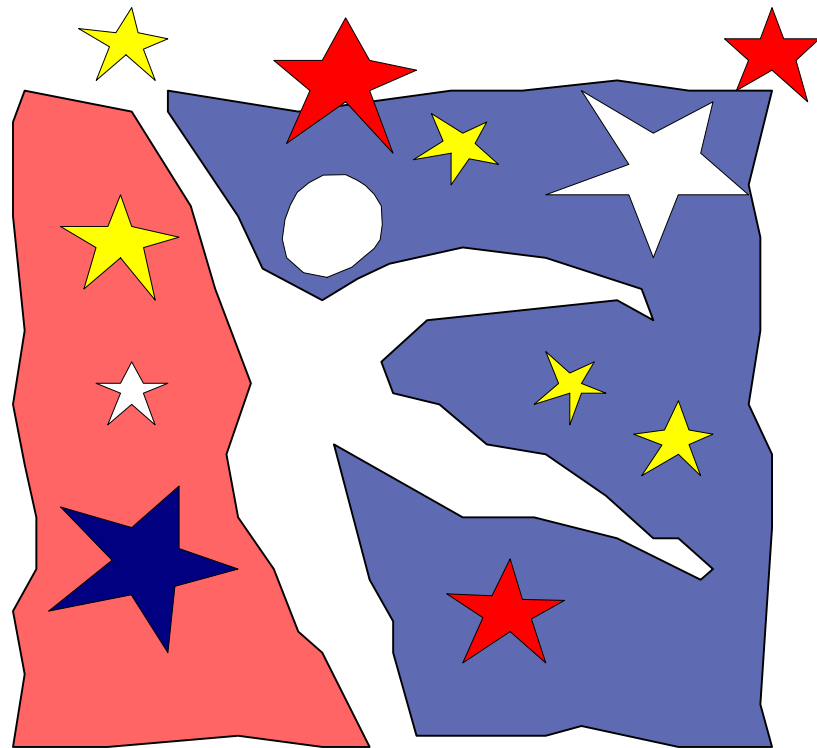


# Mentor Program Evaluation Report

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*Supporting Success*



*in Teaching*



Arlington Public Schools  
April 2006

# Mentor Program Evaluation Report



## Department of Instruction Office of Professional Development

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**Arlington Public Schools**  
**April 2006**

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**Evaluation Report:  
The Office of Professional Development  
Arlington Public Schools  
April 2006**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Arlington Public Schools (APS) 1999–2005 Strategic Plan Goals call for the systematic evaluation of personnel, schools, and programs to spur continuous improvement throughout the system. In response to that goal, a process for the evaluation of instructional programs was developed. This evaluation focuses on the APS Mentor Program, a program within the Department of Instruction. Data for program evaluation were collected during the 2004–2005 school year, with a limited amount of data collected during the 2005–2006 school year.

### **Mission Statement**

The Mentor Program provides intensive and sustained professional support for all first-year and experienced school-based new hires in an effort to attract, recruit, and retain highly qualified instructional staff.

### **Program Description**

In an effort to align itself with the Virginia Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act of 1999, APS designed and implemented a formal Mentor Program during the 2000–2001 school year. A commitment to beginning teachers and to teachers new to APS has been the focal point of the program since its inception.

Currently, there are over 400 teachers who have completed mentor training. In order to be a mentor, a teacher must be on continuing contract and have completed three years of successful teaching in APS. Additionally, the teacher must complete one full day and two half days of training. Mentors and mentees also complete a partnership agreement that serves as the basis for the relationship throughout the year.

Mentors also submit a monthly Mentor Journal to countywide teacher specialists. This journal indicates the kinds of support provided by the mentor in a variety of areas. The areas include, but are not limited to, classroom management, school culture, lesson planning, student concerns, special education policies and procedures, student assessment, time management, effective use of technology, and referrals to other resources.

### **Program Objectives**

1. Pair all eligible new hires with a trained mentor (mentors provided for teachers in positions .5 and above) during their first year of teaching in APS.
2. Prepare mentors to coach and provide assistance to new hires while modeling Best Instructional Practices in teaching.
3. Train mentors in skills and strategies to effectively carry out the roles and responsibilities of a mentor.
4. Maintain ongoing communication between and among school-based mentors and countywide teacher specialists.

5. Provide opportunities for collaboration between mentors and mentees to improve the instructional practices of both participants.
6. Assist in recruitment and retention of new teachers.
7. Provide high-quality training that supports current best practices in mentoring.

### **Description of Department and Evaluation Design**

Purpose of the evaluation design:

1. Identify the extent to which the APS Mentor Program adheres to local and state guidelines for mentor programs established in 2000.
2. Assess the quality of training and support provided to experienced teachers who serve as mentors and contact mentors.
3. Examine the degree to which new hires feel supported during their first year of teaching in APS.
4. Determine if new hires paired with mentors remain in APS longer than those who are not paired with mentors during the first year of teaching in APS.

### **Summary of Findings (2004–2005)**

- The number of teachers new to APS who were assigned mentors increased from 55% (141 teachers) in 2001–2002 to 77% (158 teachers) in 2004–2005.
- 96 of 100 elementary mentor–mentee pairs worked in the same building.
- 71 of 88 secondary mentor–mentee pairs taught the same grade, subject, or both.
- No mentor was assigned more than two mentees (state allows for up to four).
- Mentors and mentees who share a common planning period are almost three times more likely to meet on a daily basis than mentors and mentees who have a different planning period.
- Mentees and mentees who taught the same grade and subject met more frequently than those who did not teach the same grade and subject.
- 97% of the 75 school administrators who completed the 2004 Administrative Conference survey responded that the mentoring relationship was confidential always or most of the time.
- 96% of active mentors met the training requirements.
- 82% of mentors found the Mentor Journal to be an effective communication tool.
- 58% of mentors who participated in the focus group thought that a refresher training would be helpful, coupled with ongoing discussion groups.
- 96% of mentors agreed or strongly agreed that they applied the skills learned in mentor training with their mentees.
- 77% of mentors agreed or strongly agreed that the contact mentor maintained ongoing communication.
- 80% of mentors strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with the support provided by the contact mentor.
- 72% of new hires surveyed reported that working with their mentor enhanced their instructional practices.

- 95% of mentors were more than satisfied or satisfied with the structure of the mentor program.
- 99% of mentors were more than satisfied or satisfied with the content of the mentor program.
- 98% of mentors were satisfied with the support provided by the Office of Professional Development.
- 82% of mentees felt supported by the Mentor Program.
- 90% of mentees strongly agreed or agreed that their mentor–mentee relationship was positive.
- It appears that the Mentor Program was not instrumental in teacher recruitment.

### **Effective Use of Resources**

An examination of the longitudinal data suggests that a greater proportion of new teachers with mentors remain in teaching positions with APS longer than do new teachers without mentors. Specially, of the 141 new teachers hired in 2001-02 and paired with mentors that year, 90 teachers (64%) remained in teaching positions three years after they were initially hired. In contrast, of the 136 new teachers hired that same year but not assigned mentors, 80 teachers (59%) were still teachers in the system in 2004-05. The cost of replacing a teacher is substantially more than the cost of assigning, training, and supporting mentor-mentee pairs.

### **Unexpected Outcomes**

For the past five years, the Office of Professional Development has participated in local recruitment fairs to answer questions from teacher candidates and to provide information about the APS mentor program. Surprisingly, results from this evaluation indicate that the Mentor Program may not play a vital role in teacher recruitment or teachers' choice to work in APS. Rather, the Mentor Program plays a role in teacher development and retention in the school system.

Another unexpected outcome was that while mentees reported that working with a mentor improved their instructional practices, mentors also reported that working with their mentee improved their own instructional practices. Therefore, the benefits of being a mentor support the notion that mentoring is an opportunity for growth as both teacher and learner.

### **Recommendations for the Office of Professional Development**

- Provide the opportunity for “Refresher Training” at least two times during the year for those mentors who were trained more than two years prior to their mentoring year.
- Send out periodic newsletters to active mentors.
- Provide mentoring calendars with tips and suggested activities to active mentors/contact mentors throughout the school year.
- Continue to make mentors/contact mentors accountable by periodically requiring additional documentation to show support given to mentees (beyond the mentor journal).



### **Recommendations Requiring Work With Other Departments**

- Work with the Departments of Information and Personnel Services to ensure that APS has a consistent database of new hires with codes for the following: (1) years of experience, (2) new to APS, (3) transfer within APS, (4) re-hire.
- Work with the Departments of Information and Personnel Services to ensure that APS has an accurate and updated list of all new hires prior to the August orientation.
- Work with the Departments of Information and Personnel Services to ensure that new hires hired after January 15<sup>th</sup> are coded as eligible for a mentor the following school year.

### **Recommendations for Administrators and Supervisors**

- Ensure that non–classroom-based staff are assigned a mentor if it is deemed appropriate.
- Increase collaboration among administrators in the assignment of mentors when a new hire works in more than one school.
- Ensure that the criteria for matching new hires and mentors are consistent from school to school.
- Increase collaboration between school-based administrators and supervisors on the assignment of mentors to resource teachers for the gifted, school psychologists, social workers, physical education teachers, music teachers, art teachers, etc.

## **INTRODUCTION AND EVALUATION DESIGN**

Goal 5 of the Arlington Public Schools (APS) 1999–2005 Strategic Plan calls for the systematic evaluation of personnel, schools, and programs to spur continuous improvement throughout the system. In response to that goal, a process for the evaluation of instructional programs was developed. This evaluation report focuses on the APS Mentor Program, a program within the APS Department of Instruction. The evaluation design for the Mentor Program was created during the 2003–2004 school year, and data were collected during the 2004–2005 school year with a limited amount of data collected during 2005–2006. As a result, this program evaluation supports the following 1999–2005 APS Strategic Plan Goal.

### **1999–2005 Strategic Plan Goal 4**

#### **Staff Quality I**

APS will recruit and retain teachers and administrators of high quality.

**Objective:** Design and implement systematic recruitment initiatives to identify and attract high quality teachers and administrators.  
Establish high quality mentoring programs for teachers and administrators.  
Support the development of administrators and teachers from inside the APS system.

#### **Staff Quality II**

APS will provide intensive and sustained professional development for all teachers and administrators.

**Objective:** Provide increased activities for self-initiated and collaborative professional development through a variety of activities.

#### **Virginia State Guidelines**

This evaluation also falls within the framework of the Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers (Virginia State Guidelines for Mentor Programs, adopted by the Virginia Board of Education, June 22, 2000). In accordance with the Virginia State Guidelines, the Office of Professional Development has conducted annual evaluations of the APS Mentor Program since its inception in 2000. The state guidelines for evaluating mentor programs mandate that evaluation of the mentor teacher program focus on its effectiveness in meeting the following goals:

1. Retaining quality teachers;
2. Improving teaching performance;
3. Supporting teacher morale, communication, and collegiality;
4. Facilitating a seamless transition into the first year of teaching.

## *Introduction and Evaluation Design*

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The state requires that evaluation be comprehensive and ongoing, and include multiple criteria that are related to program goals and objectives. The program evaluation should involve program participants and other stakeholders and lead to substantive program improvements.

Using the state guidelines as a framework, the APS evaluation design addresses three main components of the APS Mentor Program. First, it examines the extent to which the APS Mentor Program adheres to the state criteria. Second, it looks at the training and support provided to continuing contract teachers who serve as mentors. Third, it addresses the degree to which new hires feel supported during their first year with APS and remain in the school system.

The Arlington School Board's Policy on Accountability and Evaluation provides questions to be answered through the process of program evaluation. The Mentor Program Evaluation design is provided below. The design lists the School Board's policy questions in addition to the related evaluation questions discussed in this report.

The APS Mentor Program Evaluation Design

**Description**

Answers Policy Questions: *What are we trying to do and for whom?*  
*What will success look like and/or what was the original plan?*

**Who is served**

The Mentor Program provides all first-year and experienced new hires with a trained mentor for their first year of teaching in Arlington Public Schools. This includes general and special education teachers, librarians, reading teachers and counselors.

**Goals and objectives**

The Arlington Public Schools Mentor Program was developed to support two Instrumental Goals of the Strategic Plan for 1999-2005:

1. The Arlington Public Schools will recruit and retain teachers and administrators of high quality, and
2. The Arlington Public Schools will provide intensive and sustained professional development for all teachers and administrators.

Goal 1 –The Mentor Program helps attract, recruit and retain highly qualified teachers in Arlington Public Schools.

Goal 2 –The Mentor Program enhances instructional practices of mentors and mentees.

For First-Year Teachers

- The Mentor Program helps beginning teachers make a successful transition into teaching by providing them with a mentor.

For Experienced Teachers

- The Mentor Program helps experienced teachers make a successful transition to teaching in a new school system by providing them with a mentor.

For Mentors

- The Mentor Program allows experienced teachers to revitalize, evaluate and enhance their own teaching practices while helping new hires make the transition into teaching in Arlington Public Schools.

For Administrators

- The Mentor Program helps administrators understand the needs of beginning teachers, and provides guidance on ways to address those needs.
- The Mentor Program provides administrators with the appropriate training and resources necessary to successfully complete the application and matching processes.

For Arlington Public Schools

- The Mentor Programs helps retain highly-qualified teachers.
- The Mentor Program encourages, rewards, and recognizes teachers as leaders.

For the Community

- The Teacher’s P.E.T. (**P**artners for **E**xcellence in **T**eaching) Program, provides an opportunity for local businesses to recognize the work of mentors in Arlington Public Schools.

## **Program Design**

Answers Policy Questions: *What resources are committed?*  
*Who is responsible for implementing the program/service? Are there persistent concerns?*

### **Who we are**

The Office of Staff Development consists of six, full-time staff:

- Supervisor – Kranulett Forte Richardson
- Elementary Teacher Development Specialist – Valerie Smolinski
- Secondary Teacher Development Specialist – Donna Cerwensky
- Teacher Development Specialist – Sue Sarber
- TESA Training Coordinator – Gladys Sossa-Schwartz
- Clerical Specialist – Esmeralda Castillo

### **The Mentor Program**

- Consists of 400 trained mentors, 28 contact/lead mentors, and 2 countywide teacher specialists.
- Mentors receive one full-day and two half-day mentor training sessions, up to two days to observe, plan or provide feedback, 90 recertification points, on-site support from the contact mentor, countywide support from the teacher specialists, and a stipend of \$1,628.31.
- Contact mentors receive one half-day training session, 30 recertification points, and a stipend of \$888.17.

### **Guidelines**

- The Mentor Program adheres to the Virginia State Guidelines for Mentor Programs.
- The Mentor Program provides financial incentives in accordance with the guidelines established by the Teacher Compensation Committee.
- The Mentor Program is evaluated annually using the State Criteria for High-Quality Professional Development and Training.

Objective	Question	Data Source
<i>Policy Question: How well did we implement?</i>		
1. All new hires are paired with a trained mentor.	1a. What proportion of new hires are paired with a mentor? 1b. What proportion of new hires are paired with trained mentors? Mentors in their building? 1c. To what extent do mentors meet the Virginia State Criteria for Mentor Selection?	Teacher longitudinal data set  Records maintained by the Office of Professional Development
2. Trained mentors coach, provide assistance and support, and model Best Instructional Practices for the new hire.	2a. To what degree do mentees and mentors maintain the defined relationship and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meet regularly,</li> <li>• understand their roles,</li> <li>• observe the other’s class, and</li> <li>• maintain confidentiality?</li> </ul>	Surveys
3. Mentors receive the support that is necessary to mentor effectively.	3a. What additional support do mentors need to assist new hires? 3b. To what degree do mentors believe their principals, assistant principals, and countywide mentors support their roles as mentors? 3c. To what extent do mentors satisfy APS’s requirements in order to be a paid mentor?	Surveys Focus Groups Records maintained by the Office of Professional Development

***Introduction and Evaluation Design***

<p>4. Contact mentors facilitate communication between and among school-based mentors and countywide mentors.</p>	<p>4a. To what degree do contact mentors help facilitate communication between and among mentors and mentees? 4b. How satisfied are mentors with the support provided by their contact mentor?</p>	<p>Surveys  Focus group</p>
<p><b><i>Policy Question: What change(s) happened for the intended recipients?</i></b></p>		
<p>The mentor–mentee relationship improves the instructional practices of both participants.</p>	<p>5a. To what degree did working with a mentor improve the mentee’s instructional practices?</p>	<p>Surveys  Focus groups</p>
<p>The mentor program helps attract new teachers.</p>	<p>6a. To what degree does the mentor program influence teachers’ choice to work in APS?</p>	<p>Focus group</p>
<p>The mentor program helps retain new teachers.</p>	<p>7a. Do new hires paired with mentors remain in APS longer than new hires who did not have mentors? 7b. Are teachers who worked with a mentor more likely to remain at the same school than those who did not work with a trained mentor?</p>	<p>Teacher longitudinal data set</p>
<p><b><i>Policy Question: What change(s) occurred in areas that were not the primary focus of the evaluation?</i></b></p>		
<p>What change(s) occurred in areas that were not the primary focus of the evaluation?</p>	<p>No objective is related to this; instead, one may expect to find results through data gathering.</p>	

<i>Policy Question: If this did not work equally well in all locations, why?</i>		
	No objective is related to this; instead, one may expect to find results through data gathering.	
<i>Policy Question: How satisfied were the users and clients?</i>		
Mentors and mentees report satisfaction with the mentor program.	8a. To what degree are mentors satisfied with the content, structure, and training requirements of the mentor program? 8b. To what degree are new hires satisfied with the support they receive from their school-based mentor? 8c. How satisfied are the mentors and contact mentors with the support provided by the Office of Professional Development?	Training rating sheets  Surveys  Focus groups
<i>Policy Question: How effectively were the system's resources used to achieve the identified goals?</i>		
9. The Mentor Program uses its resources efficiently.	9a. Are teachers who worked with a trained APS mentor more likely to remain employed with APS than those who did not work with a trained mentor (new hires from 2002–2003, 2003–2004, 2004–2005)? 9b. Are teachers who worked with a trained APS mentor more likely to remain at the same school than those who did not work with a trained mentor?	Teacher longitudinal data set
<i>Policy Question: What happened that was unexpected or unintended?</i>		
	No objective is related to this; instead, one may expect to find results through data gathering.	

**Use of External Evaluators**

Colleen Ryan, an independent researcher and consultant, was hired to plan and conduct two focus groups during the summer of 2005. Ms. Ryan has extensive experience with qualitative research in general and focus groups in particular. She wrote two reports based on her analysis of the focus group discussions; portions of those reports have been quoted throughout this Mentor Program Evaluation Report.



## **Data Sources**

Surveys were administered to mentees at three points during the 2004–2005 academic year and once to mentors. In addition, contact mentors were surveyed in the Fall of 2005. Data also were collected from a survey given at the 2004 Administrative Conference and from rating sheets completed by mentors after every training session held in 2004-2005. Two focus groups of teachers were conducted in June and August of 2005, moderated by an outside consultant (Colleen Ryan). Finally, personnel and Mentor Program records were analyzed and teacher attrition costs were calculated using a formula published by the Alliance of Excellent Education (August 2005).

## **Glossary of Terms**

Several terms have been used throughout this report that are unique to the Mentor Program. Therefore, definitions have been provided for the sake of clarity and for the purpose of drawing distinctions between terms used by the state, and terms used by APS.

**beginning teacher** A teacher who has completed zero years of full-time teaching experience (definition from state *Mentor Program Guidelines*). Cross-reference to new teacher.

**confidentiality** The ability to respect and protect all information discussed in the mentoring relationship.

**contact mentor** A trained mentor whose responsibility is to facilitate communication between and among the building mentors and the countywide teacher specialists.

**countywide mentors** The elementary and secondary Teacher Development Specialists who are located in the Office of Professional Development.

**experienced teacher** A teacher who has been hired by Arlington Public Schools who has completed at least one year of teaching in another school system.

**mentee** A new hire supported by a trained mentor.

**mentor** A classroom teacher who has achieved continuing contract status and meets the local and state mentor selection criteria.

**mentoring** The process by which a role model, or mentor, offers support to another person. A mentor has knowledge and experience in an area and shares it with the person being mentored.

**Mentor Journal** A checklist that identifies specific areas of support provided to the mentee. The journal is submitted to the teacher specialists by the mentor on a monthly basis and is viewed as a confidential document.

**mentoring partnership agreement** A goal-setting document that is signed by the mentor and the mentee at the beginning of the school year.

**new hire** A teacher who has been hired for the first time by Arlington Public Schools.

**new teacher** A teacher who has been hired for the first time by Arlington Public Schools, with zero years of teaching experience. Cross-reference to beginning teacher.

**support** All of the essential elements of a formal mentor program that includes, but is not limited to, training, compensation, and release time for planning, observation, and feedback.

**POLICY QUESTION:**

**“WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO DO AND FOR WHOM?”**

The mission of the Arlington Public Schools (APS) Mentor Program is to provide intensive and sustained professional support for all first-year and experienced school-based new hires in an effort to attract, recruit, and retain highly qualified instructional staff. It is the goal of the program to also provide new hires with a mentor for their first year of teaching in APS.

In an effort to align itself with the Virginia Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act of 1999, APS designed and implemented a formal Mentor Program in 2000. The commitment to beginning teacher support and assessment and the retention of highly qualified teachers has been the focal point of the Mentor Program since its inception. It begins, however, with the commitment and training of teachers in the existing workforce. Jo-Lynne DeMary, Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction, stated at the 2004 State Mentor Conference: “It has become clear that strong induction and mentoring programs are important means to increase the success rate of beginning teachers.”

**Mentors**

The process of becoming a mentor starts with interested, continuing contract teachers completing and submitting a School-Based Mentor Application to their school administrator. A copy of the application can be found as Appendix A of this report. The administrator, with guidance from the Office of Professional Development Supervisor, has the task of either recommending that the applicant continue with the mentor training process, or he or she may decide not to recommend the applicant. Those whose applications are forwarded to the Office of Professional Development then begin the training process.

Mentor training consists of one full day and two half days of training. Participants in these sessions address the potential needs of new teachers (mentees). The concepts of learner-focused relationships and the roles and responsibilities of mentors are addressed. Communication skills, including how to be an effective listener, and observation models are discussed, and opportunities for role-playing are provided. Adult Learning Theory and the Five Stages of Teaching are concepts that also are addressed in an effort to prepare mentors for the support they will provide their mentees. Once mentor training is completed, APS mentors are given the information they need to support the new workforce. The training schedule is included as Appendix B.

It is the responsibility of the school administrator to pair first-year teachers and those new to APS with a trained mentor. Administrators use several criteria to assist them in the pairing of mentors with their newly hired staff. A key component is the mentor’s ability to maintain confidentiality, a fundamental component in the Mentor Program. A mentor should also possess strong interpersonal skills and have time to support the needs of a newly hired colleague. A common lunch or planning period during which to meet and a common grade level/subject are also strong considerations when an administrator is in the process of pairing a trained mentor with a mentee. Once the mentor–mentee pairing has been completed, the administrator shares

the pairing list with the school-based contact mentor (see Appendix C for copies of the Matching Checklists provided to administrators).

### **Contact Mentors**

The contact mentor is a teacher within the school building who functions as the manager of the Mentoring Program at the school level. Those interested in applying for the contact mentor position must have gone through the Mentor Training Program, must be on continuing contract status, and must have completed one successful year of mentoring, which includes submitting Mentor Journals in a timely manner. The applicant should also convey a positive attitude toward the school and the teaching profession, demonstrate effective communication skills, possess organization skills, have the ability to maintain confidentiality, and demonstrate a comfort with technology.

Once selected, the contact mentors commit to a year-long position during which they function as a support for the mentors and mentees and serve as liaisons between the Teacher Specialists at the county level and the school-based program. Their duties include the dissemination of materials, the facilitation of communication between the school-based program and the Teacher Specialists, and oversight of the general well-being of the Mentor Program in their building. Contact mentors also are asked to convene a minimum of two meetings per year with mentees and one with their mentors. Topics such as Back to School Night, parent conferences, and report cards are addressed at the school-based level. Contact mentors ensure that these issues are addressed so that the mentees are prepared at an appropriate time for issues they face during the school year. In the past, these topics were covered during the new hire classes, but that timing proved to be less than optimal. The contact mentors' application and list of responsibilities can be found in Appendix D.

By September, contact mentors are in place, active mentors for each school have been identified, and the pairing of mentors and mentees has been completed. The mentoring process then begins. During the week of orientation for new hires, a luncheon is held where mentees meet their mentors. This icebreaker is helpful in allowing the newly hired teachers to become acquainted with their mentors and in establishing the beginning of the relationship in a collegial setting. Within the first week of reporting to their schools, new hires should have met their mentors and their building's contact mentor.

### **The Process**

Between June and the first week in September, administrators match new hires with mentors. The assignment of the mentor–mentee pairings is done by school-based administrators (in most cases) as well as by system-wide curriculum supervisors.

During the first week when teachers return from summer break, contact mentors are asked to convene a meeting with active mentors to review their roles and responsibilities and to ensure that all mentors are prepared to support their assigned mentee, whether a first-year teacher or an experienced new hire. Contact mentors also assemble the mentees to welcome them to the school, allowing them to meet one another and to acquire some understanding of the Mentor

## *Description of Program*

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Program. This meeting is of utmost importance in establishing the confidential, supportive role the mentee may expect from those associated with the Mentor Program.

