

# Six Case Studies of the Delaware New Teacher Mentoring/Induction Program

June 2007



*prepared by*

*Jeffrey A. Raffel • Rachel R. Holbert • Karen A. Curtis • Anthony Middlebrooks  
Audrey Noble • Francis O'Malley*



Institute for Public Administration  
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*with funding provided by the*



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Delaware Department of Education

## Preface

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As the Director of the Institute for Public Administration at the University of Delaware, I am pleased to provide this report, *Six Case Studies of the Delaware New Teacher Mentoring/Induction Program*. This report, which was funded by the Delaware Department of Education (DOE), continues the work done for a previous study, *A Preliminary Report of The Delaware New Teacher Mentoring/Induction Program*. It is especially effective in personalizing participants' experiences with the program, which can only be done through site visits and personal and group interviews.

This report describes the mentoring/induction program and various improvements that DOE has made to it in the past few years. It then provides a great deal of in-depth information about the four districts and two charter schools studied, such as how the program is coordinated, degree of integration with other district/school programs and policies, how mentors are selected and matched with protégés, perceptions of the induction components, and participant suggestions for program improvement. This report provides the basis for a forthcoming report, *Delaware's New Teacher Mentoring/Induction Program: Initiation, Implementation, and Integration*, which uses information from the case studies to develop overall findings and recommendations.

Jerome R. Lewis, Ph.D.  
Director, Institute for Public Administration

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## Introduction

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Delaware's current mentoring/induction program stems from the Legislature's passage of the Professional Development and Educator Accountability Act of 2000, which, among other things, requires that:

- every new educator receive mentoring;
- the mentoring/induction program be aligned to Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching;
- mentors and new teachers spend at least 30 hours together during the first year, 18 of which must be related to the Pathwise induction program, a teacher induction package purchased from the Educational Testing Service (ETS); and
- in order to secure a continuing license, teachers complete the three-year mentoring/induction program and receive no more than one unsatisfactory evaluation.

For three years after the legislation's adoption, the former mentoring program continued. The Department of Education (DOE) implemented the three-year induction approach, called the Delaware New Teacher Mentoring/Induction Program, with all of its school districts and five charter schools during the 2004-05 school year. As of the 2005-06 school year, all charter schools are participating in the mentoring/induction program.

The structure, duration and contents of any program depend on its overall objectives. For example, the general goal of support provision in traditional mentoring programs leads to a traditional duration of one year, little overall structure and few requirements regarding the amount of time that mentors and new teachers meet and what they should discuss. The goals of newer induction programs, on the other hand, are to decrease the attrition rate, improve teacher quality, and increase student achievement. Thus, they generally continue for a longer time period and are more structured than their earlier counterparts.

New teachers are required to complete four cycles of induction activities over three years. Cycles One and Two are carried out by following certain aspects of the Pathwise induction program, including cognitive coaching, descriptive feedback, bias identification, elements of practice as described in the Framework, collecting evidence of practice and providing descriptive feedback to new teachers. These cycles focus on the development of new teachers' skills in the area of classroom environment, planning and preparation, and instruction. Guided by the rubrics that describe the levels of performance in Danielson's Framework for Teaching, new teachers and mentors determine where current performance lies and set goals for further professional development. During this process, teachers are provided with one-on-one mentoring. Most sites complete Cycles One and Two in one year, though some allow two years.

Cycle Three usually takes place during the new teacher's second year, when the mentoring/ induction program's focus is on Assessment *for* Learning through the work of Richard J. Stiggins. The goal of this cycle is to develop assessment literacy, enabling new teachers to help their students assess their own work and create improvement goals for themselves, as well as to understand the appropriate use of summative and formative assessment. Included in the process are strategies that focus on constructing assessments and assignments that contain student-friendly language, examine student work, and enable students to self-reflect and set goals for improvement. The cycle is deliberately conducted in learning teams that should contain no more than six teachers whenever possible. Embedded in the process is working with colleagues from all professional levels and engaging in professional conversations around how to improve student learning. Lead mentors are responsible for knowing when the meetings are to be held, making certain that the teams have the materials needed for their meeting, assisting the learning team leaders whenever needed, and collecting any materials from the meetings. The Assessment *for* Learning program is a deliberate step to address DOE's student achievement goals and moves new teachers into a collaborative role with their colleagues. Thus, the issues of both teacher skills and student achievement are being addressed within the mentoring/induction program.

Cycle Four, which typically occurs during the program's third year, is designed to assist new teachers who are moving to a continuing license to develop a professional growth plan that will secure their required 90 "clock hours" of professional development necessary for renewal of their continuing licenses. In addition, some districts require that the new teachers focus on continued professional development during that year. New teachers work with lead mentors during this cycle.

Instead of relying on consultants to provide mentor training, the new program uses a "train the trainers" model, meaning that lead mentors are trained by DOE staff and national experts, who in turn train mentors to work with protégés. Mary Ellen Kotz, DOE's Education Associate for Professional Accountability – New Teacher Mentoring and Induction, and Pat Bigelow, Education Associate for Professional Accountability – National Board for Professional Teaching Certification, are fully trained and certified in Pathwise, Assessment *for* Learning, and other programs that help mentors work with adult learners. Lead mentors are trained in the summer and throughout the school year by the two DOE administrators and well-known educators and trainers in the areas of mentoring, induction, working with adult learners, and creating professional development experiences. The lead mentors, in turn, train mentors on the district and charter school level. This arrangement supports a DOE vision of the department working directly with districts and charter schools to improve teaching and learning. DOE prefers this path because it can provide an instant response to concerns and needs and does not have to rely on a consultant, as it had to with the former mentoring program.

The Pathwise component of the mentoring/induction program has changed over time. Indeed, DOE has utilized three versions of Pathwise to date and is planning a fourth

modification. Districts trained their mentors on and used the initial version at the program's initiation in 2004-05, but the next year ETS reduced the number of events and changed the materials somewhat. Second-year mentors and new teachers also found that some of the materials needed by new teachers were included in the mentor packet. Consequently, some mentors who trained on the first version had to mentor new teachers using the second one without having received full training on it. A third version, which utilizes a non-interactive web-based format and is slightly different from the previous versions, was used to various degrees at a small number of sites (one of which is included in the study). While there are advantages to using a ready-made national, commercially-available program, the disadvantage is that DOE and program participants must struggle to adjust continually to changes made by those outside the state that may or may not be to the program's benefit. In addition, the cost structure is established by ETS instead of by the state's needs or limits.

As of January 2007, DOE administrators and their leadership team received permission from Charlotte Danielson to use her Framework to design new activities for Cycles One and Two instead of using ETS materials. The DOE administrators noted that they and their leadership team are planning to "Delaware-ize" the cycles by making them more flexible and allowing new teachers to utilize the content programs they are also learning, such as the Smithsonian science kit or Trailblazer math. Introduction of these newly-created cycles is planned for the 2007-08 school year. Further, as a previous report noted, Pathwise needed modification for educators outside of the traditional classroom, an effort that DOE has been addressing.<sup>1</sup> New specialist programs for nurses and counselors are planned for fall 2007 implementation.

Finally, several districts initially opted to extend Cycles One and Two over two years, creating confusion for both mentors and new teachers when Pathwise changed from one year to the next. Currently, most districts have combined Cycles One and Two into the new teachers' first year experience. Changes to this complex program component have led to some confusion and difficulties in the districts' implementation.

Pathwise is based upon a continuous improvement model in which new teachers "plan, teach, reflect, and apply."<sup>2</sup> The program requires that new teachers talk with other teachers, observe veteran teachers, and read professional materials related to their area for development. Mentors observe their protégés, review the findings with them, discuss their plan for development, and return at a later point to observe growth and offer further feedback. While appropriate for adult learners, such an active learning approach is not always appreciated by those who have to do the active learning, especially when such new teachers are trying to cope with the pressures of their first full-time placement or feel their previous education or experience was sufficient to excel in the classroom. Thus, it may not be a surprise that some teachers trying to implement the Pathwise component of the program express frustration as described below. But whether the frustration is justified or not, being addressed or not, or aimed at the correct target or not, it does

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<sup>1</sup> Raffel, J. & Holbert, R. (2006) *Preliminary evaluation of the Delaware new teacher mentoring/induction program*. Newark, DE: University of Delaware.

<sup>2</sup> *Pathwise Mentor Resource Manual*. (2001) Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.



indicate and affect the challenge of implementing a successful program at the district, school, and individual levels.

It should be noted that districts and charter schools have some flexibility over how the program is implemented at their sites. For example, they can require more documentation than DOE does. Many site leaders feel comfortable with a certain degree of paperwork that is handed in for accountability purposes, to show that the events within Pathwise and Assessment *for* Learning are carried out. A few district leaders feel comfortable enough with their lead mentors and mentors to require little or no extra paperwork. The state coordinator remarked that the flexibility “allows [district leaders] to match their own leadership style.” Regardless of district requirements, some new teachers decide to fill out the Pathwise forms, since they add structure and a “paper trail” to their activities.

The Delaware Mentoring/Induction Program aims to provide all new public school teachers in the state with the benefits of both mentoring and induction. While teacher retention is a long-term outcome that can be determined after teachers finish the program, its shorter-term components and processes can be studied now to assess their effectiveness in achieving some of the shorter-term goals like provision of a support system and initiating new teacher professional development.

The interdisciplinary team chosen to study the mentoring/induction program during the 2005-06 school year consisted of an anthropologist (Karen A. Curtis, Ph.D.), political scientist (Jeffrey A. Raffel, Ph.D.), former Delaware teacher of the year (Francis O’Malley), educational psychologist and now leadership professor (Anthony Middlebrooks, Ph.D.), program evaluator (Audrey Noble, Ph.D.), and public administration doctoral student whose emphasis is program evaluation (Rachel Holbert).

With the assistance of DOE’s program administrator, the study team chose six sites: two large school districts, two smaller districts, and two charter schools, with three sites located below the Chesapeake and Delaware canal and three north of this dividing line. The team gathered information primarily through individual and group interviews of more than 130 people using a common protocol for each role (such as new teachers, mentors, lead mentors, and so forth). Mentoring-related information, such as orientation materials, was collected. The research team also attended meetings and trainings, both at the school/district and the state level, when possible. Participant checks, through which either all or a subset of the participants could comment on the case studies’ facts and findings, were also conducted. Because the entire team did not visit each site, a cross-case study matrix was developed to help team members compare sites and ensure that each result held true for at least four of six sites.

Table 1 displays the program participants interviewed (N=134) by school or district and by role within the program.

**Table 1: Mentoring/Induction Program Participants Interviewed by Role**

	<b>Carlisle SD</b>	<b>Webster SD</b>	<b>Franklin SD</b>	<b>Riverdale SD</b>	<b>Highline Charter</b>	<b>Penfield Charter</b>	<b>Totals by Role</b>
<b>New Teachers</b>	20	17	10	5	9	5	<b>66</b>
<b>Mentors</b>	5	10	10	2	2	4	<b>33</b>
<b>Lead Mentors</b>	4	3	2	3	0	0	<b>12</b>
<b>Site Coordinators</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	<b>6</b>
<b>Principals</b>	4	2	2	1	0	1	<b>10</b>
<b>Informal Leaders</b>	3	0	0	1	1	0	<b>5</b>
<b>Others</b>	1	1	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Totals by District/School</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>134</b>

Within each case study is the data used to analyze for the technical report, *Delaware's New Teacher Mentoring/Induction Program: Initiation, Implementation, and Integration*.<sup>3</sup> However, each case tells a story of its own with a richness of detail that cannot be fully chronicled in the technical report. The cases are interesting, descriptive accounts of the trials and tribulations of implementing a highly significant program into existing and complex organizations. Further, each case has a slightly different focus based on the circumstances of that school or district and how that site is implementing the mentoring/induction program. For example, Carlisle and Riverdale illustrate how the program can be integrated into a district's culture of professional development, while Webster's case study closely examines the program's leadership.

Those leading mentoring and induction programs can read the cases to understand how other sites handled issues they are facing. Those new to the program in leadership positions can read the cases to determine the issues that other sites face, such as mentor recruitment and selection and finding time for mentors and protégés to meet and observe each other. The cases describe the program "on the ground" so that those in leadership positions can better understand the issues that school and district leaders face in order to provide support for changes or additions that may help several, if not all sites. These include calls for improved training and reinforcement among the mentors; increased awareness and support for the program among principals; and greater emphasis on new teacher observations of mentors and other experienced teachers for longer than one year.

The cases are presented in alphabetical pairs according to complexity: two large districts, two smaller districts, and two charter schools that began the mentoring/induction program

<sup>3</sup> See Curtis, K., Holbert, R., Middlebrooks, A., Noble, A., O'Malley, F., & Raffel, J., (publication pending) *Delaware's New Teacher Mentoring/Induction Program: Initiation, Implementation, and Integration*. Newark, DE: University of Delaware. This report also discusses the history of the program, research design, perspective of the research team, and results in greater detail.

during the 2004-05 school year. Each pair has similarities and differences. For example, both large districts hired full-time site coordinators to carry out the program, while this duty is incorporated into the other responsibilities of teachers and administrators at other sites. In addition, teachers indicated more variability in their perceptions of and experiences with the program in districts, whereas charter school teachers were more likely to agree on their experiences with the program and the issues the schools face.

Each individual case study follows a similar pattern. A brief background of the district or charter school is given, followed by discussion of the program's leadership, the context of any changes that have occurred through time to the program, and participants' perceptions of the program's purposes and goals. The program's mentoring, Pathwise, and Assessment for Learning components are described, with an overall evaluation of each site provided along with participants' suggestions for program improvement.

### **Site introductions**

The large, urban/suburban Carlisle School District's mentoring/induction program is headed by a full-time site coordinator who is responsible for all new teacher professional development. The Carlisle district is committed to professional development and had been considering implementing a similar program for its new teachers at the time the statewide program was introduced. The site coordinator has developed materials for new teachers that explain how the program works in the district, which includes some of the broader goals of induction. As is expected in a large district, the quality of mentor-protégé relationships appear to vary, and finding time to meet is a concern. Several new teachers found the Pathwise program to be confusing, repetitive, or not relevant to their teaching experiences; however, since the district requires no more paperwork to be handed in beyond DOE's requirements, there were no complaints of time spent filling out forms. Many new teachers involved in Assessment *for* Learning appreciated the small group, collaborative learning approach it employs. Overall, it appears that Carlisle new teachers are well supported with a cohesive program on the district level.

While the large Webster district is not as cohesive, the program's site coordinator has built a strong organization of lead mentors who contribute significantly to its success. The theme of this district's program could be "adaptation"; it has experienced a great deal of teacher turnover, and the mentoring/induction program itself has been adjusted from year to year as its leaders seek to meet new educators' diverse needs. The Webster district's program also supports "school liaisons", who help the site coordinator with administrative duties and hold regular meetings for new teachers, in schools that do not have a lead mentor. The mentoring portion also adapted through time by first trying to match protégés and mentors by subject area, and changing its policy to provide in-building mentors after receiving feedback from new teachers. Similarly, the district's first year of providing Assessment *for* Learning (2005-06) included much variation as both lead mentors and new teachers worked through that component; the site coordinator and lead mentors used what they learned to make the next year more consistent. As the district's program moves past implementation and toward integration, the program's leadership team and ability to adapt will serve it well.

The small, rural Franklin district has very energetic, dedicated lead mentors who serve as the program's leaders. The district's principals and administrators, while verbally supportive of the mentoring/induction program, appear to know little about it and provide limited support for other professional development activities. Consequently, the lead mentors' attempts to provide full training for mentors and additional activities to new teachers are stymied. The lead mentors, who select and match mentors to protégés, have had difficulty finding in-building mentors for all new teachers, something that both mentors and new teachers desire. Unlike other districts, several mentors said that they chose not to take advantage of substitutes in order to observe their protégés, instead using their lunch, specials, or planning periods to do so. Participants suggested, among other actions, streamlining paperwork associated with Pathwise, increasing time spent on observations, and matching protégés to mentors within their own buildings.

The Riverdale School District, also small and rural, is much more cohesive in its overall commitment to professional development. One example is the district-wide push for all of teachers to learn Assessment *for* Learning as a cluster along with the new teachers who are progressing through Cycle Three. The district configures its six lead mentor positions in a unique way—two handle new teachers' first year (Cycles One and Two), two handle the second year (Cycle Three) and two handle the third year (Cycle Four). This configuration helps to distribute a workload that could become distracting if all tried to do everything, and each pair can focus their energies on understanding their cycles and the new teachers who are going through them. The lead mentors and an administrator work as a team to find and match mentors to protégés and to plan each year's dates and activities. While mentors are recruited and trained early and the mentor cadre is seen as high-quality, nearly half the mentors have two protégés. Consequently, several participants suggested that Riverdale's program leaders focus more on recruiting additional mentors.

Highline Charter School has experienced significant teacher turnover; in 2005-06, one-third of its faculty were new teachers in the mentoring/induction program. After the program's first year, its leader, a school administrator, found an energetic, organized, and well-respected teacher to take on site coordinator and lead mentor duties. Mentor-protégé matching criteria focus on matching new teachers with mentors who are either a grade above or below and teach similar subjects. Specials teachers, however, struggle with the matching because no one else teaches their subject and none are senior enough to become mentors. The program is seen by its participants as helpful though not connected to other professional development activities. Unique to this school is the process by which mentors and protégés schedule observations and meetings. Both schedule substitutes at the same time for half days throughout the school year, during which they observe each other or other experienced teachers and meet to work through Pathwise events.

The Penfield Charter School is known for its high standards for both its students and teachers. Parental involvement is high and teacher turnover is relatively low. A school administrator serves as both the mentoring/induction program's site coordinator and lead mentor. She meets monthly with the school's mentors and seeks other opportunities for

communication and support. While a good deal of care is taken in matching mentors to protégés, the new teachers who teach special education or a specials class reported difficulties with being matched to a regular classroom teacher. Nonetheless, all the new teachers have found their mentors to be helpful. Participants noted that the program is compatible with the school's emphasis on academics and decorum. They would, however, appreciate the chance for more classroom observations and mentor training.

## **Carlisle School District**

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The Carlisle School District is a large school district in northern Delaware, with schools in both urban and suburban locations. Approximately 10,000 students are enrolled in the district. The student population is comprised of primarily white and African American students, with Asians and Hispanics accounting for much smaller percentages. About one third of enrolled students are classified as low-income.

