



Design Considerations

Mentoring in K-12 Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Prepared by

Nicole Reddig, RTI International
Amaya Garcia, New America

RTI International
3040 E. Cornwallis Road
Durham, NC 27713-2852

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Introduction

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs are an evidence-based workforce development strategy geared toward positively impacting worker effectiveness, preparedness, and retention through paid on-the-job learning. Since 2022, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has approved the creation of RA programs for the K-12 education workforce, including K-12 teachers, paraeducators, school counselors, and administrators. During an RA program, apprentices complete supplemental education through an approved education provider and apply their learnings in a paid job in a K-12 classroom.

A vital component of an educator RA program is mentorship. In an RA program, the apprentice is supervised, advised, and evaluated by an experienced mentor teacher, also known as a journeyworker. This mentoring relationship goes beyond what is typically seen in the student teacher–cooperating teacher mentoring model that has prevailed for much of the history of educator preparation. In RA programs, the apprentice is an employee of the school district and, in most cases, works with their mentor teacher for multiple years. Given the importance of this relationship, this resource—*Design Considerations: Mentoring in K-12 Teacher RA Programs*—offers illustrative examples of how mentorship is being implemented in K-12 teacher apprenticeship programs and includes planning considerations for practitioners to help guide the design of mentorship practices.

Importance of Mentorship in Educator Preparation

Literature shows that mentorship experiences can be impactful for both pre-service and early career teachers because mentor teachers empower candidates to improve their practices. Multiple studies of mentorship during student teaching have found that mentors impact early career teachers in their own classrooms by modeling highly effective instructional practices and forming positive relationships. A study of pre-service teachers in Washington state¹ found that teachers are more effective in the early career stage after having student-teaching experiences with highly effective mentor teachers. In this study, the effect of working with a mentor teacher who was rated “highly effective” had more positive impact on a student teacher’s future effectiveness than any other type of pre-service experience. Another study found that first-year teachers who are mentored by highly effective teachers during pre-service were as effective as second- and third-year teachers (in English and math, respectively).²

This impact of mentorship extends to teachers in residency programs. A longitudinal case study of resident teachers in an urban teacher residency program³ identified that a positive resident–mentor relationship impacts the resident’s development, particularly their abilities to engage in reflective practice and to make progress in mastering the domains of effective teaching. Thus, research suggests that teachers and students can benefit from placing pre-service teachers with highly effective mentor teachers.


Mentorship can also be impactful during induction for early career teachers. Induction programs provide structured support for new teachers. A critical review of 15 studies of induction and mentoring programs for new teachers⁴ found that mentorship had positive impacts on teacher retention, classroom instructional practices, and student achievement. The reviewed studies of retention found that new teachers with induction and mentorship programs reported higher job satisfaction, commitment to teaching, and retention than teachers without induction and mentorship programs. An additional study of teachers in a Midwest state's statewide mentoring program⁵ found that mentor experiences were most positive when the mentee and mentor were in the same district and in the same position. New teachers reported that the benefits of mentoring include improved instruction, collaboration, positive interactions, direction, and sense of community. Mentor teachers reported that the benefits of mentoring include increased reflection on their practice, positive interactions, collaboration, and improved instruction. These findings indicate the importance of mentorship for early career educators during their induction period as well as pre-service training.

Studies of teacher retention found that new teachers who participated in induction and mentoring programs reported higher job satisfaction, commitment to teaching, and retention than teachers who did not participate in induction and mentoring programs.

The opportunity for advanced teacher leadership also benefits mentor teachers. Through the mentorship experience, mentors learn transformational leadership skills, experience increased intrinsic motivation in the workplace, feel more fulfilled in their profession, and are generally more satisfied and committed in their careers compared with those who have never mentored.^{6,7} Additionally, mentors gain new ideas and strategies, enhancing their teaching practices by exchanging information with mentees from different backgrounds and generations.⁸ This relationship can also serve as reverse mentorship, fostering cooperation and collaborative learning when complementary skills between mentee and mentor are matched.⁹