By the end of September, the mentor and mentee are expected to collaborate and complete a Partnership Agreement. This document establishes goals and objectives that will lay the groundwork for the mentor–mentee relationship throughout the year. Meeting times are agreed upon, boundaries are set, and the exact role confidentiality plays is outlined in the Partnership Agreement. The intent of this document is to ensure that continuous communication is maintained between the two, with expectations set that are both reasonable and realistic. The mentee and the mentor keep copies of this document, and a copy is sent to the Teacher Specialists in the Office of Professional Development. It may become necessary to refer to the Partnership Agreement intermittently, throughout the year, to refocus the relationship (see Appendix E for a copy of the Partnership Agreement).

Along with Partnership Agreements, mentors are expected to submit Mentor Journals to the Office of Professional Development the last day of each month, September through May. The journal reflects the mentor’s relationship with the mentee. The journals may be sent either electronically or via school mail. The first part of the journal is a checklist where the mentor indicates support provided to the mentee on a weekly basis. The areas listed include school policies/procedures, lesson planning/curriculum, behavior management, classroom organization, student concerns, special education support, student assessment, modeling instruction, parent issues, time management, technology support, in-house procedures, and communication.

The second half of the Mentor Journal allows a narrative response from the mentor concerning suggestions and recommendations given to his or her mentee and personal reflections on the mentee’s monthly progress. The insights given allow the Teacher Specialists who receive the journals to stay abreast of mentees’ progress and any special concerns mentors may have. Based on these monthly journals, the contact mentor may be asked to provide assistance, or the Teacher Specialists may initiate communication or plan an on-site visit (see Appendix F for a copy of the Mentor Journal).

Individuals who participate in the Mentor Program, either as trained mentors or as the school-based contact mentor, receive monetary compensation for their time and service in accordance with the system’s academic stipend. Although these sums change yearly on the basis of cost of living increments, the distribution of the compensation has set guidelines. In order to receive the mentor stipend, mentors must submit Mentor Journals on the last day of each month. Should journals not be submitted in a timely manner during the first pay cycle, with multiple journals being sent at one time, the first half of the stipend will be withheld. Once a commitment is reestablished on the part of the mentor, the mentoring stipend will be paid in full in June. If a mentor falls behind on three or more journals during the second pay cycle, Mentor Journals and a one-page narrative per journal must be submitted. The narrative is expected to summarize the support provided by the mentor in the areas identified in the journal. All documentation must be received in order for the stipend to be remitted.

Contact mentors receive a one-time stipend when their duties have been completed at the end of the school year. Stipends are processed in May, with payment in June. It is at this time that the

contact mentor position is reopened, and school-based, trained mentors interested in serving as the contact mentor the coming school year may apply.

The mentor–mentee relationship culminates with a Closure Conversation held at the end of the year. Personal and professional goals may be addressed for the coming year. Successes are revisited and celebrated. Most of all, it is a time of reflection for the mentor and mentee to note areas of strength and areas needing to be strengthened. At this time, it is important for the mentor to help the mentee redefine their relationship, as it will take on a more collegial feel in the coming year. Should an administrator feel that a teacher, at the end of his or her first year of teaching, would benefit from having a mentor in the second or third year of teaching, that may be discussed with the Supervisor of the Office of Professional Development.

### **Mentees**

The goal of the Mentor Program is to help beginning teachers make a successful transition into the public school classroom. As stated above, the APS Mentor Program provides a school-based mentor to new teachers and experienced new hires during their first year of teaching in the Arlington school system. This includes general and special education teachers, librarians, reading teachers, counselors, psychologists, and social workers. According to the APS Mentor Program, a new hire is defined as someone new to teaching in APS with zero years of experience, or someone new to teaching in APS with more than zero years of teaching experience. New hires who work at .5 and beyond are eligible for a mentor funded by the local School Board.

In addition, the Mentor Program provides support for teachers beyond the first year of teaching in APS. In such cases, funds from the state mentor program are used to provide mentors and a variety of additional support for probationary teachers. The state defines *new teacher* as someone who has been hired for the first time by the school system but has already completed at least one year of full-time, successful teaching experience prior to employment. A new teacher is also an individual who is placed in a new school or in a new instructional subject or level. A *beginning teacher* is defined as someone who has completed zero years of full-time teaching experience in a public or an accredited nonpublic school at the time of employment. An *experienced teacher* is a teacher who holds Virginia licensure and who has completed a least one year of full-time successful teaching experience in a public school or an accredited nonpublic school.

The state of Virginia mandated on June 22, 2000 that teacher mentor programs be created by local boards to provide assistance and professional support to teachers entering the profession and to improve the performance of experienced teachers who are not performing at an acceptable level. In response to this mandate, administrators were notified that if a teacher was not a new hire but needed a mentor beyond the first year of teaching in APS, a mentor would be provided upon written request from the principal or assistant principal. See Table 1 for data on new hires served in the 2004–2005 and 2005–2006 school years.

**Table 1. New Hires Provided Mentors During the 2004–2005 and 2005–2006 School Years**

School year	New hires (zero years teaching experience)	New hires (experienced, but new to APS)	2nd-year teachers with mentors <sup>b</sup>	Teachers assigned to new schools or new positions with APS	Re-hires	Late hires (after Jan. 15 of previous year)	Total
2004–2005	75	95	5	9	0	2	186
2005–2006 <sup>a</sup>	57	78	10	26	6	8	185

Notes. Source: APS Office of Professional Development.

<sup>a</sup> Data as of October 15, 2005. <sup>b</sup> A request was made by an administrator.

The data reported in Table 1 come from records maintained in the Office of Professional Development. The numbers of teachers with mentors in 2005–2006 were captured in the beginning of the school year and are likely to increase as additional requests come in throughout the year. In addition, 2005–2006 data are reported here (and not elsewhere in the report) to begin to establish a baseline. The data in Table 1 show that the number of teachers assigned to new schools or new positions and the number of rehires for whom mentors are requested are increasing. The extent to which this is a trend spanning multiple years is an issue that Professional Development staff will monitor.

### **History of the Arlington Public Schools Mentor Program**

APS started its first formal mentor training program during the 2000–2001 school year in response to the Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act of 1999. The act mandated that funds be appropriated by the Virginia General Assembly to train public school teachers as mentors, to provide assistance and professional support to teachers entering the profession, and to improve the performance of experienced teachers who are not performing at an acceptable level.

#### **Program Year 2000–2001**

A total of 139 teachers completed mentor training. APS provided a mentor for 45 teachers who were new to the profession with zero years of teaching experience. In addition, 115 experienced teachers new to APS were provided with mentors. Of the total number of trained mentors, 138 agreed to serve as active mentors for the 2001–2002 school year.

The mentor–mentee relationships continued throughout the school year, as evidenced by mentor journals and mentee end-of-year surveys. Surveys indicated that the training provided to mentors was a critical component in preparing them to work with their mentees. Mentees received assistance in developing and presenting lessons to meet students’ needs effectively and reported that much of their teaching success was attributed to the support provided by their mentors. Although the Mentor Program was only one facet of the induction program, it seemed to be a key facet in helping teachers make a successful transition into teaching in APS.

### **Program Year 2001–2002**

During the second year of the Mentor Program, the number of staff interested in becoming mentors continued to rise. Recruiting mentors was much easier than in the previous year, and principals completed the matching of mentors and mentees by the end of the first month of school. A total of 57 teachers completed mentor training, and 68 new teachers and 119 experienced teachers were supported by trained school-based mentors. Although it is difficult to document the direct impact of the Mentor Program on student achievement, it appeared that new teachers who were mentored by trained mentors were more aware of the resources available for both themselves and their students in their efforts to support instruction. At the end of the year, 170 mentors indicated that they would serve as mentors during the 2002–2003 school year.

### **Program Year 2002–2003**

During the third year of the Mentor Program, the position of contact mentor was added. Contact mentors are responsible for disseminating information from the Teacher Specialists to mentors in their building and for maintaining ongoing communication among mentors. A total of 23 contact mentors were trained and became responsible for facilitating communication between and among trained mentors within their buildings. Concurrently, 51 new mentors were trained and provided support to 68 new teachers with zero years of teaching experience and 100 experienced teachers new to APS.

### **Program Year 2003–2004**

During the 2003–2004 school year, awareness of the Mentor Program throughout the system increased substantially. Recruiting mentors for 2004–2005 was much easier than in the past. Principals used the resources provided by the Office of Professional Development to provide the best match for mentors and mentees. System wide, more departments became interested in starting mentor programs for non–school-based staff and sought support from the Office of Professional Development in designing an implementation plan.

This was also the year that the School Board approved a substantial increase in the mentor stipend for the second half of the school year, and a formal Mentor Partnership was established with the community. During this year, 47 teachers completed mentor training. There were 60 teachers new to the profession, all of whom received mentors. In addition, 90 experienced teachers new to APS were provided mentors. The impact of the Mentor Program on student learning could be inferred from the following:

- Mentees received assistance in developing and presenting lessons to meet student needs effectively.
- The mentors were able to provide guidance in pacing and share resources necessary to teach the APS curriculum.
- The mentor–mentee partnership agreement focused on setting goals that supported learning for all students.



## ***Description of Program***

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During the fourth year of implementation, the APS mentor program was cited as exemplary by the Video Journal of Education. Four APS teachers and both countywide mentor specialists were selected to participate in a training video on *Effective Mentoring*. The video was released on October 14, 2003.

### **Program Year 2004–2005**

During the 2004–2005 school year, 75 teachers completed one full day and two half days of mentor training. A total of 75 new teachers were provided with formal mentors. In addition, 95 experienced teachers new to APS were provided with mentors.

To date, a total of 380 mentors have been trained over a 5-year period. The success of the program may be attributed to the quality of training afforded to the mentors, coupled with the commitment of teachers who are dedicated to supporting success in teaching.

The Office of Professional Development began to collect qualitative data from Mentor Journals and quantitative data from substitute request forms to examine the impact of the Mentor Program. The data indicated the following:

- Mentees and mentors worked collaboratively to develop curriculum and provide instruction in accordance with Best Instructional Practices.
- Mentors and mentees used a total of 63 full substitute days and 64 half substitute days for developing curriculum, planning instruction, observing each other's classes, and providing feedback on observations.
- The mentors met with new hires during the August pre-service week at a Meet Your Mentee Luncheon.
- New hires were given an end-of-year celebration with built-in reflection activities. Over 75% of first-year teachers attended.
- The culminating mentor activity for the 2004–2005 school year was a recognition dinner for all active mentors. Over 85% of our current active mentors attended, in addition to APS Superintendent Dr. Robert G. Smith and Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Dr. Mark A. Johnston.

The Mentor Program continued to gain recognition throughout the school system and community. Staff from the Office of Professional Development collaborated and shared resources with mentor specialists in Frederick, Maryland, and Loudoun County, Virginia, to support their new Mentor Program initiatives. In addition, APS staff worked with the Arlington County Sheriff's department to assist them in starting their first formal mentor training program. During the summer of 2005, the first Refresher Mentoring Training Session was offered for mentors trained more than three years ago. This training brought mentors up to date on best practices in mentoring and provided a forum for them to learn about the growth of the program over the years. For a complete list of presentations made by the Office of Professional Development staff, see Appendix G.

Tables 2 and 3 present information on the Mentor Program training history and stipends.

**Table 2. Mentor Training Program History**

<i>Program year</i>	<b>Number of new hires<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Number of mentors trained</b>	<b>Number of active mentors</b>
2000–2001	160	139	136
2001–2002	187	57	140
2002–2003	168	51	156
2003–2004	150	47	130
2004–2005	280	75	189

*Notes.* Source: Office of Professional Development.

<sup>a</sup> Includes all new hires (including part time and system wide).

**Table 3. Mentor Program Stipend History, in Dollars**

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>2000–2001</b>	<b>2001–2002</b>	<b>2002–2003</b>	<b>2003–2004</b>	<b>2004–2005<sup>a</sup></b>
For mentoring a teacher new to APS with zero years experience	\$450	\$450	\$450	\$550	\$1,628.31
For mentoring a teacher new to APS with more than zero years of experience	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$250	\$1,628.31
Contact mentor stipend (per active mentor in the building)	The contact mentor role did not exist	The contact mentor role did not exist	The contact mentor role did not exist	\$22.50/new hire in building	\$818.17 (fixed amount)

*Notes.* Mentors also receive 90 recertification points for serving as an active mentor each year. Contact mentors also receive 30 recertification points for serving as the mentor leader within their school.

<sup>a</sup> Increase approved by School Board.

**POLICY QUESTION:  
“WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?”**

Prior to the 2000–2001 school year, annual mentor and new hire surveys indicated that the amount of support provided by two countywide mentors did not effectively meet the needs of all new Arlington Public Schools (APS) teachers. As a result, the Office of Professional Development created a formal mentor program to provide more frequent and direct support to new hires to help them make the transition to teaching in APS. To establish this program, the Office of Professional Development examined a variety of successful mentor program models. Concurrently, the Virginia State Board of Education provided summer training to program coordinators to assist them in creating mentor programs in response to the Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act of 1999. In order to receive state funds, school systems had to either develop their own mentor model or use one of the state’s recommended mentor models. These models included the Fairfax County Great Beginnings Program, The Santa Cruz New Teacher Project, and the Educational Testing Service Induction Program. The APS Office of Professional Development supervisor, along with two teacher mentor specialists, reviewed each model and decided that the Great Beginnings mentor model closely matched the goals and objectives of the APS Mentor Program.

When the APS mentor program began in the fall of 2000, the following goals were established as a basis to begin the program.

- The mentor program would help increase teacher retention in APS.
- All school-based new hires teaching at a .5 level and above would receive a trained school-based mentor during the first year of teaching in APS.
- Mentors would receive training that supported Best Practices in teaching and mentoring.
- The mentor–mentee relationship would be established at the beginning of the year, would be sustained throughout the year, and would come to closure at the end of the school year.
- Administrators would submit to the Office of Professional Development all mentor–mentee matches by end of the first week of school.
- Teachers, administrators, and staff would recognize and respect the mentoring partnership as confidential.
- Mentors would receive a stipend commensurate with the amount of work involved in the program.
- The mentor and mentee would view their partnership as collegial rather than hierarchical.
- Mentors and mentees would grow together as teachers and learners in an effort to enhance instructional practices.
- Teachers would feel supported by other teachers, administrators, and staff.
- Mentoring would become a culturally integrated practice of all stakeholders.

After three years of program implementation, it was necessary to revise the aforementioned goals to better reflect and meet the ever-changing needs of new hires. Thus, the Office of Professional Development began to refine the goals of the mentor program by using the Understanding by Design Framework to specifically outline what mentors should know and be able to do.

## **Mentors**

### What Mentors Should Know

- Roles, responsibilities, and qualities of effective mentors
- Potential needs of a beginning teacher
- Stages of new teacher development
- Phases of mentoring
- Elements of adult learning theory
- Conditions that characterize a learning-focused relationship
- Their own style of interaction and the style of their mentee
- What resources exist to support the mentoring relationship
- Best Practices in mentoring and teaching
- Strategies that facilitate teaching and learning
- Classroom observation techniques
- Continuum of mentor stances
- Elements of a closure conversation

### What Mentors Should Be Able to Do

- Negotiate a learning-focused relationship: Set goals, establish boundaries, and create a road map for success
- Maintain confidentiality and establish mutual trust
- Structure support to meet the needs of the new teacher
- Overcome obstacles in the mentoring relationship
- Recognize the needs of their mentee at a given moment in time and be flexible in the stance taken (consultant, collaborator, coach) in the interaction
- Use self-questioning techniques to determine what role/stance to take... What did the mentee say that indicated to you what to do?
- Attend fully and recognize cues of physical rapport
- Use effective paraphrasing and a variety of questioning strategies to probe for specificity, support planning, prompt reflection, and extend thinking
- Reflect on their own teaching practices for continuous learning and improvement
- Recognize the signals that it is time for closure
- Celebrate learning
- Seek opportunities to grow and learn with their mentee
- Assist the mentee in charting a course for teacher leadership

### **Mentees**

From the design for the mentor expectations came the need to establish goals for mentees as well.

#### What Mentees Should Know

- Mentoring is not a forced practice
- What goes on in the mentee's classroom is ultimately his or her responsibility
- Feedback provided by mentors should be nonevaluative and nonjudgmental
- Mentoring is an opportunity for reciprocal growth and learning

#### What Mentees Should Be Able to Do

- Seek out mentor to schedule meetings and communicate ongoing needs
- Actively listen; be open to constructive criticism and positive feedback; consider all suggestions and options with an open mind
- Assume responsibility for their own professional growth and development
- Set goals and make decisions to achieve those goals
- Spend time reflecting on the achievement of goals
- Communicate openly with their mentor; ask for feedback; acknowledge when mentor's suggestions are followed and share the outcome
- Value the mentor as a person
- Develop mutual trust and respect
- Maintain confidentiality

**POLICY QUESTION:  
“WHAT RESOURCES ARE COMMITTED?”**

**Staff, Curriculum, and Materials**

Office of Professional Development Staff

- 1.0 Supervisor
- 2.0 specialists
- 1.0 12-month clerical specialist

School-Based Staff

- 35 school-based contact mentors
- 369 trained mentors (some have assumed other positions in APS, retired, or left the school system).

2000–2001 (139)  
2001–2002 (57)  
2002–2003 (51)  
2003–2004 (47)  
2004–2005 (75)

Curriculum Resources

The Mentor Program adheres to the Virginia State Guidelines for Mentor Programs by providing training to individuals who qualify to be mentors and by supporting first-year teachers. The curriculum was developed after lengthy research of methods and practices of successful induction programs throughout the country. The training of mentors addresses current data and research, including stages of teaching and factors that affect the resilience of new teachers. The curriculum is compiled in notebooks and is continually evaluated for effectiveness and quality of content. It is the responsibility of the teacher development specialist to monitor the types of support provided to mentors to ensure that areas of Best Instructional Practices are being discussed and/or modeled through classroom demonstration for new hires.

Materials

***For the Mentors***

A comprehensive delivery model has been developed that includes mentoring practices on videos, the sharing of current published research, and mentoring methods and materials. These materials have been compiled over time and are delivered in an interactive, informative model.

***For the Mentees***

During Orientation Week, new hires receive an information packet that outlines the types of support available to new hires. This packet includes information about the Mentor Program, Survival Tips to Get Started, and a schedule of new-hire classes that are required as part of the induction program. New hires also receive a New Hire Handbook that includes information on the following topics:

## *Description of Program*

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- APS philosophy
- APS strategic goals
- APS annual priorities
- Department of Instruction–Instructional Goals
- Who’s Who in APS
- Special education coordinators
- Mini telephone directory
- STAN substitute information
- Holidays for school employees
- Instructional Media and Technology
- Library Information Services
- Instructional Materials Production Center
- Benefits summary
- Health comparison charts
- Health and dental benefits overview
- Changes outside open enrollment
- Tax-sheltered annuities
- Credit Union information

The purpose of the New Hire Handbook is to help new hires make the transition into APS and to provide them with general information about the school system. Additionally, new hires receive a wealth of information during New Hire Week from content supervisors, department specialists, lead teachers, and other content specialists.

**POLICY QUESTION:**

**“WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM?”**

Implementation of the Mentor Program is the responsibility of the Office of Professional Development Supervisor, Teacher Development Specialists, and the Clerical Specialist. The Mentor Program provides support to new hires and to mentors, including but not limited to

- Confidential support to probationary and experienced teachers;
- Assistance with the school-based mentor program;
- Mentor training to qualified individuals;
- Informational classes for newly hired teachers six times per year;
- Organization of a pre-service, week-long induction program for newly hired teachers;
- Guidance in continued professional growth;
- Non-evaluative feedback;
- Substitute time to plan, observe, and/or collaborate;
- Organizational, procedural, and behavioral methodology workshops to assist first-year teachers in setting up their classrooms, establishing procedures and routines, and developing classroom management techniques.

**School-Based Staff**

The primary responsibilities of the school-based staff members who implement the Mentor Program are described below. The responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

**Mentors**

1. Provide a communications link between new teachers and Teacher Development Specialists:
  - Submit monthly Mentor Journals the last day of each month.
  - Complete, sign, and submit a copy of the Mentoring Partnership Agreement.
  - Work with countywide Teacher Development Specialists in supporting new teacher hires.
2. Support new teachers' understanding of Best Instructional Practices:
  - Convey a positive attitude toward the school and the teaching profession.
  - Model lessons of Best Instructional Practices in teaching.
  - Work with new teachers in setting the climate for learning.
  - Help new teachers develop strategies for assessing learning.
  - Share with new teachers ways to communicate the learning to parents.
  - Work with new teachers on ways to instruct for improved student learning.
  - Assist new teachers in reflecting and goal setting.
3. Maintain the Mentoring Partnership Agreement:
  - Maintain confidentiality of the relationship.
  - Meet regularly as scheduled.
  - Establish and agree on the goals and objectives of the relationship.
  - Keep communication open, candid, and direct.
  - Look for multiple opportunities and experiences to enhance learning.



## ***Description of Program***

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- Share challenges faced and strategies used.
  - Provide regular feedback to each other and evaluate progress.
  - Decide whether the relationship should continue, how much longer it should continue for, and when and how to come to closure.
  - Use other resources to support the mentoring relationship.
  - Work collaboratively to maintain the integrity of the mentoring relationship.
  - Focus on goals that promote professional growth.
4. Participate in sustained, ongoing mentor professional development:
- Complete one full-day and two half-day mentor training sessions.
  - Attend a Mentor Refresher Course when applicable.

### Contact Mentors

- Convey a positive attitude toward the school and the teaching profession.
- Demonstrate effective communication skills.
- Possess and use organizational skills.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Use e-mail and voicemail proficiently and in a timely manner.
- Use *Blackboard* as a communication tool (training is provided).
- Manage and share resources.
- Submit to the Office of Professional Development the name, subject/grade level, teaching status, room number, and the name of the assigned mentor of all new hires in the building.
- Inform the Office of Professional Development when there is a late new hire, unmatched new hire, or transfer to the building.
- Facilitate communication between school-based mentors and countywide Teacher Development Specialists.
- Coordinate an in-house group meeting, to include all mentees and mentors, a *minimum* of once per semester.
- Inform the Office of Professional Development of concerns regarding mentors or mentees.
- Disseminate information to school-based mentors.
- Ensure that new teachers receive information on topics that are no longer addressed at the countywide level. These topics include Back-to-School Night, parent-teacher conferences, report cards, and end of year procedures.

### School-Based Administrators

- Submit requests for mentors
- Make mentor–mentee assignments, a checklist is provided to the administrators.

### **Central Office Staff**

### Curriculum Supervisors

- Make mentor–mentee assignments, by using the checklist provided.

### **Office of Professional Development Staff**

The primary responsibilities of the Office of Professional Development staff members who implement the Mentor Program appear below. The responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### Teacher Development Specialists

##### 1. Coordinate the School-Based Mentor Program:

- Develop, publicize, and provide informational sessions about the School-Based Mentor Program in an effort to build support for the program and recruit new mentors each year.
- Prepare and disseminate materials describing the mentor program.
- Plan, conduct, and evaluate training for school-based mentors.
- Meet with new hires to discuss the Mentor Program and the roles and responsibilities of the mentors and mentees.
- Coordinate and facilitate the roles and responsibilities of the school-based contact mentors.
- Meet individually with mentors to provide ongoing support and training.
- Meet with new teacher hires to monitor the mentor program, identifying unmet needs and modifying the program to better meet the needs of the mentees.
- Work with principals and supervisors to facilitate mentor–mentee matching.
- Prepare and distribute materials for use in the implementation and maintenance of the mentor program.
- Consult with the Staff Development Supervisor to report on the progress of the mentor program and report annually in writing about the program.
- Collect and maintain documentation on the support provided and records of the program and its participants.
- Facilitate and coordinate the evaluation process of the mentor program.
- Evaluate the Mentor Program by seeking suggestions from current mentors, mentees, and administrators.
- Prepare recommendations for improvements to ensure the program functions according to the Best Practices for professional development.
- Publish a quarterly newsletter.
- Manage the training budget.
- Organize and facilitate advanced training on peer coaching.

##### 2. Coordinate and support the New Teacher Hire Program:

- Develop, coordinate, and publicize the monthly New Teacher Hire course to provide staff development on relevant topics related to APS policies, procedures, and Best Practices for teaching, differentiating presentations for beginning and experienced teachers.
- Organize workshops in conjunction with other departments to help teachers become highly qualified.
- Observe, provide feedback, and model Best Practices in teaching.

## *Description of Program*

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- Work with principals, assistant principals, supervisors, specialists, and special education coordinators to identify and provide staff development that meets the needs of new APS teachers.
- Organize and facilitate support groups for new teachers.
- Design and present workshops on effective teaching, classroom organization, and management to beginning and experienced teachers.

### 3. Coordinate orientation for staff new to APS:

- Participate in developing, organizing, publicizing, and presenting orientation for new teacher hires.
- Prepare New Teacher Hire and Teacher Assistant Handbooks, program agendas, and invitations.
- Plan and conduct monthly orientations for late new teacher hires, substitutes, and assistants.

