

Promising Practices and Implementation Tools

1. Names & Positions:

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3. Lever Addressed: Induction

4. Title of Promising Practice: Building and Sustaining an Effective Induction Program

5. District Where Implemented: Danvers Public Schools

6. Applicable Grade Levels: K–12

7. How This Practice Reflects District's Mission & Core Values:

This promising practice reflects the districts mission as "a dynamic community of independent learners dedicated to respect, responsibility, creativity and the pursuit of academic and personal excellence", in that utilizing the expertise of experienced teachers and administrators to develop, support and retain new teachers is a key element in successfully achieving this mission.

8. Goals of This Practice:

- 1.) Create an Induction program that recognizes the varied needs of teachers in the district
- 2.) Integrate new teachers into the culture and provide support in meeting the mission of the Danvers Public Schools
- 3.) Align Danvers Induction Program with the rigorous standards of the new teacher evaluation system
- 4.) Satisfy current requirements as mandated by DESE

9. Description of This Practice:

Danver's mentoring program began several years ago, but was then more formalized in response to the Mentor and Induction requirements adopted by DESE, and negotiations with the Danvers Teacher Union in the mid 1990's. Since that time, Danvers has maintained two Co–Directors of the program, one administrative and one teacher director, who have worked collaboratively to meet the range of needs presented by new teachers or teachers new to the district.

Approximately two years ago, Danvers was invited to participate in Project SUCCESS (School University Collaboration Committed to the Educational Success of All Students), a graduate program offered at UMASS Dartmouth and funded by a State grant, that trains Lead Mentors and mentors with the knowledge and skills to effectively support new teachers and eventually train other new mentors in their district.

Involvement in this program has propelled Danvers into implementing a richer and more comprehensive Induction Program, while expanding upon leadership capacity, training and ability to differentiate professional development geared to the needs of teachers.

In terms of program structure, leadership has grown from two to four Co- Coordinators of the program, three of whom are classroom teachers and one an Assistant Principal, and all are stipended positions. The four co-coordinators collaborate and plan together for all trainings, meetings and evaluations on a monthly basis, but have divided responsibilities for planning different group trainings. For instance, two are responsible for both one on one and group mentor trainings and the other two work directly with the new hires/mentees. Also, while the job responsibilities are shared, it should be noted that by design, the administrative Co-Coordinator is the one responsible for collaborating with the Asst. Superintendent around budget allocations and resources to ensure that the Induction program is operating efficiently and effectively.

Previously, mentors were chosen based on principals' recommendations; this practice changed two years ago when the team implemented an application process that allows for the Co-Directors to collaborate and select mentors, relying on administrative input only if necessary. Requirements have also been more tightly refined which have resulted in intentional, authentic educators assuming the roles of mentors in the district.

Once chosen, teacher mentors must attend a one day orientation in August, that zeroes in on expectations, confidentiality, program requirements, strategies for conducting observations using a collaboration log, facilitation of weekly meetings with mentees, and honing in on best listening and reflection practices. Attempts are made to pair mentors by grade level, building or discipline; mentors are required to meet with their mentees and keep a log on a weekly basis.

Orientation for mentees is also conducted one week before school starts, at which time all new teachers are warmly welcomed into the Danvers school community by the Superintendent and other district administrators, School Committee and Danvers Teachers Union President. This initial integration into the district also includes an overview of all district departments and functions, i.e. Human Resources, SPED. Town resources are also highlighted via a bus tour through the community and new hires are introduced to their mentors during a luncheon that day.

Monthly Mentor meetings led by a Co-Coordinator or other district experts, provide ongoing training and center around topics such as parent communication, listening and related skills for critical conversations with mentees, effective feedback, student engagement, and new teacher evaluation to name a few. Mentoring in Action, a recommended resource from Project SUCCESS, is used to guide and structure these meetings. However, based on mentor feedback, these topics are often adjusted to best address a particular need that may have surfaced in the interim. Allowing flexibility in training topics creates greater mentor ownership of the overall program.

Monthly Mentee meetings are also facilitated by co-coordinators and mentor leaders currently in training, and are framed by the curriculum found in First Year Matters, another resource recommended by Project SUCCESS.

Needs of the mentees are differentiated based on experience and content area. For example, if a teacher is new to Danvers Public Schools, but has completed an induction program in another district, that teacher will be considered a part time mentee. They will still be assigned a mentor for that academic year and are not required to attend monthly meetings vs. a teacher new to the profession who attends monthly meetings and is assigned a mentor for the year. In addition, specialty areas that are not involved in direct instruction, such as a School Psychologist, or School Nurse are assigned a mentor and attend only those monthly meetings that discuss common student needs and issues.

From January through June additional PD is provided for new hires and mentors that serves to supplement and enrich the topics that are discussed during one on one meetings. Organized by the four Co-Coordinates, critical topics such as Bullying Prevention and Intervention and student motivation are addressed, by utilizing experts in the community or in-house teacher expertise to present.