Current Guidance on Mentorship in Educator RA Programs






DOL describes a mentor, also known as a journeyworker in apprenticeship, as “an experienced worker who has attained a mastery level of skill, abilities and competencies required for the occupation and oversees and guides the work of the apprentice in the on-the-job placement.”¹⁰ Mentors help apprentices understand their roles and career path and provide support if apprentices face any challenges. Strong mentors are able to support others in reflecting on their own practice, willing to share advice from their experience, and empathetic while remaining objective and organized. Mentors themselves may benefit from the experience through increased confidence, improved supervisory skills, and an expanded knowledge base.¹¹

There are also industry-specific resources on mentorship in RA programs, such as the [Recommended Standards and Design Principles](#)  for teacher apprenticeships from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA). These principles require that educator apprentices are “paired with a mentor teacher who will provide

classroom-based guidance and coaching and will model effective instructional practice for the apprentice.” AFT and NEA further encourage mentor teachers to have at least 3 years of experience and demonstrated skill as practitioners, be well versed in the mode of preparation, model a commitment to continuous learning, engage in ongoing reflection, demonstrate the ability to collaborate, and demonstrate a commitment to the quality of the profession. They also recommend that mentor teachers receive an additional incentive or compensation for their work outside of their regular teacher’s salary.

Mentor teachers are typically assigned to apprentices at a ratio of one mentor to one apprentice. Mentors receive training and additional support in their roles, including specific training on best practices in mentorship and collaboration with educator preparation programs (EPPs). This mentor teacher holds many responsibilities within an educator apprenticeship:

- Frequently assess and provide feedback to apprentices to help improve their skills.
- Help the apprentice understand school and community culture.
- Support the apprentice in identifying and developing professional goals through professional relationships and professional development.
- Collaborate with apprentices to design, develop, and implement lesson plans that incorporate the learning from their academic coursework.

Some states are issuing their own guidance on mentorship in K-12 teacher apprenticeship programs. The [Wyoming Department of Education](#)  (WDE), [Tennessee Grow Your Own Center](#)  (TNGYOC), and [Arkansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#)  (ARDESE) require that mentor teachers have a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience and have high educator effectiveness ratings. Guidance from the [Office of the Idaho State Board of Education](#)  (ISBE) and TNGYOC emphasizes selecting mentor teachers with a positive disposition toward the educator profession, a growth mindset, and willingness to provide feedback. Multiple guides require or recommend that mentor teachers participate in a mentorship training. Emphasizing partnership, TNGYOC suggests that mentors be jointly selected and trained by participating local education agencies (LEAs) and EPPs. Some states include unique resources for mentorship. For example, the University of Wyoming hosts a yearlong mentor cohort to engage in communities of practice, and the ISBE provides a questionnaire for districts to match mentors and mentees according to their beliefs and dispositions to form more positive mentoring relationships. In another state, the [Colorado Department of Education](#)  offers grant funding to districts to support mentorship training. All of the guidance encourages compensation for mentor teachers and, in states like Wyoming, the state’s Department of Education provides funding for these stipends.

Using Interviews to Gain Insights

To better understand how mentorship is being incorporated into apprenticeship programs in practice, we interviewed RA program staff and participants in four states across the country:

Colorado, Nevada, Kansas, and Iowa.* The programs were selected because of their high enrollment numbers, established mentor training programs, and participation of teachers' unions in supporting mentor teachers. EPP staff, district leaders, mentors, and apprentices were invited to participate in hour-long virtual interviews. In total, 10 interviews with program staff or participants were successfully completed.

The following sections summarize design considerations for mentorship in K-12 Teacher RA programs and highlight examples from these interviews, as well as provide a planning tool to help guide mentorship design.

Mentoring in Teacher RA Programs

Design Considerations

Through the interviews, we were able to identify five critical design considerations for an effective mentorship component:

1. Mentor selection
2. Mentor training
3. Mentor roles and models
4. Compensation
5. Mentor satisfaction and support

This section explores how each of the four interviewed states approaches these design considerations.

1. Selection

Given the importance of mentor teachers in the learning process and clinical experiences of apprentice teachers, we sought to learn more about the selection process and considerations used by the programs in the interview sample.