### 4. Support efforts to recruit and retain high quality staff:

- Plan and conduct workshops for teacher assistants, interns, and administrators as needed on relevant topics such as The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the Praxis Exam, classroom and behavior management, and the Mentor Program.
- Participate in APS job fairs and recruitment days.
- Provide support and assistance to continuing contract teachers who are on Formal Improvement Plans.
- When applicable, provide support and assistance to probationary teachers who are on Plans of Improvement.

## Supervisor

The Supervisor performs the following tasks in addition to responsibilities similar to those of the Teacher Development Specialists:

- Supervise and evaluate the Mentor Program for continuous improvement.
- Seek funds to support and manage the Mentor Program's operating budget.
- Work in conjunction with program specialists, school-based mentors, contact mentors, and school and central office staff in an effort to maintain ongoing communication among all stakeholders.
- Participate in the design and implementation of the Mentor Program to ensure alignment with state and local guidelines.
- Provide administrators with resources to support the Mentor Program within their schools and departments.
- Collect and analyze data to determine ongoing program needs.
- Coordinate system wide awareness programs to enhance school and community awareness of the impact on teacher retention.
- Design the annual Mentor Program brochures and related literature.
- Manage and coordinate system wide professional development and training programs to include assessment, design, and implementation tasks.

Clerical Specialist

The Office of Professional Development's clerical specialist facilitates the process in the following ways:

- Maintains an extensive mentor and new hire database,
- Manages state and local accounts for mentor stipends,
- Coordinates ongoing classes and in-services, and
- Processes information related to the program.

**POLICY QUESTION:**

**“ARE THERE PERSISTENT CONCERNS THAT HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED BY USERS SINCE THE LAST EVALUATION?”**

A number of concerns have been identified through continuing conversations with mentors, contact mentors, teacher specialists, and new hires in the Arlington Public Schools (APS). Issues of concern include training, matching of mentor–mentee, time to collaborate, accountability, and confidentiality. Many of these concerns were examined during the evaluation.

**Issues of Concern**

Training

Teacher specialists and mentors realize the value of completing the three Mentor Training sessions that are required in order to become a mentor. Survey feedback from participants and current research about induction programs throughout the country are continuously monitored. From these sources, the Mentor Training sessions are modified and updated to address the most current issues and trends in retaining highly qualified teachers.

Since the inception of the formal Mentor Program in 2000, over 400 teachers have become trained mentors. Some of these mentors have become administrators or have left the school system. The concern lies with keeping mentors up to date and aware of the most recent trends in teacher induction programs. A Mentor Training Refresher course was created to meet this need; however, attendance has been voluntary. Ideally, mentors would attend a retraining every fourth year if they wished to continue their status as active mentors. This requirement would ensure that the Mentor Program would continue to improve and meet the needs and concerns of APS’s ever-changing new hire population.

Matching

Research shows that an induction program is only as good as the match made between a new hire and his or her mentor. This has been determined to be true regardless of whether the teacher is new to the profession or comes to the system with teaching experience. Therein lies another concern of the Mentor Program.

The matching of new hires and mentors has historically been the responsibility of the school-based administrator. Teacher specialists, mentors, and contact mentors may be consulted; however, the administrator makes the final decision. Both new hires and mentors have requested that several conditions be taken into consideration in order to maximize the mentor–mentee relationship.

New hires have responded in numerous surveys that a common planning period, teaching the same subject area, and proximity to one another are the most important factors that should be considered when matching a new hire with a trained mentor. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to satisfy these three factors.

Difficulty arises when there is no trained mentor available who teaches the same core subject or shares a common planning period with the mentee. At times, accessibility becomes difficult because the new hire is not close in proximity to the mentor. In the case of social workers, psychologists, resource teachers for the gifted, and other specialists, the mentor may be located in another building altogether.

As the Mentor Program becomes more visible in APS, the administrative teams are becoming increasingly aware of the role they play in the success of retaining highly qualified teachers. Administrators are encouraging more teachers to become trained mentors in order to have greater flexibility in their matching. With this collaboration, schools are becoming staffed with continuing contract teachers trained in mentoring. This will allow for the matching concerns to be addressed, resulting in maximum support of the new hires.

#### Collaborative Time

An age-old concern echoed in the teaching profession is lack of time. Mentoring is no exception. A persistent concern of teacher mentors and new hires has been that there is a lack of ample time to collaborate. County and school-based meetings, professional responsibilities, and lack of compatible times to meet exacerbate the situation.

Collaborative time between mentor and mentee can be increased through the matching process. Taking into consideration proximity, planning times, and subject compatibility would increase the amount of time a new hire would have to interact with his or her mentor.

The Mentor Program has attempted to address this concern by allocating two professional leave days per year per active mentor. The mentor may use these days in any number of ways to meet the needs of the mentee. This does not address the daily/weekly need to meet and confer, but it may meet some of the needs of the mentor–mentee relationship.

#### Accountability

As the state and county invest funds to hire and retain highly qualified teachers, accountability becomes more of an issue. The Teacher Specialists, who facilitate the Mentor Program, find it an increasing challenge to monitor the support that new hires receive from school-based mentors. Partnership Agreements are sound tools in establishing meeting times and expectations for the mentor–mentee pair; however, greater accountability is needed to ensure that the goals and objectives included in the agreement are revisited on a regular basis. Monthly Mentor Journals were established as that accountability tool. Mentor Journals were designed to give the Teacher Specialists monthly feedback regarding how the new hire was progressing. This tool, however, is only as good as the reporting in it.

In an effort to improve the situation, a formal guideline was established that would link the remittance of the mentor stipend to the feedback desired to determine how the new hires were progressing in the field. The reporting system was also streamlined and made easier by electronic transmittal to the Mentor Program. Although it is still too early to determine the success of these changes, the trend appears to be favorable.

## *Description of Program*

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### Confidentiality

The foundation of the Mentor Program is confidentiality. If the induction program is to be a success, the new hires must feel they are free to speak to their mentors without their mistakes and queries being exposed. This trust, once established, reinforces the relationship as one in which learning takes place, resulting in professional and personal growth.

In the past, mentors' accountability to school-based or county administrators raised a concern. Was a mentor obligated to share his or her knowledge of the new hire's performance based on private conversations and observations? As the Mentor Program progressed and developed, confidentiality became the cornerstone. Without this trust between mentor and mentee, a new hire's professional growth could be in question. Currently, administrators, supervisors, and mentors understand and respect the role confidentiality plays in the mentoring relationship. The importance of confidentiality is stressed in all of the training sessions and appears as an integral part of the Partnership Agreement signed by both the mentor and mentee.

## **POLICY QUESTION: “HOW WELL DID WE IMPLEMENT?”**

This section analyzes key aspects of the implementation of the Mentor Program. More specifically, implementation questions in the following four areas are addressed:

1. the extent to which the APS Mentor Program matches state criteria;
2. the attributes of the relationship between mentor and mentee;
3. the support mentors receive; and
4. the role of the contact mentor.

### **Background**

The Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act passed by the Virginia state legislature in 1999 requires that local school boards provide mentors to probationary teachers with no prior teaching experience. Three basic criteria for selecting mentors were outlined in the Act and described in the state’s *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs* (Department of Education, 2000). First, mentors must be classroom teachers with continuing contract status and must work in the same building as the teachers they are mentoring or be instructional staff whose sole job is to mentor new teachers. Second, mentors should not mentor more than four teachers at a time. Third, mentors are required to guide newly hired teachers “through demonstrations, observations, and consultations to promote instructional excellence” (p. 11).

### **Background on the Data Analysis**

The following approach was undertaken to determine if the Mentor Program is meeting the goal of providing mentors to all probationary teachers with zero years of teaching experience. The teacher data sets for school years 2000–2001 through 2004–2005 were obtained from Technology Services. Every teacher employed by APS was included in the data set for each school year, along with information on the teacher’s hire and termination dates, certification type, and number of years of teaching experience. The teacher records were linked across the five years to create a longitudinal data set.

Several assumptions were made to identify teachers in the longitudinal data set who were eligible for a mentor. The assumptions are detailed below.

- a) For each school year, any teacher with zero years of teaching experience as noted in the APS personnel database was flagged as eligible for a mentor during that year.
- b) In some cases, teachers with zero years of teaching experience appeared to have previous teaching experience in Arlington based on a review of the longitudinal data. If a teacher had previous teaching experience with APS, it was assumed that the teacher was not eligible for a mentor, and the flag was removed.
- c) For the purpose of this analysis, any teacher hired after December 31 of a school year was flagged as eligible for a mentor during the following school year.



The numbers of teachers “eligible for a mentor,” based on the assumptions noted above, are shown in Table 4. This list includes all newly hired T-scale employees, including teachers in part-time or system wide positions (positions not assigned to a specific school).

**Table 4. APS New Hires (2001–2005)**

	<b>2001–2002</b>	<b>2002–2003</b>	<b>2003–2004</b>	<b>2004–2005</b>
New hires	277	198	230	227

*Note.* Source: Teacher longitudinal data set, 2000–2005: Planning and Evaluation.

Next, evaluation staff used mentor-mentee assignment records from the Office of Professional Development from 2001–2002 through 2004–2005 to identify teachers who had mentors. A flag was added to the longitudinal data set for each teaching year, identifying teachers paired with mentors. Table 5 shows the number of teachers assigned mentors over a 4-year period.

**Table 5. Number of Teachers Assigned Mentors (2001–2005)**

	<b>2001–2002</b>	<b>2002–2003</b>	<b>2003–2004</b>	<b>2004–2005</b>
Mentees identified	161	149	141	175

*Note.* Source: Teacher longitudinal data set, 2000–2005: Planning and Evaluation.

It is possible that more teachers were actually served by mentors than the number of teachers reported in Table 5. However, the numbers reflected in this analysis are based solely on information from the Professional Development Office that evaluation staff could match to teachers in the longitudinal data set received from Technology Services.

**Evaluation Question 1: Virginia State Criteria**

The following questions address aspects of the Virginia state criteria for mentor programs.

1. *What is the proportion of new hires paired with a mentor?*
2. *What is the proportion of new hires paired with mentors who have received training?*
3. *To what extent do mentors meet the Virginia state criteria for mentor selection? Mentors should*
  - *work in the same building as their mentees and be on continuing contract;*
  - *mentor no more than four mentees; and*
  - *guide mentees through demonstrations, observations, and consultations.*

**Proportion of New Hires Paired With a Mentor**

**Data Sources**

- APS database of all T-scale employees for the school years 2001–2002 through 2004–2005

- Office of Professional Development records of mentor–mentee assignments from 2001–2002 through 2004–2005

**Results: Proportion of New Hires Paired With a Mentor**

According to the design of and resources available to the Mentor Program, some new hires are not eligible for mentors, including the following:

- A teacher in less than a .5 position.
- A teacher in a position location designated as system wide, indicating that the teacher was not assigned to one school building.
- A teacher hired after January 15<sup>th</sup> (because she or he does not automatically have a contract for the subsequent year).

Therefore, to determine the proportion of eligible new hires paired with mentors data were run to examine the number of teachers who were .5 FTE or greater, and their position locations (see Table 6).

**Table 6. Number of Teachers New to APS and Percentage of New Teachers Paired With Mentors**

School year	No. of teachers new to APS	Teachers new to APS not assigned a mentor				*No. of new teachers eligible for a mentor (No. new to APS minus not eligible for mentor)	No. of teachers new to APS assigned mentors (as percentage of teachers eligible for mentor)
		No.	No. with FTE < .5 (and percentage of those new to APS with no mentor)	No. system-wide (and percentage of those new to APS with no mentor)	No. not eligible for mentor		
2001–02	277	136	5 (5%)	19 (13%)	22	255	141 (55%)
2002–03	198	77	3 (4%)	12 (16%)	14	184	121 (66%)
2003–04	230	105	9 (9%)	31 (30%)	39	191	125 (65%)
2004–05	227	69	10 (14%)	14 (20%)	21	206	158 ( 77%)

Notes. Source: Teacher longitudinal data set, 2000–2005: Planning and Evaluation.

\* This number takes into account teachers who were both FTE<.5 and system wide so that they are not double counted.

Based on this information, the proportion of new hires who were eligible for mentors and paired with one ranged from a low of 55% in 2001–2002 to a high of 77% in 2004–2005. Looking more closely at 2004-05, it appears that there were 48 teachers new to APS who were not assigned mentors. Who were these teachers? Twenty-nine of the forty-eight new teachers whose mentors could not be verified were secondary teachers, six were elementary classroom teachers, eight

were special education teachers, and five were ESOL/HILT teachers. Of these 48 teachers, 11 initially were assigned mentors according to records kept in the Office of Professional Development. However, their mentors either did not complete the training or paperwork necessary to be paid. These mentors may have worked with mentees on an informal basis.

Among the mentees identified in the longitudinal data set, there were also teachers assigned mentors who were not new to APS. The program also has assigned mentors based on requests from their administrators, usually for teachers who have switched grade levels or schools. According to the Virginia *Guidelines for Mentoring*, support should be provided for new teachers and those experiencing difficulty as part of the training continuum for all teachers (new teachers are defined as individuals placed in a new school, new instructional level, or new subject area). For example, during the 2004–2005 school year, 17 experienced APS teachers received mentors at the request of their administrators. See Table 7 for information on experienced APS teachers paired with mentors.

**Table 7. Experienced Teachers Not New to APS Assigned Mentors**

<b>School year</b>	<b>Total No. of mentees (new and experienced teachers)</b>	<b>No. of experienced APS teachers assigned mentors</b>	<b>Experienced APS teachers assigned mentors (as percentage of total no. of mentees)</b>
2001–02	161	20	12%
2002–03	149	28	19%
2003–04	141	16	11%
2004–05	175	17	10%

*Note.* Source: Teacher longitudinal data set, 2000–2005: Planning and Evaluation.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Current efforts to reorganize Information Services might include specifications that provide the Office of Professional Development with direct access to teacher data relating to implementation of the Mentor Program. The current process of obtaining data via Personnel Services and referrals from contact mentors and principals does not always ensure that the program identifies all new hires.

Accountability could be improved if the following changes occur:

- a) Technology Services works with the Mentor Program staff to define and develop a flag that automatically generates an ongoing list of new hires.
- b) Technology Services provides the Mentor Program with the rights to access and update the list of new hires and to provide new fields in the teacher data set, including
  - i) a field identifying the “mentor assigned” (mentor employee number) to a mentee, and
  - ii) fields identifying the “mentees assigned” (mentee employee numbers) to a mentor.

- iii) Note, new data fields related to mentor and mentee assignments should not be overwritten annually, but instead should be maintained for evaluating mentor services over time.
- c) The Mentor Program regularly reviews the automatically generated list of new hires and maintains accurate mentor and mentee assignments within the teacher data set.
- d) If Technology Services explores this issue further, it may be possible to determine a way to generate mentor stipends directly from the information maintained by the Mentor Program. It may be possible to eliminate a number of steps that the Office of Professional Development and Personnel Services currently use to process pay for mentor stipends.

### **Mentees Paired With Trained Mentors**

#### **Data Source**

- Training records maintained by the Office of Professional Development

#### **Results: Mentees Paired With Trained Mentors**

Records from the Office of Professional Development indicate that the number of mentors receiving training ranged from 139 in the inaugural year of the program (2000–2001) to 75 mentors in 2004–2005. Of the 182 active mentors for 2005–2006, all have received training and, thus, all 2005–2006 mentees are paired with trained mentors.

### **Mentors Meeting Virginia State Criteria for Selection**

#### **Data Sources**

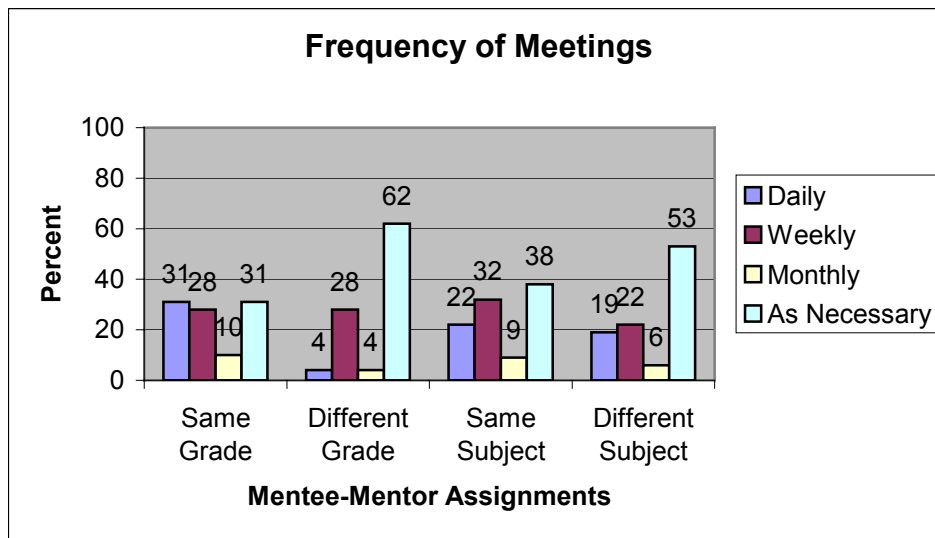
- Records maintained by Office of Professional Development
- Surveys administered to 122 teachers with mentors in June 2005. The surveys included an item related to the frequency with which mentees met with their mentors. The complete survey is included in Appendix H.

#### **Results: Mentor Selection Criteria**

As noted in the introduction to this section, Virginia state criteria require that mentors work in the same building as their mentees, are on continuing contracts, and mentor no more than four teachers at the same time. According to records kept in the Office of Professional Development, the majority of paid mentors meet these state criteria. For example, during the 2004–2005 school year, all but four of the more than 100 elementary mentor–mentee pairs worked in the same school building. The four pairs who did not work in the same building did, however, teach the same subjects. Similarly, of the 88 mentor–mentee pairs at the secondary level in 2004–2005, all taught in the same building. Further, 71 of the 88 secondary mentees taught the same grade, subject, or both the same grade and subject as their mentors. In addition, all mentors paid in 2004–2005 were on continuing contracts with APS, and no mentor was assigned to more than two mentees.

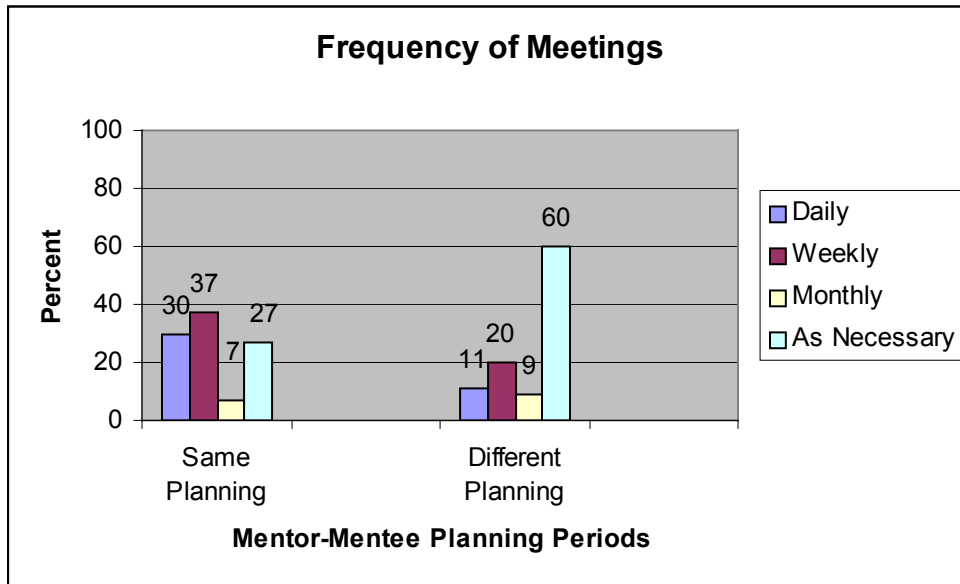
It does seem, therefore, that mentor–mentee assignments are made consistent with state guidelines. What effect does this have on the relationship? To address that question, survey data were analyzed to determine if mentees who taught the same grade and/or subject as their mentors met more frequently with them throughout the school year. As illustrated in Figure 1, mentees who taught the same grade and subject reported that they met more frequently with their mentors than mentees who did not teach the same grade and subject. This was especially true among mentees who reported that they taught the same grade level as their mentors: 31% of these mentees reported that they met with their mentor on a daily basis as compared with only 4% who did not teach the same grade as their mentors. It should be noted that these data cannot be broken down into elementary and secondary teachers—an interesting finding for further inquiry.

**Figure 1. Mentor–Mentee Assignments: Frequency of Meetings**



Notes. Source: Mentee Survey, June 2005. Same Grade (n=73), Different Grade(n=45), Same Subject (n=80), Different (n=38).

In addition to being asked whether they taught the same subject and/or grade as their mentors, mentees were asked if they shared a common planning period with their mentors. As illustrated in Figure 2, mentees who shared a common planning period with their mentors were almost three times more likely to meet with them on a daily basis than mentees who did not have the same planning period as their mentors. Mentees and mentors who had different planning periods were most likely to meet on an “as necessary” basis. While this finding is perhaps not surprising, it has relevance for the assignment of mentors, particularly at the secondary level. In addition, it is consistent with survey data from new hires gathered over the years of the Mentor Program and discussed in the Persistent Concerns section of this report.

**Figure 2. Mentor–Mentee Planning Periods: Frequency of Meetings**

Note. Source: Mentee Survey, June 2005. Same planning period ( $n = 63$ ); different planning period ( $n = 55$ ).

### **Evaluation Question 2: Description of Relationship Between Mentee and Mentor**

This section presents an analysis of the degree to which mentors and mentees

- *maintain the defined relationship and meet regularly,*
- *observe the other's class, and*
- *maintain confidentiality.*

### **Data Sources: Aspects of Mentor–Mentee Relationship**

- Surveys were administered to mentees at three points during the 2004–2005 school year. In September 2004, 151 mentees responded to the first mentee survey; in January/February 2005, 92 mentees responded to a second survey; and in June 2005, 122 new hires with mentors responded to the third, and final, survey. All are included in Appendix H.
- Surveys were administered to 136 mentors in June 2004. (Also found in Appendix H)
- Focus groups of mentors and mentees were conducted during the summer of 2005. Participants discussed the nature and frequency of their meetings.
- The Administrative Conference survey was distributed to school-based administrators in August 2004.

### **Background**

Open and regular communication between mentor and mentee is an essential element of the relationship. Meeting regularly allows the mentor and mentee opportunities to monitor the learning process and to ensure that the agreed upon goals are being met. One way to foster that communication is through face-to-face meetings. To determine if mentees and mentors were

meeting regularly throughout the school year, staff from the Office of Professional Development surveyed mentees at the beginning, middle, and end of the 2004–2005 school year. As might be expected, it appears from these data that new hires were especially likely to meet with their mentors at the beginning of the year and to move to an “as needed” basis in the spring. Results from the three administrations of the survey follow. (Note: The number of completed surveys varied from collection to collection, and the response options were worded slightly differently during the three administrations of the mentee survey.)

### **Results: Aspects of the Mentor–Mentee Relationship**

Shortly after the start of school in September 2004, 151 mentees responded to a survey about their experiences with their mentors leading up to and during their first week of school. Responses to this first mentee survey indicated that 135 of the 151 newly hired teachers (89%) had met their mentors as of mid-September. (Eleven new hires—7%—did not respond to that question on the survey.) Further, results show that 24% of the 151 mentees reported meeting with their mentors every day during the first week of school; 15% met three to four times during that week; 35% met one to two times during the first week; and 19% met with their mentors “as needed.” About 7% of the new hires indicated that they did not meet with their mentors at all during the first week of school.

In January/February of 2005, 92 teachers with mentors responded to a mid-year survey. Eighteen percent of the teachers responded that they met with their mentor daily, 40% met with their mentor weekly, and 28% met with their mentor on a monthly basis. About 13% of the respondents indicated that they met with their mentors “infrequently.”

By the end of the year (June 2005), 20% of the 122 first-year teachers who responded to the third mentee survey indicated that they met with their mentor daily, 28% met on a weekly basis, 8% met monthly, and 45% responded that they met with their mentor “as necessary.” This percentage (45%) contrasts sharply with the mentees’ responses in September when only 19% of the mentees stated that they met with their mentors “as needed.” Finally, when surveyed at the end of the school year, a full 90% of the mentees *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the statement “My mentor maintained ongoing communication with me,” and 82% *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the statement, “This year I felt supported by the Mentor Program.”

Mentors were surveyed once during the evaluation year, in June 2005. When queried about the frequency with which they met with their mentees, 24% of the 136 mentors who responded to the survey indicated that they met with their mentees daily, 41% met weekly, 9% met monthly, and 27% met “as necessary.” It is interesting that a higher percentage of mentees than mentors selected “as necessary.” Table 8 compares the responses of mentees and mentors.

**Table 8. Frequency of Meetings as Reported by Mentees and Mentors in June 2005**

Meeting frequency	Mentees (n = 122)	Mentors (n = 136)
Daily	20%	24%
Weekly	28%	41 %
Monthly	8%	9%
As necessary	45%	27%

Notes. Source: Survey administered to mentees and mentors, June 2005. Valid percentages reported and rounded.