The Danvers mentor leadership model requires both classroom teachers and administration to share in the role of district wide Mentor Coordinator, which creates a respectful teacher friendly dynamic. It allows for new teachers to work within their comfort zone when bringing an issue to light, whether that comfort level is with the teacher Co-Director or administrative Co-Director, which provides supportive options for new teachers and mentors alike.

Evaluation of the program is multi-faceted in that there are multiple means of feedback from multiple sources. For instance, at the beginning and end of the year, both mentees and mentors complete an on line survey that is used to ascertain needs, strengths and areas needing improvement. The Co-Coordinates also meet with central office at the beginning and end of the year, are in constant communication with principals, and elicit informal feedback during each monthly mentor and mentee meeting.

How This Practice Addresses Criteria for the Induction Level:

The district provides comprehensive, systematic supports to make the transition from novice to accomplished educator more effective and professionally

rewarding. As detailed below, this promising practice exemplifies many of the criteria necessary for successful implementation of Induction as it relates to continual school improvement:

School district has a comprehensive Induction Plan that includes program elements, roles and responsibilities, implementation processes and time lines, and that identifies necessary tools and resources.

All members of the district and school community share collective responsibility for contributing to novice teacher and administrator growth.

Provision for professional growth of novice teachers and administrators is an integral part of the school district's professional development plan for all educators.

The induction process is informed by the Common Core of Professional Knowledge and Skills and is focused on instruction.

Induction programs provide comprehensive support for all teachers and administrators in their first two years of practice.

Professional development for novice teachers and administrators is specialized and developmentally appropriate.

Programs are differentiated to address educators' specific areas of responsibility and levels of experience.

Induction programs are multi-faceted and include training, orientation and networking for beginning teachers, leaders, veteran teachers and administrators.

Induction and mentoring programs are provided with the administrative supports and resources necessary.

The selection, training, responsibilities and rewards for mentors are informed by research and are part of the district Induction Plan.

Time for mentoring of novice teachers and administrators is an integral part of the instructional day and beyond and provides opportunities for observation, consultation and reflection.

The district Induction Plan includes a process for collecting program data and conducting ongoing formative evaluation and regular summative evaluation of program effectiveness.

10. How This Practice Was Implemented So It Was More Successful Than Others:

Participation and training of teachers through Project SUCCESS over the past

three years has fine-tuned the districts' thinking, and provided the needed elements to build upon and strengthen the existing program.

Central office support from the Superintendent on down has also been a critical factor in the successful implementation of a more comprehensive Induction Program.

Responsibility for mentoring of new teachers is shared throughout the school community in a number of ways. For instance, grade level and department common planning times, which are embedded into the daily schedule, focus mainly on curriculum, assessment, and the sharing and adjusting of best instructional practices geared to the needs of students. Curriculum Coordinators, Department Chairs, Technology Coordinators, and Administrators at all levels K-12, also support new hires through managing technology needs and implementation of the new teacher evaluation system. As a result, a wide range of colleagues other than formal mentors, are equally invested in mentoring in an informal capacity, which creates an inclusive and collegial working environment, and greatly contributes to the growth and retention of new teachers throughout the district.

11. How This Practice Changed The District or School:

Revisions to the existing Induction program have provided more opportunity for teacher leadership and collaboration. For instance, there are presently two elementary teachers participating in Project SUCCESS, and the current action plan is to create two additional Lead Mentor/Coordinator positions. This plan will expand the program leadership to a team of six and will better reflect teacher representation at all levels, K-12.

Adapting and living by the credo of making decisions based on "what is best for kids" has served to provide more consistency in deciding whether to retain or release a new hire regardless of the supports the new teacher received via the Induction program.

Joint K-12 mentor/mentee meetings have led the way for more vertical dialogue opportunities amongst K-12 teachers, as highlighted in a recent K-12 discussion about meeting the needs of students on the autism spectrum.

In the recent three years of the program, the district has effectively built upon

its successes, which has resulted in greater clarity of purpose and responsibility. One concrete example is a flow chart that is being developed for the district so that new and veteran staff alike can better understand the program, the process and the hierarchy of responsibility.

Another future goal is to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the program and conduct research on the correlation between the district's induction program and retention of new teachers employed by Danvers Public Schools.

12. Resources (time, money, materials etc.) Required For Successful Implementation:

Funding for mentor coordinator stipend, mentor stipend and related program expenses

Time in the form of common planning, mentor, mentee, co-coordinator and administrative meetings

Central office administrative assistance, i.e. researching data on new teacher retention

13. Tools You Used To Implement or Advance This Practice:

- 1.) Handbook Letter
- 2.) Mentor Application Cover Letter
- 3.) Mentor Application
- 4.) Mentor Survey Results –Power Point
- 5.) New Hire Questionnaire
- 6.) OTAGS Presentation Application
- 7.) OTAGS Brochure
- 8.) Principal Recommendation