Many states set a minimum number of years of experience for mentor teachers. Some states also set teacher effectiveness performance requirements that these mentors must meet.¹² Indeed, several program leaders shared that their states had set minimum criteria for mentor teachers. For example, in [Colorado](#), mentor teachers must have 3 years of successful teacher experience and a professional teaching license. Similarly, in Iowa, the state requires mentor teachers to have 3 years of teaching experience and be working in the same licensure or endorsement area and grade band (e.g., elementary education). And in Nevada, the program at

* Programs interviewed for this report include only those approved by State Apprenticeship Agencies due to the tenure of programs and selection criteria, but Office of Apprenticeship states also approve educator apprenticeship programs. See <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/about-us/apprenticeship-system> to determine your state approval agency.

the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) takes into consideration teacher evaluations: “Teachers in Nevada are rated annually on...the Nevada Educator Performance Framework, and student achievement as a part of that. So, we’re looking for teachers who have been rated consistently in their work as meeting and exceeding those standards,” said Danica Hays, Dean of the College of Education at UNLV. This practice aligns with the state guides and research encouraging the use of teacher effectiveness as a selection criterion for mentors.

Beyond state criteria, programs seek recommendations from school principals, district human resources, local union leaders, and current mentor teachers to identify strong candidates for becoming mentor teachers. Programs also consider the characteristics of apprentices in trying to match them with a mentor teacher—for example, finding teachers who share common experiences with the apprentice. Apprentices’ schedules and job duties also factor into mentor selection, with programs emphasizing the need for daily interactions between mentors and mentees. As Heather Steel—CTE Facilitator and Work-Based Learning Coordinator in Elko County School District, which partners with UNLV—shared, “We want to make sure that mentoring is a naturally occurring process and doesn’t end up being an additional responsibility on either the mentor or mentee, so we collaborate to incorporate mentoring into our regular schedules and what is already happening in our school buildings.”

Some programs have elected to have non-classroom teachers serve as part of the mentorship team. The teacher apprenticeship program in Iowa’s Cedar Falls Community School District tapped instructional coaches to serve as mentors given their experience and leadership in adult learning, mentoring teachers, and facilitation and mastery of instructional practices happening in school buildings. The mentors meet with apprentices at least once per week, observe them, and offer professional learning and support. Classroom teachers are more actively involved in mentorship activities, in addition to the instructional coach, during apprentices’ “student teaching” portion of the experience where they lead classroom instruction.

2. Training

Mentor teachers benefit from ongoing training and support to help them be effective in their roles and to become familiar with the structure and expectations of RAs. A variety of entities are charged with designing and delivering training to mentor teachers, such as the state teachers’ union, EPPs, and school districts.

In Kansas, the Kansas National Educator Association (KNEA) offers four training courses—at no cost to school districts—to help mentor teachers learn more about mentoring and supporting classroom instruction. The training focuses on how to best support the needs of an apprentice, including “how they will be assessed in the knowledge that they have so that the mentor can know exactly how they’re progressing and really be able to differentiate the support that they have all the way through the program,” said Idalia Shuman, Director of Teaching and Learning at KNEA. This training sequence is planned across several years, with year one focused on building mentor relationships and apprentices, year two focused on the application and practice

of competency evaluation, and year three focused on instructional coaching. In addition, the Kansas Department of Education has connected with KNEA around this work and has been supportive of the association's approach to mentor training. KNEA is also working on developing a tool that mentor teachers can use to help guide feedback and evaluation conversations with apprentice teachers. School districts in the state offer additional context-specific mentor training, whereas the KNEA training is consistent across the state.

In some states, such as Colorado and Nevada, teacher mentors are able to earn a certificate or endorsement by participating in a training program. Colorado Mountain College (CMC) offers a series of modules that lead to an endorsement; these modules cover philosophy of coaching, building trust, effective coaching practices, co-teaching, co-planning, co-assessment, and how to give effective feedback. "So, it's really comprehensive in terms of going from foundationally what you need to be a successful coach...and then what are actual cycles and protocols you would use to do that coaching work," said Liz Qualman, Director of Teacher Education at CMC. Mentor teachers also have to complete clinical hours so they can practice applying what they are learning and receive feedback on the support they provide to apprentices. Since this work is based on an existing mentor teacher training program, Dr. Qualman and her colleagues are working on updating the training modules to integrate the competency requirements that apprentices are expected to meet.