Professional development opportunities for teachers are offered in the schools, at the district and state levels, through the Delaware Teacher Center and local colleges. In 2005-06, Carlisle offered its new teachers 18 professional development workshops. Carlisle's professional development model for new teachers includes the following components: workshops on targeted professional growth areas taken from Charlotte Danielson's Frameworks; two master teachers working directly in the classroom to model effective instructional strategies and train teachers; and professional development funds to defray the registration and travel costs for teachers to attend professional conferences, seminars, and workshops. All teachers are required to complete six hours of Personalized Inservice Program (PIP) each year. PIP hours are earned through staff development workshops in the school, the district, or at the state level. The district's strategic plan includes a strategy to "recruit, support, and retain high quality staff" accomplished in part by "provid[ing] all new teachers ...with two years of intensive coaching and support to improve skills." In 2005-06, there were ten lead mentors, 57 mentors and 129 new teachers with initial licenses in the district, 63 of whom were in their first year and required mentors.

In the Carlisle district, the mentoring/induction program is organized such that the new teacher's first year is spent with a mentor working through Cycles One and Two (Pathwise). During the program's second year, groups of new teachers work with lead mentors to complete the *Assessment for Learning* program (Cycle Three). Finally, new teachers spend their third year developing a professional growth plan as required by Cycle Four. This design has remained stable at Carlisle since the new mentoring/induction program's inception.

Research in the district was conducted by in-person interviews with the site coordinator, the curriculum director, the assistant superintendent, the human resources director, four principals (one representing each grade configuration), and one informal leader. Focus group interviews were conducted with three lead mentors, four mentors, and 17 new teachers. In addition, at one intermediate school, a group interview was conducted with a lead mentor and a mentor, followed by a group interview with four new teachers. In total, four lead mentors, five mentors, and 20 new teachers were interviewed.

### **Leadership**

Carlisle's full-time position of Coordinator of Professional Development/New Teachers position was created in 2004, about six months prior to the initiation of the

mentoring/induction program. Prior to assuming this position, the site coordinator had been an intermediate school teacher in the district for approximately 15 years and had served as a mentor in the earlier mentoring program. The site coordinator provides the leadership and administration of the program. The site coordinator meets with the curriculum director on a biweekly basis and is in contact regularly by telephone and e-mail. The site coordinator is also a member of the district content area specialist team, which meets biweekly and is concerned with necessary content area support and training (for example, science, math, social studies, English Language Arts, and so forth).

The site coordinator conducts a three-day orientation session for new teachers in mid-August, prior to the start of the school year. The orientation session covers Carlisle's strategic plan, Robert Marzano's *A Handbook for Classroom Instruction that Works*, Pathwise, and various content specific training modules (for example, Harcourt Reading, Technology Support, Smithsonian Science Kit, and McDougal Littell Math). The orientation manual includes all of the Pathwise and other professional development completion milestones and meeting dates for the academic year, as well as district and state forms, coaching tips, a reflection framework, classroom set up, and management checklists, and resource contacts and locations. A similar manual is distributed to all mentors and lead mentors. The site coordinator also conducts training in the use of the Pathwise at various school locations during the year for mentor-protégé partners.

The site coordinator developed a position description for lead mentors and works with principals and the curriculum director to fill these positions. The site coordinator meets a minimum of three times a year with the ten lead mentors as a group and communicates regularly on an individual basis by telephone and e-mail. The role of the lead mentor is to work collaboratively with other lead mentors and the site coordinator to implement the program. Lead mentors serve as (1) liaisons between the program, site coordinator, and administration, (2) immediate supports for the mentor-protégé relationship, and (3) facilitators of the completion of Pathwise, Assessment *for* Learning, and professional growth plans. However, there appears to be some variation in how the lead mentor role is implemented, as one second year teacher said, "I'm a little confused about the lead mentor because I had no interaction with her in the past two years at all, only if I had to turn something in to her. So I don't really understand what her role is." Other new teachers and mentors also report confusion about the lead mentor role.

Lead mentors are responsible for Pathwise attestation documentation, which ensures completion of Cycles One and Two requirements, in their assigned schools. In 2005-06, lead mentors began working with groups of new teachers to complete the first year of Assessment *for* Learning. Lead mentors also conduct Pathwise training for mentors at the building level and hold regular meetings with mentors to assist with completion of Cycles One and Two. Mentors coach new teachers in working with students in the classroom and assist new teachers in scheduling observation of other teachers.

The site coordinator visits each school in the district on a regular basis and is in direct contact with new teachers. She provides her office, cell, and home phone numbers to new teachers. She often informally observes new teachers and volunteers to teach in their

classrooms so that they may observe her or so they can observe other teachers. As one new teacher said, “She will teach a lesson and not just observe. That really helps to see an experienced teacher.” She is in regular e-mail contact with new teachers, mentors and lead mentors. She sends e-mail reminders about all events and when various assignments are due. One mentor noted, “She’s very organized. She’s great. [She] answers your questions pretty much immediately, doesn’t get frustrated with too many questions of the same thing. She communicates with us often.” Respondents were unanimous in their high regard for the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of the site coordinator. “She does a lot that is not required... She is highly organized. We are very, very fortunate to have [her],” said one administrator. A new teacher echoed this, saying, “She is just really excellent. She’s doing a great job. I guess we all feel with this program – she always make me feel comfortable and gives me good advice when she comes in the room.”

## **Context**

Carlisle’s mentoring/induction program was developed as part of a strategic planning process that began independent of the state’s legislatively-mandated program. A number of national experts on mentoring and induction made presentations to teachers, other staff, and Carlisle’s strategic planning task force. Special ongoing funding for support of new teachers was included in the 2001 referendum, though changes in budget and cost forecasting reduced the amount. Significant changes in how and when new teachers are hired also took place, resulting in earlier recruitment and hiring, which made it possible to make more timely mentor-protégé matches. In addition, the site coordinator reported that she conducted a needs assessment and a district level year-end survey of the program in the spring of 2004. This survey indicated that new teachers were clearly ready for and in need of a more structured system of mentoring. Many said that they rarely, if ever, even saw their mentor. Consequently, Carlisle’s administration was already moving toward the direction ultimately chosen by the state. Regarding Carlisle’s support for the program, an informal leader said:

People [understand] that teaching is very complex and if you don’t have a system similar to what we do for new doctors who go through an internship and a residency kind of thing, we can’t expect folks to stay in the profession and excel. So it was easy for other folks to grab the information and run with it.

Several respondents had participated in the previous mentoring program. Though a number of the workshop sessions and topics in the earlier program were recalled as particularly beneficial, the current program is seen as offering a more structured and consistent program experience. One lead mentor characterized the difference in the following way:

When I first got involved as a mentor, the program was a lot looser, and I always felt that as a mentor, it was my responsibility to seek out the protégé and ask them questions. This program puts more of the onus of expectation on the protégé because they are required to do certain things and seek out your time. I think that’s the way it should be.



An informal leader made a similar judgment about the former program:

[New teachers weren't matched] with mentors until sometime in the fall, and it varied tremendously based on who they were assigned to. Some mentors really put their heart and soul into mentoring the new teacher and helped them a great deal and happened to be close enough in the same building that they could help them a great deal. Others were across different buildings and subject areas and rarely saw one another.

The site coordinator characterized the current program's initiation as difficult:

It was welcomed by the leadership; now it's welcomed by all. But initially, it was me, some of the lead mentors, and the administration supporting it. The new lead mentors thought it was going to be a hard transition. Some of the lead mentors that participated in the previous program were really a 'hard sell.' Several of these lead mentors actually dropped their positions. Now everybody is on board. But there was and is definite support from the leadership – me, my supervisor, the assistant superintendent, and most of the lead mentors. We were on board. And we had to sell it to everybody else involved. Because it looked like just so much time. And it is more time, but it's more valuable time.

Respondents see the mentoring/induction program as well integrated with other district professional development opportunities. This is likely due to the site coordinator's role in new teacher professional development as well as her participation on the district content area specialist team.

### **Purpose and goals**

District documents cite the goals of Carlisle's mentoring/induction program as (1) supporting all new teachers in the district, both those new to the profession as well as new to the state or district, (2) increasing retention of promising beginning teachers, (3) promoting the personal and professional well-being of the beginning teacher, and (4) satisfying mandated requirements related to induction and certification. According to the site coordinator, Carlisle's goals are consistent with DOE's goals. "We have very similar goals," she said. "The district goals and [DOE's] goals, without listing them in particular, [are] to ...hire really great teachers and retain them. And then at the same time, provide them with as much professional support as possible."

Lead mentors, mentors, new teachers, and administrators identify similar goals of the program, though different roles tended to emphasize different purposes. New teachers spoke more about the supportive nature of the program. For example, one new teacher emphasized relationship-building as a retention method: "I think the mentoring is a good idea, when they put you with someone, because then right away you form a relationship. The more good relationships you have in a school district the more likely you are to stay." Mentors and lead mentors stressed the impact of the program of creating

professional teachers: “The goal is to make you a better teacher. That’s the bottom line. To help you become a better teacher. The more information you get, the more training, the better you are in the classroom,” said one lead mentor. Finally, administrators were more likely to focus on the long-term goal of teacher retention: “[Creating] highly qualified teachers who stay in the district. There are wonderful opportunities for new teachers. I wish I had this program as a new teacher,” commented one administrator.

Most new teachers understand the relationship of the program to state licensing requirements. Several new teachers reported that the DOE website does not accurately convey the actual state requirements for new teachers trained in other states.

## **Mentoring**

The site coordinator works with lead mentors and building principals to recruit mentors and facilitate the mentor-protégé match. Desirable mentor qualities include demonstrated teaching skills and good communication skills. Though it varies by school, the goal in mentor-protégé matches is to assure common grade level, common content area, and common planning or lunch periods. Teachers stressed the importance of common grade level for mentor-protégé matches. However, some participants reported problems in matching specialist teacher protégés with mentors. A number of new teachers sought informal mentoring relationships when the official match was not appropriate.

The role of principals in facilitating and approving mentor-protégé matches varies across schools, associated to some degree with how long principals have been in that role. According to the site coordinator, “the building principal has the last say in the mentoring [match].” An elementary school principal uses the following factors in assigning mentors: content area expertise, grade level, availability, willingness, and practical knowledge (“nuts and bolts”). A middle school principal looks for a “top-shelf person” with instructional and classroom management skills. An intermediate school principal recruits teachers with “professional mindset, common content area, good classroom management skills, and interest in the program and willingness to participate.”

Release time is granted throughout the new teacher’s first year for classroom observation. Many mentors stated that they spend more than the required amount of time with their new teachers. However, some first-year new teachers said they had not met with their mentors and that their mentors had not observed their teaching. Respondents who did meet together reported meeting during planning periods, after department meetings, during lunch, and after school. Sometimes lack of common planning periods interfered with arranging mentor-protégé meetings, while some mentors and new teachers have classrooms in the same section of buildings and find it easy to “touch base frequently.” A few new teachers worry about “imposing” on their mentors and do not always get help on instructional or classroom management problems. Several mentors suggested that lead mentor responsibilities include some monitoring of mentor effectiveness.

Time for the program was mentioned in other ways as well. A mentor mentioned that the time commitment kept some people from becoming mentors. “I know a lot of the reasons

why people in my building don't want to be a mentor. It's the time because it's outside the school schedule." A lead mentor hoped that increased familiarity with the program will decrease the time needed to carry it out:

Like any program they have running in your school, it's finding the time....I know [the site coordinator] does everything she can. She'll come in and cover a class while you go observe somebody. I've offered that, but I don't know how we can find more time. But the other thing is just getting used to the Pathwise program. Hopefully we'll stick with the program and then the mentors can become more familiar with [it] as we go along. Then it won't take as much of the mentors' time."

## **Pathwise**

Unlike some schools and districts, which experienced a significant amount of change to their programs, Carlisle's program has remained stable except for changes made to Pathwise by its developer. Further, required documentation is minimal. During its first year, new teachers and mentors had to complete meeting time logs, but the second year that requirement was dropped so that no documentation is required except for the attestation form to ensure participants' completion of each cycle. "I really liked it a lot that [the site coordinator] knew that we were all professionals," one mentor said.

Participants involved in the program's first year experienced some problems with Pathwise due to a lack of consistency between the materials provided to mentors and new teachers. Several lead mentors commented that becoming familiar with the Pathwise materials and other duties took some time and effort, particularly during the first year. One said, "I think the hardest thing for me was I had the training, but until I go through it once, it's the practical application. You can train me all you want, but it's not until I'm actually doing it that I learn it." Another agreed, saying, "With me it was just fumbling through the packet when I needed to use it. I knew where everything was the day we were trained, but then when I got back to the building and everybody [said], 'Where are the articles for [that segment]?'"

First-year teachers, who started in the program's second year when the number of required "events" decreased, stressed the benefits of the Pathwise program. One noted that "it makes sure you take a step back and look at what you're doing." Mentors and lead mentors found the program structure and content helpful as well. One said, "I like the Pathwise program. I think that there are some really great questions in there and that it really provokes reflection if it's done the right way by the protégé...Doing it the right way means taking it seriously and filling out the questions and actually doing the reflection." Another noted its relevance for new teachers:

I think for the new teacher coming in the door it's an awesome program. That's the feedback I've heard because you have to have someone help you get through that first month of school. In addition to that, you're making a connection in the district where you're being given professional development on a continual basis. I

must say that ...the program has really helped because its relevant to what you're doing in the classroom.

Almost all participants commented on the value of the Pathwise observation and reflection components. One first-year teacher saw that the observations and reflections worked back into the mentoring relationship. "It causes you to actually sit down with the mentor and go through what you did and what they saw – you have to communicate," she said. Another new teacher noted specific ways that observations helped her in the classroom: "The observation parts were helpful. Especially with my [students], it helped me set up learning centers, different modes of instruction, and then also provided some positive feedback on things that I was already doing that just needed some minor adjustments," she said. Some mentors noted that mentoring made them more reflective teachers. One mentor remarked, "It makes you begin to question. Even little things like the difference between the objective of your lesson and what do I want the children to learn, there's a difference in mind set there... So it makes you reflect on the whole pattern of being a teacher." Finally, an informal leaders commented on the overall positive effect of observations: "Once [new teachers] did a couple of observations, it showed them what they could learn from that and they wanted to do more."

While most participants find the mentoring/induction program beneficial, there are complaints about its requirements. "I just feel like we can spend our time better on learning about [classroom] management than wasting it reading a book," said one new teacher. In addition, some new teachers felt they had been exposed to the Pathwise language and structure as part of their college and/or student teaching experience and found it repetitive. "We did the whole thing in college" was heard more than once.

Specials teachers and counselors said that the Pathwise program was less valuable due to the difficulty of finding same specialty mentors and the orientation of the program to the general classroom. "For music teachers specifically, it is not that helpful. We don't have classrooms like other teachers," said one. A special education teacher agreed, saying, "I work in the Intensive Learning Center. And so a lot of things that I feel have been kind of brought out at the [program] hasn't been completely relevant I feel for me."

High school teachers see Pathwise as targeted to the elementary school level in terms of activities and examples. "It's a lot of elementary school stuff, and it's hard to apply that to the children that we have. So when you actually read the book and then you look at your classroom habits, it doesn't help at all," said one new teacher. Another new teacher agreed, saying, "[Pathwise says] 'little Johnny is not doing this.' Yes, well, big Frankie is telling me to F off, and it's not in the book."

### ***Assessment for Learning***

In the first year of *Assessment for Learning* (2005-06), the value of peer learning was emphasized though some new teachers found it difficult to manage the logistics of cluster meetings at rotating schools and a number commented on the initial lack of clarity about Cycle Three requirements. Both second-year teachers and those who had begun teaching

the year before the new program (who were in their third year) began were required to complete Cycle Three to receive their continuing licenses. Third-year teachers also completed Cycle Four by the end of that school year. New teachers could choose to participate in Assessment *for* Learning as a state-sponsored cluster, which involves considerably more effort than the required non-cluster program. Teachers reported that they met regularly with smaller groups of other new teachers in their schools to work through the material and occasionally met in larger groups facilitated by a lead mentor.

Most who participated in Assessment *for* Learning found it to be valuable, particularly when compared to the new teachers' previous year. New teachers appreciated the collaborative learning aspect, as one new teacher noted, "I actually like this program better than [Pathwise] because it was more intense. It was more hands-on and it was more of a group effort where we were all working together and coming together to collaborate. I think you learn a lot more than way, and I think we find that in our classes as well." While the new teachers appreciated the collaborative learning approach, smaller, more individualized, groups appeared to work better than larger ones. One new teacher pointed out that:

I got very little out of the larger group. We had an excellent group that worked together here at [my school], and we learned a lot just talking with each other as we worked through the book together. I would say that our part of the program was probably the most valuable time versus the time spent with the larger group. Sometimes we weren't all on the same page when we met together...In some cases it was just another work session and we had already completed that work in our small group.

A lead mentor also learned by facilitating Assessment *for* Learning: "I found that with the assessment cluster, the way I looked at things was different. I don't even have to assess kids all the time, but I do work with teachers. It gave me a different way of looking at assessment. I used a lot of the ideas from that in other areas working with other teachers," he said.

Because it was the program's first year of implementation, glitches were expected. Both lead mentor and new teacher respondents reported problems with the start up of the Assessment *for* Learning segment, including lack of clarity and consistency on instructions, and expectations and questions about applicability. One new teacher felt that "[The book] was very confusing between the CD that was given and then what was labeled an activity and what was a form and what was something [else]....Some of it seemed to repeat. I don't know. It was unwieldy sometimes. It took all of us to try to figure it out. It wasn't very clear what we had to do." Another new teacher commented on the issue of unclear communication: "I think it took some real communicating to figure out what we had to hand in and in what format. What exactly needed to be in our portfolio and the order that it was put in and how much information and data we need to put in an activity at times." A new teacher questioned the applicability of Assessment *for* Learning techniques to first grade students by saying, "Extended written response is stretching it."

Several of these problems were attributed to the program's novelty: "I think the assessment piece might have been [overwhelming] the first year because it's new. I didn't do as well communicating in the second part as it will be in the future. And I ended up having four or five meetings a week to accommodate 12 people. There's no way," said one lead mentor. Another lead mentor agreed, saying, "It's tough. It's challenging. Because this is the first year of it, it hasn't run as smoothly as it will. It's like [Pathwise, where] the second and third year are going much better than the first year." At least some new teachers understood that the unfolding of a new program requires patience: "I think there was a little rough going at first, but I think it was because [lead mentors] were new to it as well. They were trying to find their way. I think we were all understanding of that simply because we knew it was the first year," said one.

## **Evaluation**

Each year the district compiles teacher retention data and reports it to the Carlisle district school board. Improvements in Carlisle's teacher retention are viewed as resulting from improvements in teacher hiring practices and the implementation of the mentoring/induction program. The site coordinator encouraged Carlisle's lead mentors, mentors, and new teachers to participate in a 2005 online survey conducted by the University of Delaware for DOE. She was disappointed that the low response rate meant that district level data was not reported. Each training session offered as part of the mentoring/induction program includes an evaluation section. The site coordinator has a positive attitude toward evaluation, noting, "I want to know what's not working. I'm not afraid of bad stuff. I think we need to know that. If we don't know that, we don't know where to make it better. So I like to know."

