

Pleasantdale School District 107

Administrative Office • 7450 S. Wolf Road • Burr Ridge, IL 60527
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Background/Purpose: Pleasantdale School District's New Teacher Mentoring Program is a result of our comprehensive Strategic Blueprint which guides the progress of the district. Our New Teacher Mentoring Program fits into our *Building Human Capital* goal area which states: *We will ensure that PSD 107 is recruiting, hiring, and retaining high level professionals who engage in collaborative professional development and are committed to learning and implementing innovative strategies focused on improving student learning.* The specific action step this program addresses is: *Build a comprehensive mentoring program for all staff members.*

Researchers, Austin, Odell Ishler, Kay, and Edeflet (1989) identified the core purposes of a teacher mentoring program which include:

- Improve teacher performance
- Increase retention of promising beginning teachers during the induction years
- Protect the investment of the district in the teacher
- Promote the personal and professional well-being of the beginning teacher
- Satisfy mandated requirements
- Transmit the culture of the system
- Improve student performance and outcomes

The PSD 107 New Teacher Mentoring Program addresses these core purposes in a way that ensure both support for the new teacher and accountability. Our New Teacher Mentoring Program supports our new teachers over two years and focuses on intense support in the early stages of employment and provides the new teacher with greater autonomy in the later stages of the program. Year-one of the program allows new teachers to build an ongoing professional relationship with a master teacher within our school system. This mentoring relationship provides the new teacher with a positive role model and the necessary support to deliver great results in the classroom. In year-two of the program the New Teacher gives back to the community through the implementation and completion of a Stretch Goal. Each year of the mentoring program will be discussed later in this report.

Mentoring: New teacher effectiveness and retention has been studied for many years. In the end there are four main ways that New Teacher Mentors are able to most effectively support new teachers.

1. Provide emotional support and encouragement
2. Provide information about the daily workings of the school and the cultural norms of the school community
3. Promote cultural proficiency regarding students and their families
4. Promote reflection and improved practice through cognitive coaching (Villani, 2002)

Teachers who wish to serve as Mentor Teachers will complete an application process and commit to the terms of the mentoring program which include regular meetings with their assigned new teacher, as well as, completing the Mentor Training Program. When considering prospective mentors, items such as years of service, contribution to the district, and leadership history will be considered. To ensure a high quality Mentor Training, the district will partner with Northwestern University. Prospective mentors will spend two half-day sessions with Northwestern staff and focus on best practices in regard

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to coaching. Additionally, each Mentor Teacher will spend a day at Northwestern's annual spring mentoring workshop. Northwestern is quickly becoming a leader in the area of teacher mentoring and coaching, and we are fortunate to enlist them as a partner. Well developed mentoring programs have a ripple effect on the districts in which they are implemented. Mentors often report they got more than they gave, and this is largely because of the ongoing professional development they receive as mentors, as well as, the satisfaction of helping new colleagues. Mentors find that as they participate in extensive mentor training, they learn a great deal about their own practice and how to support a new colleague. When this happens, other experienced teachers who are not mentors may start learning more about the benefits of reflection and on improving their practice, hence the ripple effect.

Program Structure:

Year 1: The focus of year-one of the program is to establish a coaching relationship between the New Teacher and the Mentor Teacher and ensure the New Teacher's initial success in the district. In year-one the New Teacher can expect a high level of intense support. As the New Teacher becomes accustomed to the district and settles into his/her new position, the support will become less intense. Support for the New Teachers is accomplished through participation in a district orientation in August, monthly meetings between the New Teacher and the Mentor Teacher, classroom observations, reflection of teaching, and the creation of a year-two stretch goal. Each one of these components is described in greater detail below.

