

## Promising Practices and Implementation Tools

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**3. District(s) Where Implemented: Needham Public Schools**

**4. Lever Addressed and Title of Promising Practice: Recruitment, Hiring and Comprehensive Induction of Beginning Teachers – K-12**

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

The Needham Public Schools sees hiring of new teachers among its most critical responsibilities. Aligned with this core value is a multi-pronged approach to supporting all new teachers' professional and personal growth and success. The focus in this work is on continual improvement of student learning and high achievement.

**6. Goals of This Practice:**

The first goal is to implement a hiring system that is rigorous, efficient, and effective, managed by teams including administrators, teachers, parents and community members. Successful hiring is an important part of strong school and district cultures. A second goal is to maintain a high level of retention of high quality teachers. To this end, supporting new teachers is comprehensive and intensive in the first year, but also continues beyond in a variety of forms. Fostering strong Professional Learning Communities is an overarching goal.

**7. Description of This Practice and how it Addresses Criteria for these Levers:**

Needham has expanded and diversified the venues where teachers and staff are recruited. The district hosts an annual Job Fair for teachers of color. Other recruitment sites are colleges, universities and career centers from Maine to Florida. Electronic advertising and communication is done

but leaders believe face-time is the more effective way to recruit the best candidates.

Needham's Comprehensive New Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program for New Teachers includes several components:

1) New Teacher Orientation – a 2-day program implemented in the fall before school begins to orient new teachers to the Needham Public Schools. Day 1 focuses on the district as a whole where the district's mission, values, and goals are reviewed, and teachers meet the district's leadership teams. Day 2 is building-based – teachers are oriented to their new work settings, receive training in technology, for example, FirstClass, PowerSchool, and attend an introductory training session with their mentors.

2) New Teacher Induction Curriculum – 6 sessions per year cover topics such as Needs of Beginning Teachers, Anti-Racist Education, Working with Parents, and Classroom Management. The formal curriculum varies from level to level, tailored to the different needs. Feedback on the value of this program is solicited from new teachers and adjustments are made accordingly.

3) Administration, building-based, makes well-considered mentor-mentee matches. Leaders draw on research which suggests discipline, gender, race, level taught, geographic proximity, and years of teaching experience are important criteria in the matching process.

4) Required Mentor Education/Training Course: Teachers are paid to attend a 2-day training, and they also receive a mentoring stipend of \$800. Course topics include: Developmental needs of beginning teachers; Characteristics of good teaching; Characteristics and roles of effective mentors; Class observation techniques: Qualities and methods of reflection on instructional practice. Teachers need to be tenured in the district (3 years) in order to mentor.

5) A Mentor Brochure detailing goals of the program, characteristics of mentors, and expectations of mentors is published for the School Committee, community, school leadership and faculty exposure and use.

6) Mentoring relationship: Mentors and mentees meet a minimum of once a week. They are expected to observe each other teaching and attend district-led PD meetings 3 times a year. A log of activities and meetings is maintained by mentors and submitted to the Personnel Department at the end of the year.

7) Formal calendars are created for each level and given to mentors and mentees as a tool for structuring mentoring, and for anticipation and planning through out the year.

8) Mentors and mentees are required to observe each other teaching and feedback sessions follow. Substitute teachers are provided.

- 9) Site-based support meetings, led by a coordinator, are held for mentor support, trouble shooting issues and sharing mentoring experiences.
- 10) Evaluation of the program is implemented through surveys completed by mentors, mentees, and district leaders where appropriate.
- 11) New teachers are also supported by their departments in the first year, and beyond.
- 12) There is a district-wide Mentor Coordinator who oversees the program, K-12.

### **Criteria addressed within this Practice:**

#### **Recruitment, Hiring, and Placement:**

The district provides a climate of supportive, collegial and growth-oriented working conditions to attract quality candidates committed to student learning and achievement.

Attention given to hiring and placement timelines allows the district to recruit high-quality candidates in a competitive timeframe.

The district taps into state and regional organizations and higher education institutions to assist with the recruitment efforts.

The district includes teacher and other stakeholder input (including administrators, students and parents), as appropriate, in the hiring process.

The district ensures that beginning teachers are provided with adequate resources that allow them to succeed. The resources are defined and include technology resources.

District recruiting, hiring and placement identify and plan for candidates with potential to advance within the system to leadership positions.

The Common Core of Professional Knowledge and Skills informs the recruitment, hiring and placement practices.