Several themes are found in respondents' comments about the mentoring/induction program: time burdens, confusion about the program materials, and usefulness of various activities. Many new teachers saw the Pathwise program as too complicated and repetitive. A number of new teachers commented on the lack of applicability of some of the activities, with frequent mention of the school profile exercise.

### *Participant suggestions*

Improvements to Carlisle's orientation and induction process suggested by first-year teachers include presenting more information about: (1) building level procedures and requirements, (2) concrete classroom management techniques, especially at the high school level, (3) district inclusion strategies (for example, Individual Education Plans), and (4) interaction with parents. Another new teacher suggested that second- and third-year teachers present some of their key first-year experiences at the new teacher orientation. Several new teachers suggested a mid-year, second orientation session for first-year teachers. Some noted that they did not get any help on how to time various curriculum components and ended up "cramming" at the end of the year.

New teachers further along in the mentoring/induction program suggested that Assessment *for* Learning and the Professional Development Plan be combined into a one-year program. Several lead mentors suggested revising Cycle Three instructions to incorporate target outcomes language at the outset, instead of focusing on the required hours and assignments. New teachers advocated choice in which chapter examples an individual teacher would complete and commented that the large group meetings are not always conducted in an organized fashion.

Respondents have various suggestions about how they would like to see the program operating in five years, focusing on more release time for mentors and an emphasis on different program components. “The program should be extended to five years, not just three years, because there is research about the percentage of teachers that leave after five years,” said one principal. Some administrators would like to see more of an emphasis on classroom management. “We need more time for professional development. But it is difficult because of the tension about teachers being out of the classroom. New teachers need a tight support network and hands-on work on classroom management,” said one. Another agreed, saying:

The program should have more emphasis on classroom management. This is what most new teachers really need, especially high school teachers who do not get pre-service training in classroom management. The relationship between teachers and students at the high school level is critical – many high school students do not feel connected to the teachers, the school, or to learning. We need to get teachers into practices where they work differently with students. We need more release time for all new teachers so they can observe other teachers and work as groups to problem-solve.

When asked about their visions for the mentoring/induction program five years hence, the site coordinator and an informal leader focused on mentors with increased release time. The site coordinator is enthusiastic about the Santa Cruz mentoring model:

My dream world is for us to have release mentors, released from the classroom, full release time. It would be challenging right now, but their full time job would be to work solely with the new teachers. And how that would work here at Carlisle: we would not need lead mentors at that point. It would just be these release teachers and myself. Each would be assigned a minimum of 12 new teachers to coach. We would be able to meet with them every week for an hour and a half, two hours. Mentor training would occur on a regular basis, weekly meetings could be held with the team of released mentors. I think that would be most effective, alleviating the lack of time issue. Right now, the Santa Cruz model in California, I love that....That’s my dream.

An informal leader derives her inspiration elsewhere that encompasses similar methods:

Where I’d like to be in five years is full-time or nearly full-time release mentors who have been very carefully selected based on both their instructional expertise

and effectiveness in the classroom and their ability to coach adults. A mentor would have no more than 14 or so new teachers. Twelve to 14, ideally as closely matched in background, grade level, and content area expertise as possible. In fact, at the high school level, I like the model that's used at Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High in Long Island, and it's the department chairs who teach very part-time and the rest of the time they are mentoring the non-tenured and they are coaching all department members, using the same rubric for everybody. Whether it's at the high school level through department chairs or other levels through full or nearly full-time release mentor teachers, it's schools in which for all teachers there's a phenomenal focus on instructional expertise and time for discussion, goal-setting, coaching, observing, all of that to occur where people are constantly honing their skills. And then at the non-tenured level, at least six observations per year that are written up and discussed. Three of those [observations] should be on three consecutive days so that you're really seeing the development of the lesson and the handling of students who didn't quite get it and the adjustment of instruction. You're seeing how that occurs and having a chance to have the conversations about it.



## Webster School District

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Webster School District is one of Delaware's largest school districts, with one of its most diverse student populations. As such, it includes urban schools and those on the suburban fringe. The district struggles with its volume of teacher turnover; nearly 300 new teachers participated in its mentoring program during the 2005-06 academic year.

Webster's mentoring/induction program is managed by a full-time release teacher who serves as the program's site coordinator. The site coordinator trains, organizes, and supports 15 lead mentors and ensures in a broad way that all the new teachers are progressing through the program. She also holds monthly meetings with the lead mentors during which they collaborate to plan, monitor, and evaluate the program. She is accessible to all program participants, including mentors and new teachers. Because she has been to all of the trainings and attends regular DOE meetings for site coordinators, she is perceived by program participants as a credible, trustworthy source of information.

Lead mentors train the mentors, hold district-wide meetings for new teachers and mentors, and answer any questions they may have. A few of these lead mentors are assigned to help program participants with particular backgrounds—for instance, new teachers who came to teaching via Alternative Routes to Certification, as well as new nurses and counselors. By all accounts, lead mentors are highly regarded by new teachers, the site coordinator, and especially mentors.

In addition, the district uses a combination of funds to support a "school liaison" in nearly every school, except in buildings that house a lead mentor. School liaisons match mentors with new teachers (with principals given final approval), collect paperwork for the site coordinator, and hold monthly meetings about upcoming events such as open houses, report cards, parent-teacher meetings, or the Delaware State Testing Program (DSTP). Most new teachers appreciate the liaisons' efforts to individualize the program. "The school liaison was the one that gave us all e-mails, reiterated everything that you needed, met with everyone, made sure you got all your paperwork in...[she] almost answered the questions before we had them," said one new teacher.

When the program began at Webster, during the 2004-05 school year, it was designed for new teachers to move through Cycle One the first year and Cycle Two the second. Once they gained experience with the program, the site coordinator and lead mentors realized that new teachers could finish the first two cycles in one year, so they condensed them in the program's second year. During this time, when "year two" teachers were completing Cycle Two and "year one" teachers were completing both Cycles One and Two, twice as many mentors were needed than if the entire Pathwise program had been completed in one year. During the 2005-06 school year, 193 mentors were matched with 239 first- and second-year teachers. Because of the change to the program, most new teachers have completed Pathwise and will begin Cycle Three, Assessment *for* Learning, during the 2006-07 school year. Consequently, significantly fewer mentors are needed for 2006-07.

The district's new teacher orientation takes place for two days before school begins, during which a general overview of the mentoring/induction program is given. However, the program's primary introduction occurs around the second week of September, when new teachers meet their mentors and the site coordinator distributes Pathwise materials. This component has changed through time; it began with three or four meetings throughout the year and consolidated to one meeting in September for the 2005-06 school year. Most new teachers described the mentoring/induction program orientation as confusing and overwhelming, noting that it was too much information at the beginning of the year. One new teacher, perhaps recalling the more general orientation at which new teachers receive materials on the Delaware Performance Appraisal System, technology, district calendars and from the union, remarked, "It was very intimidating. They gave us a three-inch stack of papers, and they said, 'This is your mentoring program.' We're all like, what?" Regardless of whether they attended several meetings or just one, new teachers relied on their mentors to sift through the Pathwise requirements.

Mentors are trained by lead mentors on Charlotte Danielson's Framework and the Pathwise cycles over a schedule of three or four meetings after school throughout the school year. Newer mentors generally stated that their training was uneven. Several mentors agreed that the training "depended on the person who was running it." Some mentors noted that even after the training, they did not fully understand their roles and the program's basic requirements; a few new teachers noticed that their mentors did not appear to have a complete understanding of Pathwise. One group of mentors noted that their lead mentor was more helpful than the training. "I think I learned more from [our lead mentor about] what to do," said one. "Definitely," said another, "when we came back, she re-taught the whole [thing]." At Webster, more than some other districts and schools, lead mentors rather than mentors are seen as the key source of Pathwise information. Reliance on lead mentors is expected to dissipate as mentors become more experienced with Pathwise, assuming they remain mentors for long enough and the program achieves stability.

In addition to the mentoring/induction program's requirements, the Webster district requires new teachers to attend topical meetings or professional development activities throughout the school year. These meetings vary in topics ranging from curriculum design to instructional technology to classroom management issues. Each year the site coordinator and lead mentors have altered the meeting requirements for new teachers in order to balance a desire of the program's leaders for new teachers to learn about certain subjects with the new teachers' wish for fewer structured, school-related activities taking place after school hours. In the program's first year, new teachers were required to attend three meetings, usually led by lead mentors or other district experts. New teachers hired during the program's first year or earlier expressed little enthusiasm for the previously-required meetings. "Just being able to sit down with a mentor and go through the things one on one, I got more out of that than being called to a district meeting and meeting with other teachers...I don't remember any of that stuff. I remember everything that I went through with the other teacher and with [my mentor] and one on one," one new teacher said. When these are added to the monthly meetings run by the school liaison and faculty

meetings, it becomes understandable why one teacher said that “it felt like all we did my first year was go to meetings after school.”

During the 2005-06 school year, first-year teachers were required to attend any three of a variety of professional development activities and document how the activities related to their teaching. As of the 2006-07 school year, the meeting requirement has been eliminated in favor of three self-selected professional development activities chosen by each new teacher. In addition, mentors work through specific issues on a one-on-one basis with their protégés using a list of suggested monthly topics developed by the site coordinator and lead mentors.

As the program has moved from its first to third year, the mentoring/induction program has experienced changes in the Pathwise component, the district’s orientation, and the number of required meetings for mentors and new teachers. Even though many of the changes were made to accommodate previous participants’ comments, several mentors and second-year teachers expressed confusion about the program. One second-year teacher best expressed an often-heard desire for program stability: “I know it’s new and they have to trial-run it and get all the glitches out, but I think once they get all of that together, that will really help the program to run more smoothly.” Indeed, some who have been with the program since its inception report that the program is easier to understand and has fewer difficulties each year.

## **Leadership**

Webster’s mentoring/induction program has a well-defined *formal* leadership structure, beginning at the top with a site coordinator directing both lead mentors and school liaisons, who in turn direct mentors and the subsequent mentoring activity with new teachers. From various perspectives, however, the *informal* leadership structure is based more on who is perceived as assuming the leadership role (as participants define leadership), wielding influence, and setting vision. In this district, the informal leadership varied, often mirroring the formal leadership, but just as often focusing on the relationship that had made the most impact on the individual, regardless of position.

### *Formal leadership*

The formal leadership of the mentoring/induction program in this district consists of one individual in the site coordinator role communicating with lead mentors, school liaisons, and to a lesser extent, school principals. The lead mentors, in turn, work with the mentors in each school. And, of course, the mentors provide the dyadic relationship with the new teacher(s) to which they have been assigned.

Results of this evaluation find the formal leadership of the site coordinator to be of exceptional quality and commitment. Teachers serving in every role throughout the mentoring/induction program consistently noted her coordination, organization, and support. Further, these comments were supported by the assessment of data from two interviews with the site coordinator. Central to this assertion of excellence are: (1) an

exclusive focus on the program, (2) considerable autonomy and flexibility, (3) a great deal of experience with both the district and the profession, (4) deep understanding of the program, and (5) unceasing effort to achieve and improve. In other words, the site coordinator communicated a level of experience, expertise, and dedication that was reflected by teacher and mentor comments.

Participants also are very enthusiastic about Webster's lead mentor cadre. Lead mentors carried school liaison positions, so not only were they responsible for attending monthly meetings to help the site coordinator guide the program and holding mentor trainings, they also handled school liaison duties. "She gets substitutes so that we can observe [new teachers] and vice versa. She...does a lot of stuff that nobody else will do, would ever do," said one mentor. Lead mentors are highly regarded for their knowledge, energy, organization, and their accessibility to both mentors and new teachers. One new teacher remarked that his lead mentor "showed a lot of interest in what we were doing as teachers and how we were fitting into the school and the climate in general."

The role of the formal administration, namely the school principal, comprises another interesting theme relevant to the leadership in this program. Participants were asked about the role of the building principal in the mentoring program. Responses surrounded three issues: (1) building principals' awareness of the program, how it functions, and who is involved was usually perceived as quite limited; (2) building principals' support for the program was perceived as varying (from highly supportive and involved to disinterested), and not necessarily related to their understanding of the program, and (3) a consciously erected "firewall" between mentoring activities and formal assessment activities protects the sensitive nature of the mentoring relationship.

Building principals had limited awareness of the mentoring program, how it operates, and the implications it may have for their teaching staff. As the site coordinator relayed, "The first question I asked [a room full of principals] is what did they know about the mentoring program. They knew nothing. But oddly enough, for some reason, they did not distrust it....I would be concerned about what's going on in that classroom that I'm not privy to." A lead mentor, questioned whether her principal knew about the mentoring/induction program said, "I don't think the principal knew too much about it....it was never mentioned, never discussed."

In light of this lack of awareness, efforts have been made to provide more information and integrate mentoring goals with the strategic plans that principals may have for their schools. Based on reports, the principals appear generally supportive. "They came away [from an informational meeting] wanting to know so much more. They wanted to know about the materials we were using and they didn't seem terribly upset about the firewall. They understood the idea of trust," said the site coordinator.

Program participants found their school administrations to vary in support. One mentor noted, "Our principal had very little, if any, support for the mentoring program....There was very little respect on the end of the principal for the program." However, another lead mentor had a better experience, saying:

My administrator has been very supportive of the program. She had suggestions for topics that she wanted me to cover for the monthly meetings. She attended some of those meetings, as an invited guest, to answer questions on topics that the new teachers wanted her input on, such as announced observations and evaluations. She arranged for the building instructional coach to coordinate her after-school meetings with mine so that the new teachers weren't kept after school too many times.

Some principals appear to support the mentoring/induction program, even if they did not necessarily understand its details. "I think it's good to have [a mentoring program], it more formalizes things and it kind of pushes people to have to do it," said one. Another principal said, "I think it's necessary. I think it's good...because it gives the teacher the place to go if they're feeling overwhelmed or feel, 'I don't want people to think I'm stupid.' Then they have a relationship with the other person who can say, 'You're not stupid, you're just learning.'"

A number of participants felt that involvement of the school administration *should* be limited. For example, one third-year teacher said, "I didn't see [the principal's limited involvement] to be a problem. I don't think she didn't support it. I just think she had people who could provide the support. I think if there were issues or that kind of thing, she's dealt with it, but [there was] very little of that as well." Indeed, it appears that school administrative support may be contingent on the competence, trust, and involvement of the individuals serving as lead mentors and mentors. As one school liaison said, "Our principal was supportive at the start, but then gave it over completely. She became too busy, but also learned to trust me."

As a manifestation of this belief in the limited authority of the school administration in the mentoring program, the concept of a "firewall" has been asserted. The site coordinator explained, "The whole Pathwise program of induction is very, very strict about there being a firewall between mentors and building administration...Mentors are never to go to principals and say, 'You should have seen [this teacher's] lesson today.' One of the things we stress with mentors is that your only role is to support the new teacher and give them feedback." A mentor supported this, saying, "I made it clear that I was not going to report on my opinions about any new teacher to [the principal]. Any weaknesses I observed in them was kept completely confidential." This distinction is also supported by school administrators. A principal explained this view, "I always believed that it was important for a teacher, a new teacher...to have somebody they can turn to and they feel comfortable turning to, someone to have a relationship with. They're not afraid to ask questions and that sort of thing."

While the firewall concept is apparent to most program participants, new teachers who were matched with their department chairs were uncertain whether or not they were being observed for evaluative purposes. In fact, department chairs do not have an evaluative role. Since the new teachers who were matched with department heads appreciated their mentors in other ways, this issue could be alleviated through up-front communication.

### *Informal leadership*

The informal and perception-based nature of some leadership relationships brings forth a second distinction among administrative management, supervision, and leadership. As some individuals addressed the query of who leads, they often spoke about the activities of organizing, preparing, and dealing with other administrative management tasks. As one new teacher said when asked who was the leader and why, “[The] school liaison gave us all e-mails, made sure we got paperwork in...[ran] building mentor meetings...” and “...she coordinates a lot of stuff.” Yet others saw leadership as a more formalized position of authority – supervising actions, activities, and individuals. For example, one lead mentor responded, “Would [the leader] be [the site coordinator]? I’m not sure if that’s exactly what you mean [by who provides leadership]. [The site coordinator] kind of runs the program and she disseminates information to us and provides us with training opportunities, and then we train the teachers.”

Lastly, there were those for whom the leader was the individual who influenced them at a more emotional and social level, and created a clear end-state for the activities. This conceptualization is most closely aligned to effective leadership definitions from research, namely leadership as a relational process of influencing others toward a common vision. Individuals citing this as leadership most often did so in reference to the dyadic relationship that they had with the individual directly above them (such as a new teacher with mentor, mentor with lead mentor, and so forth). The charismatic personality of the perceived leader provides both influence and vision to the individual so that those in the more formal leadership positions were seen as providing administrative oversight and coordination rather than “leadership.” For example, one new teacher said, “I had a wonderful mentor who was very insightful so she knew what I needed.” Another example of influence rather than oversight came from another new teacher. “My mentor my first year kept us on track. My mentor was absolutely terrific because she was right beside me. If I ever had a question, she’d come over and help me,” she said. One new teacher even attributed his decision to remain a teacher to his mentor: “My mentor is probably the reason I’m still in the program. She went beyond what she was required to do.”

More often than not, this conceptualization of leadership was found in the new teacher-mentor relationship. The mentoring program is not designed as a pathway to leadership for teachers serving as mentors; nevertheless, mentors wield implicit influence through both their actions and their behavior as role models. Thus, the program would be well-advised to target and raise the awareness of mentors to their role, or at least their influence, as informal leaders.

### *The culture of leadership*

Given that leadership, as perceived by the followers, varies greatly from person to person and school to school, it is imperative that at least the culture of leadership be agreed upon as a shared vision. In other words, what can leaders do to allow for this considerable variability, yet still maintain the core objectives of the program? Key to the goal of

striking this balance, and echoed in many interviews, are the characteristics of flexibility and adaptability.

Flexibility and adaptability are particularly important for a larger district like Webster. Larger, more urban districts comprise a broader and more diverse constituency, more teacher and administrator turnover (thus creating the need for more mentors), higher student mobility, and a higher percentage of teachers who enter the profession through alternative means.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, a successful mentoring program in a large urbanized district must find a way to strike a balance between the organized/formalized and the flexible and reflective in order to maintain the social-emotional support that new teachers require. The Webster district is able to strike this balance; however, whether this is by chance or design is unknown. For example, where some mentor-protégé meetings followed the structure of the Pathwise book, others took on a more informal tone. As one mentor noted, “We’d kind of just sit around and chat, and that made it nice because it didn’t feel like we were in a mentor-protégé relationship. It was more colleague to colleague.” Regardless of their mentoring relationship’s tone, however, every new teacher completed the required Pathwise activities, indicating that flexibility does not affect the program’s success.