These survey responses seem to be supported by data from the focus group discussions. For example, the mentor focus group moderator wrote, “Some focus group participants [mentors] commented that their mentor/mentee relationship changed over time. In general, they said the relationships would start in a relatively formal way—with mentors and mentees tending to have scheduled meetings and very specific subjects to tackle together (e.g., Back-to-School Night). Over time, several said, the meetings became less formal, with their mentee simply ‘dropping by’ when a visit was needed” (Ryan, 2005a, p. 3).

Mentees expressed similar views on the time spent with their mentors. In her narrative report from the focus group discussion with mentees, Ryan (2005b) wrote:

“A handful [of mentees] said they had such regular contact and collaboration that their activities ranged widely, and any formalities of the mentor/mentee relationship—such as official ‘meetings’—ebbed away. For these individuals, activities included discussing curriculum, planning lessons, addressing classroom management matters, carrying out administrative tasks (e.g., field-trip paperwork), planning around school events, preparing for Standards of Learning (SOL) testing, and other issues. This wide-ranging, closely connected form of collaboration was particularly described by participants working at the elementary level” (p. 2).

In contrast, however, Ryan also wrote, “A couple of participants indicated that they spent little or no time with their mentors” (p.2). One mentee expressed that she and her mentor did not share a common planning period.

Finally, as discussed in the program description, as a general rule, teachers are assigned mentors if they meet one of two conditions. That is, they receive mentors if (a) they are new teachers with zero years of teaching experience or (b) they are new to APS, but they have previous teaching experience in another school district. Therefore, the survey responses from both groups of newly hired teachers were analyzed. Not surprisingly, those teachers who indicated on the surveys that they had no previous teaching experience were more likely than experienced new hires to meet with their mentors on a daily basis (see Table 9). (It should be noted here, however, that there are exceptions to this general rule of who is assigned a mentor. First, some, but not all, administrators request mentors for teachers who are new to their school building but not necessarily new to APS. Second, a teacher who is new to APS but was hired after January 15<sup>th</sup> may not be assigned a mentor. A mentor would be assigned only if an administrator specifically requests one.)



**Table 9. Frequency of Meetings as Reported by Teachers With and Without Prior Teaching Experience.**

Meeting frequency	New hires with no prior teaching experience (n = 42)	New hires with prior teaching experience (n = 77)
Daily	26%	17%
Weekly	26%	29%
Monthly	5%	9%
As necessary	43%	46%

*Note.* Source: Survey administered to mentees in June 2005. Valid percentages reported and rounded. Three mentees did not respond to this item.

In addition to regular communication, state and local guidelines highlight the importance of maintaining a confidential relationship between mentor and mentee. In general, both mentees and mentors expressed satisfaction with the confidentiality of their relationship. About three quarters of both mentees and mentors responded that they were *very satisfied* with the confidentiality of their relationship (see Table 10).

**Table 10. Satisfaction With Confidentiality of Relationship as Reported by Mentees and Mentors**

Rating	Mentees (n = 122)	Mentors (n = 136)
Very satisfied	71%	74%
Satisfied	18%	23%
Unsatisfied	4%	2%
Very unsatisfied	3%	0
Not certain	4%	2%

*Note.* Source: Survey administered to mentees and mentors, June 2005. Valid percentages reported and rounded.

Results from the 2004 Administrative Conference survey suggest that school administrators also recognize the confidential nature of the relationship between mentor and mentee. Of the 75 school administrators who completed the survey during August 2004, 97% responded *always* or *most of the time* to the statement “The mentor/mentee relationship is confidential.” There were no administrators who responded *seldom* or *never* to that item on the survey.

As a means to encourage collaboration between mentors and mentees, a mentor may request up to two substitute days per mentee to plan, observe, or to provide feedback to the mentee. However, most mentors are highly creative in finding ways to preserve instructional time and to observe their mentees without using a full day of release time. Some mentors use school-based substitutes to cover a class period for observation, while others schedule observations during their personal planning period, if different from their mentee. During the 2004–2005 school year, 17 mentors requested a full day of release time to either observe or plan with their mentee.

We do not know in a systematic way, however, to what extent mentors and mentees are observing each other's lessons.

In summary, these survey data suggest that mentors and mentees are meeting regularly, are maintaining the confidential nature of their relationship, and are adjusting their relationship as the school year progresses. Mentees and mentors who teach the same grade level and have the same planning period are most likely to meet on a daily basis. We do not know, however, the frequency or quality of mentor–mentee observations. That may be an area where follow-up is needed. It also may help to determine the effect of the Mentor Program on the enhancement of new teachers' instructional skills.

### **Evaluation Question 3: Support Available to Mentors and Mentor Requirements**

This section addresses the following questions:

1. *To what extent do mentors satisfy APS requirements to be a paid mentor?*
2. *What additional support do mentors need to assist new hires?*

### **Data Sources: Mentor Requirements and Support Provided to Mentors**

- Records from the Office of Professional Development
- Surveys were administered to 136 mentors in June 2005. Mentors were asked to rate the support provided to them.
- Focus group of 10 mentors was conducted in June 2005 and moderated by an outside consultant.

### **Background**

The Virginia State *Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs* (2000) stipulate that mentors must have “the knowledge and skills to identify and respond to teacher needs and to create a collegial community that positively engages program participants” (p. 13). Further, research suggests that the protégés of mentors who were involved in research-based mentoring programs could more effectively organize and manage instruction at the beginning of the year than the mentees of experienced teachers without formal mentor preparation (Evertson & Smithey, 2000). Therefore, a multi-session training program was developed and implemented by staff in the Office of Professional Development to provide mentors who were trained more than three years prior with current skills that support and model Best Practices in mentoring. In addition, several tools were put in place to support the mentors' work with their mentees. Mentors' perceptions of the training program and the support they receive are included in this section.

The training provided to mentors, the Mentor Journals, and the Partnership Agreement (between mentor and mentee) are integral aspects of the APS Mentor Program. All three components are required for a mentor to be considered qualified to be a paid APS mentor.

### **Results: APS Requirements for Mentors**

Mentors receive stipends for participating in the Mentor Program in January and June. In order to receive the funds, they are required to attend mentor training, submit the Partnership Agreement they developed with their mentees, and submit Mentor Journals on a monthly basis. Of the teachers asked to mentor during the 2004–2005 academic year, 100% of the elementary and 96% of the secondary teachers completed the training requirement. Partnership Agreements were submitted by 100% of these trained mentors. Mentor Journals were submitted regularly by 91%.

### **Results: Support Available to Mentors**

Ninety-eight percent of the 136 mentors who responded to the survey in June 2005 *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were “satisfied with the support provided to mentors by the Office of Professional Development.” This finding was reinforced by comments made by the 10 mentors in the focus group discussion held in June and moderated by an outside consultant. During the discussion, the mentors lauded the support they received both from the Office of Professional Development and from the contact mentors in their schools. Several mentors also noted that the administrators in their schools were respectful of the confidential nature of the mentor–mentee relationship. (See Focus Group Research report, Appendix I, p. 7).

Further, most mentors agreed that the tools put in place to enhance their relationship with their mentees were effective. For example, during the focus group discussion, many of the mentors “singled out the Mentor’s Journal as important to helping them feel supported” (Ryan, 2005a, p. 8). Similarly, 82% of the 136 mentors who responded to the end-of-year survey *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the statement that “The mentor journal is an effective communication tool.”

However, mentors—both during the focus group discussion and in their responses to survey items—did make concrete suggestions on ways in which the support provided to them could be enhanced. During the focus group discussion, mentors commented that they would benefit from refresher training sessions after their initial training, and they also discussed options to expand communication among mentors. For example, several mentors commented that a periodic newsletter or mass e-mail with mentoring tips would be useful (Ryan, 2005a, p. 9). Similarly, when asked on the end-of-year mentor survey to indicate what kind of follow-up would be helpful after the initial training, 32% of the 136 mentors responded that discussion groups would be helpful and 26% were interested in a refresher session. Thus, findings from the focus group and the survey seem to be converging on the idea that greater communication after the initial training may be beneficial to mentors. It should be noted here that the Office of Professional Development did offer an optional mentor refresher training session during the summer of 2005.

Looking next at the training the mentors receive, a majority of mentors (95%) responding to the survey *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that “I apply the skills I learned in mentor training.” Yet, interestingly, 28% of the mentors *agreed* or *strongly agreed* on their end-of-year survey that they would be able to be “an effective mentor without training.” In fact, only 9% (or 12 mentors out of 136) *strongly disagreed* with the statement “I would be able to be an effective mentor without

training.” This seems to contradict the opinion expressed by the 10 mentors during the focus group discussion. These mentors were of the opinion that no one in the APS Mentor Program should mentor without training and that it would be ideal for mentors to complete their training prior to being assigned a mentee, rather than concurrently training and mentoring (Ryan, 2005a, p. 9). However, these mentors also did make the point that no training could possibly prepare mentors for everything a new teacher will face in his or her first year. The group was unified in their opinion that there are some challenges one simply has to live through before one can help someone else through them. To quote one of the mentors in the focus group:

“There is a requirement that you’ve been a teacher for at least three years. There is a good reason for that. You have to live through experiences yourself as a teacher to be able to be an effective mentor. That, more than a training course [prepares you to help teachers face challenges].” (Ryan, 2005a, p. 10)

Viewed from this perspective, the mentors’ survey responses that they applied the skills learned in training but could mentor without it seems somewhat less contradictory. This may reflect their opinion that there are situations for which formal training cannot prepare them. Perhaps this is the reason so many are interested in refresher training sessions or discussion groups after the initial training.

#### **Evaluation Question 4: Contact Mentors**

The issues relating to contact mentors were as follows:

1. *To what degree do contact mentors help facilitate communication?*
2. *How satisfied are mentors with their contact mentor?*

#### **Data Sources: Contact Mentors**

- Surveys were administered to mentors during the 2004–2005 school year. A total of 136 mentors responded to the survey. Two items on the survey administered to mentors addressed the role of the contact mentor. First, mentors were asked about the extent to which they agreed that contact mentors maintained ongoing communication with them—an essential element of the contact mentor’s role. Second, mentors were asked to indicate their overall level of satisfaction with the support they received from their contact mentor.
- A focus group consisting of 10 elementary and secondary mentors and moderated by an outside consultant was conducted in June 2005. During the discussion, the topic of support for mentors at the school level—including support from contact mentors—was raised.

#### **Results: Contact Mentors**

More than three-quarters of the 136 mentors surveyed *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their contact mentor maintained ongoing communication with them and that they were satisfied with the support they received from their contact mentor. (Results are shown in Table 11.) Further, when queried during a focus group about support available to mentors, the focus group participants all indicated an awareness of their contact mentors’ availability. The few mentors

who reported having mentoring difficulties during the year indicated that they sought help from their contact mentors. See Focus Group Report, Appendix I.

However, although most respondents expressed satisfaction with their contact mentors, about 20% of the mentors disagreed with the survey statement that the contact mentor maintained ongoing communication with them. Another 4% indicated that this statement was “not applicable” to them. Therefore, communication between contact mentors and mentors seems to be an area of implementation where improvement may be warranted.

**Table 11. Mentors’ Perceptions of Support From Contact Mentors**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Ongoing communication (n = 136)</b>	<b>Satisfaction with support (n = 136)</b>
Strongly agree	22%	26%
Agree	55%	54%
Disagree	14%	9%
Strongly disagree	6%	5%
Not applicable	4%	5%

*Note.* Source: Mentor survey, June 2005. Valid percentages reported and rounded.

### **Discussion of Results for Implementation Questions**

The evaluation questions in this section all address, to one extent or another, implementation issues related to the APS Mentor Program. It appears from a comparison of Technology Services data and Mentor Program records that about three-quarters of the newly hired teachers in APS were assigned a mentor during the 2004–2005 school year. This is an increase in proportion from the previous three years but obviously shy of the goal of assigning a mentor to every new teacher in the district. Further examination of this issue is needed to determine if there are new teachers who are eligible for the Mentor Program but are not assigned mentors or if there is a disconnect between the records kept in Technology and Personnel Services and the Office of Professional Development. Another aspect of the program that warrants deeper probing is the extent to which assigning mentors to experienced teachers impedes the program’s ability to serve all teachers who are both new to APS and new to the profession.

It does appear that mentor–mentee assignments are being made in a manner consistent with Virginia state guidelines. For the most part, mentors and mentees work in the same buildings and meet regularly, and all mentors receive training and mentor fewer than four mentees. Mentees and mentors who teach the same grade and/or have the same planning period are especially likely to meet on a daily basis.

Most mentors are satisfied with the contact mentors’ levels of communication. Yet, almost a quarter of the 136 mentors who responded to a survey either disagreed or marked “not applicable” when asked if their contact mentor provided them with ongoing communication. This would appear to be an area of implementation that requires follow-up. Finally, based on the data we have, and perhaps because of the confidential nature of the relationship between mentor and mentee, we were unable to determine how often mentors and mentees observed each other’s instructional practices.

**POLICY QUESTION:**

**“WHAT CHANGES HAPPENED FOR THE INTENDED RECIPIENTS?”**

The mission of the Mentor Program is to provide intensive and sustained professional support for all first-year and experienced school-based new hires in an effort to attract, recruit, and retain highly qualified instructional staff. Therefore, in addition to examining the degree to which working with a mentor enhanced a mentee’s instruction, we looked at the relationship between the Mentor Program and the recruitment and retention of APS teachers.

**EVALUATION QUESTION 5: To what degree did working with a mentor improve the mentee’s instructional practices?**

**Data Source(s)**

- Surveys were administered to all newly hired school staff during the 2004–2005 school year, and 122 new hires completed the survey. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement “Working with a mentor enhanced my instructional practices this year.”
- Focus groups of mentors and mentees were conducted in June and August of 2005. Participants were asked to respond to a question related to the impact of the Mentor Program on newly hired teachers.

**Results**

Seventy-two percent of the new hires who responded to the survey at the end of the school year expressed agreement with the statement that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practices; about 20% disagreed with the statement; and 6% were not certain. (See Table 12 for mentees’ responses.) This seems consistent with data from a national study: The U.S. Department of Education reported that 66% of teachers who were formally mentored indicated that the mentoring “improved their classroom teaching a lot” (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002 as cited in Alliance for Education, 2005).

**Table 12. Mentees’ Perceptions of the Impact of the Mentoring Program on Instructional Practices**

<b>Item: Working with a mentor enhanced my instructional practices this year.</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Mentees (n = 122)</b>
Strongly agree	50%
Agree	22%
Disagree	14%
Strongly disagree	7%
Not certain	6%

*Note.* Source: Mentee survey, June 2005. Valid percentages reported and rounded.

Although half of the respondents strongly agreed that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practices, almost 30% either disagreed or were not certain. This seems to be a fairly substantial proportion and a finding that may warrant further investigation. One way to look more closely at this item is to examine the responses of mentees who were in their first year of teaching as compared with mentees with prior teaching experience. While about the same percentage of new and experienced teachers agreed that having a mentor improved their instruction (about 70%), a higher proportion of new teachers than experienced teachers *strongly* agreed with the statement. Specifically, 58% of the 43 teachers with zero years of teaching experience *strongly* agreed that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practices and another 14% agreed. In comparison, 46% of the 78 mentees with prior teaching experience *strongly* agreed with that statement and another 27% agreed. (One of the 122 mentees did not respond to this item on the survey.) When the average scores on this item were calculated for both groups of mentees and compared, there was not a statistically significant difference between the two groups. (The mean, or average, on this item was 4.1 for the new teachers and 4.0 for experienced teachers on a 5-point scale. An independent sample *t* test was run to compare the means.) Thus, one interpretation may be that while teachers new to the profession may feel more strongly about the impact their mentors have on their instruction, both new and experienced teachers generally agree that their instructional practices benefit from working with a mentor.

Are there other factors that are particularly associated with mentees' perceptions that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practices? Correlational analyses suggest a relationship between mentees' perceptions that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practices and ongoing communication between mentor and mentee ( $r = .61, p < .01$ ). Stated another way, the more that the mentees perceived that their mentor maintained ongoing communication with them, the more likely they were to think that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practice. There was also a positive but moderate relationship ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ) between mentees' perceptions that their instructional practices had been enhanced and their views that their mentor-mentee relationship was positive. Other relationships (meeting time, same subject, same grade, same planning period) were statistically significant, but weak.

Finally, qualitative data collected during focus groups also were analyzed to address this evaluation question. In August of 2005, six teachers who had been paired with mentors the preceding school year (2004–2005) participated in a focus group discussion about their experiences as mentees. When probed by the moderator on ways that the Mentor Program had helped them through their first year, the teachers focused on three main areas: modeling best practices in teaching, administrative matters, and “insider” information (aspects of school culture such as assemblies and field trips). Those teachers who had opportunities to watch their mentors teach found the experience useful, learning both about what works and what does not work. The teachers, however, did not explicitly mention that mentoring helped develop their instructional strategies. (See page 5 of the Focus Group Report in Appendix I).

In contrast, when the mentors were asked about the benefits of the Mentor Program for newly hired teachers during a focus group session held in June 2005, several mentors expressed the view that the Mentor Program improved the mentees' instructional practices. To quote from the report: “These teachers [the mentors in the focus group] described working on lesson plans and

rubrics with their mentees, strengthening them and then receiving mentee’s feedback that the plans had worked well” (Ryan, 2005a, p. 6).

In addition, most of the mentors who participated in the focus group discussion expressed the belief that mentoring had a positive impact on their own instructional practices. To quote from the focus group report prepared by Ryan (2005a):

“One participant pointed to his mentee’s energy, saying it was revitalizing to him. Another said his mentee provided materials and new information from the mentee’s more recent academic training that the mentor found beneficial to his own teaching. A third indicated that she is better able to learn from mistakes in the classroom as she discusses these events with her mentee, pointing out that although she is experienced, she is not perfect. Even one participant whose mentee was not succeeding felt that serving as mentor benefited his teaching because he had found himself conscientiously trying to model excellent teaching and classroom tactics.” (pp. 5–6)

### **EVALUATION QUESTION 6: To what degree does the Mentor Program influence teachers’ choice to work in APS?**

#### **Background**

The Alliance for Excellent Education, a national policy, research, and advocacy organization, estimated that “every school day, nearly a thousand teachers leave the field of teaching” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005, p. 1). This loss is costly in terms of both learning and resources. Schools districts, therefore, must strive to recruit and retain high quality teachers.

#### **Data Source: Recruitment of New Teachers**

- A focus group of six former mentees was held in August 2005 and moderated by an outside consultant. Each former mentee had been a first-year teacher new to APS during the 2004–2005 school year.
- Surveys were administered to 122 new hires with mentors in June 2005.

#### **Results: Teacher Recruitment**

During the focus group discussion held in August 2005, the moderator specifically asked the participants if and how the Mentor Program had influenced their decision to accept a teaching position in APS. All six of the teachers participating in the focus group indicated that the Mentor Program did not influence their decision to join APS. These teachers said that they assumed there would be some sort of mentoring program available to them because virtually all school systems have mentor programs in one form or another. Therefore, at the point of recruitment, the APS Mentor Program was not a unique draw. However, had APS not offered a formal mentor program, the teachers said they might have “felt dubious about the possibilities at APS” (Ryan, 2005b, p. 3). The following quote illustrates the general perception of the former mentees who participated in the focus group:



“I assumed that I would have one [a mentor]. I assumed that would be true anywhere. And, if it wasn’t, then I probably would’ve just had a bad first year.” (p. 4)

An extension of this evaluation question is examination of an item that appeared on the end-of-year survey given to 122 mentees. When asked to rate whether they would recommend working in APS to others, 91% responded *yes*, 2% responded *no*, and 7% responded *not certain*. However, it is certainly not clear from these data the extent to which, if any, the Mentor Program played a role in the respondents’ willingness to recommend APS as an employer to others.

### **EVALUATION QUESTION 7: Teacher Retention**

*7a: Do new hires paired with mentors remain in APS longer than new hires without mentors?*

*7b: Are teachers who worked with a mentor more likely to remain at the same school than those who did not work with a trained mentor?*

### **Background**

While some workforce attrition is inevitable in all professions, research suggests that “nearly half of all teachers who enter the field leave it within a mere five years” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005, p. 2). This attrition can be costly, both in terms of a school district’s resources and in terms of student learning. When new teachers are asked, they often cite a “lack of support and poor working conditions” among the main reasons they chose to leave the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005, p. 2).

### **Data Source(s)**

- Longitudinal teacher data set prepared by Office of Technology Services and Office of Planning and Evaluation

### **Results: Retention**

Analysis of the longitudinal data suggests that teachers who are new to the profession and are assigned mentors are somewhat more likely to remain employed as APS teachers at the conclusion of their second year than new teachers without mentors. It should be noted that the data reported in Table 13 do not tell us why teachers are no longer teaching. There are many possibilities for their departure, such as resignation, termination, family issues, and medical leave. Or, in some cases, the teachers may have accepted administrative positions and therefore no longer appear in the teacher database. Nevertheless, the school district does make an investment in probationary teachers. Therefore, it is interesting to note that for the teachers hired in 2001 and 2003, higher percentages of new teachers with mentors than those without mentors remained as APS teachers one year after they were hired, and, for teachers hired in 2002, all returned to teaching.

These data also are discussed in the section on effective use of resources. In that section, the retention of teachers hired in 2001-02 is tracked over a three-year period. A comparison is made between teachers with mentors and teachers without mentors.

**Table 13. Retention of New Teachers: Percentage of Teachers with and without Mentors Remaining in APS One Year after their Hire**

<b>Teachers hired in 2001–2002</b>		
Teacher retention	Teachers with mentors ( <i>n</i> = 141)	Teachers without mentors ( <i>n</i> = 136)
Employed by APS during 2002–2003	75%	68%
<b>Teachers hired in 2002–2003*</b>		
Teacher retention	Teachers with mentors ( <i>n</i> = 121)	Teachers without mentors ( <i>n</i> = 77)
Employed by APS during 2003–2004	100%	100%
<b>Teachers hired in 2003–2004</b>		
Teacher retention	Teachers with mentors ( <i>n</i> = 125)	Teachers without mentors ( <i>n</i> = 105)
Employed by APS during 2004–2005	92%	85%

Notes. Source: Teacher longitudinal data set.

\*Numbers were verified and it appears that all new teachers returned to APS

In addition, from an analysis of the teacher longitudinal data, it appears that new teachers who are paired with mentors are somewhat more likely than new teachers without mentors to remain in their original schools. However, these data do not indicate when or for what reasons teachers switched school assignments within APS. (See Table 14).

**Table 14. Percentage of Teachers Who Switched Schools During the 2001–2002 to 2004–2005 School Years**

<b>Teachers hired in 2001–2002</b>		
Number of schools	Teachers with mentors ( <i>n</i> = 141)	Teachers without mentors ( <i>n</i> = 136)
One school	87%	81%
Two schools	12%	13%
Three schools	1%	3% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Teachers hired in 2002–2003</b>		
Number of schools	Teachers with mentors ( <i>n</i> = 121)	Teachers without mentors ( <i>n</i> = 77)
One school	95%	92%
Two schools	5%	8%
<b>Teachers hired in 2003–2004</b>		
Number of schools	Teachers with mentors ( <i>n</i> = 125)	Teachers without mentors ( <i>n</i> = 105)
One school	95%	89%
Two schools	5%	11%

*Notes.* Source: Teacher longitudinal data set. <sup>a</sup> Does not equal 100 because there are 4 teachers in the data set for whom this field is not coded.

### **Discussion of Results for Changes to Intended Recipients**

About 70% of the 122 mentees who responded to an end-of-year survey agreed that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practices. Almost 30% disagreed with that statement or were not certain.

Although we have information from only six teachers on whether the APS Mentor Program influenced their decision to work in Arlington, it appears that it was not a key factor in their decision. This seems to be because so many other districts offer mentoring programs, and it was their general expectation that the district would offer mentors. This finding is quite limited, however, because of the small number of teachers who responded to this inquiry. A more formal assessment is warranted.

Finally, it does appear that teachers who are new to APS and assigned a mentor remain at APS longer than do new teachers without mentors. They appear to switch schools less frequently than do new teachers without mentors. However, a note of caution is warranted here; these data do not tell us why teachers switch schools or leave the district. It is possible that surpluses or family situations necessitate moves (or other factors not discussed in this report).

**POLICY QUESTION:**

**“WHAT CHANGES OCCURRED IN AREAS THAT WERE NOT THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION?”**

While the primary focus of this evaluation is on the effect of the Mentor Program on newly hired teachers, it does seem that the experienced teachers who serve as mentors also derive benefits from their participation in the program. During the focus group discussion, several mentors described how being a mentor enhanced their teaching. They commented on how the enthusiasm of new teachers was invigorating and how they were able to learn from the mentee’s more recent training. Further, one mentor remarked that the effort he made to be an exemplar of best practices improved his own performance as a teacher.

In addition to comments made during the focus group discussion, over 80% of the 136 mentors who responded to the end-of year survey in June 2005 indicated that being a mentor enhanced their instructional practices *somewhat* or *very much*. Only 14% (or 18 mentors) said *not at all*. Thus, while the new hires were the primary focus of the evaluation, a description of positive outcomes for mentors also emerged.

Further, while a main question of the evaluation was to determine the proportion of newly hired teachers who were paired with mentors, an evaluation of how the Office of Professional Development receives information on newly hired teachers became a focal point of the evaluation.