- **August Orientation:** In August, prior to the start of the school year, new teachers will participate in a New Teacher Orientation. This is a two-day commitment where teachers will learn more about our district and the expectations of our school community. New teachers will meet with administrators and will also meet with their Mentor Teacher. Administration and Mentor Teachers will collaborate on the planning of this day.
- **New Teacher/Mentor Teacher Individual Meetings:** New Teachers and Mentors will meet monthly at a time and in a location of their choosing. The agendas for these meetings are included in the New Teacher Mentoring Program book and were created by the administration. In addition to the required discussion topics, Mentors should use these meetings to problem solve issues in the classroom and allow the New Teacher time to reflect on his or her practice.
- **Observations:** New Teachers will schedule three observations with his/her Mentor Teacher. These observations are non-evaluative and will focus on growth and improvement. The observations should last at least one class period or the duration of one lesson. The Mentor Teacher will complete the district observation form during the observation. The New Teacher and the Mentor Teacher will complete the district reflection form after the completion of the observation. Additionally, the New Teacher will observe his/her Mentor Teacher at least two times during the first year.
- **Reflection of Teaching:** After each observation the New Teacher and Mentor Teacher will meet to debrief the observed lesson. The focus of this reflection meeting should be on aspects of the lesson that went well and on aspects that could be improved. The district reflection form should

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be used to guide this discussion. The New Teacher should focus on the feedback from the Mentor Teacher and incorporate his/her suggestions into future lessons.

- **Creation of a Year-Two Stretch Goal:** Over the course of the first year of mentoring, the New Teacher will work with his/her Mentor Teacher on the development of a year-two stretch goal. This goal will be identified and mutually agreed upon by the New and Mentor Teachers through the observation process and ongoing reflection and discussion. The stretch goal will then be implemented in year two of the mentoring program.

Year 2: The goal of year two of this program focuses on refining teaching practices and supporting the New Teacher through the completion of a Stretch Goal. Year-two supports new teachers as a cohort and these teachers will participate in monthly New Teacher Cohort meetings. The Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning will serve as the program director. At the end of year one, all New Teachers will have identified a Stretch Goal, year two will bring the implementation and completion of this goal. New Teachers will engage in an ongoing conversation about their Stretch Goal progress and any supports needed to meet their goal. The culminating experience will be a presentation of the Stretch Goal to the cohort of new teachers and mentors.

- **Monthly Cohort Meetings:** Each month the New Teacher cohort will meet with the program director. The goal of these meetings will be to discuss best practice, support the New Teacher's professional growth, review and support the New Teacher's Stretch Goal, and provide any other information that will help the New Teacher grow and develop as a professional. Based on the topic of the meetings, New Teachers may be asked to read articles/book chapters, watch videos, or engage in other professional activities prior to the meetings.
- **Stretch Goal:** The New Teacher will work to implement a Stretch Goal that was drafted during the first year of mentoring. This goal should focus on best practices of teaching. New Teachers will be asked to come to the first cohort meeting with the Stretch Goal form completed and prepared to discuss their goal. The program director will oversee the New Teacher's successful completion of the Stretch Goal and will provide support to the New Teacher as needed. Stretch Goals should include either specific measures and/or deliverables. At the conclusion of the second year, the New Teachers will present their Stretch Goal along with their outcomes to the cohort group.
- **Observation and Reflection:** During the course of the second year the New Teacher will observe two teachers within the district. The goal of these observation is to allow the New Teacher to see a seasoned teacher interacting with students and engage in thoughtful reflection about teaching and learning. At the conclusion of the observation the New Teacher will complete the Observation Reflection Form and will be prepared to discuss this experience. The first observation will be completed before the November cohort meeting and the second observation will be completed before the March cohort meeting. If the New Teachers need assistance setting up an observation, the program director will facilitate an observation.

The district will begin to solicit teachers to serve as mentors in the coming weeks and months and will implement our Mentor Teacher training program. We expect that this program as structured will have a positive impact on students and the culture and climate within our schools. We are excited to

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implement this new program and believe that the program will allow us to achieve our mission *To Create A Community of Inspired Learners.*