This adaptability was also seen in addressing specific populations served by the district but not specifically part of the Assessment *for* Learning curriculum. For example, a special education teacher took it upon herself to retool the curriculum to better serve new teachers like her. She explained, “We sat down and kind of brainstormed, and we wrote a proposal to [the site coordinator] ...and asked if we could spend the same amount of hours designing a program for other third-year teachers in that program. So then we spent the rest of the year ...pulling anything we could out of [the program] that fit, but catering it to [our students].”

School liaisons also help to increase the district’s flexibility and adaptability. In fact, the site coordinator cites this as a reason for developing the position:

The reason I thought it was really important to have an in-school person is every school addresses those issues differently. We used to have a full group meeting, having 100 people, talking about DSTP, but if you're a 12th grade Advanced Placement teacher, it doesn't apply to you. If you are a preschool/kindergarten teacher, it doesn't apply to you. So doing it within a school, they could target what the roles were of different people at different levels.

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<sup>4</sup> See p. 94 of Bartell, C. (2004) *Cultivating High-Quality Teaching through induction and mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, and p. 24 of *Tapping the Potential: Retaining and Developing High-Quality Teachers*. (2005) Washington, DC: The Alliance for Excellent Education.

## Context

### *Previous mentoring program*

For approximately five years before the advent of the mentoring/induction program, the Webster School District took part in DOE's previous mentoring program with a full-time release teacher as its administrator. The previous mentoring program called for "buddy" type mentors for first-year teachers as well as required attendance at three DOE-run "regional" meetings. In addition, Webster also required district-wide meetings for new teachers and mentors, as it did during the mentoring/induction program's first year. Several mentors noted that the previous program was more "relaxed," because it did not have an induction component to work through, but it was also very time-consuming and sometimes irrelevant to certain teachers.

Several people mentioned that the new program is a distinct improvement over the former one, noting the changes in structure, organization, and accountability. The site coordinator commented on improvements in equity and consistency across the state. Instead of having to write grants each year for funding, as she had to with the former program, each district receives a certain amount based on its number of new teachers, greatly improving program support at larger districts. The site coordinator also remarked that "from district to district, there was no real accountability. There was no uniformity, and once a program like Pathwise was selected, there still may be less uniformity than would be ideal, but everybody has the same expectations."

### *Program's ties to professional development activities*

Nearly everyone who spoke of Webster's alignment between its ongoing professional development and the mentoring/induction program saw the mentoring program as simply added on top of, rather than integrated with, other professional development programs. For example, the mentoring/induction program is one of many topics at the new teacher orientation, but it does not appear to be placed in the context of meeting some overall vision for new teachers. Though the program has been more isolated in the past, the district is trying to make connections between the program and other professional development, for example, by encouraging experienced teachers and administrators to learn about and implement *Assessment for Learning*.

Though few participants noted any direct connection, some indicated that the mentoring/induction program might be tied indirectly to the district's efforts with classroom behavior management or longer-term personal and professional growth. For example, one mentor said that both portions of the mentoring program and teachers' in-service days are dedicated toward setting goals and creating plans to reach those goals. Another mentor also indicated a connection between the mentoring program and the district's time spent on professional development:

There's a lot of collaboration that goes on in the mentoring program, and that is a big push right now in all districts, this collaboration, distributed leadership,



working with each other, figuring out lessons, differentiating. We'd certainly talk about how to do that in the mentoring meetings and that's something we're trained on now constantly. So I think just really there's a definite correlation there. It's modeled after exactly what the district wants all of us to do as teachers.

The possibility of utilizing the new teacher induction activities to enhance and inform veteran teachers was also considered in at least one school. A third-year teacher provides an example: "My school liaison set up something this year that we've not had before...so many people were struggling with classroom management issues that we held an open invitation to the entire staff to discuss problems they might have and also solutions. It was really good because what happened was not only did the new teachers discuss their issues, but they also had things to offer. But they could also see experienced teachers who have said, 'I still struggle with that same thing.' So they didn't feel like they were alone." Thus it appears that in perhaps a few schools, the mentoring/induction program is becoming more integrated into their cultures and overall professional development. In addition, Cycle Four, which none of the participants had yet completed, will reinforce this connection. Effective organizational leadership strives toward shared values and institutionalization of effective systems. This integrated approach is not yet a part of the Webster district, but it is moving toward that goal.

### **Purposes and goals**

In order to accomplish a program's goals, participants should be clear and consistent about exactly what they are. The mentoring/induction program's primary goals are to provide a supportive atmosphere for new teachers and to increase new teachers' skills in the classroom. According to theories behind mentoring and induction programs, teacher support and improved skills should lead in the future to both increased teacher retention and student achievement.

When asked about the program's goals, participants usually indicated that its purpose is to provide support to ease the transition into the teaching profession and improve teacher retention. A few commented on long-term professional development, such as demonstrating good teaching practices and providing new teachers with "a sense of responsibility and accountability," as noted by the site coordinator.

In particular, many participants felt the program's primary goal is to provide both technical and emotional support for new teachers. "The whole reason for the program is to help the transition into teaching and to [provide] networking and to give advice," one mentor remarked. A new teacher mentioned that the program's goal is "to bounce ideas off each other. When you have those classroom management issues that teachers always have, you've got to have someone who's been through it too to share with or vent to." Given that the new teachers had just completed Cycles One and Two, it is not surprising they focused more on the mentoring and support aspects than its student achievement and professional development goals. Some new teachers did perceive the link between support and retention. "I think that it's to make us feel that someone has invested

something in us. So it makes us feel like we should stay...they want the comfort level there so they can retain the teachers,” one said. Another echoed this, saying:

What I see [is that] they're trying to guide teachers in the transition of getting into teaching but also in retention....It seems like this is intended to keep people interacting with each other, talking about it as a profession and improving and moving forward instead of isolating yourself.

## **Mentoring**

Most new teachers are matched with their mentors by the district's first mentoring/induction meeting in early September. Mentors are chosen and matched in a variety of ways, depending on the school. In general, school liaisons and lead mentors are responsible for finding mentors and matching them. Some mentors volunteered by responding to a general request via e-mail; some were “tapped” by lead mentors or school liaisons to be matched to a new teacher in a similar grade or content area. In those cases, matching of a new teacher to a potential mentor is done prior to actual mentor selection and training. At times, principals take a more active role by asking teachers to be mentors; more often, principals appear to take a more passive role and merely approve the matches once they are completed.

Before the 2006-07 school year, when the need for mentors was intense, the district was in the position of having to accept nearly anyone who applied to be a mentor. Indeed, many school liaisons, lead mentors, and principals had to use their persuasion skills in order to ensure the district had enough mentors for all its new teachers. (If the site coordinator found evidence of poor mentoring, however, the mentor would not be paired with anyone the next year.) Most participants agreed that most important to protégé-mentor matching is grade level and subject area. Special education teachers are generally paired with other special education teachers. Specials teachers, such as music, physical education, and art, were paired with other specials teachers during the 2005-06 school year, but the site coordinator found that most specials teachers desired a mentor in their own building, even if they lost subject area compatibility. Protégés whose mentors teach outside the building have more trouble meeting and discussing classroom concerns. As a result, new teachers utilize “outside” mentors less, and mentors in that situation find it difficult to observe and meet with their protégés. One specials teacher mentioned that “I gained a lot of knowledge about how the school works and what to do and what not to do, not from my mentor because my mentor is...in a different school. So I was kind of on my own. But I learned a lot at lunch in the faculty lounge with everybody else.” Many new teachers sought other teachers who were in some way able to help them in ways that their mentors could not. Based on new teacher feedback, the site coordinator and lead mentors decided to institute a policy of pairing new teachers with in-building mentors for the 2006-07 school year. The site coordinator admitted that the balancing act is not easy: “How do you get both content and the basic mentoring [process]?” she asked.

Because or regardless of the matching process, most protégés thought they were well-matched with their mentors. They mentioned their mentors' organization, accessibility,

communication skills, and general feeling of support as their primary strengths. One new teacher, who was especially enthusiastic about her mentor, said, “She IS [our] high school!” Another teacher noted that, “She was organized. The biggest thing is [that] we communicated together...we worked together well, so I think that was great.” Most protégés felt comfortable with their mentors and spoke enthusiastically of the support they received from Webster’s mentor cadre.

Most complaints regarding mentoring involve accessibility issues. Some schools experience little turnover, while others, particularly the middle and high schools, experience a great deal more. Demand for mentors is consequently higher, and new teachers at those levels have a greater chance of being ill-matched or matched with a mentor who takes on two or more new teachers. One teacher said, “There were times that I really wanted to meet with my mentor and talk about my own personal things that I was going through...especially with behavior management, and I felt like that time was taken by another person...[My mentor] was stretched thin and did the best she could but I think they should tell mentors only to take one [protégé].” Combining Cycles One and Two into one year has alleviated the need for a great number of mentors during the 2006-07 school year; indeed, no mentor has more than one protégé.

Formal meetings between mentors and new teachers varied widely in terms of number of times they met, time they found to meet, length of meetings, and subjects of discussion. Several participants said that they met about once every two weeks, either during a planning period or after school. Most meetings appeared to be relatively short, lasting from 15 to 30 minutes, and both mentors and new teachers agreed that other classroom issues were usually discussed in addition to Pathwise activities. New teachers also appeared to value the brief, informal encounters that they usually had with their mentors almost every school day. While most teachers experienced both formal meetings and informal encounters, a few relied almost exclusively on the more informal experiences, like one who said, “It was never formal for me just because he was right across the hall. Every day after school, we would just go into each other's room. Especially last year, we would talk maybe for an hour. Sometimes I would just walk into his room and vent and ask for advice and stuff. It was never formal, but we talked almost every day.”

### **Pathwise**

In the Webster School District, new teachers and mentors tended to make a distinction between mentoring and Pathwise. Most participants did not appear to understand that the mentoring/induction program was designed in a way such that Pathwise is the instrument through which the process of mentoring is transmitted; in theory, they are supposed to complement each other. Many new teachers stated that the Pathwise book activities (as opposed to observations) had little effect on their day-to-day teaching. Several said that Pathwise is redundant, irrelevant, and/or unnecessary. Some teachers claimed that working through the Pathwise paperwork kept them from discussing other topics with their mentors. “Sometimes [Pathwise] just kind of got in the way. It made it stressful, and I would have rather have sat down and said this is what happened today and how do I fix it, but we didn't have time always to do that because we had to get through... Pathwise,”

one said. The Pathwise forms were not designed to be an additional activity but were intended to add a professional learning dimension to the mentoring process. However, it appears that at times the forms take on “a life of their own,” resulting in added stress or frustration at times.

Most new teachers appear to have met Pathwise requirements. Almost all were observed twice or more, and observed other teachers two or more times. However, two teachers admitted that they had never observed an experienced teacher, and one said she had never been observed. The site coordinator noted that the district had caught one of these instances through the use of attestation forms, which are legal documents that all new teachers and mentors sign stating that they have either received or provided the services required by the mentoring/induction program.

According to many new teachers and mentors, the greatest strengths of Pathwise are observations and non-evaluative feedback, rather than reading articles or filling out forms. One mentor spoke for others when she said, “I think the observation part is the most crucial part for them, for them to be able to go see other people. I think it's helpful to have us go see them maybe before an administrator comes just to have someone in there and see what that feels like. I think that is the key to the program.” A new teacher appreciated not only her mentor's observations, but other ones as well. “The observations were the best part of last year, and not just having my mentor come in and observe me and tell me things that she thought went well...but actually having other teachers come in and observe me was kind of nice. I liked that because it was nice to get feedback from someone else about how they thought things were going.”

While mentors generally agreed that Pathwise was burdensome for new teachers, some mentioned that it helped them to become more reflective of their own teaching habits. One mentor noted that, “When you're giving them suggestions on how to handle things, you're thinking about how you do things and it works for you...So you definitely reflect on what you're doing too.”

### **Assessment *for* Learning**

Approximately 80 new teachers completed Cycle Three, Assessment *for* Learning, during the 2005-06 school year. These teachers were hired in 2003-04, the year after the law requiring the mentoring/induction program was passed but before it was implemented. Consequently, their first year was the last year of the former mentoring program. During the first year of the program's implementation, these teachers (now in their second year) had no requirements because technically they had completed the program's first year. Once that part was up and running, Webster's site coordinator and lead mentors turned their attention to providing the Assessment *for* Learning component to these teachers, most of whom appeared to have no idea at the beginning of the year that they were required to complete the new mentoring/induction program in order to receive their continuing licenses, despite e-mails sent by the site coordinator during their second year.

New teachers met in groups of ten to 15 and sometimes broke into smaller groups after an initial meeting, depending on the team leader. The groups met five times for two hours each over the school year; the site coordinator characterized the program as “almost like a graduate course” because of the amount of reading and in-classroom work required. This is especially true for those who decided to take *Assessment for Learning* as a cluster, which requires 90 additional hours of work for a two-percent pay raise. One lead mentor agreed, noting that “the program was a struggle last year, because the material is very complicated for a second or third year teacher to take on, even with support. The assignments and readings were lengthy and leaders weren’t provided with enough structure and information about expectations, so we were all running our meetings very differently.” For the 2006-07 school year, when most of Webster’s new teachers will be moving through *Assessment for Learning*, DOE has decreased somewhat the program’s amount of work and level of difficulty. In addition, Webster has created consistent expectations that were highlighted at a district-wide meeting early in the school year. One of these expectations is that large groups break into smaller discussion groups of similar-content teachers whenever possible to help make the material more relevant.

One of the lead mentors described Cycle Three as “an excellent program....Especially in those first two years, I think it's a great piece for teachers to look at. Instead of, ‘I'll take the assessment from the back of the book or I'll use this or I'll use that,’ it really guides them step by step to do standard-based assessments.” The site coordinator noted that, “At the end of the year, when it was time for evaluating, many [of the new teachers] said, ‘I went in kicking and screaming, I was furious that I had to do this, but boy did I learn a lot.’ They really came out of it feeling like they had accomplished something.”

One criticism of the program is that, similar to Pathwise, *Assessment for Learning* does not accommodate the needs of special education and specials teachers. One special education teacher said, “I'd say this has had very little impact on me. But...I think this is excellent material. I think it's really very good for classroom teachers. The reason I like it is because the way they talk about data collection and rubrics and creating clear targets... The problem is that -- I had nonverbal kids and used picture communication, and a lot of [Assessment for Learning] was very involved. My kids would never understand this. So that's why it didn't really fit me in my classroom.” Instead, as noted earlier, she and another teacher adapted the materials to be more relevant to her situation and is now leading a group of similar teachers in *Assessment for Learning* this school year.

## **Evaluation**

Despite complaints about the number of meetings and Pathwise paperwork, most participants appreciated the program. “I really enjoyed the program, and the feedback that I received from my [protégés] is that it was helpful for them,” one mentor said. In particular, mentors enjoyed the supportive aspects of mentoring. The most highly regarded parts of the program are the non-evaluative observations and simply the provision of a mentor. A new teacher summed up her feelings about it this way: “I think that I would have been much worse off without it. It definitely helped me to make some connections with other people and helped me to have [a mentor].” Another new teacher

noted the program's smooth administration in his school. "I think it's beneficial and needed. I think [Webster's] is well run and doing [well]. Just comes at a really tough time." Brand-new teachers often lack the perspective that experienced mentors usually have about the program, which is that not having a program such as this one could result in an even more difficult first year.

From a leadership and strategic planning perspective, the Webster School District's mentoring/induction program has successfully completed the initiation stage, is working through the implementation stage, and is becoming integrated. This move toward integration can be seen in the district's continuing flexibility and responsiveness to its mentors and new teachers. The extent to which the mentoring/induction program succeeds at the Webster School District rests upon its organization and structure. The program is not integrated into the district's culture well, partly because the district does not have a cohesive culture. Moreover, it receives uneven support from school and district administrators. Larger, more diverse school districts have greater difficulty creating the conditions under which programs can be completely integrated. Consequently, the program's success at Webster rests on the site coordinator to provide consistency and support for other program participants. In addition, its dedicated cadre of lead mentors and other leaders lend knowledge and enthusiasm for the program to busy mentors and new teachers, and the establishment of personnel at each building has greatly helped new teachers ease the transition into teaching. Integration of the mentoring/induction program into both individual schools and the district as a whole will require a focused effort to enhance awareness among principals and administrators so that the program becomes an integral facet of how decisions regarding new teachers are considered and made.

Few people we spoke with had concerns about barriers for successful program implementation. One principal discussed having to make choices regarding whether new teachers would attend a monthly faculty meeting or a mentoring meeting run by the school liaison. She told us that the teachers' collective bargaining agreement only allows for two hours per month of required after-school meetings, which would not allow new teachers to attend both meetings. Another barrier, matching more than one protégé with each mentor, has already been eliminated. Finally the barrier of finding enough time to provide the kind of high-quality training for mentors that the literature suggests requires additional resources and remains to be addressed.

### *Participant suggestions*

While several participants offered suggestions for program improvement, little consensus on those suggestions emerged. "It's better than what we had, but not as good as it could be," noted one mentor. Mentors generally agree that mentor training should be improved to lessen uncertainty about Pathwise. Mentors appeared to appreciate trainings in which checklists for working through Pathwise and its events were handed out. Some teachers supported reducing Pathwise paperwork requirements and increasing opportunities for observation. These concerns have been heard and are being addressed at both the state and district levels.

## Franklin School District

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The Franklin School District serves students whose families come from a small working-class town within a rural environment in Delaware. Enrolling just over 3,000 students, the district strongly values its community connectedness. While striving to improve student achievement, its mission is very reflective of and responsive to the community; school leaders want their students to become responsible individuals who see the value of contributing to society. The district's leadership roots run deep as evidenced by its stability. Many of the teachers are former students of the Franklin district. Pride in their schools and their community is a common characteristic among educators within the Franklin District. However, the district has experienced a good deal of teacher turnover at the middle school and high school levels; during the 2005-06 school year, more than half of the middle schools' teachers were involved in the mentoring/induction program.

The Franklin district reflects its diverse community. More than half of its students come from low-income families and about 40 percent are racial minorities. Residential development in surrounding communities is beginning to affect this area as well; however, much of the growth targets retirees and may not contribute to the school district's short or long-term expansion. Its schools vary in their level of academic accomplishment, mirroring the state. Franklin's elementary schools have been rated as "superior" or "commendable", while its secondary schools are rated less satisfactorily. Despite these ratings, pride within these secondary schools exists as evidenced in their display of blue-ribbon awards and honors bestowed on them from past Delaware governors and national organizations.