**POLICY QUESTION:  
“IF THIS DID NOT WORK EQUALLY WELL IN ALL LOCATIONS,  
WHY?”**

There are several variables that affect the Mentor Program’s effectiveness. These variables have to do with administration, the people being hired, and the location of mentors.

There are many variables that affect the matching process. Because matches are decided at the school level, the individual responsible for such matches may be invested in the success of the Mentor Program, or he or she may be unaware of the priorities for matching compatible individuals. At the elementary level, administrators usually do the matching. At the secondary level, any number of individuals may assist in the process, including the contact mentor, the guidance director, and a member of the administrative staff. The intricacies of a match can make or break the success of the relationship. The matching process seemed to work well in 2004–2005; over 90% of the mentees who responded to the end-of-year survey agreed that their mentor–mentee relationship was positive. However, about 8% of the 122 respondents disagreed that the relationship was a positive one or were not certain.

The experience of new hires also has an impact on the effectiveness of the Mentor Program from school to school. The numbers of experienced teachers who are newly hired and those who are in their first year of teaching affect the outcome. Experienced teachers traditionally need less guidance beyond the culture of the school and community. First-year teachers need intensive guidance throughout the year, not to mention emotional support. This can be seen by the frequency with which the newly hired teachers reported meeting with their mentors: About 28% of the teachers with no experience met with their mentor daily, whereas only 17% of new hires with prior experience did so.

Finally, the physical location of the mentor and mentee has an impact on the effectiveness of the relationship. Ideally, a mentor and mentee should be in close proximity to one another to facilitate communication and collegiality. At times, some mentors and mentees may be at opposite ends of the building, and for a number of reasons, mentors may not even be in the same buildings as their mentees—though this situation occurred infrequently in 2004–2005 (only four mentor–mentee pairs were in different buildings). This situation may arise when the building either does not have enough trained mentors or there is not a mentor available in the new hire’s subject area. This problem is being remedied by increasing the number of individuals trained as mentors across the curriculum in all buildings. Having the same planning period has been shown to be especially beneficial.

**POLICY QUESTION:**

**“WHAT HAPPENED THAT WAS UNEXPECTED OR UNINTENDED?”**

As the results of the evaluation of the Mentor Program were reviewed, several issues arose. Although staff were aware of some of the issues, the scope of the impact was unexpected.

Since 1999, when the Virginia state legislature required that all teachers new to Virginia school systems be supplied mentors, it has been understood that *every* new hire would receive a mentor. However, the percentage of personnel who did not receive mentoring leaves one puzzled. The variables below offer some explanation.

Some teachers were not assigned a mentor because they were not full-time employees. Mentors were assigned to those who were employed .5 or greater. A standard criterion, though arbitrary, had to be set to define what was meant by the term *employed* in order to maximize the resources available to the program.

Another reason an individual may not have been assigned a mentor could be the time of year he or she was hired. Individuals hired prior to January 15 were assigned a mentor. If a teacher was assigned to a school after this date, he or she was not on an annual contract and therefore was not deemed eligible for a mentor.

The third reason the percentage of individuals who did not have mentors was high may have been due to the fact that at its inception, the Mentor Program targeted only those employees who were assigned to classrooms. The newly hired individuals who were not assigned mentors may have been social workers, school psychologists, speech pathologists, resource teachers of the gifted, or student activities coordinators. Not until 2004–2005 were there formally trained mentors in these fields. An attempt is now being made to assign mentors to these non-classroom-based individuals for the year.

**POLICY QUESTION:  
“HOW SATISFIED WERE THE USERS AND CLIENTS?”**

**Background**

Barry Sweeny, a national consultant on mentoring, stated, at the 1999–2000 Virginia State Mentoring Conference, “A mentor program is only as good as the training and support afforded by the program.” The Office of Professional Development plans and implements a training program for mentors and works with both mentors and new hires to ensure the development of a positive and beneficial relationship between mentor and mentee. Therefore, the clients’ satisfaction with the program was examined in three ways. First, the extent to which the mentors are satisfied with the training they receive from the Office of Professional Development was measured by analyzing responses from end-of-training-session rating sheets. Second, on surveys administered at the end of the school year, mentors were asked about the support they received from the Office of Professional Development. Third, mentees were asked about their level of satisfaction with the support they received from their school-based mentors.

**EVALUATION QUESTION 8: Mentors’ and Mentees’ Satisfaction**

- 8a. To what degree are mentors satisfied with the content, structure, and training requirements of the Mentor Program?*
- 8b. How satisfied are the mentors with the support provided by the Office of Professional Development?*
- 8c. To what degree are new hires satisfied with the support they receive from their mentor?*

**Data Sources**

- Session evaluations were distributed to mentors at the conclusion of each mentor training session sponsored by the Office of Professional Development during the 2004–2005 school year. Mentors were asked to rate the overall content of the mentor training session as well as the overall structure of the session on a 4-point scale ranging from *not satisfied* (1) to *more than satisfied* (4). Results from training sessions 1, 2, and 3 are reported here.
- Surveys given to mentors in May 2005 asked respondents to agree or disagree with the statement “I am satisfied with the support provided to mentors by the Office of Professional Development.” Response options ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.
- Surveys given to mentees in June 2005 asked respondents to agree or disagree with three statements related to satisfaction: (1) “Overall, my mentor–mentee relationship was positive.” (2) “Working with a mentor enhanced my instructional practices.” (3) “This year I felt support from the Mentor Program.” Response options ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

**Results: Satisfaction**

*Training Sessions*

All mentors who participated in training sessions during the 2004–2005 school year expressed satisfaction (ranging from *somewhat satisfied* to *more than satisfied*) with the training sessions held during 2004–2005. No participants expressed dissatisfaction on the rating sheets with either the structure or the content of the training (see Table 15).

**Table 15. Mentors’ Satisfaction With the Structure and Content of the Training Sessions: Percentage of Mentors (n = 88)**

Response	Structure	Content
More than satisfied	86%	90%
Satisfied	9%	9%
Somewhat satisfied	5%	1%

*Note.* Source Rating sheets submitted after training session. Valid percents reported and rounded.

While it is favorable that the mentors were satisfied with their training sessions, the extent to which mentors used the skills and techniques learned during training was not explicitly measured.

*Support From the Office of Professional Development*

Ninety-eight percent of mentors *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were satisfied with the support provided to mentors by the Office of Professional Development. Further, when asked on the survey to respond to an open-ended question regarding what additional support would assist the mentors, the following statements were made:

- “I was very satisfied with the amount of support I had as a mentor. [Teacher specialist] was available by e-mail or phone and responded very quickly to any suggestions or concerns.”
- “The support I had was great.”
- “Nothing. It is just right as is. Thank you.”

Other respondents did, however, make recommendations for additional support that they would find beneficial to their role as mentors. For example, mentors responded,

- “More handouts from the mentor office to use as a guide for support. For example, the end-of-year check list was excellent. Is there a beginning-of-year one?”
- “Communication with principal to support new teachers”
- “A refresher session”
- “Activities where mentors and mentees get together as a group”
- “Dedicated mutual planning time with mentee”
- “Training on how to do effective observation”

*Mentees’ Satisfaction With Mentor Program*

Over 90% of the 122 mentees who responded to a survey administered in June 2005 *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their mentee–mentor relationship was positive. Seventy-two percent



believed that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practices, and 82% indicated that they felt supported by the Mentor Program. These survey responses suggest that mentees are satisfied with the relationships they form with their mentors and with the overall support they receive from the program. The mentees seem less inclined, however, to agree that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practices. In fact, 21% of the mentees disagreed with that statement on the survey, and another 6% indicated that they were not certain (see Table 16).

**Table 16. Mentees' Satisfaction With the Mentor Program**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Positive relationship (n = 122)</b>	<b>Instructional practices enhanced (n = 122)</b>	<b>Felt support from program (n = 122)</b>
Strongly agree	73%	50%	55%
Agree	20%	22%	27%
Disagree	1%	14%	6%
Strongly disagree	5%	7%	8%
Not certain	2%	6%	4%

*Notes.* Source: New Hire Survey, June 2005. Valid percents reported and rounded.

### **Discussion of Results for Satisfaction**

In general, the mentors surveyed in 2004–2005 appear to have been satisfied both with the training and with the support they received from the Office of Professional Development. Several suggestions were made on ways in which that support could be enhanced. One suggestion made by the mentors—refresher training—has already been implemented by the Office of Professional Development.

Similarly, mentees expressed satisfaction with their mentor–mentee relationships. The item on which they felt uncertain was the extent to which their instructional practices had been enhanced by working with a mentor. There may be a variety of reasons for this finding, and understanding the mentees' perspective in this area may be a useful direction for future evaluations.

**POLICY QUESTION:**

**“HOW EFFECTIVELY WERE THE SYSTEM’S RESOURCES USED TO ACHIEVE THE IDENTIFIED GOALS?”**

**Background**

Replacing teachers is costly; recruiting and hiring costs accrue as well as costs related to training and orientation. A national estimate for the cost of replacing teachers who have left the profession or switched schools is \$2.2 billion per year. In the state of Virginia, the estimated cost to school districts related to teachers who leave the profession is \$62,031,275 (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005.) This dollar amount was calculated based on the Department of Labor's estimate that employee attrition costs the employer 30% of the leaving employee's salary. The estimated cost of teacher attrition was based on the average national teacher salary in 1999-2000 as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics, multiplied by .30 (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005, p.6). Therefore, in this evaluation report, the proportion of first-year teachers with zero years of teaching experience who switched schools within APS or left the system has been examined. The data are broken down into first-year teachers who worked with mentors as compared with first-year teachers who did not do so.

**Evaluation Question 9: Are teachers who worked with a trained APS mentor more likely to remain employed with APS than those who did not work with a trained mentor?**

**Data Source**

- Longitudinal teacher database

**Results: Retention**

An examination of the longitudinal data suggests that a greater proportion of new teachers with mentors remain in teaching positions at APS longer than do new teachers without mentors. Specially, of the 141 new teachers hired in 2001-02 and assigned mentors, 90 teachers (64%) remained in teaching positions three years after they were initially hired. In contrast, of the 136 new teachers hired that same year but not assigned mentors, 80 teachers (59%) were still teachers in the system in 2004-05. A year by year breakdown of teacher retention rates for teachers hired in 2001-02 is displayed in Table 17. These same data are graphically illustrated in Figure 3.

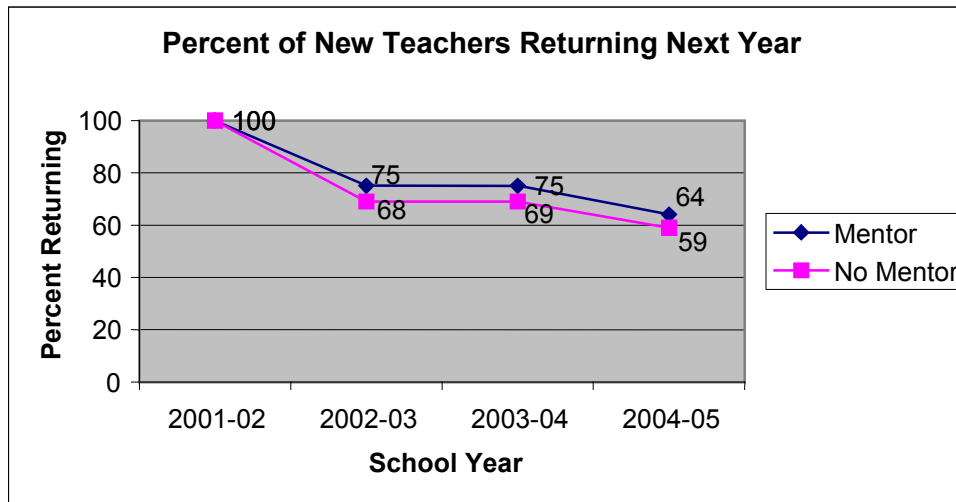
It should be noted, however, that the same caveats discussed previously in this report (in the "what changes happened for intended recipients" section) must be considered. That is, these data do not tell us why the teachers are no longer in the system. They might have resigned, been terminated, or left due to family issues, or medical or unpaid leave. Or, in some cases, the teachers may have accepted administrative positions and therefore no longer appear in the teacher database.

**Table 17. Retention of New Teachers: A Comparison of New Teachers Hired in 2001-02 With Mentors and Without Mentors**

School Year				
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Teachers Hired in 2001-02	No. of New Hires	No. Returning (Percent of New Hires)	No. Returning (Percent of New Hires)	No. Returning (Percent of New Hires)
New Hires with Mentors	141	105 (75%)	105 (75%)	90 (64%)
New Hires without Mentors	136	93 (68%)	94 (69%)	80 (59%)

*Note.* Source: Teacher longitudinal data set.

**Figure 3. Retention of New Teachers: A Comparison of New Teachers Hired in 2001-02 With Mentors and Without Mentors**



*Note.* Source: Teacher longitudinal data set.

What is the cost associated with this attrition? The average salary for an APS teacher in 2005 was \$61, 827 (as reported in the WABE Guide, retrieved from <http://www.fcps.k12.va.us/fs/budget/wabe/>). Thus, by applying the formula used by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2005), the estimated cost to APS of teacher attrition can be calculated. For example, the average APS teacher salary in 2005 was \$61,827, multiplied by the cost estimated by the Department of Labor of losing an employee (30% of the employee's salary)

yields the estimated cost to APS of teacher attrition at \$18, 548/leaving teacher (\$61,827 x .30 = \$18, 548).

How does this attrition cost compare to the cost of the Mentor Program? In 2005, the Mentor Program spent \$327,431.34 on expenditures such as mentor stipends, supplies, release time, and materials. One-hundred-seventy-five teachers were supported by mentors that year. Therefore, by dividing the cost of the program (\$327, 431.34) by the number of mentees served (175), we can estimate that in 2005, the Mentor Program spent approximately \$1871.04 per mentee ( $\$327,431.34/175=\$1,871.04$ ). This amount is substantially less than the amount the district would spend to recruit, hire, and train new teachers. This amount, however, does not include the costs associated with the Office of Professional Development staff who coordinate the Mentor Program.

Finally, to offer a comparison between Arlington and the nation, during the fiscal year 2000, the average teacher salary in APS was \$50, 652. Therefore, by once again applying the formula, the cost per lost teacher in 2000 for APS was \$15, 195. The national average for that year, as reported by the Alliance for Excellent Education was \$12,546 (the national average teacher salary = $\$41,820 \times .30$  yields \$12, 546 per leaving teacher in 1999-2000).

**POLICY QUESTION:  
“HOW WELL WAS OUR APPROACH VALIDATED?”**

The Arlington Public Schools (APS) Mentor Program was developed to support two Instrumental Goals of the Strategic Plan for 1999–2005. One goal was to recruit and retain teachers and administrators of high quality; the second goal was to provide intensive and sustained professional development for all teachers and administrators.

This program evaluation reveals mixed results related to the Mentor Program and the goals of the Strategic Plan. For the most part, however, the Mentor Program aligns with the standards set forth by the state of Virginia for assigning mentors.

The Mentor Program has been effective in its objectives to train, support, and communicate with school-based mentors. Data from the evaluation also indicate that having trained, supportive mentors assigned to probationary teachers with no prior teaching experience has had a positive impact on instructional excellence. A little more than 70% of the new hires who responded to the survey at the end of the school year expressed agreement with the statement that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practices.

In the process of answering the Policy Question stated above, we must examine the original goals of this evaluation and the groups intended to be served. We then must ask ourselves, “Did we achieve our goals with success?”

**Goal Achievement**

**First-Year Teachers**

The Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act passed by the Virginia state legislature in 1999 requires that local school boards provide mentors to probationary teachers with no prior teaching experience. Data collected and analyzed indicate that the APS Mentor Program is steadily improving in this area. New hires who were eligible for a mentor and were paired with a mentor ranged from a low of 55% in 2001, the first year data were available, to a high of 77% in 2005. While this upward trend is encouraging, it does still fall short of the APS goal of providing mentors to all newly hired teachers. The reasons for the gap between the number of new hires and the number of new hires assigned mentors should be investigated and eliminated.

In June 2005, of 122 first-year teachers responding to the survey question “This year I felt supported by the Mentor Program,” 82% *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the statement. Seventy percent of the new hires responding to the 2004–2005 survey said having a mentor enhanced their instructional practices. Thus, the new hires with mentors do seem to feel supported by their mentors and perceive that their instructional practices are improved because of the relationship. However, the data collected in this evaluation do not really address what, if any, instructional strategies or practices the mentees bring to their classrooms as a result of collaborating with a mentor.

## **Experienced Teachers**

The Mentor Program addresses the needs of the experienced teacher new to APS by assigning a mentor to those who are eligible. During the 2004–2005 school year, at least 17 experienced teachers new to Arlington were assigned mentors. Addressing the unique needs of these experienced teachers is important to ensure a smooth transition to APS. APS further addresses this need by supporting the assignment of mentors, by administrators, to experienced teachers new to their school but not new to APS. In doing so, teachers new to a school acclimate faster. Survey data suggest that these experienced teachers are as satisfied with their mentors as are the first-year teachers. However, based on the 2004–2005 survey responses, experienced teachers do not require as frequent meetings with their mentor as do the mentees who are new to the teaching profession. In matching mentors with new hires, especially where multiple mentees are assigned to one mentor, it would be prudent to have a balance of those new hires needing intense guidance and those who have experience and need basic acculturation.

## **Mentors**

The majority of teachers who become mentors meet the Virginia state criteria requiring that they are on continuing contracts, and they mentor no more than four teachers at a time. In June 2005, 98% of 136 mentors surveyed responded that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were “satisfied with the support provided to mentors by the Office of Professional Development.” When asked about the training they received, 95% of the mentors *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they apply the skills learned in Mentor Training. These findings validate the goal of the Office of Professional Development to train, support, and communicate with mentors.

## **Administrators**

Administrators increasingly understand the need for new hires to be paired with qualified mentors. They also acknowledge the need for the mentor–mentee pair to share the same grade and/or subject level to increase the frequency of interaction. The supervisor of the Office of Professional Development is a resource to administrators. The supervisor provides administrators with updated information concerning matching priorities, the application process of mentor training, and support services available.

Administrators have begun to address the needs of new hires within their buildings by holding informational meetings at the school level. These meetings are the best method of dispensing administrative information unique to individual schools.

## **Arlington Public Schools**

In August 2005, an end of the year survey asked new hires to rate whether they would recommend working in APS to others. Ninety-one percent responded *yes*. However, the extent to which the Mentor Program influenced this positive response is not known.

In summary, mentees generally felt supported by the Mentor Program and that their instructional practices improved by working with a mentor. Further, mentors also expressed satisfaction with the program, noting that it was a growth opportunity for the mentor as well as the mentee. Thus,

## *Findings - Approach*

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the approach to working with the mentees and mentors seemed to be validated. However, the most notable area in which the current approach needs to be improved is the process by which the Mentor Program staff receives information about newly-hired teachers and is therefore able to assign mentors.

## **POLICY QUESTION: “IS THIS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS?”**

Before determining if this is the most effective way to achieve success, one must first define *success*. Maryse A. Nelson, Business Consultant, Professional Speaker and Trainer, defines success as the accomplishment of goals and objectives necessary to achieve a particular task, realize a particular dream, or satisfy a particular need or want, for a period of time (Nelson, <http://uhhp.com/artciles/maryse07242001.html>, retrieved Jan.24, 2006). This definition will be used as a basis to respond to the aforementioned policy question.

The Arlington Public Schools (APS) Office of Professional Development has conducted annual evaluations of the Mentor Program since its inception year in 2000–2001. Over the past five years, a significant number of changes have occurred in the program’s design and content to more effectively meet the needs of new teachers, mentors, administrators, and other support staff. According to the results from this evaluation study, the goals and objectives of the program were met in many areas. However, there are still areas that need improvement that will be addressed over the next two years.

### **Teacher Retention**

One of the primary goals of the Mentor Program is to attract, recruit, and retain teachers of high quality. The evaluation results suggest that the mentor program may be instrumental in retaining teachers but does not affect a teacher’s decision to work in APS. This is not a surprising discovery because providing a mentor to new teachers is not an optional part of what effective schools do in Virginia—it is a state requirement. Therefore APS is no different from other Virginia school systems in this regard. APS does, however, go the extra mile to provide mentors for experienced teachers new to APS to help them make the transition to teaching in a new school system; this is not a state requirement. In this regard, APS is different. Yet, the question remains: Is providing all APS new hires with a trained mentor the most effective way to achieve success of the mentor program? This evaluation indicates that it is part of the picture, but not the full picture.

Consistent with its original design, the mentor program focuses heavily on new teacher retention. However, it is clearly evident that the Office of Professional Development needs to work more closely with the Office of Personnel Services to take a more active role in teacher recruitment efforts. Doing so will allow department specialists to highlight the ways in which APS provides mentors to all teachers, not just new teachers.

### **Virginia State Standards**

Next, did the mentor program achieve success by meeting the Virginia Standards for Mentor Programs, and is this the most effective way to achieve success? At one point, the answer to this question would have been an uncontestable yes. However, now that more research has been conducted on identifying and meeting the needs of new teachers, a mentor is no longer perceived as a “magic” pill of support. Rather, the mentor’s role has been more clearly defined to equip



him or her with skills, techniques, and resources to assist teachers in providing high quality instruction to their students.

### **Effectiveness in Meeting Different Needs**

Finally, it appears that the current structure of the mentor program meets the needs of most new hires who responded to the survey, but not necessarily in the most effective way. A differentiated training approach for mentors might allow them to more effectively obtain skills commensurate to mentees' teaching experience. Currently, the same model is used to train mentors of new and experienced teachers, and research shows that the needs are quite different. Therefore, although the mentor program is effective in what it does and it continues to improve on the basis of feedback from constituents, the most effective way to achieve all of its goals cannot be determined until other mentor models have been explored further.

**POLICY QUESTION:**

**“ WHAT SHOULD BE MODIFIED, ADJUSTED, INCREASED OR ELIMINATED?”**

**Recommendations for Staff**

- Provide the opportunity for “Refresher Training” at least two times during the year for those mentors who were trained more than two years prior to their mentoring year.
- Send out periodic newsletters to active mentors.
- Provide mentoring calendars with tips and suggested activities to active mentors/contact mentors throughout the school year.
- Continue to make mentors/contact mentors accountable by periodically requiring additional documentation to show support given to mentees (beyond the Mentor Journal).

**Recommendations Requiring Work With Other Departments**

- Work with the Departments of Information and Personnel Services to ensure that APS has a consistent database of new hires with codes for the following: (1) years of experience, (2) new to APS, (3) transfer within APS, (4) re-hire.
- Work with the Departments of Information and Personnel Services to ensure that APS has an accurate and updated list of all new hires prior to the August orientation.
- Work with the Departments of Information and Personnel Services to ensure that new hires hired after January 15<sup>th</sup> are coded as eligible for a mentor the following school year.

**Recommendations for Administrators and Supervisors at the School Level**

- Ensure that non–classroom-based staff are assigned a mentor if it is deemed appropriate.
- Increase collaboration among administrators in the assignment of mentors when a new hire works in more than one school.
- Ensure that the criteria for matching new hires and mentors are consistent from school to school.
- Increase collaboration between school-based administrators and supervisors on the assignment of mentors to resource teachers for the gifted, school psychologists, social workers, physical education teachers, music teachers, art teachers, etc.

**POLICY QUESTION:  
WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?**

Results from the evaluation suggest that mentors are using the skills and strategies acquired during mentor training to assist new teachers in making the transition to teaching in Arlington Public Schools (APS). However, for the Mentor Program to continue to gain momentum and stay current with Best Practices in mentoring, it is necessary to make changes to the program within the upcoming years.

In most formal mentor programs, there are four ways in which mentors serve: mentor, coach, collaborator, and consultant. The role played by the mentor is determined by the mentor and mentee and provides a basis for the mentoring relationship throughout the year. Currently, mentors in APS are trained to use skills that are designed to support their mentor roles. A logical next step to the Mentor Program would be to prepare mentors to become more sophisticated in their mentoring practices by providing training in Peer Coaching.

Additionally, the Office of Professional Development must collect more specific data to determine the ever-changing needs of new hires and to create programs to best meet those needs. Table 18 identifies major program findings and describes ways in which those findings will be addressed by the Office of Professional Development for continuous program improvement.

**Table 18. Major Program Findings and Responses to the Findings**

<b>Major findings</b>	<b>Response to findings</b>
The number of new hires paired with a mentor increased from 55% in 2001–2002 to a high of 77% in 2004–2005. This indicates that all eligible teachers were not provided a mentor.	Continue to work with Personnel Services to develop a database of all staff eligible for a mentor and to provide a mentor for 100% of eligible teachers.
An increasing number of requests are made by administrators to provide trained mentors for second- and third-year teachers.	Determine what needs are not being met during the first year of teaching, and design a plan for continued support throughout the probationary years.
Mentors and mentees who taught the same grade and subject reported that they met more frequently than mentors and mentees who did not teach the same grade and subject.	Revise the Mentor–Mentee Checklist to reflect the importance of matching mentors and mentees who teach the same subject and grade level.
The Mentor Journal was perceived as an effective communication tool by 82% of mentors.	Create a tool for new teachers to reflect on the mentoring relationship.

