Louisiana Believes

Building a Strong Educator Workforce:
Leveraging Mentor Teachers
Objectives

Participants will:

• Explore the benefit of hosting and mentoring yearlong residents

• Create a plan for recruiting and selecting Mentor Teachers

• Identify methods for supporting and training Mentor Teachers
Agenda

- Believe and Prepare Overview (5 min)
- Recruiting and Selecting Mentors (10 min)
- Supporting and Training Mentors (10 min)
- Panel Discussion (30 min)
- Planning Time (20 min)
Believe and Prepare
Louisiana’s Commitment to Building a Strong Educator Workforce

**Full Preparation for Louisiana’s Teachers:** Prepare Louisiana’s teachers for their first years in the classroom through competency-based preparation programs with yearlong residencies, as piloted through Believe and Prepare. Facilitate strong partnerships between educator preparation providers and school systems.

**Continuum of Leadership Roles:** Establish content-specific roles and training for expert teachers who are equipped to support and prepare new teachers, and provide curriculum-specific professional learning.

**Informed Workforce Decisions:** Publish educator workforce data that informs decisions related to educator compensation, placement, recruiting and hiring practices, as well as supports for struggling schools to ensure that all students have access to excellent educators.
We know that…

• Teacher and principal quality is an important factor affecting student success.
• Teacher preparation experiences have a great impact on teachers’ readiness for day one in the classroom.
Believe and Prepare

In order to better prepare new teachers for their first years in the classroom, the Louisiana Department of Education launched the nationally recognized Believe and Prepare pilot program in 2014, to strengthen teacher preparation. This pilot program:

- offered aspiring teachers a full year of practice under an expert mentor and a competency-based program design, and

- catalyzed strategic partnerships between school systems and educator preparation provider partners.

Since the pilot’s inception, **over 850 undergraduate teacher candidates** were supported by expert mentors while pursuing certification through a yearlong residency program.

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“As a first year teacher...I support one-year residencies for future teachers....I feel that if student teaching could be an entire year, there would be fewer surprises for teachers when entering their own classrooms.” Delaney Longa, First-Year Teacher
Yearlong Teaching Residency Model and Competency-Based Design

In October 2016, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), with support from the Louisiana Board of Regents (BoR), adopted landmark regulations to expand yearlong residencies and competency-based curricula statewide.

By July 1, 2018, teacher preparation programs in Louisiana will include a yearlong residency alongside an expert mentor, and all preparation programs will include a competency-based curriculum that will provide teacher candidates with the knowledge and skills needed in order to be prepared for their first years of teaching.

Louisiana’s teacher preparation competencies were developed in collaboration with content experts, elementary and secondary educators, and postsecondary education leaders. Competencies are based on Louisiana student standards and the pedagogical skills needed to ensure that all students achieve those standards.

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“I applaud Louisiana for adopting new teacher preparation standards that will support all teachers and help ensure they are prepared to lead their classrooms.”

John B. King Jr., former U.S. Secretary of Education
Leadership Development

As yearlong teaching residencies grow statewide, undergraduate and post-baccalaureate candidates need skilled mentors to support their growth.

To further support the next generations of educators for years to come, Louisiana seeks to:

1. Establish a cadre of excellent educators who have the knowledge and skills to coach and support other teachers, and who understand how to use and implement high-quality curriculum aligned to Louisiana’s standards and assessments
2. Grow the local leadership pipeline for schools and school systems by developing talented teachers

In order to reach this goal, Louisiana is building a cadre of trained mentors -- expert classroom teachers -- to support residents, new, and developing educators.

“I am fortunate enough to have the opportunity of being a mentor teacher to a yearlong teacher resident….I know that our schools need quality teachers that are prepared to take our students, our schools, and our state to the next level. Putting qualified, highly trained, and experienced new teachers in the classrooms is key to this success.”

Shannon P. Embanato, Mentor Teacher

Louisiana Believes
Recruiting and Selecting Mentors
What is a Mentor Teacher?

Mentor Teachers are those who:

- Host a resident in an *undergraduate teacher program* and co-teach with them for the full school year.

- Coach residents in a *post-baccalaureate program* weekly by reviewing instructional plans, materials, assessments, and student work samples, and by leading frequent observation/feedback cycles.

- Support *veteran teachers* who are struggling by reviewing instructional plans, materials, assessments, and student work samples, and by leading frequent observation/feedback cycles.

Mentor Teachers can support a variety of teachers to best meet the needs of a school or school system.
Mentor Teacher Criteria

In order to ensure that school systems draw on their strongest teachers to support and develop their residents, new, and developing teachers, school systems should develop systems to identify and recruit these teachers.