### Leadership

Franklin is the only district in the study where the site coordinator has no leadership role *per se*. Instead, it is clear that the two lead mentors are in charge of mentoring/induction program. The site coordinator, who handles the administrative duties associated with the program, said during an initial phone conversation, "the lead mentors *are* the program." New teachers, mentors, principals, and the site coordinator agree about the prominent roles of the lead mentors in the program's overall management and implementation. A new teacher noted, "[The lead mentors] are pretty much running the show."

The lead mentors take on this role by serving as the primary facilitators of mentoring and induction-related professional development within the district; serving as the central source of information regarding the program; being regularly involved in DOE-provided training; and taking responsibility for resolving problems that surface related to day-to-day implementation. "They definitely are the ones saying, 'here's the schedule, here's what you need to get done,'" said a new teacher. A mentor noted, "They're the ones that I really went to for any problems that I might have as far as helping [my protégé]." Several participants also agreed that the lead mentors were very helpful with arranging substitutes to release them for observations.

The Franklin lead mentors bring an interesting set of skills to the position. Though both of them teach in the secondary school, they have backgrounds that distinguish them from most teachers within the district. It is obvious that they are very oriented to managing programs. They have unique backgrounds in teaching and running their own school, and one had significant business background. “We were...in administration for several years and went back into education. So I think we wear a different hat because we like to...do this stuff and have the added responsibility,” said one.

The lead mentors appear committed to the importance of quality training and professional development. They described the professional development provided by DOE as “top-notch and very valuable. It has basically helped to put Delaware on the map as far as the mentoring business.” They bring their business orientation and experience to their roles as lead mentors. They appreciate the importance of the DOE’s investment in early preparation. They also recognize that what they are promoting may be a step beyond the district’s current comfort level. One lead mentor said, “If [districts] really look at the end and keep the end in mind, it's going to come back and they'll gain more from the [mentoring and induction] process.”

From the participants’ perspectives, district and school administrators are seen as supportive of the new teacher mentoring/induction program but not involved in it. One mentor expressed the opinion of many regarding the administration: “...everybody is accommodating to what you have to do. They know you need time to leave your class and observe your protégés....I feel supported because it is a requirement.” Some participants, while not critical of administrators’ lack of involvement, simply imply that the program is outside their range of responsibility. Mentors and new teachers commented that they have little interaction with the administration and that they rarely talk with principals about mentoring or induction.

It is also clear from the principal and district administrator interviews that they are unfamiliar with the details of the program. One principal said, “I don't have a lot of hands-on experience with it, to be very honest.” There also appears to be some confusion about who is actually responsible for new teacher mentoring. One principal portrayed the lead mentors as “mentoring our non-veteran teachers who have taught in our district for less than three years. They've been doing a phenomenal job!” In fact, the lead mentors do not engage in direct mentoring except when necessary. The lead mentors described the challenge they faced as they attempt to engage the school administrators. They characterized it as “a learning curve with our principals because [they] are still thinking mentoring and orientation and the buddy program.” The Franklin lead mentors have tentatively pinned their hopes on engaging the principals in the mentoring/induction program through their future potential involvement in the upcoming induction program for administrators. One of them said, “Once the administrators actually are either mentoring someone or participating, they're going to truly understand—I think.”

A challenge that the lead mentors face as they attempt to guide the program is that, at times, they are caught in what could be described as a middle management dilemma. In other words, while they have the capacity to affect change within the program itself, the



decision-making of those at higher levels does not appear to be responsive to or aware of the program's mission. This dilemma came to light during the interviews with Franklin's principals and some of the program's participants. One principal shared concerns about the district's waning capacity to commit time to professional development for its teachers. One teacher said, "Our district is taking away time...it has limited its time commitment to professional development during the 2006-07 academic year to one in-service day, the day required by the state." A principal shared that the shortened calendar was influenced by parental concerns and construction:

Partially because we're starting school later next year because of construction... So we're opening after Labor Day. So in an effort to have some of those days -- now, I don't think they're going to go back even the next year....The parents really wanted to start after Labor Day and wanted less time off during the year.

In response to what was viewed as an unmet need for more time for new teachers, one principal had written a grant "to be able to have a summer institute with my new teachers so they can get a few more days of in-service at the beginning of the year, above and beyond everybody else in the district." However, this effort was not connected to the mentoring/induction program. In lieu of collaborating with the lead mentors to integrate the program into this grant, the administrator was trying to develop something else that would address the pressing issue of "hav[ing] so many new teachers coming in."

Even though the program's leadership appears strong, the challenge of marginal administration interest undermines its integration into the district's professional development efforts. This reflects a need for more active involvement of the school and district leaders in the program, beyond "allowing it to happen" so that new teachers can meet the state's licensure requirements.

## **Context**

Like the other districts, Franklin participated in the former new teacher mentoring program where "mentors were buddies and cheerleaders." Mentors who also participated in that program characterized it as having many after-school meetings all around the state that had little relevance to the Franklin District and its individual issues. "Now it's more one-on-one," noted one mentor. When the current program began, the lead mentors actively sought to create a different mind-set about it with the mentors, since all mentors would be trained and expected to be more than just a "buddy." As one lead mentor stated, "I think that was the biggest transition and probably for the better for the program because it filtered out the people who...weren't committed and weren't really as active as they should have been."

As district commitment to professional development time for teachers diminishes, district-supported orientation for new teachers could be described as one day of "procedural stuff," during which the lead mentors introduce the mentoring/induction program. A first-year teacher reflected on the district's orientation and described it as follows: "We do have a new teacher orientation. It's just one day at the beginning of the

year where we came in. We sat down with the administration. They walked us through all the procedural stuff.” Another described the nature of orientation as a time when “they have the new teachers come a couple days early, and they go through all their paperwork and talk about what’s going on and how the schedule works and everything.” From the perspective of a veteran teacher who serves as a mentor, the district’s focus on supporting the new teacher has changed over time. “Years ago I think we did more than what we’re doing now for the needs of the new teacher. I can remember we would have faculty meetings and in-service days and we would actually bring speakers in to talk about behavior, approaches to the classroom behavior, and things like that. I don’t feel like we do that anymore,” he said.

Most participants agreed that the district’s professional development activities are disconnected from those of the mentoring/induction program. The only professional development of a sort that some participants mentioned was the after-school meetings held by the lead mentors for new teachers and mentors during the program’s first year.

### **Purpose and goals**

Teachers’ ideas regarding the purposes and goals of the mentoring/induction program center around three basic issues: (1) They see it as a vehicle to support new teachers as they acclimate themselves to this profession; (2) They hope that the program will contribute to keeping teachers in the field and in their district; and (3) They believe it is a means to hold new teachers accountable to common standards.

Recognizing the pressures felt by new teachers, Franklin participants most frequently refer to support as the program’s goal. They believe that it is designed as a “way to help people who aren’t as outgoing to get the help they need and support they need,” said one new teacher. Some see the program (due to its requirements for matching veterans with new teachers) as a way of providing “structured support” instead of the “sink-or-swim” model that has characterized entry into the teaching field in the past. They believe that the program eases the new teacher’s transition into the school culture, regardless of their individual resourcefulness. One teacher said, “I think that they’re really trying to make it easier for a new teacher to find the help that they need, get the support, because if you’re the type of personality where you don’t want to go out and bug anyone or anything like that, it gives you the opportunity.”

Turnover is a common concern among those interviewed. One principal noted that “I have twelve more new [teachers] coming in this year.” These educators expressed the desire for the program to help keep teachers in Franklin. “Hopefully, we’re trying to help the new teachers also stay in the district and want to teach here,” one said. One Franklin administrator anticipated the program’s ability “to be able to provide teachers with the support they need at the beginning of their career to stay in the game.” Mentors also contemplate their efforts would “make new teachers feel comfortable... make them successful, and...make them stay in teaching,” one said.

Many of the responses of both new teachers and mentors indicate they see the program as providing quality assurances. Instead of relying solely on the fact that the individuals had graduated from a college with a teaching degree, this program provides a common standard. One mentor said, “you get a degree from college, and you don't necessarily know the courses. It's at least some kind of a standard.” Others concur with this thinking but also indicate their awareness of the relationship of the program to licensing. That is, teachers who have successfully completed the program would show evidence of meeting a certain standard of instructional performance and consequently achieve continued licensure. The new teachers are very aware of the importance of completion of the program; all had said that the lead mentors clearly communicate this requirement to them. “It seems like [DOE's] safe way of saying now we at least know that they've gone through these components,” said one.

## **Mentoring**

The adoption of the current program adds a significant dimension focused on pedagogy and mentoring as a component of the induction process, rather than mentoring alone. The lead mentors clearly stated that there was a “switch from mentoring to induction.” Yet it appears that the “switch” has not fully occurred at Franklin with some mentor-protégé pairs. A few mentors, who had mentored during the previous program, seemed nearly unaware of Pathwise and focused almost entirely on developing a mentor-protégé relationship. Other pairs, because they were in separate schools, used the rare time they spent together to discuss topics of greatest concern to protégés whether or not they were related to their work in Pathwise. These protégés often worked through Pathwise events on their own or asked team members in their school's content area for help.

At the elementary school level, participants see mentoring as a professional responsibility that they have toward one another and tend to view mentoring as more important. It is not seen as a program but rather as a cultural value. The program (in other words, Pathwise) is the “box”; mentoring is the way things are done. At the elementary level, where there is less teacher turnover, almost everything is done collaboratively, including curriculum planning, child study, professional development, and instruction. One elementary school mentor said, “In general, the teachers here are just very easygoing....Anybody will help you.” Another veteran teacher who is serving as a mentor said, “we would have done this anyway for our new teachers.”

This scenario speaks to the importance of context. It is obvious that much of what already exists in the elementary school environment is conducive to supporting new teachers. The “sink-or-swim” model does not find a home there as it does in the secondary schools. In the words of one high school mentor: “I would say that's one of the things that's stayed the same in education for the last three years. You're going to sink or swim.”

At the Franklin district during the 2005-06 school year, 22 mentors were matched with approximately the same number of new teachers. Issues surrounding mentoring and induction surfaced regarding the main components of the overall program: mentor selection, matching, and training.

Prior to the 2005-06 school year, the mentor selection process was each principal's responsibility. As of the 2005-06, school year the lead mentors, in collaboration with the district site coordinator, select mentors. They clearly expressed that their primary criterion for selecting mentors is instructional quality: "You pick good teachers with solid backgrounds in education to go in there and work through this induction program... this mentor for the induction program really has to be an outstanding teacher."

The mentor selection process varies depending on where mentors are needed and how many volunteer. Some mentors did volunteer for the position; as one said, "I said if you need anybody to do it, and then they called me and asked if I would do it, and I said 'yes.'" Other mentors said they were approached to participate: "I just got a phone call asking if I wanted to do it." The lead mentors indicated that while they seek volunteers, they also actively seek out quality teachers who have "good classroom rapport" and have been involved in staff development activities. Franklin's lead mentors think that the best mentors are the best teachers, that is, those who are quality instructors and are committed to the development of their own professional expertise.

Regardless of other potentially important matching criteria, Franklin's lead mentors feel that "we really needed to pick good, solid teachers". Their views do not necessarily align with the more pragmatic notions held by many of the teachers and mentors, who consistently said matching new teachers and mentors within the same building is highly important to ensure their capacity to fully participate in the program. The issue of protégés and mentors being within the same building seemed to be of particular importance to the middle and high school participants because of the high rate of teacher turnover and corresponding demand for mentors. In fact, three middle school teachers had to be paired with mentors who teach at the high school. One mentor noted that mentors in the same school can "interpret for our protégés not just good pedagogical methods. We're also interpreting how you do things here in this district, how this principal sees things, and what your observation is going to be about from the person who's doing it at your school. If you're at two different schools, it's apples and oranges." A new teacher spoke of the difficulties of not having an in-building mentor: "[My mentor] is not in my school. So that made it a little bit challenging as far as meeting with her. If I had a question about how [my] school does things versus how [the other] school does things, then we had some trouble trying to find answers."

At the elementary school, all mentors and protégés are assigned to the same building. For them, grade level matching appears most important. "I'm fortunate to have my mentor in the same grade level. So that works. We have daily communication even with all the teachers. We work as a team. We collaborate and share ideas," commented one new teacher. A mentor echoed this, saying, "I was able to meet with [my protégé] a lot more. We were right there at field trips, anytime that we got a chance to talk. So that was helpful being in the same grade level."

Regardless of the mentors' and protégés' locations, most appeared to feel that they were well matched. One new teacher who teaches special education and has a special

education mentor said, “She would sit down and work with me about it, even do a model lesson for me, things like that...I think she had a lot of knowledge in that area. And she was easygoing. So that helps.” A mentor noted, “I’m lucky. [My protégé] is right beside me and he teaches the same grade level and the same subject.” In fact, participants’ only complaint about matching came about if they were not in the same building. “I think [my mentor] is a great match,” said one new teacher, “[but she] is not in my school. So that made it a little bit challenging as far as meeting with her. If I had a question about how my school does things versus how [her] school does things, then we had some trouble trying to find answers.”

Given that Franklin allows two years to complete Cycle One, many mentor-protégé pairs meet formally five or six times throughout their first year and primarily on an informal basis the second year. One new teacher said that she meets with her mentor “maybe half a dozen times. It wasn’t specifically once every week or once a month. It was just kind of when I needed help, I went to her, or when she found out something new, she would come to me...But we talk often. She was right there if I needed anything or if I had any trouble.” Participants whose mentors or new teachers were located outside of their school recall spending much of their time together discussing immediate issues such as classroom management while allowing new teachers to work through Pathwise events on their own or via e-mail. One mentor stated, “It’s like, what does [my protégé] need right now? What do we need to be talking about at this session? We do that and then we move on.”

Several mentors said that they benefited from the mentoring/induction program as well. “I think that’s important because there are always times or always things that I can do to improve, and [my protégé] has brought that out. She wouldn’t know that...but because of the relationship we’ve had, even though it hasn’t been all the time, [it] has brought things out to me that I think have been beneficial too,” said one. Another added, “It gives you new ideas, kind of the current things because they’re just out of college, a lot of them. So you can see different perspectives on issues.”

Mentor training changed from the program’s first to second years. During the 2004-05 school year, regular after-school, evening, and weekend “training” meetings were held. During the 2005-06 school year, mentor training was adapted so that the majority of communication was conducted by e-mail. The training model changed from a very structured model to one that is much more individualized. Several mentors feel that the quality of the training suffered; they prefer the organized structure of the regular meetings and believe that the structure helps them in better understanding the program. “The first year it seemed to be a little more organized...I think because the meetings were planned at a certain time, it did make us go there and understand what the program was about,” said one mentor. She continued, “This year I don’t think we were clearly informed about how we were supposed to go about it. We didn’t receive any information at the beginning, and we did have to track down [the lead mentors] and say, what are we required to do this year, how do we go about doing it, what’s the time frame. And we weren’t clear at the end of the year what had to be completed.”

The lead mentors are aware of the benefits and trade-offs of each of these two modes of implementation. Consequently, their intent next year is to move toward a balance between both models. The lead mentors appeared to realize that most participants desired these opportunities to get together and “touch base,” and were planning on adding some back for the 2006-07 school year. “We’re going to meet with them more regularly than we did this year because we felt like there were just more questions that came up during the year than were normal,” said one.

However, some teachers felt their experience in the classroom surpasses any training they received. “Actually I think it was just more from experience and just being honest with [my protégé]. I don’t know about the training part of it, that it helped me at all,” noted one mentor. Another agreed, saying, “I had training from [the lead mentors], but I think my experience is really the backbone.”

### **Pathwise**

As in other districts and charter schools, Cycle One, or the Pathwise program, has changed from year to year. In Franklin, one of the more significant changes that some participants took advantage of was online access to Pathwise forms. While all districts could take part in this option, Franklin participants were the only ones who mentioned it. Some teachers indicated appreciation regarding the flexibility that the online format allows. “I loved it online because I was able to work at my own pace,” said one new teacher. “I liked being able to go on and print off all of the things....My desk is a mess, so if I lost a paper, then you can go right back online and print it out again. So that made it a lot easier for me,” said another.

Of all the topics explored through the interviews, questions about Cycle One generated the most feedback from Franklin educators. Some see Pathwise as aiding the new teachers’ development. “I think part of it is really good for [new teachers] because they get a chance to break things down as far as what they’re doing in the classroom,” said one mentor. Another saw the Pathwise as a means by which to structure the mentoring relationship: “It definitely did at least give you those good conversation starters. So...if you knew you’re working on classroom management, it kind of gave you that topic of what to talk about.” A new teacher appreciated the reflection is required: “I really like reflecting on where you are and what you can improve on.”

However, these comments reflect the minority opinion. The majority of mentors, most of whom were trained during the program’s first year before Pathwise was streamlined from ten events to seven, were critical about its value for their new teachers. “I thought it required a lot of paperwork from the new teacher. I think the time could have been spent maybe more with observations of their mentors instead of them being somewhere in those boxes filling out all that paperwork,” one mentor explained. Another echoed that sentiment: “I was looking through that book last year, and I [thought], good grief, this is a lot of stuff to fill out. So for a new teacher, sometimes it’s a little overwhelming because they’re already kind of feeling overwhelmed by the end of September anyway.”

The new teachers have mixed reviews of their experiences with Pathwise materials. Those who had received their teacher preparation from Delaware universities, specifically, Wilmington College and the Alternative Routes to Certification program at the University of Delaware, shared views of going through the program again. One new teacher, for example, thought the repetition was beneficial:

I think it helped me more because I went through it before. I think coming into it, not really knowing the system, it would have been overwhelming to me because it was overwhelming when I started it in college. At first, you're not really sure why you're doing it, but then when you start to see the changes over time.

Others were more critical of the need to repeat the work. One new teacher said, "I think a lot of the problem is [that] I was taking Alternative Routes classes and it was such overkill, overload, overlap."

In addition, some of the new teachers who teach in other than core subject areas (for example, special education, technology, and music) believe that the events and related written assignments do not relate to their instructional areas. "A lot of the events...didn't pertain to the type of activities that I would do," said one special education teacher. Another agreed, saying, "That's a big thing because with some of the events I struggled to find student work that exactly met the requirements of what they were looking for because I don't teach a math class where I have that same kind of example."

In almost all cases, the time mentors spend observing classrooms and the collaboration that evolves from this is seen as a very beneficial component of the program. "I think it's actually better feedback than anything I got from my principal," said one new teacher. Pathwise requires new teachers to observe veteran teachers at least twice. Most mentors and new teachers said that they observed each other at least once, but some mentors noted that their protégés did not observe them. In a few cases, new teachers whose mentors were in different schools observed experienced teachers in their own school. Some participants expressed a desire to have more opportunities for observations, including more time for the new teachers to observe their mentors' or other experienced teachers' classrooms. "I observed [my protégé] and I [gave] her my perspective on it. I think it would have been better if she could observe me and see how I may or may not have handled it, and we could have some discussions back and forth," one mentor noted.