Similarly, in Nevada, UNLV offers a teacher leadership certificate that covers topics such as mentoring and using data to support instructional outcomes. The team is also working on aligning the systems typically used to supervise student teachers and first-year teachers to help bridge those practices in the context of teacher apprenticeship. They also seek feedback from mentor teachers to gain insights on the competencies being used to evaluate apprentice teachers, and they are leaning into providing more support for mentor teachers in general. "How could we support our mentor teachers to have the most effective meetings as they're working with several apprentices in the building? How could we be most effective with that time? And then creating space...where everyone kind of comes together...facilitating that kind of cross-team approach is something we want to build out," said Dr. Hays.

Many of the program leaders we spoke with have implemented practices to provide time and space for mentor teachers to receive targeted support. In Iowa, Cedar Falls Community School District hosted weekly meetings for instructional coaches who were serving as apprentice mentors, in which apprenticeship was a standing agenda item. Mentors received guidance about the program, expectations for their work, tools for supporting apprentices, and strategies for providing evaluative feedback. Content was largely focused on how to support apprentices and how to provide tailored support, as Tara Estep, Executive Director of Elementary Education at Cedar Falls Community School District, shared: "There was a lot of intentionality around trying to provide our apprentices with exactly what they needed...because they were all at different levels...and so that ended up needing to be tailored per the apprentice."