<b>Major findings</b>	<b>Response to findings</b>
About 50% of mentors in the focus group were interested in refresher training or follow-up discussion groups.	Offer a Summer Mentor Institute that provides beginning, advanced, and refresher mentor training.
Although most respondents expressed satisfaction with their contact mentor, 20% reported that the contact mentor did not maintain ongoing communication.	Provide contact mentors with a monthly communication tool that supports their role and publish the mentor newsletter quarterly rather than bi-annually.
A little more than 20% of mentees did not believe that working with a mentor enhanced their instructional practices.	Determine, if possible, whether this is the same percentage as for those who need an additional year of support.
The percentage of teachers reporting that working with a mentor improved their instructional practice was 70%.	Make annual changes to the training components of the mentor program to stay current with Best Practices in teaching.
Mentors in the focus group reported that their instructional practices improved when they worked with a mentee.	Collect data on mentors' perceptions of the ways in which their instructional practices are affected as a result of working with a mentee.
An overwhelming 92% of teachers would recommend working in APS to others.	Determine, via the end of year survey, if the support provided by the mentor is a contributing factor.
Data in the Office of Professional Development database and the Personnel Services database do not always match.	Work closely with Information Services to develop a more comprehensive way to systematically improve the accuracy of employee data.
New teachers with zero years of experience meet more often with their mentor than new experienced teachers.	Discontinue the monthly new teacher classes coordinated by the Office of Professional Development to allow more time for new teachers to meet with their mentors.
A significant number of new hires who did not receive a mentor were "systemwide."	Determine the base location for systemwide new hires in order to provide a mentor to eligible teachers.
More than 95% of mentors are satisfied with their training.	Keep mentors motivated and their mentoring practices rejuvenated by offering training in advanced skills in mentoring on an annual basis.
The mentor program does not affect teachers' choice to work in APS.	Take a more active role in APS job fairs to highlight the additional support provided by the Mentor Program.

**Conclusion**

These steps should lay the groundwork for the next summative evaluation. The data collected in 2004–2005 can serve as a baseline on which to build future evaluation questions, including a closer examination of the extent to which the mentor–mentee partnership improves instruction.

## REFERENCES

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## **Appendix A**

### School Based Teacher Mentor Application



# Arlington Public Schools

## School-Based Teacher Mentor Application

(2005-2006 School Year)

*Part I - To Be Completed by the Applicant*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Subject/Grade Level (2005-2006): \_\_\_\_\_ SSN: \_\_\_\_\_  
Summer Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

1. Years of Teaching Experience in Arlington Public Schools \_\_\_\_\_
2. Total Years of Teaching Experience \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Please check all that apply.**  
\_\_\_\_ I will serve as a department chair in 2005-2006 Year \_\_\_\_\_ (if previously served).  
\_\_\_\_ I have taken the APS Best Practices course Year \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ I will serve as a lead teacher in 2005-2006 Year \_\_\_\_\_ (if previously served).
4. **On the back, please write a brief essay that explains why you would like to be a teacher mentor. (Attach additional pages if necessary).**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Teacher's signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

***Part II - To Be Completed by an Administrator ONLY.***

**Principals, Assistant Principals, or Supervisors, please initial in the boxes where appropriate.**

- At this time, I recommend this applicant to serve as a school-based mentor.
- At this time, I do not recommend this applicant to serve as a school-based mentor.
- I have discussed my decision with the applicant.
- I have provided the applicant with a copy of the signed application.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Principal's Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\*\*Principals should return or fax a copy of this form to Kranulett Hunter at The Office of Professional Development. Fax Number: 703-516-7120.

## **Appendix B**

### School Based Mentor Training Schedule





# ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Office of Professional Development

### School-Based Mentor Training Schedule 2005-2006

#### SESSION I

September 17, 2005 (Saturday)	8:30 AM - 3:30 PM	Marshall Building
October 4, 2005	8:30 AM - 3:30 PM	Marshall Building

#### SESSION 2

November 17, 2005	3:30 PM - 6:30 PM*	Marshall Building
December 13, 2005	8:30 AM - 11:30 AM	Marshall Building
December 20, 2005	12:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Marshall Building

#### SESSION 3

April 20, 2006	12:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Marshall Building
April 25, 2006	8:30 AM - 11:30 AM	Marshall Building
April 27, 2006	3:30 PM - 6:30 PM*	Marshall Building

**All mentors must attend one full day and two-half days of training. \*Teachers will be paid \$15.00 per hour for attending the 3:30 - 6:30 PM sessions.**

#### Registering in ERO

1. From APS web page, click on "**online registration**"
2. Click **login** and enter organization ID (**55103**)
3. Enter your **new 6 digit ID number (for both user ID and PIN)**
4. Click on **Course Catalog** tab
5. Under **Choose Curriculum**, scroll down to Staff Development
6. Click on **Search**
7. Click on the Mentor Training I, II or III and find the session you would like
8. Click on the **green register** button

**Questions:** Contact Donna Cerwensky (x2110) or Valerie Smolinski (x2109)

## **Appendix C**

### Assignment Checklists

- Checklist for Matching Elementary Mentors and Mentees
- Checklist for Matching Secondary Mentors and Mentees



# Arlington Public Schools

## Checklist for Matching *Elementary* Mentors and Mentees

### **The school-based mentor....**

- √ Is willing to maintain confidentiality
- √ Is caring, supportive, and insightful
- √ Possesses strong interpersonal skills
- √ Has the time to be a mentor
- √ Conveys a positive attitude towards the school and the teaching profession
- √ Is willing to attend required mentor training sessions
- √ Is willing to submit required mentor documentation
- √ Has three years of successful teaching experience in Arlington Public Schools
- √ Shares a common planning period or lunch time
- √ Shares common subject matter (classroom teachers should be matched with other classroom teachers, specialists with other specialists)
- √ Has personal and professional strengths which address the needs of the mentee
- √ Has no more than two mentees



# Arlington Public Schools

## Checklist for Matching *Secondary* Mentors and Mentees

### **The school-based mentor....**

- √ Is willing to maintain confidentiality
- √ Is caring, supportive, and insightful
- √ Possesses strong interpersonal skills
- √ Has the time to be a mentor
- √ Conveys a positive attitude towards the school and the teaching profession
- √ Is willing to attend required mentor training sessions
- √ Is willing to submit required mentor documentation
- √ Has three years of successful teaching experience in Arlington Public Schools
- √ Works in close proximity to the mentee
- √ Is currently working at the same grade level as the mentee
- √ Shares a common planning period or lunch time
- √ Is currently teaching the same subject as the mentee
- √ Has personal and professional strengths which address the needs of the mentee
- √ Has no more than two mentees

## **Appendix D**

### Contact Mentor Forms

- Contact Mentor Application
- Contact Mentor Responsibilities



8. What leadership positions do you currently hold?

9. What honors and/or recognitions have you received that support your interest and ability in serving as a leader in the mentor program?

10. Additional Comments

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Teacher's signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Administrator's signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

***Part III - To Be Completed by Office of Professional Development ONLY.***

**Mentoring History**

- completed training
- detailed journal entries

- timely submission of paperwork
- effective communication

\_\_\_\_ 4 = Excellent      \_\_\_\_ 3 = Good      \_\_\_\_ 2 = Fair      \_\_\_\_ 1 = Poor

**Arlington Public Schools**  
Office of Professional Development

**Contact Mentor Responsibilities**  
2005-2006

The Contact Mentor is a one-year commitment to facilitate communication and disseminate information to mentors in the building. A Contact Mentor must be trained as a mentor but does not have to be actively mentoring.

**I. Prerequisites:**

- ▶ Must have completed Mentor Training Sessions I, II and III.
- ▶ Must have completed one successful year of mentoring, which includes submitting mentor journals regularly.

**II. Qualifications:**

- ▶ Convey a positive attitude toward the school and the teaching profession
- ▶ Demonstrate effective communication skills
- ▶ Posses organizational skills
- ▶ Maintain confidentiality
- ▶ Use email and voicemail proficiently and in a timely manner
- ▶ Willingness to use *Blackboard* as a communication tool (training will be provided.)

**III. Responsibilities:**

- ▶ Manage and share resources
- ▶ Submit to the Office of Professional Development the name, subject/grade level, teaching status, room number, and the name of the assigned mentor of all **new hires** in the building.
- ▶ Inform the Office of Professional Development when there is a **late new hire**, **unmatched new hire**, or **transfer** to the building.
- ▶ Facilitate communication between School-Based Mentors and countywide Teacher Development Specialists.
- ▶ Coordinate an in-house group meeting, to include all mentees and mentors, a minimum of once per semester.
- ▶ Inform the Office of Professional Development of concerns regarding mentors or mentees.
- ▶ Disseminate information to school-based mentors.
- ▶ Ensure that new teachers receive information on topics that are no longer addressed at the countywide level. These topics include: Back-to-School Night, Parent-Teacher Conferences, Report Cards, End of Year Procedures.
- ▶ Attend a paid, 90-minute information session June 16, at 4:15, or June 27, at 9 a.m.

**IV. Incentives:**

- ▶ Contact Mentors will be paid a one-time stipend of \$980 at the end of the school year.
- ▶ Contact Mentors will be awarded 30 recertification points for each year of service.



## **Appendix E**

### Mentoring Partnership Agreement



# Mentoring Partnership Agreement

## 2005-2006

(To be completed by the mentor and mentee)

### Section I - Setting Goals and Objectives

In order to grow together as teacher and learner in our mentoring relationship, we have agreed on the following goals and objectives:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

### Section II - Establishing Ongoing Communication and Maintaining Confidentiality

We have discussed the protocols by which we will work together, develop, and in the spirit of partnership, collaborate to keep our communication, honest, open, candid and direct. To do this we will....

- a. Maintain confidentiality of our relationship. Confidentiality for us means...  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. Maintain ongoing communication by meeting regularly. It is our goal to meet...  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Section III - Setting Boundaries and Providing Effective Feedback

In order that we do not exceed the limits of the relationship, we will.....

- a. Establish and honor the ground rules we have developed for this relationship. Our ground rules are as follows:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. Provide regular feedback to each other and evaluate the progress of our relationship. We will accomplish this by reviewing our learning goals TOGETHER by meeting **weekly** for the first semester. We will revisit our agreement second semester and arrange to meet on a needs basis.

In the event one or both of us feel that the mentoring relationship is no longer productive for us to continue working together, or the learning situation is compromised, we will seek guidance from the teacher development specialists to determine the most effective and professional manner in which to conclude the relationship. At this time, we will agree to use closure as a learning opportunity.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor's Signature                      Mentee's Signature                      School                      Date

Adapted by Kranulett Hunter from the *Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships* by Lois J. Zachary, 2000.

**Appendix F**  
Mentor Journal



# THE MENTOR'S JOURNAL

## 2005-2006

Mentor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Mentee's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_

<b>SUPPORT PROVIDED (check all that apply)</b>	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Week 4</b>
<b>School Policies and Procedures</b> (APS and individual schools)				
<b>Lesson Planning &amp; Curriculum Overview</b>				
<b>Classroom Organization</b> (setting up the classroom and learning centers)				
<b>Behavior Management</b> (strategies to improve discipline and student learning)				
<b>Individual Student Concerns</b> (issues impacting student performance)				
<b>Special Education Policies and Procedures</b>				
<b>Student Assessment</b> (test preparation, administration and implications)				
<b>Modeling Instruction</b>				
<b>Parent Conferences, Back-to-School Night, Report Cards</b>				
<b>Communicating With Others</b> (team members, staff, administrators, and others)				
<b>Time Management ( filing, grading, sorting, organizing, scheduling)</b>				
<b>Technology Support ( IEPs on line, TSIPs, Easy Grade Pro)</b>				
<b>End of Quarter and/ or End of Year Procedures</b>				
<b>Emotional Support ( referrals to other resources)</b>				
<b>Lunch Talk</b>				
<b>Other</b>				

(OVER)



## **Appendix G**

### Mentor Program Presentations



## Mentor Program Presentations

- Performance Institute of Arlington, 2006
- Leadership Arlington, 2004 and 2005
- Pennsylvania National Staff Development Conference, 2003
- Interview with *The Video Journal of Education*, 2003
- George Mason University Leadership Conference, 2001
- Technical Solutions and Maintenance, Inc., 2000
- Supported mentor program initiatives with the Arlington County Sheriff's Department, Loudoun County Schools and Frederick County Schools.
- Was cited by the *Video Journal of Education* as having an outstanding mentor program.

## **Appendix H**

### Surveys

- Mentor Program Evaluation Survey: New Hires (administered to new hires in June 2005)
- The First Days of School: Mentor Support Evaluation (administered to new hires in September 2004)
- Mid-Year Mentor Program Evaluation: New Hires (administered to new hires in January 2005)
- Mentor Program Evaluation Survey: Mentors (administered to mentors in June 2005)





16. What type of support do you feel would be most helpful for second year teachers? (Mark all that apply).

- Behavior management
- Lesson planning
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Parent communication
- Emotional support
- Assessment
- Differentiation

17. Would you recommend working in Arlington Public Schools to others?  Yes  No  Not Certain

18. As a new teacher, I wish someone had told me...

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19. The one thing I liked best about the Mentor Program was...

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20. The one thing I would change or add to the Mentor Program is...

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**Thank you for completing this survey !**

**Please return to the Office of Planning and Evaluation by:  
June 3, 2005**

# The First Days of School Mentor Support Evaluation

School \_\_\_\_\_

## Please Mark One

- Full - time employee
- Part - time Employee

## Please Mark One

- Teacher
- Librarian
- Counselor
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Please Mark One

- I am a first - year teacher with zero years of experience.
- I am a new hire to Arlington with:
  - 1- 3 years of experience
  - 4 - 6 years of experience
  - 7 - 10 years of experience
  - more than 10 years of experience

### MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Use a No. 2 pencil only.
- Do not use ink, ballpoint, or felt tip pens.
- Make solid marks that fill the response completely.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.
- Make no stray marks on this form.

CORRECT: ●

INCORRECT: ☒ ☓ ○ ⊖

- 1. Did you attend the August New Hire Orientation?**  Yes  No  
If yes, mark all the days that you attended.  Monday  Wednesday  Friday  
 Tuesday  Thursday (elementary only)  
If NO, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

- 2. Have you met your mentor?**  Yes  No

***IF NO, YOU DO NOT NEED TO COMPLETE THE REST OF THIS SURVEY.***

- 3. Do you know your mentor's name?**  Yes  No

- 4. When did you meet your mentor for the first time?**
- at the mentor-mentee luncheon during New Hire Orientation Week
  - during Pre-Service Week (August 30 - Sept. 3)
  - during the first week of school (Sept. 7 - 10)
  - did not meet my mentor until after the first week of school
  - none of the above, explain \_\_\_\_\_

- 5. How did you find out your mentor's name?**
- my principal or administrator told me
  - my mentor came and introduced him/herself to me
  - the contact mentor at my school told me
  - I asked someone at my school
  - none of the above, explain \_\_\_\_\_

6. How often did you meet with your mentor during Pre-Service Week? (Aug. 30 - Sept. 3)

- everyday
- 1 - 2 times
- 3 - 4 times
- as needed
- did not meet at all

7. How often did you meet with your mentor during the first week of school? (Sept. 7 - 10)

- everyday
- 1 - 2 times
- 3 - 4 times
- as needed
- did not meet at all

8. How helpful was your mentor in facilitating your transition into teaching in Arlington Public Schools?

- very helpful
- somewhat helpful
- somewhat unhelpful
- very unhelpful
- none of the above, explain \_\_\_\_\_

9. My mentor (mark all that apply)

- gave me a tour of my school
- helped me understand building procedures
- helped me locate resources to support instruction
- helped me understand school policy and procedures
- helped me prepare for the First Week of School

10. Name one thing your mentor did during the first few weeks of school that was helpful to you.

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**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY.**

For	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> 8	<input type="radio"/> 9
internal	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> 8	<input type="radio"/> 9
use only	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> 8	<input type="radio"/> 9



**Please consider the support provided by your Contact Mentor in the next set of statements.**

STRONGLY  
AGREE      AGREE      DISAGREE      STRONGLY  
DISAGREE      N/A

16. The Contact Mentor in my school maintained on-going communication with me.
17. I am satisfied with the support I received from my Contact Mentor.
18. How often did the Contact Mentor in your school meet with the entire group of mentors this year?
- 1 - 2 times       3 - 4 times       more than 3 - 4 times       we never met

19. What type of support do you feel would be most helpful for second year teachers? (Mark all that apply)

- Behavior management       Lesson planning       Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Parent communication       Emotional support      \_\_\_\_\_
- Assessment       Differentiation      \_\_\_\_\_

20. What additional support would assist you in your role as mentor?

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21. The one thing I liked best about the Mentor Program was...

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22. The one thing I would change or add to the Mentor Program is...

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**Thank you for completing this survey !**

**Please return to the Office of Planning and Evaluation by:  
June 3, 2005**

**Arlington Public Schools**  
 Mid-Year Mentor Program Evaluation  
 January 14, 2005  
 (to be completed by new hires)

**Please Check One**

- Full time employee
- Part time employee

**Please Check One**

- Classroom Teacher
- Librarian
- Art/ Music/ P.E.
- Student Services
- Other

**Please Check One**

- First -year teacher
- 1-3 years experience
- 4-10 years experience
- more than 10 years experience

1. Do you have an assigned mentor? **YES** **NO** (If NO, please stop here)

2. Do you have regularly scheduled meetings with your mentor? **YES** **NO**

3. Do you feel your mentor respects the confidentiality of your relationship? **YES** **NO**

4. How often are you meeting with your mentor at this time?

- Daily**      **Weekly**      **Monthly**      **Infrequently**

5. To what degree was the "partnership agreement" helpful in establishing your relationship with your mentor?

- Very helpful**      **Helpful**      **Somewhat helpful**      **Not helpful**      **Uncertain**

6. In which areas has your mentor been most helpful to you? Check all that apply.

- Parent communication
- Individual student concerns
- Lesson planning/Best Instructional Practices
- In-house routines/procedures
- Providing feedback on instruction
- Emotional support
- Assessment
- Other

7. Working with my mentor has enhanced my instructional practices.

- Strongly agree**      **Agree**      **Disagree**      **Strongly disagree**      **Not applicable**

## **Appendix I**

### Focus Group Reports

- Focus Group Research Report: Teacher Mentors (June 2005)
- Focus Group Research Report: Teacher Mentees (August 2005)



**Arlington Public Schools Office of Professional Development**  
**Mentor Program Evaluation**  
*Focus Group Research with Teacher Mentors*  
**Report of Findings**  
June 20, 2005

## **BACKGROUND**

The Office of Professional Development within Arlington Public Schools (APS) has established a teacher mentor program to deliver consistent and ongoing support for newly hired APS teachers. Each new teacher hire is linked with an experienced APS teacher, who serves as a mentor and provides guidance on topics ranging from instructional strategies to the school system's culture. Mentors receive formal training—one full-day session, and two half-days—as well as a stipend, recertification points, and substitute days for mentor-related activities, such as observing or meeting with their mentees.

## **RESEARCH PURPOSE**

This focus group study is one component of a larger, multi-faceted evaluation of the APS Mentor Program. The overarching goals of the focus group were to better understand mentors' perspectives on:

- How well the existing Mentor Program serves mentors and mentees, and how various aspects of the program might be strengthened, as well as
- The extent to which the Mentor Program enhances the instructional practices of mentors and mentees.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

One focus group was conducted with 10 teacher mentors—5 working at the elementary school level, and 5 working in APS middle and high schools. At a future time, at least one focus group will be conducted with mentees. Staff in the Office of Professional Development carried out recruiting activities, striving for a mix of elementary and secondary teachers and a mix of individuals who have had trouble-free mentoring experiences, and those who have encountered difficulties. Each teacher mentor in the focus group had:

- Actively been mentoring a new APS teacher in academic year 2004-2005.
- Completed all three sessions of the APS mentor training program.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The moderator's guide (see Appendix) covered three overarching topics, specifically:

1. The mentor/mentee relationship,
2. Effects of the Mentor Program for mentors and mentees, and
3. Topics related to how the Mentor Program itself functions.

### **Mentor/Mentee Relationship**

## Time

The teacher mentors were asked to describe how they and their mentees typically spend their mentoring time. Mentors said that how they spend their time with mentees varies widely, based upon the mentees' needs. However, some patterns were evident.

- With mentees new to teaching *and* matched with a mentor teaching the same subject/grade, the topics addressed within the mentor/mentee relationship ranged the most widely. These mentoring sessions covered topics from administrative matters to classroom management to handling parent relationships. In addition, they included exchanging teaching ideas, and discussing curriculum.
- With mentees new to teaching, but *not* matched with a mentor in the same subject/grade, the focus of the mentoring relationship was slightly narrower. In these cases, mentors said they would discuss matters such as administrative topics and classroom management, but did not tend to address teaching content or curriculum as much.
- With experienced teachers new to APS, the focus of the mentoring relationship was the most narrow. In these cases, the relationship was said to focus mostly on administrative matters related to the school itself, or to the APS system. In other words, these individuals were said to need little or no content or classroom support. But, they were thought to benefit from having a mentor to guide them on administrative-type matters.

*If I'm mentoring an experienced teacher who is new to Arlington, then [the mentoring relationship] tends to focus on the curriculum and the policies of the school. Whereas, if I mentor a new teacher, it's much more about how to set up the classroom, ideas about keeping grades, how to handle discipline, what we're teaching...<sup>1</sup>*

At several points in the discussion, the mentors highlighted their strongly held opinion that the more closely matched a mentor and mentee can be, the more beneficial the relationship will be. To their minds, it is extremely helpful when mentor and mentee teach the same subject(s) and grade level(s), work in the same building, and share a planning period and/or lunch period. Additionally, for experienced teachers new to APS, an APS teacher with many years of experience was considered to be a more comfortable mentor match than an APS teacher with just a handful of years of teaching. The group recognized that perfect matches are not always achievable, but they shared a desire to emphasize that a good match can make a huge difference in how valuable the mentor/mentee relationship ultimately is. They recommended that school administrators who assign the mentor/mentee pairings be given guidelines (even "strict guidelines") about the best ways to match up mentors and mentees. Participants hoped that as more mentors are trained, better and better matches will be achievable.

*Participant 1: I really recommend that [mentor and mentee] have at least some period—planning period, lunch—together so that they can meet during the day, not always before school or after school.*

*Participant 2: Or that there be a lot of thought given to how they are matched up, so that they are on the same team, or share a planning time.*

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations were transcribed from an audiorecording of the group discussion.

Teacher mentors were reluctant to definitively say whether they have too much, too little, or just the right amount of time for their mentoring activities. Rather, they indicated that their time requirements depend very much upon the needs of their particular mentee(s). At times, they felt they had enough time, at times too little, and at times just right. Nonetheless, there were no strident complaints about not having enough time. In addition, the group did share strong agreement that the current limit of two mentees per mentor was appropriate. At higher ratios (e.g., five mentees to one mentor in one participants' past experience), group members said that lack of time becomes a factor, and mentees' needs cannot be met effectively. As one participant explained from experience, a mentor with too many mentees can end up prioritizing among mentees and giving time to the very neediest, while other mentees may go without enough attention.

*I think two[mentees] is a good limit. Because you have to keep time for your own job, and your own responsibilities. And, because you have to be able to be there [for your mentee] not just in a passing moment. Because, a lot of the times, the valuable discussions come out when you don't even think they have anything [pressing] to say. When you just sit down and talk, and then it all comes out.*

Some focus group participants commented that their mentor/mentee relationship changed over time. In general, they said the relationships would start in a relatively formal way—with mentors and mentees tending to have scheduled meetings and very specific subjects to tackle together (e.g., Back-To-School Night). Over time, several said, the meetings became less formal with their mentee simply “dropping by” when a visit was needed. Also, the topics addressed within the relationship became more emotional.

*As we learned in training, [the mentor/mentee relationship] progresses from [being] very objective, and “up front,” such as your to-do list for the first two weeks of school and Back-To-School Night...to the emotional things that start happening as the year progresses and you're dealing with students, teachers, other faculty, etc.*

### Effectiveness

These teacher mentors measure their effectiveness in several ways. First, they feel rewarded when they see growth, change, and successes occur for their mentees. They seem to actively revel in these changes, both tangible (e.g., moving on to a full-time position in APS) and intangible (e.g., feeling more competent and confident in the classroom). Additionally, participants nodded their agreement when one mentor said that when new teachers stay in the county, it is evidence of mentoring success. A few also described feeling gratified as their mentor/mentee relationships evolved to include mutual sharing, and learning from one another.

*It's the personal growth you see...seeing them (mentees) become competent, comfortable. It's really rewarding.*

*If they stay in the county, that means that we've done something to make them want to stay.*

*I think we get to a point where there is no longer as much of a difference in where you're "at." You're beginning to share ideas and work together.*

When asked what qualities make for an effective mentor, this group's list included:

- The ability to guide a mentee, not tell him or her what to do in a dictatorial way
- The ability to function as a coach
- Diplomacy, feeling unafraid of discussing tough topics
- Good communication skills, including asking the right questions to elicit discussion
- Strong social skills to help the mentee feel comfortable approaching the mentor

These teachers said they felt less effective when their mentees rejected their advice, opted not to take a specific suggestion of theirs, or failed to "follow through" on a plan of action they had arrived at together.