Characteristics of high-potential Mentor Teachers:

- Experience making consistent, positive impacts on student learning
- Ability to teach and lead adults
- Leadership and coaching skills with a willingness to invest in colleagues to help them grow
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Ability to manage time and plan effectively
- A commitment to constant learning and improvement

School systems should actively identify a large pool of teachers who possess these characteristics and are interested in serving in this critical role.
Mentor Teacher Application Process

One way to ensure a large pool of qualified candidates for the Mentor Teacher role is to create an open application process.

A sample application process should include:

• A job description that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Mentor Teacher
• A communications plan that notifies all eligible teachers about the opportunity
• An application timeline that states when applications will be accepted and when decisions will be made
• Clearly defined roles: who will manage the application process, communicate with applicants, make final decisions, etc.
Recruiting Mentor Teachers

As a part of the recruitment process, it is critical that school system interview potential mentors.

- Conducting interviews of Mentor Teacher candidates will help ensure that school systems are identifying individuals who have a willingness and the ability to meet the demands of the position.

- The Believe and Prepare community library provides direction on Mentor Teacher interviews in the Mentor Teacher Recruitment and Training Guidance toolkit.

Mentor Teacher Interview Best Practices

Provide opportunities for applicants to role play various aspects of the position, for example:

- have applicants watch a teaching video and determine an area of strength and weakness

- provide a scenario where the candidate has to role play a conversation with a mentee to help him/her address a particular issue

- share a mentee’s observation data and ask the candidate to analyze that data and set a goal for that mentee
Supporting and Training Mentors
In November 2017, the Department launched a statewide training opportunity to prepare expert teachers to effectively mentor residents, new, and developing teachers.

The training builds mentors’ ability to: develop relationships with their mentees, identify and address the needs of their mentees, deliver resources to help their mentees improve, and track their progress.

Through a nomination process, 89 school systems and preparation providers identified 470 teachers to participate in this training, which is offered statewide. In 2018-2019, nearly 700 more educators are expected to participate in the second cohort.

By 2020, Louisiana will have established a cadre of approximately 2,500 trained mentor teachers through Louisiana’s Mentor Teacher Training.

As a result, Louisiana is creating a leadership pipeline for top talent who understand Tier 1 curricula and its implementation, and practice effective coaching and mentoring skills.
Statewide Mentor Teacher training includes nine days of in-person trainings that prepares expert teachers to:

1. **Build strong relationships** with residents, new, and/or developing teachers.
2. **Identify and prioritize the needs** of residents, new, and/or developing teachers based on teacher preparation competencies.
3. **Provide targeted resources and coaching** to residents, new, and/or developing teachers to develop skills and improve practice.
4. **Track residents, new, and/or developing teachers’ progress** and facilitate their self-reflection and improvement.
Panel Discussion
Panel Discussion: Recruiting and Selecting Mentors

Rebecca Freeland, Talent Pipeline Lead, Richland Parish

Naomi Jones, Director of Human Resources, Rapides Parish

Amy Merrell, Talent Pipeline Lead, Grant Parish

Amanda Morrison, Principal, Grant Parish
Panel Discussion: Recruiting and Selecting Mentors

How do you currently utilize Mentor Teachers in your school or school system? How is this different from how you have used Mentor Teachers in the past?

What impact do you believe Mentor Teachers have on student outcomes?

How are you identifying strong mentors to serve in struggling schools? Do you incentivize the mentor role in struggling schools? If so, how?

What criteria do you believe are most important when selecting mentors?

Whom do you target in your recruitment efforts? How?

What are the key features of your mentor interview process? What do you learn through these interview components?
Panel Discussion: Supporting and Training Mentors

Do your Mentor Teachers participate in statewide training? If so, in what ways has this training prepared them to serve as a Mentor Teacher?

What elements of training do you believe have been most helpful in developing your mentors?

What types of support do you provide to your Mentor Teachers throughout the year? What structures or routines are in place? Who organizes and provides this support?

What types of support do you believe mentors would benefit from most in order to serve in their role successfully?

How would you like to see Mentor Teachers evaluated? What tools would be most useful?
Planning Time
1. Reflect on your current practices related to Mentor Teacher recruitment and identification. What aspects are strong, and which need improvement?

2. Review the Mentor Teacher job description, and decide how you might want to edit it to better fit your needs.

3. Sketch out the application and interview process you would like to use for this role, including who should be involved and at which stage.

4. Determine specific groups of teachers you’ll recruit to serve in the role.

5. Identify who will support Mentor Teachers in their mentoring role.

6. Describe what the ongoing support of mentors will include (i.e., check-ins, additional trainings, feedback on their mentoring skills, etc.)

7. Identify the staff in your school/school system who you will need to work with to implement your plan.
Questions & Answers

For further information on Mentor Teachers, please contact BelieveandPrepare@la.gov and visit the Louisiana Mentor Teachers webpage.