Some mentors choose not to take advantage of the release time provided by the program since it involves getting substitute coverage for their classes. Many see using substitutes as an ineffective solution to the problem of not having enough time to fully devote to the mentoring/induction program. Because of the added complications of having substitutes in their classrooms (such as additional planning and subsequent re-teaching), they work observations and other time with their new teachers into their schedules. "[We meet] after school and we just kind of have to hit and miss because of my schedule and her schedule," said one mentor.

Although the observation portion of Pathwise is designed to be non-evaluative, some mentors believe they are in an evaluative position and feel uncomfortable about it. Being in the role of evaluating their peers is not one most teachers embrace. “You’re kind of put into the position of telling them what they’re doing wrong. It’s hard sometimes to do,” said one mentor.

### **Assessment *for* Learning**

Twelve new teachers in their third year of teaching worked through Cycle Three, or Assessment *for* Learning, during the 2005-06 school year. The two small learning teams were divided by teaching level so that elementary school teachers and secondary school teachers met with each other. According to the lead mentors, two new teachers used the materials from Cycle Three to complete their master’s degrees at the same time. They also reported that one of the departments in the high school asked them to working through Assessment *for* Learning, presumably as a cluster.

### **Evaluation**

New teachers seem to differentiate between relationship-building activities and “paperwork.” As one new teacher noted, “It would have been nice to not have so much focus on the paperwork and instead have focus on actually getting to know each other.” Another agreed with this sentiment, saying, “But for me what was helpful is the more informal times with my mentor, not the filling out the paperwork and answering the set questions.” Most of the participants see greater value in the mentoring aspect of the program than in the induction component. Considering that many mentors and principals deem support for new teachers to be the program’s key goal, it is not surprising that relationship building held sway. Teachers spoke highly of the mentoring process: “[My mentor] was always there to answer any questions I had. Even when it wasn’t regarding the [Pathwise events], it just really gave me a chance to talk to her about other things that were going on in the school,” said one new teacher.

Consequently, even though the current program does not directly emphasize the relationship between the mentor and new teacher the way it did in the past, many teachers find other ways to address this need. Some develop personal connections through other arenas, such as coaching football or cheerleading together. Another mentor connects with her new teacher despite teaching in separate buildings. The mentor talks about how her new teacher is “also the teacher of my niece, and I got to talk to her in terms of open house and things like that. I’ve seen her at some of the games that my niece attends. So I got to talk to her at that time too.” Another mentor commented, “We probably spent more time out of this building together than we could right here except for my observations with him.”

### ***Participant suggestions***

Franklin educators offered many thoughts about the program and how it can improve. A common recommendation is to streamline and subsequently lessen the paperwork



associated with Cycles One and Two. Mentors allude to and new teachers speak more directly about the amount of paperwork and repetition within the Pathwise part of the program. “It’s a cumbersome tool,” said one new teacher. “If you take the time to actually write down the answers to all of the different things that you’re supposed to be thinking about, it takes forever.”

There were several suggestions about the need to adapt the Pathwise materials to more appropriately address different classrooms and different levels of instruction. These suggestions came from new teachers and mentors who felt the requirements should be adapted for teachers who had already completed the program in some other setting. One mentor suggested that the program should be “different [for] middle school because teaching elementary is a lot different than teaching middle school. It’s a lot different than teaching high school.” A new teacher noted that it would have helped her for the mentoring/induction program to collaborate on some level with the Alternative Routes to Certification program. As noted in the introduction, DOE is working to adapt Cycles One and Two to reflect the concerns regarding special education classes.

Almost all of the program participants see matches made between teachers in the same building as a critical criterion for successful mentoring. While some extraordinary teachers may be willing or able to work with new teachers in other schools, their commitment does not compensate for what could be lost to the new teacher.

The transition over the past two years from structured group meeting times to more independent, online communication has left some mentors and new teachers wanting something in between. They recognize the constraints upon their time but also see a need for more structured interactions. Several mentors and new teachers suggested the need to have more structured time together to foster collegiality and to build professional relationships. They also said that more scheduled time together would strengthen the training experience and enable them to more effectively complete some of the assigned tasks. “Yes, it’s time-consuming, but I think that contact has to be there for discussion among the bunch of us, not just one or two of us,” said one mentor. A new teacher followed up:

I think there should be more of the relationship going on. I think we should have certain meetings and maybe not just meet with our mentor, but maybe meet with all of the mentors together and all of the people who are in the mentoring program for their first three years maybe at an in-service day or after school sometime just to get everybody in there together and kind of bang thoughts around.

Several suggestions pertain to the value of increasing time spent observing instruction. Some see value in having the mentor and new teacher observe each other’s classrooms. Some think that the observations should include classrooms of other quality instructors, both within and outside the building and district. (It appears that several participants did not understand that observations of several experienced teachers are encouraged in the first two cycles.) “I think that there are a lot of different aspects of teaching and a lot of people teach in a lot of different ways. I think that one thing that they could do is expand

the time that the teachers are observing others and not just one person,” suggested one new teacher. A mentor expanded upon this idea, saying, “Just give [new teachers] some good, seasoned veteran teachers or maybe even some younger teachers that were very successful with teaching to try...some things that they've seen from other people....The state could even select teachers and let people go out to observe other teachers. Or maybe go through the buildings and get the Teachers of the Year for their districts.”

## **Riverdale School District**

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The Riverdale School District is a relatively small district located in a rural part of Delaware where the student population is becoming increasingly diverse. Riverdale has a stable administration and consistently high state academic rankings. One of the reasons given for the high ratings is the district's emphasis on professional development. Administrators and teachers regard the district as forward-thinking and heavily involved in faculty professional development. "They're always offering opportunities," one mentor commented, "They're always trying to do something different, or to offer something new. Anytime that some kind of professional development thing comes, it just makes its way through e-mails to everyone." The district also hires new teachers earlier than most Delaware districts in an attempt to recruit the best teachers and provide its new employees with ample time to plan and prepare for upcoming school year.

From the start of the Delaware New Teacher Mentoring and Induction Program in the 2004-05 school year, Riverdale's administration decided that Cycles One and Two of the program (which encompass the Pathwise portion of the program) would take place during the new teachers' first year. Cycle Three, *Assessment for Learning*, occurs during the second year, and the professional growth plan component (Cycle Four) takes place during the new teacher's final year in the program. Because Riverdale began the program this way, its program participants experienced less change than those in several other districts. The only change that occurred was the streamlining of Pathwise activities that all sites experienced. Riverdale holds mentors and protégés accountable for meeting and working through the induction activities by collecting paperwork simply for verification purposes. These forms are then returned to the new teachers by the end of the school year. The site coordinator noted that changes to Pathwise between the program's first and second years greatly reduced paperwork requirements.

The site coordinator position is divided between two people—one who handles most of the paperwork and day-to-day questions and issues and an employee from human relations who handles payment issues and other administrative duties. Six lead mentors oversee the mentors and divide their duties so that two lead mentors oversee each year of the three-year program. During the 2005-06 school year, Riverdale recruited 16 mentors for its 22 first-year teachers.

### **Leadership**

Most new teachers identify the district's site coordinator/lead mentor as the leader of Riverdale's mentoring/induction program. This person shares the role of first-year, or Pathwise, coordinator, with another lead mentor. Mentors tend to identify these two people as their leaders, since they conduct mentor training and have the most knowledge about Pathwise. Most teachers who mention the site coordinator note that she can answer any questions they have: "If I need anything in reference to mentoring ...if [my mentor] can't find the answer for me, I can [always] go to her," said one teacher. Mentors mention the site coordinator's timeline for event completion and her accessibility for

resolving various issues. For example, a regular teacher mentored a specials teacher who split her time between two schools and received extra support in helping the new teacher with the issues she faced.

Lead mentors also identified an administrator who coordinated the program until the 2004-05 school year. More importantly to them, however, was the point that they act as a team, along with the former coordinator, when appropriate. The administrator echoed the team concept, saying:

There's a lot of good ideas out there for the mentoring program that come from the lead mentors. I mean, they see things, and do things, so, it's collaborative.... We're in a small district. [Everybody knows] everybody here on a first name basis. So it's not any problem getting people together and talking.

Riverdale is a cohesive district where everyone, including the superintendent and the principals, has some awareness of the mentoring/induction program. Some new teachers and lead mentors mentioned that principals and other members of upper administration attend the end-of-the-year colloquium for first-year teachers. Others noted that several administrators took part in training for Assessment *for* Learning, which would increase their awareness of Cycle Three.

Participants confirmed that their principals seemed both aware and supportive of the mentoring/induction program. One new teacher confirmed that his principal is "very supportive. Even the administrators. The principals. Assistant principals. I mean, if my mentor needs to be in my room, they do try and make any arrangements to make it as easy [as possible] for both of us." A lead mentor hypothesized that principals support the program because "I think they're also sometimes a little relieved that they know that their first year teachers are being taken care of. So they don't necessarily have to follow up on them all the time. There is somebody who's there to catch the [new teachers] if they fall.... I guess we're a second set of eyes."

## **Context**

Before the introduction of the mentoring/induction program, Riverdale followed the previous state-supported mentoring program. Protégés were assigned untrained mentors and attended 30 hours of one-on-one or group meetings throughout their first year. Lead mentors shared responsibilities for coordinating mentors and finding speakers for the group meetings. One lead mentor notes that the new mentoring/induction program has increased her responsibilities and deepened her understanding of new teachers:

It was, in some ways we were almost like party coordinators. And it wasn't as...professional. It was sort of touchy-feely. Which has a place, but I'm much more aware of what is going on with the people under my purview. I'm more aware of how the teachers are doing. And I think that's better.... And that's been one of the largest changes...it's really a job now.

A long-time mentor found a profound difference between the two programs in their structures and areas of focus and thinks the new program is better:

We weren't there to actually observe lessons. We weren't there to help [new teachers] develop their plans, or come up with a growth plan. So I think it's changed a lot. The meetings before seemed to be just kind of random, [something] that they had to do. And now...we look at the whole classroom, and look at a lesson that they're teaching. It was never that structured. So I definitely approved.

### *Program's ties to professional development activities*

New teacher orientation takes place over two days before school begins, and a portion of one of those days is devoted to the mentoring/induction program. New teachers meet their mentors, the site coordinator outlines the program's requirements, and Pathwise materials are distributed. Everyone agreed that the program and the district's educational philosophy fit together well. The district focuses a great deal on professional development, so district administrators see the instructional portions of the program as helping to mold new teachers into professionals. One lead mentor remembered that Riverdale's superintendent discussed how the district is data driven and is always looking for ways to be reflective and improve in his remarks at the beginning of the school year:

Every teacher in the room needed to be a reflective practitioner...It was nice for [teachers] to hear not only did he expect that from the new teachers, he expected from every teacher in that room [that] you'd better be looking at your data, you'd better be reflecting daily on what you're doing in your classroom. So [the mentoring program] aligns perfectly with Riverdale.

A mentor agreed, saying:

I think the program fits the district well because there's high expectations for the [new teachers] this first year and then the next year it gets a little bit less...as to what they're required to do. But I think letting them know from the start that, 'Hey, we have high expectations, and you need to meet them in order to maintain your license in the state.' And that's what we are going for here in the district.

Another way that the mentoring/induction program fits well into Riverdale is through its second-year focus, *Assessment for Learning*. Not only do all second-year teachers learn the program, but all teachers in the district are strongly encouraged to learn it as an enrichment cluster (DOE-approved classes or activities offered to public school educators that result in small pay increases upon completion). One lead mentor commented that:

In Riverdale...we had a large push for *Assessment for Learning*. That has been a district initiative. And so [the mentoring/induction program has] really gone right into it. And I think the [new] teachers...are going to be ahead of the curve. Because they're used to it. And we have a lot of experienced teachers who

haven't really bought into it yet, and don't really understand that this isn't going away. So it's worked very well.

## **Purposes and goals**

Riverdale teachers and administrators generally agree that the program's goals are to provide a mentor to support teachers through their first year, create reflective practitioners, and develop teachers into better professionals.

Several educators mentioned the supportive aspects of mentoring as a program goal. A new teacher describes it as a way "to get new teachers to feel comfortable in the district, to get to know the district." She mentioned that her mentor introduced her to people in the school, emphasized the district's expectations, and helped her secure materials when needed. "They're almost like your voice in the beginning. So I think the goal is basically to make the new teachers have an easy transition into the district," she concluded. A mentor described the program as:

Teachers with experience helping first-year teachers make it through a school year. Because you think that you know a lot, and then you go in and you find out that you don't. So I guess I would just explain it as teachers with some experience guiding teachers with little to no experience through the school year. Hopefully making it a little less painful.

Given the district's emphasis on creating "reflective practitioners" and focus on reflection within the Pathwise program, it is not surprising that several participants mentioned producing "reflective practitioners" as a goal. One lead mentor said emphatically that the program's purpose is "to make a reflective practitioner. That is pretty much the whole goal." A teacher said, "I think the mentoring program is trying to make you reflective on your own teaching strategies. And help you determine what areas you need to grow. And maybe perhaps creating a plan...if there was a problem, then work on that plan."

Other educators thought the program's goal is to improve teacher quality. "I think that their goal is for us to be more effective teachers within the classroom...to give us the extra things that we need to improve within ourselves to make better teachers for our students," one teacher said. One lead mentor encapsulates this thought when she said that one of the program's goals is "about building a professional...about growing teachers. Nurturing people into being professionals. Not just somebody who comes in at 7:30 a.m. and leaves at 2:30 p.m....It's about being a professional. About being a good teacher. Not just somebody who's in there to do 20 years, or 25 years."

## **Mentoring**

Mentors are chosen and matched to protégés by the former coordinator and the lead mentor team over the summer. Since the former coordinator is responsible for hiring decisions, he speaks to every new teacher and has information that can help the lead mentors choose the most appropriate mentors. In April, the site coordinator sends out e-

mails to all the teachers explaining the mentoring/induction program and asking for anyone who would like to be trained as a mentor. Providing training ahead of the matching ensures that: (1) Riverdale has as relatively large cadre of trained mentors from which to choose for the incoming protégés, thus possibly providing for better matches, and ideally, (2) the district may have extra mentors during the school year for teachers who are hired after the September 30 pupil count or to help extended-leave substitutes who need a “buddy” type of mentor. The mentors said that their mentor training is sufficient. One mentor said, “I thought the training was excellent. It was very thorough. There were no unknowns.” In some cases where the need for mentors is traditionally great, such as in the high school, recruiters approach teachers personally to serve as mentors. Early recruitment is part of the planning that buffers against shortages.

Several criteria are used to create the most appropriate mentor-protégé matches. They include physical and grade-level proximity of protégés to mentors and in some cases, profile matching. In all grades, building proximity is key. For example, the district matches specialized instruction protégés with colleagues who work in the building to allow for quick access. These protégés take advantage of the proximity for daily consultations, and their mentors find it allows them to monitor their protégé’s progress with Pathwise assignments. Because protégés who teach specials may not be paired with mentors who teach the same content, they are also given the names of other specials teachers in the district to whom they can turn for content-related questions. Elementary grade teachers are generally matched with someone close to, but not at, their grade level, because grade-level teachers tend to become close anyway. Furthermore, since each grade level tends to have the same planning time, it is easier for mentors of different grades to schedule observation times. In the upper grades, the team tries to match mentors and protégés who teach the same subject. Regardless of grade, coordinators try to match special education protégés with special education mentors, if possible. Some teachers and lead mentors also mentioned that some “personality matching” occurs. For example, if an experienced teacher from the private school system starts teaching at Riverdale, the team will try to find a mentor more similar in age and experience.

Lead mentors see several strengths in their mentor cadre. One lead mentor views school leadership and classroom management skills as the most important characteristics of a good mentor. Another lead mentor drew attention to the depth of concern that mentors have about helping new teachers through their first year: “We have a really good group of people who seem to understand why we’re doing this, and are dedicated to doing this. They’re not in there to do a halfway job. They’re not going to just give lip service to it. They’re in there to do it.”

During the 2005-06 school year, 16 mentors were matched with 22 protégés. Thus, nearly half of the mentors were matched with two protégés. All of the mentors viewed mentor recruitment as the most significant barrier to program improvement. Interviewees noted that demand for mentors is especially acute in the secondary grades where both teacher turnover and demand for coaches and club advisors is greater. Conversely, interest in mentoring is lower in the upper grades. Though the administrators have clear criteria for making matches, the criteria cannot be used if few mentors are available in a building.

For example, in one situation, a high school English teacher has mentored math teachers for two years.

Opinions from mentors and protégés about their matches varied. Most protégés felt they were “pretty well” or “very well” matched overall, though many found other teachers who function in key support roles as well. For example, one new teacher felt well-matched in terms of personality but had to go to another teacher in his grade for curriculum assistance. Another new teacher was matched with a mentor who works in a self-contained classroom and consequently was not as familiar with the issues faced by regular teachers. In the first case, the new teacher’s mentor helped him find other teachers who could assist with curriculum issues, while in the other case, the teacher next door volunteered to help her with any questions through the first year. One new teacher who felt she was poorly matched has a mentor who teaches a different subject and does not have a background in special education. Another new teacher, who said she is very well matched with her mentor, summarized her feelings about the match: “She taught the same subject matter, and she was special education, and had been doing that for many years. So that was very helpful. I don’t think it would have been as beneficial to me had I gotten somebody not in my subject matter.”

Most new teachers and mentors meet once a month to conduct formal mentoring business, and most new teachers recalled that the formal meetings focus on completing Pathwise activities. Most new teachers also mentioned that they are able to ask their mentors non-Pathwise related questions through e-mail or when they see their mentors in the hall. Most formal meetings appear to take place after school since most mentors and new teachers do not share planning periods. It appears that substitutes are used only as a last resort to complete mentoring program activities such as observations.

When asked about their mentors’ strengths, the new teachers focused on personality traits. One new teacher, who feels her mentor match was less than ideal, commented nonetheless that her mentor “is very much like me in terms that...she doesn’t BS you. So if she thinks I need to improve something she tells me. We don’t beat around the bush.” Other new teachers note that their mentors are objective, accessible, and open to their concerns or questions. A few new teachers highlight their mentors’ knowledge about the district and ability to help the new teachers improve their teaching as reasons why they view their mentors as particularly valuable. When asked to describe the ideal mentor, new teachers are more likely to mention similar content or curriculum area.

While Riverdale struggles to find and keep a stable mentor cohort for its new teachers, there is a sense that mentors who stay with the program for several years benefit in unanticipated but significant ways. As one mentor put it, “it gets me thinking about things that I could do better. So when I’m watching somebody else...they have great ideas. So to me it’s always helpful.” Since teacher improvement is a long-range goal of induction programs, more attention might be paid to the secondary benefits that mentors experience through mentoring.