*Participant 1: It's hard when you're offering suggestions, or modeling some skill and the person doesn't follow through.*

*Participant 2: Or flat out rejects it.*

One prominent theme in the discussion of effectiveness was that when new teachers are faltering, mentors feel a great degree of concern that they are somehow personally failing as a mentor. The teacher mentors acknowledged that the matter of having an unsuccessful mentee was raised in their mentor training. Yet, those with negative mentoring experiences said they still went through a period of feeling burdened or concerned that their mentorship was failing to help their mentee. Similarly, they desired strong guidance as to what to do if they come to the conclusion that their mentee is simply not effective or happy at his or her job, and is not an employee that APS should strive to retain.

*There are going to be teachers who are not going to grow and be effective. And, do we really want them to stay in the county?...In [my mentee's case], I felt a lot of guilt. She's 23 years old. And, I really wanted to help her be effective and successful...But, it turns out that she actually doesn't really want to be there [teaching].*

*I think it's our nature as teachers...that we don't want anyone to fail. So, when we get a mentee who maybe is downright horrible, it's very hard emotionally to deal with it. This is where Donna and Valerie are so helpful.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Participant is referring to Office of Professional Development staff members Donna Cerwensky, Secondary Teacher Development Specialist, and Valerie Smolinski, Elementary Teacher Development Specialist.

In discussing their own effectiveness, the group also wondered aloud at the particular challenges of mentors who do not perform well. To address the problem of poor mentors, they suggested that the Mentor Program include a feedback mechanism for mentees to communicate with Office of Professional Development staff. These participants were aware of end-of-year feedback that mentees provide about their experience in the Mentor Program, but they wondered whether any formal mechanisms were in place for feedback at other times during the school year.

*“I was wondering if there was a way to follow up with the mentees to see if they’re getting their needs met. Perhaps there already is.”*

## **Mentor Program—Effects for Mentors and Mentees**

### Goals of the Program

When asked to describe the goals of the Mentor Program in their own words, these teacher mentors said:

- To support each mentee and, to help them to be better teachers and provide the best instruction for the students.
- To keep good teachers in APS.
- To allow an immediate and nonjudgmental mechanism for “stepping in” to remedy any small problems, thereby preventing them from becoming bigger problems.

Participants described, in a broader sense, what they believed to be the core basic needs of new teacher hires that any quality induction program should meet. In their opinions, new teacher hires need:

- Time for reflection and planning (perhaps even an extra planning period each day or reduced workload for their first year).
- Opportunities to watch their peers in action (e.g., teachers watch others teach and communicate with parents, counselors observe other counselors, etc.).
- Multiple non-evaluative observations of themselves in action. Administrators were said to be hard pressed to find time to observe new teachers as much as they want to or should.
- Opportunities to meet other teachers in the building, to feel they have familiar colleagues and resources they can turn to when in need.
- Assistance with “balancing everything,” including balancing responsibilities within school such as grading papers, preparing tests, etc., as well as the work/life balance.
- Help and guidance on time management.
- Help and guidance on classroom management.
- Help and guidance in making relationships with parents positive ones. Especially at the high school level, younger teachers may feel intimidated by their students’ parents because the parents are older than the teachers.

### Impact of the Mentoring Program on Mentors and Mentees

The group agreed strongly that participating in the Mentor Program has had an overall positive impact on them. For example, one participant pointed to his mentee’s energy, saying it was revitalizing to him. Another said his mentee provided materials, and new information from the mentee’s more-recent academic training that the mentor found beneficial to his own teaching. A third indicated that she is better able to learn from her mistakes in the classroom as she discusses

these events with her mentee, pointing out that although she is experienced, she is not perfect. Even one participant whose mentee was not succeeding, felt that serving as a mentor benefited his teaching because he had found himself conscientiously trying to model excellent teaching, and classroom tactics. One participant countered that mentoring was exhausting, rather than revitalizing for her. Yet, she still described mentoring as fulfilling.

*The energy my mentee comes with is one of the things I've found to revitalize me. To see someone coming into Arlington, and wanting to jump right in there. It's kind of refreshing. Even if you know they're getting ready to run into a wall. They have the energy to hit the wall, get a bump, and say it was still good to try.*

*A lot of the first year teachers come out of school with tools they have or things they've read that you didn't have when you were in school. That's how I think it's revitalizing.*

It was also strongly believed that mentees benefit from the Mentor Program. A couple teachers with many years of experience spoke of feeling somewhat isolated during their own first teaching year, and lauded the fact that the Mentor Program can eliminate that feeling for today's new teachers. The program was believed to improve student instruction as well. For example, these teachers described working on lesson plans and rubrics with their mentees, strengthening them, and then receiving mentees' feedback that the plans had worked well. Some mentioned that their mentees still sought them out for advice or feedback in the mentees' second year, or said they expected current mentees to continue to seek them out. The mentors took this continued contact as evidence that the mentor/mentee relationship had benefited the mentee in the classroom.

*To have them come back after you've "cut the tether," so to speak. It makes you feel like you've done good service, and it's been a positive experience for both of you.*

Within the group, there was some speculation as to whether mentees should be formally assigned to mentors for two years, rather than just one. Some participants expressed their perception that many new teacher hires stay on with APS past one year, but then leave in year two or year three. Group members debated the wisdom of a longer Mentoring Program assignment for new teachers. For example, young, brand new teachers were said to be the ones who might need second-year mentoring the most. A guidance counselor's second year was also said to have unique challenges as the counselor's students advance to senior year and require assistance with college planning. Yet, an opinion was voiced that although mentees may still need help after their first year of teaching, they would ideally have acquired the skills to access the help they need. Moreover, they should be able to begin considering themselves equals with their colleagues. A compromise, such as having a less formal mentor/mentee relationship after the first year, was suggested. In sum, the group remained mixed as to the matter of adding a year of mentoring for new hires.

*I think they're finding that the number of first-year teachers who leave has gotten better. They're attaining the desired results. Where they're finding that people are leaving is in their second and third years because they kind of feel like they've been cast adrift. So, if [a school has] three new teachers and ten trained mentors, perhaps there is some kind of*

*program where you can mentor teachers in their second year who are in need—whether they've been identified as such, or they would just like some help.*

*For someone who is 22 or 23, I think there is something to be said for a two-year mentoring program. Classroom management, grading...It might not be possible to "fit it all in" in one year.*

*I don't necessarily think [a second year of mentoring] should be formal. Do they still need help? Yes. So do teachers in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 4<sup>th</sup> year...their 20<sup>th</sup> year. I think it's something that normally goes on, hopefully, within your school among the teachers. You want to give them the skills so they can go to anybody. How do you know you're a successful mentor? Not only are they good teachers, but they've learned **how** to access what they need and consider themselves an equal.*

## **Mentor Program—Functional Topics**

### Expectations of Mentors

When these mentors were asked whether they consistently felt clear about what was expected of them as mentors, they all responded, "yes." Even when prompted as to whether they had encountered any "surprises" about their role and responsibilities, they said that there were no such surprises.

They did offer some constructive suggestions that might further strengthen this aspect of the Mentor Program. Those working as counselors and in student services—that is, those who are not classroom teachers—indicated that several items on the "Mentor's Journal" checklist did not apply to them. For example, "classroom management" is not a topic likely to come up in a discussion between two counselors. Nonetheless, the few participants who raised this issue found it easy to adapt the checklist. For example, a counselor simply "translated" (his term) what "classroom management" might mean for his mentee—perhaps case management, or managing the student/counselor relationship with a particular student. Another mentor participant, working in student services, relied more heavily on the "Reflections" section of the Mentor's Journal, rather than using the checklist.

*Participant 1: Many items on the checklist did not relate.*

*Moderator: So, what did you do?*

*Participant 1: I just put it into my "Reflections" section.*

### Support for Mentors

These mentors felt well-supported on a variety of levels. First, several made it a point to laud the support they received from the Office of Professional Development, Donna Cerwensky and Valerie Smolinski, in particular. Many did so unprompted as they described experiences at various points in the discussion. And, when asked directly about the support they received, several pointed again to these staff members' support, calling it easy-to-access, and very helpful.

*I have to give a world of praise for the advice and support that Donna gave me, particularly via the journals.*

*Even though I had no issues, I got positive feedback from Valerie. And, that was so helpful.*

At the school level, participants also felt supported. They were aware of their contact mentors' availability. The handful of individuals who said they had mentoring difficulties indicated that they had sought their contact mentors' help. At least one appreciated that his school administrators let the mentor/mentee relationship exist without any administrative interference. By leaving mentor and mentee "alone," he felt, the administrators were showing their trust in his ability to manage the relationship. This participant and several others noted that administrators were respectful of the confidential nature of the mentor/mentee relationship.

Within this topic area of how the mentor/mentee relationship is supported at the school level, one participant raised a particular concern. This individual voiced concern that department chairs who are also mentors risk finding themselves in a "conflict of interest" (her term) situation. In this case, a mentee was struggling as a teacher. In the administrator role, the department chair had obligations related to addressing the struggles on behalf of students, the rest of the departments' teachers, and the school. Yet, in the mentor role, the department chair also had confidentiality responsibilities related to the mentee's struggles.

Many of the teacher mentors singled out the Mentor's Journal as important to helping them feel supported. Aspects of the journals they appreciated included the convenience of being able to complete the journals online using Blackboard. In addition to being convenient, the technology was also appreciated because it allows users to look at past journals to recall events (especially when a mentor/mentee relationship is struggling). Also, importantly, submitting journals was said to provide a simple and welcome opportunity to receive feedback from the Office of Professional Development staff. Some participants said they felt comfortable openly "venting" about mentoring challenges in their journals, and said they wrote copiously. However, at least one said that if she were having difficulty, she would prefer to use her journal to ask for a phone call as opposed to spelling out the troubles in writing.

*I loved the journals, because you could go back and see the progress that you've made.*

When these teacher mentors were asked about the role of communication with other mentors, their responses were mixed. A couple said they had no communication at all with other mentors. Others said communication with other mentors was generally very important to them. Still others pointed specifically to contact mentors as having an important advice-giving role. At least one said, in her experience, she had more contact with her Office of Professional Development liaison than with other mentors. Those who had not found mentor-to-mentor communication to be important were probed as to whether they felt a void, or felt unsupported in that regard. They said they did not.

These teacher mentors said that they very much appreciated the stipend they receive for their work, and recognize that the stipend is now more generous than it was in the past.



The group's ideas for additional ways mentors could be supported were explored. They gave the following comments.

- Mentors need, or would benefit from, refresher training.
- Some communication outreach options could be used to keep mentors feeling in touch with the program, give mentors refresher tips or suggestions, or to mention difficult stages that may be occurring for them at various times of the year. For example, a newsletter or periodic informational mass e-mail might be helpful, participants said.

*I think as more and more people get trained, there needs to be retraining or a refresher. Potentially you could have been trained three years ago. Maybe you have been mentoring, maybe you haven't. Also, some things are new, like the Blackboard journal.*

*Or, maybe we don't necessarily have to go to a course. Maybe a flyer. Or, a quick e-mail. An informational thing. Some way to jog our memories.*

### Mentor Preparation and Training

The group was in agreement that the mentor training program was of great value to them. They said they felt well prepared for their mentor roles. They called the training "excellent," and said the handouts and activities were "good." One participant mentioned keeping her training notebook handy as she experienced difficulties with her mentee. The group wished to make clear their opinion that no one in the APS Mentor Program should mentor without training.

Their constructive recommendations for training and the challenges they highlighted included these.

- It would be ideal for mentors to complete training prior to getting a mentee, rather than concurrently training and mentoring.
- It is ideal for teachers not to have to miss school for training. The participants appreciated the evening and summer training sessions. Although they are allotted substitute hours for mentoring activities, having a substitute can be so disruptive that several prefer to avoid doing so if possible. Specific examples of difficulties included the perceived hassles of preparing lesson plans to leave for a substitute. Also, sometimes teams of teachers work together teaching their high school classes the same concepts (e.g., mathematics concepts) at the same pace. A substitute can set one teacher's classes out of synch with the others, and make it difficult for that teacher to be part of the team planning process.

*I took my training this year and I mentored this year. And, I feel like I will be a much better mentor next year, because I've gone through the training. So, if possible, you shouldn't mentor until you've done the training.*

*I know there has been a reluctance on the part of teachers in my building to come to mentor training because they're concerned about missing a day of school. So, [I suggest] mentor training where you didn't have to miss a day of school.*

These teacher mentors were asked whether they felt prepared by their training "to help new teachers address the particular challenges teachers face these days." As a group, they answered that such preparation is not the responsibility of mentor training. They spelled out their

perspective that teaching challenges are many, varied, and quite different between the elementary and secondary levels. Overall, they thought mentor training could not possibly prepare a single, mixed group on the elementary-specific and secondary-specific matters. They also pointed to the range of challenges such as technology (e.g., graphing calculators), suicide, and school violence (e.g., Columbine). The group was unified in saying that one simply has to have lived through some challenges in order to be able to help another person to weather them. To this end, they agreed that the Mentor Program's stipulation that a mentor must have at least three years of experience is an important requirement.

*I'm not sure the training could help us meet all the challenges [teachers face these days]. I mean, they're so varied. It's not to fulfill that function.*

*And, at different levels. She is an upper level teacher working in a department. I'm at the elementary level. We work in teams, too. But, you're a little more isolated in terms of a "department."*

*There is a requirement that you've been a teacher for at least three years. There is a good reason for that. You have to live through experiences yourself as a teacher to be able to be an effective mentor. That, more than a training course [prepares you to help teachers face challenges].*

When the moderator asked how these teacher mentors would respond to negative comments about mentoring, these mentors responded with dumbfounded expressions and said they had never encountered negativity toward mentoring. Some had found that colleagues who asked about the Mentor Program would say, "Oh, I do that [mentoring] anyway," speaking as if the mentor/mentee relationship was just a normal matter of course. In one example, a teacher at a school felt that he or she was extensively, but informally, mentoring a new teacher. Yet, another teacher was actually being paid to be the new teacher's mentor, and was not performing in that role. But, all in all, no one had encountered others who indicated that they do not value mentoring.

### Mentoring and Transforming Teaching

Participants commented that the strategies they learned in training—such as communication strategies—can also be used in the classroom. Several found that training provided an opportunity to revisit skills they already had, and a chance for reflection on their teaching. Throughout the conversation they described ways in which being a mentor had caused them to think more about such matters as the lesson plans they prepare, and to strive to model ways to manage students in the classroom.

*All of the strategies that I learned at the training, I could also use in my classroom. In terms of communication skills, valuing other people, looking for multiple perspectives, those are all things I felt really supported what was happening in my classroom.*

*It caused deeper reflection. These were skills that were probably always there.*

*The training was a nice summary. A time to recharge your batteries. It was very reflective.*

### Summary Comments

In closing, the group was asked whether there were facets of the Mentor Program that should be discontinued, or facets that should be added. There was nothing mentioned that should be discontinued. A few teacher mentors contemplated the relationship between the Mentor Program and the new teacher training program, speculating that the Mentor Program may be filling some of the needs once filled only by the new teacher training program. Thus, they commented, perhaps the new teacher training could be adjusted to be less disruptive. Those commenting said that new teachers find themselves out of the building on many days, and that those absences are particularly burdensome to new teachers partly because preparing lesson plans for substitutes or falling out of synch with colleagues can be challenging.

In commenting on facets to add, teacher mentors reiterated some items mentioned earlier in the group. These included:

- Refresher training (perhaps through Blackboard, if in-person training is not feasible)
- Increasing the number of training session opportunities, to minimize scheduling challenges for those trying to complete all three initial training sessions.

In summation, the group spontaneously discussed their impression that mentoring fosters teamwork among teachers. Additionally, some said they have felt an increased sense of teamwork among teachers over the years. For example, those who felt isolated as new teachers expressed a sense that some factors such as the Standards of Learning (SOLs) have increased a feeling among teachers that whole groups must work together to survive and thrive. In addition, these mentors appreciated having the opportunity to help strengthen the Mentor Program.

*One of the good things about the Mentor Program is that each year they get feedback. And, each year, they've added something different to make sure the program is growing and evolving and becoming even more of a helpful institution to the people who use it.*

## CONCLUSIONS

- **These teacher mentors were overwhelmingly positive about the Mentor Program and their role in it.** They described themselves as feeling that both they and their mentee benefited from participating. Even those whose mentees struggled as teachers felt well-supported, and were able to point to some benefits they had gained from their mentoring experience.
- **The message was clear that the better the “match” between mentor and mentee, the more likely wide-ranging benefits are to come from the relationship.** For participants, a good “match” means that the mentor and mentee work in the same building, share a planning period and/or lunch period, and teach the same subject(s) and grade level(s). In the case of counselors or others in student services, mentor/mentee matches should also take into account similar compatibilities of opportunity to meet, schedule, and work content areas.

Participants even suggested that administrators who make the matches be given specific guidelines to enhance their choices.

- **Some key facets of the current Mentor Program that were prized including:**
  - Staff in the Office of Professional Development—Teacher mentors felt well-trained, and supported by these staff members. They pointed specifically to telephone conversations and electronic responses to journal entries from staff members when mentor/mentee relationships were challenging, and to positive and encouraging words sent in response to journal entries as well.
  - Mentor’s Journals—The journal was seen as convenient, a useful tool for reflection, and an important opportunity for feedback from Office of Professional Development staff.
- **Teacher mentors suggested two additional ways that mentor/mentee relationships could be supported and enhanced.**
  - First, they suggested refresher training for mentors. They indicated that refresher material could be delivered in-person at a training session, or online technology (e.g., electronic newsletters) could prove useful as well.
  - Second, they wondered whether mentees had formal mechanisms for communicating with the Office of Professional Development staff about their mentor/mentee relationship. These participants suggested contact with staff about two to three times per year, suggesting October/November (after the flurry of back-to-school activities), mid-winter, and the academic year’s end.
- **In terms of training and support, teacher mentors expressed a need for continued attention to handling faltering mentor/mentee relationships, and handling situations where mentees are not proving to be effective teachers.** When these situations arose, mentors found them personally upsetting, and wondered at how much they should blame themselves. Support that helps them to understand their role, and to accept what they can and cannot accomplish as a mentor seemed to be particularly valuable.
- **Having permission to adapt Mentor Program materials to render them useful in particular situations was valued.** Participants appreciated knowing that they could “translate” Mentor Journal checklist items to suit their situation, or rely heavily on the “Reflections” section rather than the checklist if need be. They were clear that they did not feel obligated to always mark something on the checklist, if no items applied.
- **The safety and comfort afforded by confidentiality in the mentor/mentee relationship seemed critical.** Although the teacher mentors were never asked directly about confidentiality, they mentioned it several times during their discussion. In general, they felt it helped mentees to feel more comfortable asking for questions and help. Also, because others know the relationship is confidential, they were said to be less likely to ask prying questions, making interactions more comfortable for everyone.

**APPENDIX**  
**Arlington Public Schools Office of Staff Development**  
**Mentor Program Evaluation**  
***Focus Group Research with Teacher Mentors***  
**Moderator's Guide**  
June 8, 2005 - FINAL

Discussion time: 90 minutes

**1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, PROCEDURES (15 minutes)**

- Most importantly, **thank you** in advance for your time and help.
- **Introduce self:** name, independent researcher not employed by APS
- **Purpose** today is to talk about your experiences as a mentor with the APS Mentor Program. That includes everything from the program's training and structure, to the materials you use, to how your mentor/mentee relationship functions. As you probably know, this discussion is part of the program's ongoing evaluation. In other words, what we talk about today will ultimately be used to help strengthen the Mentor Program for the future.
- **Open, honest opinions**—both positive and negative—are most important of all. That means, if everyone's opinion is going one way, but you feel differently, I want to hear about it. And, as a group, we respect that everyone at the table has their own experience, and point of view.
- Discussion is being **audiotaped**, to help with my report. But, all answers are **confidential**. I will keep the tape. My report will not use any names, rather it will describe what "participants" said, and talk about the group as a whole.
- **Introduce observer/notetaker** whose copious notes will be a backup to the tape.
- Just a few **procedural items** to make the discussion run smoothly.
  - Talk one at a time, loudly enough for tape to pick up. I will give "time out" sign and make sure everyone gets floor time if we all end up talking at once.
  - I know you are used to protecting the confidentiality of your mentor/mentee relationship by talking about your mentees without using their names. We'll maintain that practice here.
  - Apart from my report, we will also not reveal what others say in this discussion.
  - Turn off cell phones.
  - There are many, many questions for us to get through. So, at times, I may need to ask a speaker to wrap up so we can move to the next topic.
- **Participant introductions**
  - I know that many of you know each other already. But, for my benefit, let's introduce ourselves starting with [NAME] and going around the table. Tell us your **first name, your school, and the subject and grade-level** you teach.

## 2. MENTOR/MENTEE RELATIONSHIP (15 minutes)

Let's get warmed up by keeping our focus narrow. Think about the time you spend working directly with your mentee.

- a. First, give me a general sense of how the two of you use your mentoring time.
- b. What topics or activities do you tend to spend the most time on? [PROBE REASONS WHY THOSE TOPICS/ACTIVITIES ARE PROMINENT.]
- c. Is your overall sense that you have too much, too little, or just the right amount of time to work with your mentee?
  - You say [TOO MUCH/TOO LITTLE/RIGHT AMOUNT] because
  - [IF TOO LITTLE] What are some of the things you wish you had more time to address together?

Along the way, you've probably given some thought to your effectiveness as a mentor. If not, let's think about it now.

- d. What experiences, within the Mentor Program, have made you feel you are an effective mentor?
- e. What experiences have made you feel troubled about your effectiveness?
- f. Overall, how do you personally measure your effectiveness?

## 3. MENTOR PROGRAM—EFFECTS FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES (10 minutes)

- a. In your own words, how would you describe the goals of the Mentor Program?
  - Let's step back from this particular program, and think very generally. What are the core, basic needs of new teacher hires that any quality induction program absolutely must meet?
- b. Tell me about the impact that participating in the Mentor Program, as a mentor, has had on you. [PROMPT FOR BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE.]
  - Have you found yourself changing your own teaching in any way? If so, how?
  - The program's stated goal for mentors is to "allow experienced teachers to revitalize, evaluate, and enhance their own teaching practices while helping new hires make the transition into teaching in Arlington Public Schools." To what extent is the program having those effects for you?
- c. Now, think about your mentee. Based on what you've seen, or what your mentee has said, what are your impressions of how participating in the Mentor Program has affected his or her teaching?

#### 4. MENTOR PROGRAM—FUNCTIONAL TOPICS (45 minutes)

Now, let's think more broadly, about the Mentor Program overall.

- a. Have you consistently felt clear about what is expected of you as a mentor?
  - Did you encounter any “surprises” about your role and responsibilities? If so, what were they?
  
- b. How well supported did you feel as a mentor? [IF NEEDED, PROMPT: BY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS? BY COUNTYWIDE MENTORS?]
  - In what ways has communication with other mentors been helpful to you?
  - What additional kinds of support might have been helpful?
  
- c. How well would you say the Mentor Program equipped you to do what was expected of you as a mentor?
  - Were there instances in which the program, or what you learned in training, served you well [DESCRIBE]? Instances in which you felt ill-served [DESCRIBE]?
  - Thinking about your training, how prepared do you feel to help new teachers address the particular challenges teachers face these days. [PROBE WHAT TOPICS WERE ADDRESSED, WHAT TOPICS OR ADVICE MAY BE MISSING.]
  - Describe how you would respond to a nonparticipant in mentoring who makes negative comments about mentoring, or who clearly does not understand or value mentoring. [PROBE: IS THIS RESPONSE SOMETHING YOU LEARNED ABOUT IN TRAINING?]
  
- d. Let's return to the Mentor Program's goals—one of which is to enhance the teaching of both mentors and mentees. Would you say the training helped you to see clearly how mentoring could be used to transform your teaching? Your mentee's teaching?
  
- e. Is there anything in the Mentor Program that should be discontinued?
  - [IF NEEDED, PROMPT] Any topics in the training? Training structure? Any reporting responsibilities? Anything about how the mentor/mentee relationship is defined, or how it operates?
  
- f. Is there anything that you think should be *added* to the Mentor Program?
  - [IF NEEDED, USE PROMPTS ABOVE.]

#### 5. CLOSING (5 minutes)

Our time is nearly up. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share?  
Thank you so much for your time and all your help.

**Arlington Public Schools Office of Professional Development**  
**Mentor Program Evaluation**  
*Focus Group Research with Former Mentees*  
**Report of Findings**  
August 24, 2005

## **BACKGROUND**

The Office of Professional Development within Arlington Public Schools (APS) has established a teacher mentor program to deliver consistent and ongoing support for newly hired APS teachers. Each new teacher hire is linked with an experienced APS teacher, who serves as a mentor and provides guidance on topics ranging from instructional strategies to the school system's culture. Mentors receive formal training—one full-day session, and two half-days—as well as a stipend, recertification points, and substitute days for mentor-related activities, such as observing or meeting with their mentees.