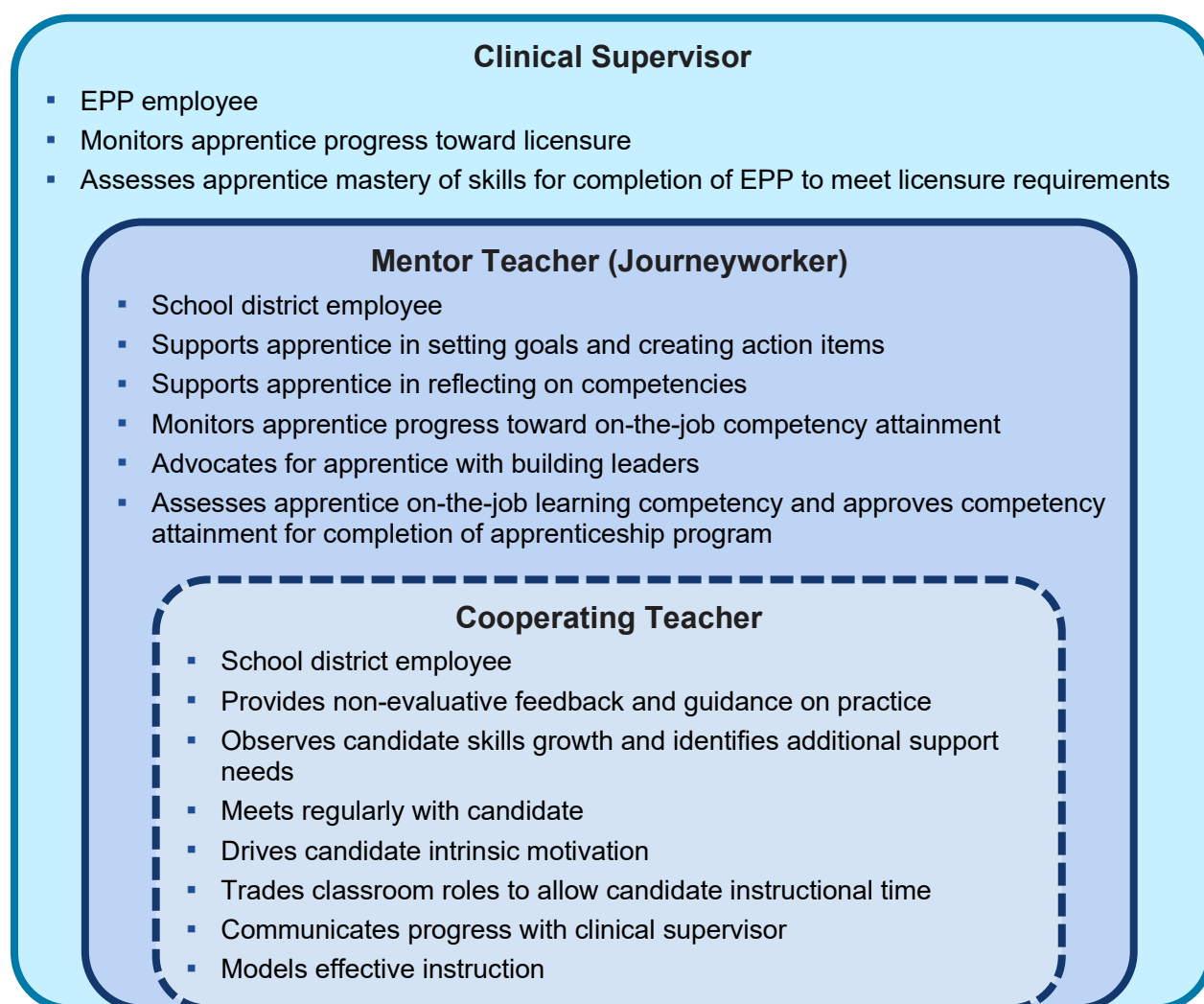
3. Roles and Models

Mentorship in apprenticeship programs differs from mentorship in traditional EPPs. In an EPP, a student teacher typically has a cooperating teacher in their placement who provides the student with feedback on their practice, along with a clinical supervisor from their university who evaluates them. In an apprenticeship program, the mentor fills the roles of model, advisor, observer, and assessor. Apprentices are also paired with their mentor teacher for a longer time than in traditional student teaching, with some apprenticeship programs lasting as long as 4 years. As one representative from KNEA said, “It’s more than just being a cooperating teacher for a student teacher, because it is a long-term relationship.”

Exhibit 1 on the following page shows the different responsibilities of

- **cooperating teachers**, typically required for the student-teaching portion of traditional educator preparation;
- **mentor teachers** (or journeymen) in apprenticeship, school employees who support apprentices and assess competency; and
- **clinical supervisors**, EPP staff who are present in both traditional preparation and apprenticeship models.

In most apprenticeship programs, the mentor teacher fulfills the duties of a cooperating teacher while also monitoring apprentice progress on attaining on-the-job competencies for apprenticeship. The clinical supervisor then monitors the apprentice’s progress toward completion of the educator preparation program requirements for licensure. In some apprenticeship programs, apprentices have a separate cooperating teacher who supervises the “student teaching” or full-time instructional experience portion of the program, as required by state law. Other programs are considering hiring mentor teachers in apprenticeship to serve as adjunct professors and in the role of clinical supervisor.

Exhibit 1. Teacher apprentice support roles and responsibilities

This differing relationship has led to promising practices among programs that are looking to clearly delineate the evaluative roles of mentors, clinical supervisors, and even instructional coaches. In one program, mentor teachers expressed hesitation giving evaluative feedback, one of whom relayed to their supervisor, “I’m uncomfortable evaluating because I’ve been trained not to... How could we get comfortable giving feedback in a coaching way?” In Colorado, staff aim to ensure that a mentor is supportive of apprentices’ goals while still maintaining an evaluative role of assessing teacher competencies.

To address these concerns, programs can create clear evaluation tools for mentors and provide proper training on assessing apprentice progress in a way that guides their growth. Some programs invest in data management systems for mentors to track both apprentice progress and competency attainment to guide their feedback and advice. In Kansas, KNEA staff are developing tools for mentors to better understand the apprentice competencies, as well as self-assessments for apprentices to identify how they are progressing prior to evaluation.

The structure of mentor roles and practices also varies across Teacher RA programs. Some programs, including the one at UNLV, utilize a team of mentor teachers for each apprentice. This allows the apprentice to receive multiple types of feedback from mentors with differing roles and perspectives. Additionally, programs often utilize a “gradual release of responsibilities” model as apprentices gain more skills through the support and guidance of the mentor teacher. In many programs, apprentices progress from a teacher’s aide role to a more instructional aide role, and from there to a co-teaching or “student teaching” style role where they are responsible for all instruction while under supervision.

Mentoring may look different across these experiences. Particularly in competency-based programs, mentor teachers can work with apprentices at their pace and meet them where they are in terms of knowledge and skills needed to achieve competency. In Iowa, the most successful apprentices were in school districts that allowed them to gradually gain responsibility over time before beginning their final semester of full instructional experience. Staff at the University of Northern Iowa encouraged mentors to “be an advocate for the [apprentice] so that they could step away from being a para while they were leading whole group instruction, individual instruction, or small groups.” In this role, the mentor teacher advocates for the apprentice with building leaders to adapt scheduling needs.