## **Pathwise**

Riverdale's new teachers most appreciate two components of Pathwise: the chance to observe more experienced teachers and the opportunity to reflect on their lessons. As noted earlier, several program participants believe that one of the program's primary goals is to create reflective practitioners, and all of the new teachers acknowledge the importance of reflection to the program. All teachers, but new teachers especially, are so caught up in the myriad tasks they need to complete every day that reflection can be easily forgotten. As one new teacher said, "it's nice to reflect on maybe what's working, and what's not working." Several new teachers echoed this teacher:

What I liked [about Pathwise] was that I can come out of my classroom, and kind of get it out of my head, and say, "Okay, I need to look at this from a larger perspective." And the Pathwise program allowed me to put things down on paper, and...[think], How am I really feeling about this? Do I think it was effective? Are there things I can change to make things better? So it gave me an opportunity to reflect. I think that was what I enjoyed about it. Because you don't often take time to sit down and... really think about your lesson.

A few teachers discussed the value of observations as a Pathwise component. One new teacher also related how her mentor's observation led to changes in classroom management strategy. Another new teacher captured the essence of non-evaluative observations when he said that:

It definitely helps having a mentor come in and kind of criticize you. Not really in a bad way. But kind of as an objective figure in the room. And it's someone that you do feel comfortable with, coming into the room....She sees things that I don't always notice.

Riverdale was one of a few districts that started the new mentoring/induction program by giving its new teachers one year to complete both Pathwise-related cycles. Despite this rigorous schedule, few complaints were heard about its demanding nature. However, some new teachers said that Pathwise duplicates portions of their college education. One new teacher, who graduated from a non-traditional program, summed up the thoughts of others when she said:

I feel like I'm doing everything that I've already done in college...Our whole [college education] program was...a reflective-based program. So, all the reflecting, and the changing, and planning, I feel like we've done that already.

On the other hand, those who graduated from more traditional teacher preparation programs seemed to gain the most. One of the traditionally-trained new teachers said, "I think it's a success. Because I think...it gives you a guideline. Puts you in contact with somebody to help you out....And it's not a lot of work. It's not stressful...everything else is basic stuff you're doing anyway in the classroom." Administrators pointed out that even teachers who are familiar with the Pathwise constructs do not seem to understand its

details, and one pointed out that “there are still issues [of] classroom management since this is their first real classroom.”

Mentors tend to appreciate Pathwise even more than new teachers. Like new teachers, mentors value the opportunity to observe, and they report that teaching reflection through Pathwise makes them more reflective practitioners. As one mentor explained:

A lot of times as teachers we forget to take that time to reflect. I mean, to be honest, it's not like after every lesson I go, 'How did that go? What can I improve?' But every once in a while, since I've now done this for two years, I find myself...saying, 'This went really well. This is what I would change.'...So, those things can change. But I think it has definitely caused me to stop and reflect a little bit more.

### **Assessment *for* Learning**

As noted earlier, Riverdale is committed to Assessment *for* Learning (Cycle Three) not only for its new teachers, but for all of its teachers. The site coordinator said that all of Riverdale's administrators have been through the assessment cluster, and some principals have implemented it in their schools apart from the mentoring program. She believes that the assessment component has been “very enlightening” for the teachers who have completed it because “giving kids comments is the most powerful thing you can do....It forces them to internalize what they really need to work on...[and] it gets [teachers] away from always thinking [that] assessment means tests.”

Second-year teachers said that the program's major strength is the Assessment *for* Learning cycle. Commented one teacher: “[The program] has made a very great impact on...the teaching experience itself. Just to see...different areas of assessment. To just actually go in there and then find...very informative information that I could use within my classroom.” One teacher, who works in a team-taught classroom with regular and special education students, believes that Assessment *for* Learning helps to equalize the groups of students that she teaches. According to that teacher, rather than grouping the students according to ability, the assessment strategies provide a continuum along which all students might progress. It also teaches students to set their own goals for learning, and special education students work better when they understand the goal of their work. Another teacher noted:

If they can see the goal, they can reach it. A lot of times we arbitrarily teach them, we say, 'This is our lesson for the day.' But the kids have no idea where we're headed. So you're putting that in front of them immediately and saying, 'This is where we're headed. This is what we're going to learn. And it might take us three weeks to get there, but this is where we're going.'

## Evaluation

Most of the mentors, lead mentors, and administrators express positive opinions of the mentoring/induction program. Most believe that the structure, organization, and opportunities for observation and reflection represent significant improvements over the previous mentoring program. “I like it overall. I like the structure...I like when [the new teachers] come in, they can see three years, see what they’re doing. They know what their path will be for the next three years,” said one teacher. Another mentioned that the program is working well, especially for teachers without previous experience. It appears that many people judge the program by its ease of administration: smooth operation, attendance, assignment completion, and progress through the program.

New teachers who are moving through the mentoring/induction program offer mixed reviews. One teacher, who works in the secondary grades, is less enthusiastic about it. “I think that it’s going okay. I don’t think that it’s in trouble, and I don’t think that it’s horrible, but I don’t think it’s probably as ‘wow’ as it could be. I think it’s going okay,” she said. However, another teacher mirrored a comment heard from mentors and administrators when she suggested that the fuller benefits of the program might not be realized until some time has passed and new teachers gain perspective on their first year:

Yesterday we just finished up with the people who are doing the second-year assessment [piece]. And we were kind of actually talking about this yesterday and said, ‘You know, when we look back now, was it really that big of a deal?’ And they [said], ‘No. It really wasn’t.’ It really was helpful once it was all done.

While most individuals involved in the program’s administration consider it a success, questions surrounding the achievement of the long-range goal relating to teacher retention persist. One teacher, who otherwise considers the program a success, observes, “I don’t know how well it’s going. I’d be interested to see numbers on retention. It seems that, within the district, we’ve kept a lot more new teachers. But I can’t say that definitely we have. It’s hard to tell.”

The program succeeds in large part because the district’s culture supports early hiring and professional development for new teachers. One lead mentor mentioned that “we had a lot of support at the central office. And that also worked because they helped impress upon the [school] administrators how very important this is. And so they have supported us financially, given us a lot of freedom.” A new teacher recognized the supportive atmosphere that his principal and other administrators provide by making it easy to schedule observations and mentor-protégé meetings. Another noted the state support: “It’s nice to have connections with Mary Kotz of DOE because she helps us out a lot, too. I mean, she answers any questions...they let you do the conferences, the training, that kind of stuff ...and ordering materials when you need them.” Riverdale’s program greatly benefits from both the material support and encouragement that its administration and the state provide.

Because Riverdale is a small district, it has a family atmosphere that offers additional supports to new teachers. This atmosphere ensures that even if a mentor-protégé match is less than ideal, the new teacher will likely receive a good deal of help throughout his or her first year. With or without a successful mentoring match, new teachers feel less isolated knowing that their neighbors and department colleagues are available to give advice on everyday issues. One new teacher, whose mentor was not always available, mentioned another teacher in the next classroom who took on support duties: “She...was like a mentor, too...if I had any questions about certain curriculum, I could go to her. She’s my go-to person.”

### *Participant suggestions*

Riverdale mentors, lead mentors, and administrators identify one major barrier to the program’s successful implementation over the long run: finding and retaining mentors. Even though Riverdale’s program appears to be successful, most mentors have two protégés. Such workloads can lead to burnout. As one administrator notes, “We’ve lost some very effective mentors who were mentoring for a couple of years, and they just got burnt out. It was just, ‘I just don’t want to do it this year.’ And we invested time and training, of course.” Having to share a mentor can be more difficult for the protégés, as well, as the challenges of coordinating meeting times increase. Unfortunately, participants had no suggestions related to overcoming the challenges of multiple matching or mentor recruitment. “I don’t know how you do that. I really think it’s hard. Because I think they think it’s too much work. And in order to show them that it’s not too much work, they need them to at least be willing to come in and see what it’s like,” said one mentor.

New teachers suggest reducing the redundancy and workload of the Pathwise component. Noted one new teacher, “The tedious part about it is, after the day is over, you have several assignments that you need to do. And those assignments take time. And that time to do those assignments, you have other things [to do], like grade papers, call parents, [and so forth].”

Mentors and lead mentors are nearly unanimous in their beliefs surrounding the future of the mentoring/induction program. One teacher may have captured the sentiments of the group when she concluded, “I hope [the program] stays consistent. I hope it stays the same. I mean, I’m sure...when we look at the Pathwise piece of it, there are things we could change or add that would make that piece more effective.” Many participants appreciate program improvement, but they also value consistency and stability as well. As one teacher predicted:

I think we’ll still be using Pathwise; it’s a great reflective program. The assessment piece, I don’t see that going anywhere either, regardless of what the state does [unless they put something else in its place]. I think they’re valuable components. The structure may change, but the pieces will still be there.

## Highline Charter School

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Highline Charter School is a relatively large school that has received a “superior” rating from the Delaware Department of Education since 2003 based on its Delaware State Testing Program scores. Because demand for student spaces in the school is high, it uses a lottery system to fill classes each year. As is typical for many charter schools, parental involvement and expectations for both students and teachers are high. Some new teachers speak of using meeting time with their mentors to deal with issues related to parental involvement, since it is a subject that does not get formal attention in school or elsewhere during the year.

Because approximately one-third of Highline’s teachers participated in the mentoring program during the 2005-06 school year, the program has the potential to become a stabilizing force for the school. Highline has nine mentors for its 12 protégés. The program is organized such that it takes two years to complete the Pathwise portion, while the Assessment *for* Learning and professional growth plan components are planned to be completed in the program’s third year (the 2006-07 school year). Second-year teachers mentioned that they did not really begin the mentoring program until late in the fall or in the winter, “because there wasn’t as much to do this year.” Consequently, mentors and new teachers do not feel the same stress about time constraints to find meeting times or complete Pathwise that some teachers from other sites do; in fact, some new teachers are bored with the program by its second year because of its slow pace. At the same time, more mentors are needed than would be otherwise, because each mentor is needed for two years. The shift of program work to the third year, when tasks related to classroom preparation and management are coming under control, may result in less stress placed on new teachers.

### Leadership

Highline started an informal mentoring program three years ago, prior to the mentoring/induction program’s implementation. One of the school’s vice principals administered the program that year and continued doing so during the program’s first year. For the 2005-06 school year, site coordinator and lead mentor duties were passed to an experienced teacher who had mentored for the previous two years. The vice principal noted that the delegation of duties from administrator to teacher was intentional:

It’s nice that it’s not tied to evaluation. If I do it, I can’t help it. I can’t help but tie [observations] to evaluations. Only because I’m responsible for making sure [new teachers are] doing what they’re supposed to do. Plus I’m responsible for their development. So it’s evaluative in my opinion, if I do it. And teacher to teacher was a little...more open with what their needs are. They’ll be more honest about their needs, I believe, if it’s not an administrator who’s evaluating them. Therefore, it opens the door for them to be self-motivated to improve.

One teacher understood this implicitly, when she said, “[My mentor] comes in to observe me, and that doesn't make me nervous. It's not [like] she's all dressed up in her suit with her clipboard.” The idea of a “firewall” between the mentoring/induction program and the school’s administration has been implemented here by the administration itself with the goal of ensuring trust in the mentor for a better overall program.

The teacher who took over the site coordinator/lead mentor position is, by all accounts, a very organized and accessible person and was named by every participant as the program’s leader. She attends all the necessary DOE trainings and is prepared to conduct the Assessment *for* Learning sessions in the coming year. Several teachers mentioned her accessibility. For example, new teachers who are coaches or have after-school commitments talked about how she arranged alternative meetings to review information discussed at any regularly scheduled meetings.

The site coordinator strives to keep mentors and new teachers informed via e-mails and face-to-face contact with anyone who has a question or cannot attend a meeting. She also held five meetings throughout the school year for new teachers as well as occasional training meetings for mentors. She noted, “This year I’ve tried to map everything out for the mentors. And I’ve met with them to have meetings and things, set deadlines. You know, to get things in on a timely manner, so people don’t wait and procrastinate and have too much to do at the end.”

## **Context**

As noted above, Highline started a mentoring program the year before DOE implemented its new mentoring/induction program. The former program paired new teachers with mentors for one year and required a series of classroom observations by the new teachers as well as individual bi-weekly meetings between the new teachers and the vice principal just to “check in.” The vice principal commented that new teachers need the regular meetings because they “get so overwhelmed and so busy unless you make the time to meet with them.... We’ve learned that new teachers don’t take the time to ask because they’re overwhelmed. You have to formalize it.” Highline folded the bulk of its previous program into the new mentoring/induction program, as Pathwise similarly requires classroom observations and has a mentoring component. The vice principal, however, continues to meet regularly with the teachers for whom she is responsible at the beginning of the year until she is satisfied that they are reasonably effective in their roles as classroom instructors.

Among the nine new teachers interviewed, there was no consensus regarding how the mentoring program was presented during new teacher orientation. Some thought mentoring was not covered at all until a few weeks into the school year; others recalled the vice principal mentioning the program and its link to obtaining a continuing license. Some could not remember at all. In fact, in 2004, the coordinator introduced the program a few weeks into the school year. In 2005, she mentioned it at orientation and followed up with a more in-depth program presentation later in September. For the 2006-07 school year, the orientation plan included a half-day focus on the mentoring program.

Most teachers also appeared to be unclear about how the mentoring/induction program relates to state licensing requirements. While some realize that DOE requires the program, only two understood its connection to receiving a continuing license.

Although the mentoring/induction program is not formally tied to any other professional development opportunities offered at Highline, the vice principal said, “each piece of the mentoring program, obviously, is for teacher improvement. It’s all tied together. But we haven’t had formal planning to tie it together.” However, one teacher disagreed, saying that the program “is kind of on its own. It doesn’t really coordinate with any other vision, or goals, or anything. Not that it’s not helpful.” There is general agreement that the mentoring program does not conflict with any other programs the school offers, and that professional development activities are becoming more important.

### **Purposes and goals**

While the goals of traditional mentoring programs revolve around providing a support system to new teachers, induction programs are more concerned with improving teacher quality, teacher retention, and ultimately increasing student achievement. However, most of the mentoring/induction program participants’ characterizations of the program’s objectives mesh with the traditional “support system” model. The school’s current site coordinator described the program’s goals as providing support and helping them meet DOE’s licensing requirements. Several mentors and new teachers recognized the aspect of personal support that is inherent in a mentoring relationship. One teacher noted, “I look at the mentor as a person that I can talk to.” Another said, “I believe [the goal is] to provide the new teachers with the support that they need..”

Another theme that teachers mention relates more to the induction side of the program, which concentrates on improving teachers’ skills. Highline’s former site coordinator described the mentoring/induction program’s goals in the following way: “I would say that it’s for a teacher to self reflect. To be exposed to other styles and ideas. And to be able to coordinate with others to increase their skills. Because it connects teachers. And that’s the biggest bonus I can see.” Some teachers said the goal is to help them reflect on their strategies and methods and analyze them with another person. One relates this idea a bit more broadly: “The goal is really to help a teacher know their strengths and weaknesses. And focus on just overcoming those weaknesses. And just being the best teacher that they can be.” Only one person mentioned teacher retention as a goal of the program, and none explicitly mentioned student achievement.

### **Mentoring**

At Highline, the two vice principals find and match mentors. These two administrators know all the teachers in the school, and they use that knowledge to make the best possible mentor-protégé matches. It appears that a match with an incoming new teacher is made even before the experienced teacher is asked to become a mentor. In addition to looking for “successful teachers who are open to sharing and growing with others,” two

of the primary criteria for matching mentors to protégés are similarity in both subject area and grade level. Nearly all of the protégés have mentors who teach the same subject area and who teach the grade level directly above or below them. A vice principal noted that they deliberately try not to match with teachers from the same grade, because they prefer to match subject areas, and the grade-level teachers have planning time together and are already like informal mentors to the new teacher. Thus, school administrators use the mentoring/induction program to strengthen Highline's community of professionals. As one new teacher said:

[My mentor's] been the most helpful. She's always been there if I have any questions. Then I've got some unofficial mentors in the [same] grade, the other two [same] grade teachers. Whenever I have a question about procedure or anything, what they've done with certain things with certain units, I'll go over and ask them.

The importance of proximity in determining matches between mentors and protégés is a consistent point of emphasis emerging from the interviews. Interviewees speak regularly and positively of the value of having a mentor who is both close in grade level and physically accessible. "It really does help to have someone that knows the grade level," one teacher commented. New teachers also value opportunities for frequent and informal dialogs with their mentors. Such opportunities arise when mentors are matched with protégés whose classrooms are close to theirs.

Most of the new teachers had positive mentor-protégé experiences during the 2005-06 school year. Of the nine first- and second-year teachers, six said they were "very well" or "perfectly" matched, while the other three characterized their match with a mentor as "somewhat well matched." Because of school size and other considerations, some new teachers could not be matched with their ideal mentors. While a specialized instruction teacher wishes she could have been mentored by another specials teacher, who sees all the students in the school on a weekly basis, there simply were none available; all four of the "specials" teachers have worked at the school fewer than three years and are new teachers in the mentoring/induction program. On the other hand, the special education teacher expressed satisfaction with his match to a regular education teacher because he spends some of his time co-teaching in a regular classroom and because "here they have a nice support group of special ed teachers" who help out with non-induction related issues.

Another determinant of positive mentor-protégé matches appears to be the personal rapport that develops between the pairs. One teacher said:

I think we're very well matched. She's very easygoing and so am I. We have a camaraderie. We can talk to each other and we feel comfortable saying things to each other that I might not feel comfortable saying to the administration, my principal, or maybe some other teacher.

Another teacher remarked:



I think it's worked very well. I go to [my mentor] if I have any questions, and then we had to do assessments and then look at them. It's really neat to see only these three kids didn't know this, and I only do it [again] with those three kids. The rest of them get it...it kind of takes me out of the whole [classroom] mind frame.

Comments like this indicate that new teachers appreciate the program for more than a mentor's camaraderie; its value lies in having someone trained in induction to help provide a context for their experience in the classroom.

Because of teacher turnover, most mentors and second-year teachers have not been together for two years through the entire Pathwise program (in fact, some teachers hold a misperception that protégés and mentors are *supposed* to change between years one and two.) Of the second-year teachers who switched mentors, all reported improvements in the mentoring relationship. One teacher asked to be switched and had a more positive experience the second year with a teacher closer to her grade level.

At Highline, formal mentor-protégé meetings and other Pathwise activities, such as classroom observations, take place over three or four half-days throughout the school year, generally starting in the late fall. A few of the new teachers mentioned only the half-day meetings, but most said they have more frequent, less formal, meetings with their mentors as well. While the teachers have to find and prepare for substitutes, the school supports these meetings as a form of professional development. The half days allow mentors and protégés to concentrate on working through the activities of a particular event, from start to finish, without interruptions. However, it also limits the number of times that a mentor and protégé need to meet and have the opportunity to discuss subjects that are outside of Pathwise but are important to the protégé. Regardless of when they meet, however, new teachers indicate they prefer to devote about half the time discussing Pathwise requirements and the other half to topics of their own concern.