## **RESEARCH PURPOSE**

This focus group study is one component of a larger, multi-faceted evaluation of the APS Mentor Program. The overarching goals of the focus group were to better understand mentees' perspectives on:

- How well the existing Mentor Program serves mentors and mentees, and how various aspects of the program might be strengthened, as well as
- The extent to which the Mentor Program enhances the hiring, retention, and instructional practices of mentors and mentees.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

One focus group was conducted with six APS teachers who had participated in the Mentor Program as mentees in the preceding academic year (2004-2005). Three participants were teachers at the elementary level, and three at the middle or high school level. A separate focus group was also conducted to obtain the perspective of teacher *mentors*. The APS Office of Professional Development will reflect on both the mentee and mentor perspectives obtained via these focus groups and other research methods in assessing potential approaches to strengthening the Mentor Program.

The Office of Professional Development carried out recruiting activities, striving for a mix of elementary and secondary teachers. Each mentee in the focus group had been a first-year teacher, and new to APS, in academic year 2004-2005.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The moderator's guide (see Appendix) covered three overarching topics, specifically:

1. The mentor/mentee relationship,
2. Effects of the Mentor Program for mentees and mentors, and
3. Topics related to how the Mentor Program itself functions.

### Mentee/Mentor Relationship

#### Time

When these mentees were asked to describe how they and their mentors typically spent their mentoring time together, their answers were mixed. A handful said they had such regular contact and collaboration that their activities ranged widely, and any formalities of the mentor/mentee relationship—such as official “meetings”—ebbed away. For these individuals, activities included discussing curriculum, planning lessons, addressing classroom management matters, carrying out administrative tasks (e.g., field trip paperwork), planning around school events, preparing for Standards of Learning (SOL) testing, and other issues. This wide-ranging, closely connected form of collaboration was particularly described by participants working at the elementary level. In these cases, the mentees said they happened also to team teach with their mentor, or to share a lunch hour with their mentor, or to be teaching the same grade level as their mentor. In other words, a variety of factors facilitated this type of mentor relationship.

*In my case, my mentor was on my team. So, we touched base in the morning, in the afternoon, just as necessary. So, it was kind of an ongoing and continual sort of reinforcement. Very, very positive... We had a couple of mentor/mentee meetings, but then we found that because we were interacting every day, it wasn't necessary to have these separate meetings.*

*My mentor was on my team, and I talked to her every day. We had a close-knit team...always together, always planning. But, I know for other people in the school it was difficult if their mentor was not on their team. [In my case] we talked mostly curriculum, [but, in their case] they don't really talk curriculum...[because they were] teaching different grades.*

A couple participants indicated that they spent little or no time with their mentors. In one instance, a new mathematics teacher worked with a mentor who was the department chair and mathematics specialist for the school. This relationship, from the mentee's perspective, was essentially the same as it would have been without the “mentor” designation. In other words, the mentor played a certain role for all of the teachers helping with matters the mentee described as “what to teach in math,” and with particulars such as specialized testing and how to distribute calculators.

*We met maybe one or two times as mentor and mentee. [At those times] we talked about classroom management, doing things in the classroom.*

In another case, the mentor and mentee were in the same department, but did not share a planning period. This particular mentor was also not typically available before and after school. This mentee, who described herself as “independent” perceived her mentor to be generally kind and helpful when asked. But, she indicated that the relationship did not grow into the close partnership described by others at the table.

*I was the only one with my planning period. So I was the only one free, when I was free. So, “in passing” was the only time we talked, and it was usually about [topics like], “Is the assembly during 2<sup>nd</sup> period tomorrow?”*

In one case, the mentor/mentee relationship functioned on an “as needed” basis, which worked well for both teachers in the mentee’s opinion. This particular relationship was facilitated by the fact that the mentor had been the mentee’s Cooperating Teacher in the prior year as she completed her education.

*We already had a relationship and that helped a lot. I basically just went to him when I needed him and talked about classroom management and sometimes about things like how to teach a certain topic.*

Participants were asked to sum up whether they felt they had gotten too much, to little, or just the right amount of time with their mentors. Those who felt like close collaborators with mentors, and the participant who said she went to her mentor as needed said they had the right amount of time. Two participants said they desired more time with their mentor. Both were careful to temper their comments on receiving too little time, however.

*She’s a great friend, and a great teacher. But, as a mentor we did not spend enough time together at all...There were many times when I was thinking and working after school and I was hoping that my mentor would be around, but it didn’t happen.*

*She was always available...[But] She was overworked, almost. So, a lot of times, she was not in her office because she was busy. But, when I needed her, I could pretty much always find her.*

## **Mentor Program—Effects for Mentees and Mentors**

### Role of Mentor Program in Hiring Process

Before applying to APS, all of these new teachers assumed that APS would have a mentor program or other form of teacher-to-teacher support for new hires. They said they thought virtually all school systems have such programs in one form or another. Thus, the particulars of the APS program were not a strong, unique draw for APS. However, had the school system *not* had such a program, these participants said they might have felt dubious about the possibilities at APS.

These teachers found out about the mentor program at different stages in the hiring process—some before the process began, some during interviews, and some after they were hired.

*I student-taught the spring that I was hired. So, I found out then that my Cooperating Teacher was my mentor.*

*I found out that I would have a mentor during my phone interview, but I didn't know who my mentor was until I got to school.*

*I had friends who were teaching before me, all over the east coast. So, I assumed that I would have a mentor and then I found out [about the Mentor Program] when I asked when I was interviewing.*

*I didn't know [about the Mentor Program] until orientation week.*

When these new teachers were specifically asked if and how the Mentor Program influenced their decision to join APS, they all said that it did not influence their decision. It seemed that they either had simply set their sights on APS for other reasons, or they believed that other teachers would help them even without a formal mentor relationship. By way of explanation, they made comments such as these.

*I assumed that I would have one [a mentor]. I assumed that would be true anywhere. And, if it wasn't, then I probably would've just had a really bad first year.*

Participant 1: *It didn't even concern me, having a mentor. I thought it was a nice benefit. I knew I wanted Arlington County. [From graduate school] I had experience in each county around here. And, I knew I wanted Arlington. So, even if you "weren't allowed" to have a mentor, I probably would've picked Arlington County.*

Participant 2: *I agree.*

Participant 3: *I agree.*

*From my experience, teachers are willing to give. If you're willing to ask the questions, people are willing to share.*

### Impact of the Mentoring Program on Mentees

The mentor program's first major impact was felt most profoundly by these new teachers at the very beginning of the academic year. Even those who did not ultimately develop deeply involved mentor relationships felt quite reassured just knowing that the mentor was available if needed in those early weeks. In addition to this strong theme of reassurance, another theme emerged from this discussion. Among these participants, there was some concern about whether or not they were a burden to their mentor. Both the stipend mentors' receive and the many, many questions that new employees tend to have figured into the new teachers' sense of whether their needs burdened mentors. The following quotes from participants exemplify both of these themes.

*Coming in, it was very reassuring to know that I had a mentor. In the very beginning, the first week of school and pre-service week, it was very nice to know that I had that mentor there and that [he/she] expected me to go and ask them questions.*

*You come in like a deer in headlights. It's nice to know that there is somebody there, and they are getting paid to answer your questions. You don't feel bad about asking them because they are getting a stipend.*

*Without the mentor program, I might've felt bad going to someone else to ask all those questions.*

*I felt bad because my mentor was also mentor to the second grade teacher. I didn't think it was fair to her that she had to deal with two new people. So, I kind of felt bad. That's why I would try to do my own thing, and she would always just grab me and say, "We'll sit down, we'll talk about it." She was great with me. But, I think she felt badly because she didn't get to see that second grade person as much because they weren't on the same team. And, I didn't want to take up too much of her time.*

To help further describe the impact of the Mentor Program, participants were asked to discuss any ways that they felt the program had "helped them through their first year" as teachers. These participants focused on three key areas in which mentors delivered support—modeling in the classroom, administrative matters, and "insider" information (e.g., school culture such as knowing that "non-core" classes are often supplanted by assemblies or field trips in the last two weeks of school, or that teachers should take steps to plan around the timing and exuberance of the school's Halloween Parade). Specifically, those who had opportunities to literally watch others teach found that experience very useful. On one hand, some said that watching another teach and run a classroom (e.g., seating, behavior management) provided a model for them. Others said they learned what *not* to do, or were able to better identify what would work for them (e.g., if a mentor used a mothering-type approach, whereas the mentee preferred to use a different approach that she saw as fostering more independence). Another key area of support that mentors delivered was described as "administrative." Mentors were able to save new teachers considerable time by helping them to understand and prioritize the paperwork that teachers were expected to complete throughout the year. These participants also appreciated information their mentors gave them about the culture and functioning of their particular schools.

*Probably the most valuable thing my mentor did for me was explaining the traditions of the school. Nobody ever puts them down in writing.*

*Just the down and dirty everyday business that goes on...like who to see if you've lost your key, and (laughing) who **not** to see if you've lost your key. Whose mailbox the papers go in. That [help] to me was priceless.*

*Even setting up my classroom. There were things, in particular, that my principal expected and I wouldn't have known [without my mentor]. And, it was great because when [the principal] came into my room, she said, "Oh, your room looks great." It was just like she wanted it. She didn't have to tell me, because my mentor told me.*

In describing the effects of the Mentor Program, participants highlighted some of the qualities that they felt made for a good mentor. These included:

- Not being too “motherly,” treating a mentee as an equal
- Anticipating mentee’s needs, especially with regard to paperwork (e.g., knowing what permissions are needed for field trips, knowing how to complete IEP paperwork)

### Perceived Impact of the Mentoring Program on Mentors

These participants were conscious of their own contributions to the mentor/mentee relationship. Top of mind for them was the notion that new teachers can infuse others—teachers and students—with a particular enthusiasm unique to people just stepping into teaching for the first time. They also felt that mentors probably strived for greater heights in their own teaching excellence, knowing that a new teacher was watching and asking questions to learn from them. And, in their experience, younger teachers are able to help more seasoned teachers with technology—everything from using digital cameras to PowerPoint to specific graphing calculator capabilities.

*I think all of the mentors have been teaching for awhile, so it’s always refreshing when someone new comes in who is really excited about their new job, and they just got out of school so they have all of these ideas...I know my mentor could get ideas from me that she hadn’t thought about.*

*My mentor would come into my classroom [because she taught the subsequent class], and she would see something I was doing or see something on my desk...She definitely took things from the way that I taught and integrated it into her [classes]. She started using computers more, and things like that. Hopefully that’s the result of me.*

*Report cards are on the computer, and digital cameras, and all that stuff. I knew how to do all of that. So, I could help her in that respect.*

*My mentor holds herself to the highest standards. But, I would like to think that my mentor really wanted to do a great job not just in her own eyes, but in my eyes as well. That worked twofold—I held myself to an even higher standard at times because I wanted her to see me at that level of excellence as well.*

### Goals of the Program

These participants said that the conventional wisdom is that one’s first year teaching is by far the most difficult. Thus, they said, if mentors can help that year to be as smooth as possible, the likelihood a new teacher will stay in teaching is increased. When asked to describe the goals of the Mentor Program in their own words, these mentees said:

- To ease the transition of new teachers into Arlington County
- To help new teachers be the best they can be for their first year
- To provide another person to help new teachers (i.e., because there is so very much to think about all at once in that first year, the mentor’s assistance in all areas means the new teacher has a bit more opportunity to focus on the classroom)
- To reduce the attrition rates of new teachers

These teachers were read the Mentor Program's stated goal, "to establish consistent and ongoing support for teachers new to Arlington Public Schools," and asked whether the program had that effect for them. Those who had been emphasizing their positive mentor relationship throughout the discussion said they did feel supported. Those with less productive mentor relationships said that their mentor had not necessarily provided a great deal of support, but that they had found support among other colleagues.

Participants described, in a broader sense, what they believed to be the core basic needs of new teacher hires that any quality induction program should meet. In their opinions, new teacher hires need:

- Assistance with administrative requirements, especially required paperwork
- Guidance on organization (e.g., keeping track of your lessons to use again, knowing what to discard so that the needed material is not cluttered with the unneeded, being careful to write neatly and in detail the first time to avoid reinventing in future years)
- Information about school culture and expectations (e.g., whether an unwritten rule exists that teachers are expected to attend all after-school special events)
- Help with completing IEPs (e.g., Two mentees had wondered, "What is the appropriate amount of detail in written plans?")
- To get to know the secretaries and janitors in their buildings—in order to encounter fewer barriers and to be able to get help from them as it is needed
- To have the same planning period as their mentor
- To have social interaction with other teachers that reinforces both personal and professional bonds

No participants spontaneously mentioned help with classroom management as a need new teachers have. When the moderator asked if this was a need for new teachers, they tended to say that classroom management is more about learning one's own tactics and style than working with a mentor to address it.

Participant 1: *So much of classroom management is actually doing it and seeing what works for you.*

All others: *Yeah*

Participant 1: *People can talk to you [about classroom management] for hours. And, actually doing it is so much better.*

Participant 2: *You kind of have to play around with it, too. It's who you are and your personality.*

Participant 3: *People can be totally different.*

Participant 4: *And, it even depends on the kids.*

Participant 1: *It's kind of trial by fire.*

Participant 5: (Agreeing, ruefully) *And, it's probably the most important thing you have to do.*

## **Mentor Program—Functional Topics**

### Expectations of Mentees

These mentees seemed a bit surprised to be asked whether they had consistently felt clear about what was expected of them as a mentee, in the mentor/mentee relationship. The source of their surprise was their perception that they had no burdensome “mentee responsibilities.” They mentioned having written out goals and completed a survey at year’s end, but said they did not believe they had any other specific mentee requirements. Several compared their own lack of paperwork to their mentors’ journal-keeping responsibilities, and felt grateful that less was required of mentees. The lack of reporting responsibilities for mentees was in line with the message these participants heard from school administrators, namely that they should be focusing their energy in the classroom. These teachers heartily agreed that their attention belonged in the classroom most of all. No members of the group said they had encountered any surprises related to what was expected of them as mentees.

When asked directly if they desired that some written reporting mechanism be put in place, they emphatically said, “No!” This question elicited a strong, thematic response that these new teachers felt overburdened by required county and departmental meetings and seminars that took them out of the classroom in their first year. The group as a whole felt that lines of communication to Office of Professional Development staff—Valerie Smolinski and Donna Cerwensky—were so open and accessible that they would have simply reached out informally if difficulties had arisen.

*[Reporting requirements] would just be another thing to worry about.*

*I think their (Valerie Smolinski and Donna Cerwensky) personalities are very open. So, our connection with them was always open. I don’t think it would be necessary, for these two particular people, to have something required for us to contact them.*

In follow-up to an earlier question, these participants were asked about whether a one-year mentor program was sufficient. They indicated that one year is long enough, saying that by the end of year one they had established relationships within their departments and schools that could serve a future support role. Moreover, they felt that an established mentor/mentee relationship could continue in any informal way that the pair wished. One speculated that a teacher making a major change, such as moving from a primary to a secondary school or changing schools, might benefit from having a mentor for that shift. Again, they indicated that the teacher making the move might appreciate having a designated “go to” person, to whom they would “not feel guilty” posing questions.

### Support for Mentees

In general, these participants indicated that they felt sufficiently supported—with several even saying that they felt exceptionally well-supported by the Mentor Program. They were aware that mentors receive training, but did not know the details of it, or how it might have affected their mentor’s abilities. Perhaps related to that, those who most lauded the program’s support attributed much of the program’s success for them to the qualities of their individual mentor and to the fact that the pair was easily able to spend time together.

*My mentor was wonderful and gave me everything I needed.*

*I do think there has to be a personality match. For mine, that was a key factor. Mine was an ideal situation, we taught the same grade, same lunch. Picture perfect. But, I can't say that was the case for other new teachers and mentors in my school. And none of them were bad people, I just don't think it was a match the way mine was a match.*

### Summary Comments

When these new teachers were asked the question, "Could you see yourselves being mentors to new teachers in the future?" the response from each person was an emphatic and enthusiastic "Yes!" When asked to describe their motivators, they said:

*Well, we're **teachers** (as if to say, "Mentoring is *natural* to us.")*

*I would do it even if there was no money, no stipend.*

*Even now, when new people come in [for academic year 2005-2006]. We get to tell them everything.*

*And, we can even tell them more because all the things we didn't know about, we can tell them. We've been there and it's fresh.*

The main benefits of the Mentor Program were summarized as:

- Having someone you can turn to
- Feeling a sense of assurance, reassurance
- Seeing somebody who will model good teaching skills
- Having someone who can demonstrate and walk you through all the professional and administrative requirements
- Having someone to answer questions without the "guilt factor"
- Knowing that our school system thinks it is important enough to make us comfortable, and to hold onto us as teachers

When queried about any drawbacks to the program, participants wondered aloud whether there was a "no hard feelings" process for switching mentors. In addition they asked whether there was any "weeding out" process to prevent some individuals ill-suited to mentoring from becoming mentors. This discussion also highlighted the group's belief that there should be a formal mechanism for introducing mentors and mentees, apart from the orientation-week activities that occur in August each year. Participants' concern was for people whose introduction to their mentor might be overlooked. They believed that mentors and mentees often miss portions of the August introductory activities. And, they emphasized that the mentor/mentee introduction need not be a "big deal," but that someone should simply be designated to ensure that the introduction takes place.



## CONCLUSIONS

- **The Mentor Program was deeply appreciated by all—even across the spectrum of those who had excellent experiences and who only had mediocre experiences with their personal mentor.** Mentors delivered wide ranging support, from answering questions to providing “a shoulder to cry on” after a particularly tough day. The chief benefits these participants focused on were mentors’ modeling in the classroom, providing guidance on administrative matters, and supplying “insider” information to help the new teachers fit in and follow the norms of the school.
- **Mentees described the Mentor Program as having a profound impact during the weeks at the very beginning of the school year.** Again, even mentees who did not develop a particularly close mentor/mentee relationship described themselves as feeling very reassured to know of one particular person to whom they could turn with any question. Moreover, it was helpful to know that the person had voluntarily signed on to be a mentor, was *expecting* questions, and was receiving a small stipend for taking on that responsibility.
- **This one focus group suggests that the Mentoring Program may not set APS apart from others in the hiring process, but that *not* having such a program could be a very bad signal to potential new hires.** These participants believed that virtually every school system provides some form of teacher-to-teacher support for new teachers. They saw the Mentor Program as sending a positive signal that APS was striving to make their first year a good one, in the hopes of retaining them as teachers. Yet, the Mentor Program was not a unique driver in their decision to apply to or sign on with APS as opposed to another school system.
- **Mentees seem to be very conscious and concerned that helping them may place a burden on their mentors.** A couple mentees said that they actually avoided asking questions at times, or that their mentor sometimes had to seek them out rather than vice versa. They worried over mentors who had two mentees. The fact that mentors were getting a stipend, however small, relieved their “guilt” considerably.
- **These mentees clearly saw their own contributions to the mentor/mentee relationship.** Despite their expressed concerns about being burdensome to mentors, these teachers could quickly and easily identify the ways in which the mentor/mentee relationship likely *benefited* their mentors. Specifically, they pointed to the enthusiasm, renewal, and new ideas that new teachers bring to the classroom. And, they believed that many mentors strive to be better teachers themselves as they model and reflect on their teaching with mentees. Finally, several mentees pointed to instances in which they helped their mentors learn to use newer technologies in the classroom.
- **Teachers in their earlier years—or, relatively recent mentees—may compose a pool of particularly enthusiastic mentors.** Participants around the table practically lit up with enthusiasm when asked whether they would consider becoming mentors once they had some additional teaching experience behind them. They felt they were uniquely suited to help with the special concerns of new teachers because their own wonders and worries were fresh in their minds. This enthusiasm held true for people who described their past mentor

relationship as “picture perfect,” and for those who had barely talked with their mentor in a mentor/mentee capacity.

- **The better the “match” between mentor and mentee, the more supportive and valuable the relationship seems likely to be.** This match encompasses intangibles such as personality, but also specific matters such as teaching the same grade/subject and being available at the same times during the day (e.g., sharing a lunch or planning period).
- **Two potential ways to enhance the value of the Mentor Program overall were suggested by this focus group.** First, it may be helpful to ensure that new hires are aware of the program when they are notified that they have been hired. While the program alone may not specifically draw teachers, its existence clearly reduces the anxiety that precedes the start of the new school year and demonstrates the commitment APS has to its new teachers. Second, in mentor training, it may be beneficial to highlight the kinds of support that mentees felt benefited them day-to-day. For example, what may seem mundane such as alerting new teachers to administrative requirements and expectations was deeply appreciated by the mentees.

**APPENDIX**  
**Arlington Public Schools Office of Staff Development**  
**Mentor Program Evaluation**  
***Focus Group Research with New Teacher Mentees***  
**Moderator's Guide**  
August 16, 2005 – FINAL

Discussion time: 90 minutes

**1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, PROCEDURES (15 minutes)**

- Most importantly, **thank you** in advance for your time and help.
- **Introduce self:** name, independent researcher not employed by APS
- **Purpose** today is to talk about your experiences as a mentee with the APS Mentor Program. That includes everything from the program's structure, to the materials you use, to how your mentor/mentee relationship functions. As you probably know, this discussion is part of the program's ongoing evaluation. In other words, what we talk about today will ultimately be used to help strengthen the Mentor Program for the future.
- **Open, honest opinions**—both positive and negative—are most important of all. That means, if everyone's opinion is going one way, but you feel differently, I want to hear about it. And, as a group, we respect that everyone at the table has their own experience, and point of view.
- Discussion is being **audiotaped**, to help with my report. But, all answers are **confidential**. I will keep the tape. My report will not use any names, rather it will describe what "participants" said, and talk about the group as a whole.
- **Introduce observer/notetaker** whose copious notes will be a backup to the tape.
- Just a few **procedural items** to make the discussion run smoothly.
  - Talk one at a time, loudly enough for tape to pick up. I will give "time out" sign and make sure everyone gets floor time if we all end up talking at once.
  - I know you are used to protecting the confidentiality of your mentor/mentee relationship. We'll maintain that practice here.
  - Apart from my report, we will also not reveal what others say in this discussion.
  - Turn off cell phones.
  - There are many, many questions for us to get through. So, at times, I may need to ask a speaker to wrap up so we can move to the next topic.
- **Participant introductions**
  - I know that many of you know each other already. But, for my benefit, let's introduce ourselves starting with [NAME] and going around the table. Tell us your **first name, the subject and grade-level you teach, and if last year was your first year of teaching or just your first year of teaching at APS.**

## 2. MENTOR/MENTEE RELATIONSHIP (10 minutes)

Let's get warmed up by keeping our focus narrow. Think about the time you spent working directly with your mentor.

- a. First, give me a general sense of how the two of you used your mentoring time.
- b. What topics or activities did you tend to spend the most time on? [PROBE REASONS WHY THOSE TOPICS/ACTIVITIES ARE PROMINENT.]
- c. Is your overall sense that you had too much, too little, or just the right amount of time to work with your mentor?
  - You say [TOO MUCH/TOO LITTLE/RIGHT AMOUNT] because
  - [IF TOO LITTLE] What are some of the things you wish you had more time to address together?

## 3. MENTOR PROGRAM—EFFECTS FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES (40 minutes)

- a. At what point in your own job search, or in the hiring process with Arlington Public Schools did you find out about the Mentor Program?
  - What effect did knowing about the Mentor Program have on your decision to teach in APS? [PROBE: How, if at all, Mentor Program influenced decision or created any particular impressions about APS as an employer.]
- b. Tell me about the impact that participating in the Mentor Program, as a mentee, has had on you as a classroom teacher. [PROMPT FOR BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE INFLUENCES ON TEACHING.]
  - [IF NEEDED] Can you tell me about any specific examples that might help me to understand clearly?
- c. In what ways would you say having a mentor helped you through your first year of teaching at APS overall? [IF NEEDED, PROMPT...This may include some of the classroom-related items we've discussed, but feel free to also think broadly about any other helpful effects.]
- d. Now, think about your mentor. Based on what you've seen, or what your mentor has said, what are your impressions of how participating in the Mentor Program has affected his or her teaching?
- e. In your own words, how would you describe the goals of the Mentor Program?
  - The program's stated goal for mentees is to "establish consistent and ongoing support for teachers new to Arlington Public Schools by providing each new teacher hire with a school-based mentor." To what extent is the program having those effects for you?
  - Let's step back from this particular program, and think very generally. What are the core, basic needs of new teacher hires that any quality induction program absolutely must meet?

#### 4. MENTOR PROGRAM—FUNCTIONAL TOPICS (20 minutes)

Now, let's think more broadly, about the Mentor Program overall.

- a. Have you consistently felt clear about what is expected of you as a mentee?
  - Did you encounter any “surprises” about your role and responsibilities? If so, what were they?
  
- b. How well supported did you feel as a first-year APS teacher, by the Mentor Program? [IF NEEDED, PROMPT... Think about the structure of the program, materials, and all of the people who are part of it—ranging from the Office of Staff Development, to contact mentors, to individual mentors.]
  
- c. Help me summarize some of what we've said today. What would you say are the *main benefits* of the Mentor Program as it currently exists at APS? What would you say are the *main drawbacks*?
  - Is there anything in the Mentor Program that should be discontinued?
  - Is there anything that you think should be added to the Mentor Program?

#### 5. CLOSING (5 minutes)

Our time is nearly up. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share?  
Thank you so much for your time and all your help.