While the gradual-release model may work well for K-12 Teacher RA programs that upskill paraprofessionals to become teachers, other programs rely on a co-teaching or co-planning model for individuals who may have already been a teacher of record on an emergency or waived license. In this model, program leaders say that “their mentor is more like a side-by-side mentor. It might be a teammate that they get to co-plan with but isn’t in the classroom with them.” This model is unique to programs that are serving districts with populations of emergency- or waived-license teachers who are looking for high-support pathways to sustained teaching careers. Across all of these models, programs should clearly delineate roles and responsibilities for mentor teachers to ensure that advisory and evaluative relationships between mentor teachers and apprentices are supportive and insightful.

4. Compensation

Mentor teachers play an invaluable and instrumental role in Teacher RA programs, and they deserve respect and compensation for their time and expertise. Across the country, programs have turned to stipends or pay increases, among other forms of incentives, to compensate mentor teachers. Programs included in this report offered as much as \$1,000 per semester in stipends for mentor teachers. Nationally, stipends for mentor teachers have varied drastically, with some programs offering stipends as high as \$10,000 per year. These stipends may come from a combination of braided funds, including from the employing school districts, institutes of higher education, and dedicated state funding

Mentor teacher compensation can include:

- Stipends
- Paid training
- Tuition scholarships
- Acknowledged leadership roles

sources. Programs in states with collective bargaining negotiate these stipends and mentor responsibilities with the local associations. In Colorado, state education grant funds not only cover the tuition cost for mentor teachers to receive the mentoring endorsement but also provide participating mentors with a \$2,000 stipend.

In addition to stipends, programs have provided other forms of compensation to mentor teachers, including paid training and tuition scholarships for graduate coursework. Kenny Varner, Associate Dean of the College of Education at UNLV, described a state investment that funds mentor teachers' graduate coursework: "Our state has something called the Nevada Teacher Advancement Scholarship. So, for anyone who's been teaching for more than 2 years...we can deploy money for them to have advanced graduate certificates and more master's degrees. And so that's an incentive to get them into this idea of mentoring apprentices." In other programs, such as those in Colorado, school leaders release mentor teachers from some courses or other responsibilities to ensure that apprentices and mentors have a common time to meet. Liz Qualman shared that in CMC's partner districts, a principal will "create common release time for the assigned mentor and the teacher apprentice to meet together." These adaptations are crucial to ensure that the work of the mentor is respected as a designated leadership role within the workday and not regarded as an additional burden or extracurricular task without compensation.

5. Satisfaction and Support

Educator RA programs have created strong momentum to reimagine teacher preparation with the goal of attracting more individuals to the teaching profession. However, less attention has been paid to how these programs can also help current teachers take on new challenges and grow in their careers. As previously mentioned, providing teachers with leadership opportunities that allow them to stay in the classroom strengthens their teaching practices and enhances their understanding of content and pedagogy.¹³

In their interviews, program leaders highlighted work to develop mentor teacher cohorts and communities of practice that provide opportunities for collaboration and reflection. They also shared how working with an apprentice helped mentors to become more intentional around their practices. One program leader shared what they were hearing from mentor teachers: "When I'm being intentional and I'm sharing my instruction decision-making with my apprentice, it's helping me reflect... It's giving me more clarity... If I have to teach it to someone else, I need to know it better."

Another important component of helping mentor teachers advance was creating differentiation and leadership opportunities within the mentoring structure. CMC works with 100 active mentors at any given time who all have a range of experience: some are new to mentoring, whereas others have been mentors for 5 years or more. Professional development is differentiated by prior training and years of service as a mentor. New mentors are paired with experienced mentors during training, and experienced mentors benefit from structured opportunities to come

together to discuss challenges and best practices. CMC also provides returning mentors with higher rates of compensation to incentivize them to stay in the role and continue “raising a generation of new educators,” said Dr. Qualman.

Planning Considerations

Mentorship is an essential component of K-12 Teacher RA programs that requires intentional planning and resources. The planning tool below (Exhibit 2) provides key considerations and questions to guide the design of mentorship, with a focus on mentor selection, training, roles and models, compensation, and support.