Placement of new teachers and administrators takes into account preparation and readiness.

A district plan for new teachers and administrators professional development is in place. (See district's Continuing Education Curriculum for teachers and administrators.)

#### **Induction:**

The district has a Comprehensive Induction Plan that includes program elements, roles and responsibilities, implementation processes and timelines, and identifies necessary tools and resources.

All members of the district and school community share collective responsibility for contributing to new teacher and administrator growth. Provision for professional growth of new 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 three years of practice.

Professional development for new teachers is specialized and developmentally appropriate.

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's Induction Plan.

Time for mentoring new teachers and administrators is a part of the school day 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. This occurs for the Mentor Program in the district.

## **8. Applicable Grade Levels:**

PreK-12

## **9. How This Practice Was Implemented So It Was More Successful Than Others:**

**Collaboration** is threaded through hiring, in-service training, and mentoring of new teachers. Teaming is site-based and occurs across schools. Multiple perspectives are critical in making hiring decisions.

**Hiring:** Under the current administration, the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent (Personnel) interview every candidate recommended for hire, before anyone is officially hired. This is not a formality but a bona fide interview, to vet each person one last time. The interview is much more than filling in forms and attending to other administrative tasks. The goal/benefit is for district leaders to become acquainted with new hires at their point of entry and pursue any concerns that may arise in the meeting. In seven years, only two candidates who

made it this far were not offered jobs. Most of the time, the hiring process is successful and Central Office Personnel become the rubber stamp. However, this last interview is a final checkpoint, to help ensure a strong hiring track record.

**Hiring:** The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent study candidates' application packets intensively – particularly the transcripts. Every piece of each application tells a story. Graduate and Undergraduate performance scores are one data point among others. Low grades may or may not be significant in the broader context of other information – but they are duly considered.

**Mentoring:** A strong support structure is in place. There is a district-wide Mentor Coordinator, and building-based coordinators at each school. Meetings are held throughout the year at the district and building level, geared to support mentors and provide professional development. This support system speaks to the district's commitment to the program, and successful mentoring relationships.

## **10. How This Practice Changed The District Or School:**

**Hiring:** The careful assembly of interview teams and the training of these teams results in strong and reliable interviewing. Training is a 45-minute session where the focus is on previewing and selecting questions to ask, discussion of “scoring” the candidates, and the expectation of total confidentiality of the process. The district has a strong record of retaining those they hire – because of this process, and the support new teachers are given (see below).

### **Mentoring:**

Anecdotal evidence and annual reviews of the program suggests that mentors make a significant difference in the professional lives of new teachers. The confidentiality of this relationship is highly valued. Teachers see the relationship as a safe haven for addressing problems they may be having. The relationship is empowering and new teachers often attribute staying in their jobs to the support they get from their mentors. The required training prepares mentors for this important role. There is increased accountability for mentors – they must meet with their mentees weekly and do the required number of observations of their mentees. They also attend three PD meetings per year. Mentors are also required to submit a log, detailing the mentoring experience. There is more rigorous oversight of the work of mentors and the bar is higher than it used to be.

Mentoring is a one-year program at this time. A second year of mentoring has been budgeted for the coming year (2013–2014) because it is considered necessary for some teachers. A differentiated selection approach will be used, however, because not all new teachers need a second year of mentoring.

Differentiating the expectations of mentoring based on whether the newly hired teachers are brand new to teaching or just new to the district is being considered. Feedback from mentors and teachers new to the district indicates a need to do this.

The district is considering an application process for prospective mentors. The mentoring relationship influences teacher retention and the district wants to recruit committed and serious mentors.

A refresher course for veteran mentors is also under consideration.

### **11. Resources (time, money, materials, etc.) Required for Successful Implementation:**

1) The Personnel Office operates a \$50,000 annual budget which covers an overall district coordinator, stipends for mentor coordinators based in each school building, stipends for the mentors, payment to mentors for attending the training, speakers for the PD Mentor Meetings, and incidental expenses like refreshments and print materials.

2) Mentor Training, led by two trainers annually, is offered and financed internally.

### **Tools You Used To Implement Or Advance These Practices: (surveys, needs assessments, technology tools, rubrics, feedback forms, etc.)**

HR Specialist Questions  
Mentoring Guidelines  
Orientation Agenda  
Recommendation to Hire Form  
Screening Committee Questions