collection • Results of evaluation • Results of RIMPS "District Self-Evaluation Tool"
C. The Mentor Program conducts periodic needs assessments to determine specific needs.	• Needs assessment instruments • Results from the needs assessments
D. The Mentor Program solicits ongoing feedback from a variety of program stakeholders such as: ▪ Administrators ▪ Coordinators ▪ Mentees ▪ Mentors ▪ Union leadership ▪ Collaborating partners	• Data collection forms • Data collection processes • Data summaries and analyses
E. The Mentor Program designs and implements program improvements based upon the needs assessment and program evaluation data.	• Article 31 Strategic Plans - Action and Implementation • Handbook revisions • Minutes of advisory board meetings • Other program revisions • Program improvement plans