Exhibit 2. Planning Tool – Mentoring Design Considerations and Questions

Focus Area	Considerations	Key Questions
Mentor Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State requirements Match with apprentice (e.g., certification area and grade band, schedule, background, common experiences) Demonstrated leadership Peer and school leader recommendations Related experience Instructional effectiveness (as measured by student growth, evaluation, and observations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are our state’s requirements for mentor teachers? How can we identify mentor teachers who match with apprentice certification areas and experiences? Who would peers and school leaders recommend to be mentor teachers? Is a team mentor model appropriate for our program? How will team mentors be selected? How can we identify mentor teachers who exhibit highly effective instructional practice? How can we identify strong mentors while facing staff shortages?
Mentor Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured training sequence Endorsement/certification Low to no cost Differentiation Content on supporting learner needs Ongoing training and support throughout mentorship Identification of key skills and knowledge that mentors need in an apprenticeship context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who can we partner with for design and delivery of mentor trainings? What endorsement or certification courses could benefit mentors in RA programs? How will training be differentiated for mentor teachers with apprentices at different levels and placements? How can mentors be trained to assess apprentice competencies? What funding is available in our state or at our institution to train mentor teachers? How will mentors be trained to support the apprentice in setting goals and identifying action steps? How will mentors be trained to support apprentices in reviewing evidence and reflecting on their progress toward competency? When will initial and ongoing mentor training be held? How will we know that the training was effective?

Focus Area	Considerations	Key Questions
Mentor Roles and Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gradual release of responsibility for apprentices ▪ Differentiation between student teaching and induction mentoring for early career teachers ▪ Mentor teams and strategic staffing ▪ Evaluation and assessment tools to be used by mentors ▪ Co-teaching or co-planning structures ▪ Collaboration and alignment between on-the-job learning and related technical instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How will a gradual release of responsibility be structured in the program and communicated to mentor teachers? ▪ How might co-teaching fit into our apprenticeship model as a phase of gradual release or support for postbaccalaureate apprentices? ▪ How will we delineate between the roles of a mentor teacher, a cooperating teacher, and a clinical supervisor in apprenticeship or traditional programs? ▪ What evaluation tools will be used by mentors to assess apprentice competencies? ▪ How are mentor teachers expected to collaborate and communicate with clinical supervisors?
Mentor Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stipends from state grants, EPP student teacher funding, or district funding ▪ Compensation for time spent in trainings ▪ Course releases and releases of other responsibilities ▪ Scholarships for graduate tuition ▪ Gradual increases in stipend amount as responsibility increases ▪ Stipend negotiations with local unions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How will mentor teachers be compensated for their time? ▪ What role will the local teachers' union play in negotiating mentor pay and responsibilities? ▪ What funding can be leveraged (e.g., scholarships) to cover the cost of training courses and pay mentors for their time in coursework? ▪ What schedule changes can be made to allow mentors course releases? ▪ What funding is available in our state or at our institution to compensate mentor teachers?
Mentor Satisfaction and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentor cohorts ▪ Professional development ▪ Communities of practice ▪ Differentiated roles and leadership opportunities ▪ Incentives to promote retention ▪ Ongoing monitoring of mentor satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What ongoing professional learning opportunities will be available for mentor teachers? ▪ How can a community of practice or cohort of mentor teachers be created and supported? ▪ How will we seek feedback on the program from mentor teachers? ▪ What incentives can be included in our apprenticeship program to promote retention of mentor teachers? ▪ How will we gather feedback from mentor teachers about the program and about their needs as mentors?

Conclusion

Over the past 3 years, K-12 Teacher RA programs have exploded in popularity, with active programs in 48 states; Washington, DC; Puerto Rico; and the Virgin Islands. Apprentices rely on teacher mentors to model best practices and help them develop the skills and competencies to be an effective teacher. Program leaders are implementing a variety of practices—some guided by state requirements—to support the selection, training, compensation, and growth of mentor teachers. But as teacher apprenticeships grow and evolve, more research is needed to identify best practices for mentorship and guide improvement efforts. Today, an EPP might offer a mentor teacher certificate using state funds to cover the cost, while the school district creates a community of practice, and the school leader builds in release time to ensure that mentor teachers and apprentices have time to meet. These efforts highlight the importance of leveraging RA program partners to provide a comprehensive approach to mentorship.

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