### **Pathwise**

Participants are generally less enthusiastic about Pathwise. On the one hand, they clearly prize the benefits derived from reflecting on lessons and learning more about specific subjects like classroom management or assessment. One teacher, whose thoughts are shared by others, said:

I think it does make you stop and really look at each part of a lesson, whereas you might not do that otherwise. So it is a good habit to get into doing. I just think in real life most people have trouble doing that only because it's so fast-paced otherwise and you don't really have that much time to do all the paperwork for each activity. But it is eye-opening to have that reflection for each lesson.

Of greatest value, however, are the opportunities that Pathwise provides both new teachers and mentors to observe other teachers and be observed by colleagues in a non-evaluative setting. Every new teacher said they had completed at least two observations and had been observed twice. Several new teachers echoed one who said:

I really think the observations are an important part of it because you're getting observed for your style. I also think it's important for the protégé to go and observe different people. I did that and I learned what I didn't want to be like. But I also got some good input from the person that observed me. And I think it's good practice to get into.

With few exceptions, however, the new teachers expressed dislike for the forms they had to complete for each Pathwise event. Many teachers commented on the forms' repetitive questions and said they feel like they are endlessly writing the same thing. Several teachers also expressed frustration with vague and confusing wording of the forms (one noted that she and her mentor have to "read a form on how to fill out a form"). Some teachers also observed that the forms take them back to the educational experience they thought they completed, such as one who said, "I feel...like [it's like] being back in college. It's like student teaching, where you have to spell out every last syllable that was going to come out of your mouth, and rationalize it, and explain why you're doing it."

A few teachers believe that they could enjoy more productive mentoring experiences if they did not spend so much time with the forms. As one teacher put it, "Well, I kind of wish there wasn't as much paperwork. Sometimes we get so focused on getting that done that the discussions begin to fall by the wayside. The actual critiquing and [my mentor's] actual observations really do kind of take a back seat." Since Pathwise is extended through two years and new teachers are given time during the school day to complete its requirements, participants are not complaining about completing forms because it created a work or time overload. They dislike the forms because they feel they are repetitive, demeaning, and stand in the way of the more positive aspects of the program, like one-on-one discussions with their mentors.

## **Evaluation**

Despite program participants' dislike of the Pathwise forms, most mentors and new teachers give the overall program high marks. Because Highline allows mentors and new teachers to use half days to work through the Pathwise forms, the frustration of finding time to meet that other schools and districts have experienced has been erased. Mentoring/induction program participants also benefit from the site coordinator's organization and accessibility. Many participants mentioned the mentoring calendar she created, which provides participants with a "big picture" of the program and enables them to make long-range plans that manage both time and Pathwise events more effectively.

The school's policy of matching mentors to protégés within grade level and subject matter proximity contributes significantly toward the mentoring/induction program's success. Additionally, Highline's relatively small size and close-knit faculty provide innate advantages. One teacher put it this way: "I've had a very positive experience. Again, I think a lot of it's due to the school environment too that we're so close and we know everybody. Mentoring is just another block on it." So while the program may not

align with other professional development efforts here, it does appear to support the school's culture.

One of the program's administrators noted that while it has not contributed to Highline's teacher retention rate, it has provided a way for school administrators to assess new teachers' needs and find appropriate professional development programs for them. The school's vice principal would like to work with the site coordinator to measure skill improvement in some way, but there are as yet no formal plans for evaluating the program. However, she feels that the program has had some positive outcomes in relation to improving classroom skills. "I can tell you that the teachers are really starting to look at their teaching practices, and that's been a bonus. [They are] starting to self-evaluate what their needs are, and talk to other teachers, and look at different teaching styles. That's been wonderful," she said.

When asked about the program's future, a vice principal answered that she sees it "definitely tied into all of our staff development. It can't be a separate entity. That's what teachers do. It touches on everything the teacher does." The site coordinator could not think that far into the future, saying, "I'm kind of going year-to-year right now."

#### *Participant suggestions*

Most new teachers said that they would decrease the amount of required paperwork. It appears that the participants are unaware that DOE does not require forms to be filled out after each event. In fact, both of the program's administrators raised the subject as a concern in need of ongoing attention. As one said:

The teachers have been telling me, 'Wow, I like the program, but this paperwork.' ...[I'm not sure] whether or not it's beneficial for them to write *everything* down that's required. I think they would like to have [the program], but less of the mandatory writing. Because they're sitting together and they're sharing, and we see it all the time. I think it's one of these things that's hard, once you give up... the paperwork, you give up accountability. So if there's no paperwork there, it's hard to tell if they really got out of it what they're supposed to get out of it. So I'm okay with the paperwork. But it shouldn't take more time than the actual experience.

Otherwise, protégés had few suggestions for improving the program, which may indicate their overall satisfaction. Two new teachers suggested that incoming teachers be given advance notice of the program's requirements over the summer. One said that "[It] would have saved me the three- or four-week delay of going to a meeting and finding out. If I knew all the stuff, then I would have been better prepared to come in and say to my supervisor, okay, I know have to be in the first-year mentoring program Who is [my mentor], what can I do, and why? I think a lot of teachers coming out of [the University of] Delaware have that initiative."

## Penfield Charter School

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The Penfield Charter School serves 650 students with 40 teachers. The school is housed in an attractive building with wide open corridors, bright classrooms, and a full range of facilities. Not a neighborhood school, it accepts applications from all state residents but prioritizes those within a 5-mile radius and siblings of students in the school. The school is oversubscribed and thus a lottery is used for admissions. The student body is almost 80 percent white, more than 10 percent African American, and the remaining students are Asian and Hispanic. Between five and 10 percent of the students are eligible for the free lunch program.

The school has a traditional educational philosophy and style. The school adheres to the Core Knowledge curriculum, students wear modified uniforms, and ability grouping is used in all grades. The students at the school are among the top achievers in the state. The school has been rated as “superior” since 2003.

The teachers seem to enjoy teaching in a school where the students and parents take their work seriously, where they can teach and not spend their time on discipline. Several said they felt it was a privilege to teach at the Penfield Charter School. Indeed, the school’s marketing material notes the extraordinary demand from teachers who want to join the school staff. New teacher qualifications outstanding—many years of previous experience, one Ph.D. candidate, and a range of educational and non-educational experiences. While not a neighborhood school, the school boasts of its “community atmosphere” and parental involvement and volunteering. A glance at a charter school evaluation website indicates that parents are pleased with the school. One parent summed up the evaluation well by saying, “The school is by far the best school your...student could attend.”

There is another side to the school that some do not like. A website notes that there is too much pressure on students and that they “don’t have the ability to be kids.” Teachers, who have one-year contracts, may feel pressured to perform and adhere to the school’s norms. One astute teacher noted that teachers used to an absence of parental involvement could be surprised at Penfield Charter, where parents are very involved if their child is not doing well. Another teacher noted that the parents are different than those in southern Delaware or a small town:

The parent clientele here is very different than probably most people are used to. Where I’m from in ‘Slower Lower,’ parental support is very difficult. And here a lot of [parents] are [professionals] and are very supportive. That was an adjustment for me. I’m getting e-mails from parents left and right going, ‘Johnny turned in this and turned in that.’ And that’s the one thing that I worked with [my protégé] about, just to give her my experience... That’s good to let them know, look, man, get ready. These parents are involved!

But it is likely that the teachers, students, and parents who do not like this atmosphere do not stay. The school remains oversubscribed.

## **Leadership and administration**

The organization of the mentoring/induction program at Penfield Charter School is simple. The dean of instruction is the administrator in charge of the program. She serves as site coordinator and lead mentor. Indeed, she initiated the program at the school, makes the key decisions as to the recruitment and selection of mentors and their matching with new teachers, and meets regularly with the lead mentors. She has the broadest view of the program and the most information about how it works in the school.

The school director attended a DOE meeting with charter school heads where they were told they had to implement this program. The school director asked the dean of instruction to begin the program in mid-year 2004–05. The school director, who serves as superintendent and principal, views her as responsible for all professional development in the school, and thus she was logical choice to lead the program. She explained the program to the staff and asked for volunteers to serve as mentors. Five teachers applied, and she selected four to serve. These four mentors continued through the 2005–06 school year. There is some ambiguity about whether she recruited certain teachers to serve as mentors or simply asked for volunteers. While she indicated she sent an e-mail to all teachers asking for volunteers, one teacher reported he was recruited. According to the site coordinator, she used the criteria of good classroom management, vision for the school and mission, good content knowledge, confidence, and people she could work with (in effect, team players). She said:

We very much wanted to have people who had good classroom management and had a sense of the vision for the school because we felt that you can't mentor people solely on educational strategies and management. They need to be mentored into Penfield Charter School, not just mentored into Delaware. And so we wanted people who were team players and had a vision of what our mission is here. We wanted people who knew their content well enough to feel some confidence in what they did because if they don't exhibit confidence, they can't very well model it for a new teacher...I wanted people I could work with. I've been fortunate here because I haven't run into too many I couldn't work with. And they're people I knew would cooperate with the system, and not be renegade, or run off and do their own thing, and say, 'Well, that's what DOE says, but we can make it work if we do this.' I wanted them not to stray too far from Pathwise.

At least three of the four teachers selected to be mentors did have extensive previous experience in a mentoring type role. One teacher who volunteered and was selected had experience as a mentor at a previous school and was positive about the idea of mentoring and repeating the previous experience. One teacher had been informally mentored by a Delaware State Teacher of the Year, valued that relationship, and used it as a model. This selected teacher had been an administrator and had supervised teachers in a nearby out-of-state district. A third selected teacher had supervised many student teachers from the University of Delaware. Two of the mentors had been department heads.

As the lead mentor, the dean of instruction received one day of training in the first year of the program at the school. She had been involved in mentoring, however, in her previous position. She said she feels well prepared but would appreciate more training:

I never feel as prepared as I should be. I don't necessarily feel that that reflects whether or not they trained me well. I think the training was good. But I just always feel like, 'Am I missing something?' 'Should I be a better listener, better understanding what they're saying?' 'Do I really understand the system, the program?' I don't open the book every day and look in it, it's not one that I'm into all the time. Right now the mentors probably know much more about it than I do as lead mentor.

While the matching of mentors with new teachers is quite important, so is the decision as to who needs mentoring. Penfield Charter attracts teachers with a variety of previous experience—as teachers outside the state, as substitutes, as teachers in private and parochial school. Several new teachers believe that the site coordinator has discretion over whether they needed to be in the program and, if so, at what level.

When asked how she matched mentors with new teachers, the site coordinator replied, "Probably a subliminal process." In actuality she was conscious of using several criteria in matching mentors with protégés including gender match, personalities (for example, "sense of humor"), and backgrounds. She described the process of matching for year two of the program as follows:

I don't know why but I felt that would [include] communication styles and so on. And I didn't want any of the no nonsense guys to feel that there was too much frou frou going on, and that kind of thing. I didn't want to turn them off that way. Make them feel they had to endure anything. Basically I think I just looked at the personalities as much as I knew of the protégés, and perhaps their backgrounds. I'm thinking in particular, one background made me think, this person's going to need some strong direction. But they're going to need someone who has a sense of humor. So I matched that up a little bit that way.

She also mentioned a problem: the number of desired dimensions which would be helpful to matches is limited within a single school. If the best match for a seventh grade, male social studies teacher would be another seventh grade, male social studies teacher, the odds are low of such a perfect match. Indeed, some teachers are in unique positions, such as those who teach specials, so a perfect match within the school is impossible.

The site coordinator meets monthly with the mentors for 30 minutes before school begins. While the meetings are relatively informal, she has an agenda in mind. She also keeps informal contact with the mentors, checking to see how they are doing and where they and their new teachers are on Pathwise. (Since the program was begun mid-year in 2004-05, they are not participating in Assessment *for* Learning until 2006-07.)

Communication is relatively easy within this school: "I can talk to all four mentors at lunch," the site coordinator said. She supports the program in several ways including

responding to questions from mentors, obtaining resources for new teachers, arranging for classroom coverage for classroom observations, and sharing specific ideas on teaching or classroom operations. One mentor described her support in great detail:

She was able to obtain a copy [of a resource book] for each of the new teachers that we're working with....[The site coordinator's] background is reading. So [she helps with] that type of thing, if I'm looking for a different approach. We were talking about student-centered learning, in terms of note taking the other week. So, that's something I could go to her for....I pretty much operate independently. [She] really empowers us to do what we need to. And she's there if we need her. The main thing she asks is that we keep the communication lines open.

The site coordinator noted that the contact with the mentors serves an unintended purpose. The mentors have become "advocates" for the new teachers, articulating their needs and asking for services and equipment that they need. One mentor said, "So there's a lot of that kind of advocacy they seem to build. And they get an appreciation for those protégés, which is very neat." For example, one mentor has informed her that his new teacher needs a laptop computer. Even though the laptop has not yet been delivered, the new teacher still appreciated the effort to obtain it.

The mentors view the school director as supportive but not because of direct experience. They conclude that the program would not be implemented if "[The principal] didn't want it." They do acknowledge that the assistant principal has helped by finding a way to cover classes when teachers need to observe other teachers in a classroom setting. For example, one specials teacher needed to observe a teacher in her field at another school, and thus she was especially appreciative of his arranging for coverage.

## **Context**

Before the implementation of the mentoring/induction program, Penfield Charter did not have a formal mentoring program. The administration and staff were busy enough with the creation of a new school and growing pains that a mentoring program was not high on the agenda. Of course, at the school's initiation, all staff members were new and in a sense, they were all beginning teachers. However, that experience was not used as an induction process.

The school has an orientation program for new teachers each year, basically a day spent with the school's three administrators. This focuses on the values and operations of the school. Neither new teachers nor mentors viewed any other programs at the school as either complementing or competing with the mentoring/induction program. When asked about other professional development programs, teachers noted in-service days and/or the core curriculum. The core curriculum seems to be the organizing aspect of the curriculum and professional development and there appears to be no conflict with the mentoring/induction program. In a sense this is good news and bad news. No program is at odds with it, but it is not explicitly integrated into a more comprehensive whole.

## Purposes and goals

Mentors and new teachers identified several goals of the program. Their responses were more educated guesses than repeating goals they had heard or read. Several identified the goals as retaining teachers, helping new teachers to feel more confident and secure in their new roles, and better preparing teachers. New teachers stressed how the program assists new teachers by making the transition easier for them, and improving their teaching. When asked what the goals of the program were, one new teacher put it succinctly: “I mean, in general, to improve my teaching...and to let me know what resources are available to me, to help me feel more confident.” A second elaborated:

The program is trying to make sure that the people that are in charge of students in the State of Delaware know what they're doing, know how to follow the standards, know how to make sure that the learning styles and learning needs of all of the students are met... probably to improve the quality of the teachers coming out. And maybe also to help them realize that they're not there by themselves, that there are people that you can lean on so that you're not so overwhelmed that you'd want to leave a profession that you just spent four years studying and getting out of college at 22 or 23.

Though recognizing the substantive goals, the mentors stressed the program's role in retaining teachers. For example, one mentor observed:

Obviously they're trying to hold on to teachers. There are teachers that don't last more than a few years because they don't have support... So I think they want to keep teachers, and also make sure that teachers are doing what they need to be doing in their classroom.

Many mentors, as more experienced teachers, reflected on their experiences as neophytes and compared the mentoring/induction program to their first few months. The lead mentor did so and said:

I'm sure that one of the goals is to retain quality professionals. First of all, make sure they get up on their feet as professionals, and with some quality traits. And then perhaps to instill upon them the thought that they continue to need to grow. I remember back [when I began], I remember feeling pretty much out there on my own...there's so much more in place now, I think that that message....I almost wish people could compare and contrast the experience I started out with, with what we offer now. Because I'm sure they don't appreciate it for what it is. But I think it's important to show them the support, that we want them in the profession. Support to retain them.

It was not clear that all participants understood the program's role in teacher licensing. Nor were there many comments about the program's role in the long-term development of a teacher. One mentor's discussion of his experience as a new teacher years ago and his mentor's first words suggested an awareness of this more long-term goal:



The first thing he said [was]... ‘I’m going to tell you one thing. You better remember it.’ He said, ‘You can teach one year 30 times or you can teach 30 years once.’ That’s the most powerful statement. And if you live by that, there’s no way you could ever be a bad teacher. If you constantly evaluate your practices, if you constantly evaluate your teaching skills or interactions with the kids, modify, adjust, be willing to new ideas and new techniques...if you’re not making mistakes in the classroom, you’re probably not doing anything anyway.

The program’s goals are aligned with the school’s goals in that the school hopes to retain its high-quality new teachers, help them with the transition to their new school, and provide assistance in confronting the realities of teaching in the school.

## **Mentoring**

A wide variety of mentoring relationships exists in the Penfield Charter School, primarily based on the adequacy of the match between the mentor and protégé and mentoring styles and personalities. The various mentor-protégé duos have quite different commonalities, professional relationships, and orientations to the mentoring/induction program. The range is from intimate to informal. All but one mentor-protégé pair focused their discussions on classroom management. While the details of this subject varied by field, curriculum area, and nature of the classroom, this was clearly the major topic.

The specials teachers both stressed issues relating to not having students in class on a daily basis. They sought a different approach than regular classroom teachers. One talked about her informal mentor, another about the different challenges faced by teachers of special subjects and special education students. “Actually, there’s another [specials] teacher here. [This teacher has] been very helpful to me. Because [she] is used to the school. [She has] been here since it began. So [this teacher has] been my mentor, really, to tell you the truth,” said one. Another remarked, “It’s really difficult being a specialist teacher, to have a regular math, science, history, English teacher, mentor you. Because it’s a totally different area the management is different. The atmosphere. Everything is so different in the [specials] room compared to the other classrooms.

Another teacher, who appreciated his mentor, noted:

The only thing that [my mentor] does not have that I feel that I could have benefited from a little bit more was that he is not a [specials] teacher. That’s no fault of [my mentor]. That’s no fault of anybody. We’ve got three [specials teachers] in the building, and two of us came in the same year and then another one we hired last year.

Since the number of new teachers each year entering the school is small, the process of assigning mentors is not a bureaucratic one. Teachers are hired early (on June 1, 2006 the school administration knew who its incoming teachers were for fall 2006) and assigned a

mentor before orientation. They can then get to know their mentor on the first professional in-service day, before school begins.

Indeed, all the new teachers at Penfield have found mentoring to be a helpful experience. They can all cite specific instances where mentoring has assisted them in the classroom. Two new teachers used words like “wonderful” and “great” to describe their relationships; the others called their mentors’ support “helpful.” Some mentors, though recognizing the challenges in their role, have also found utility in the mentoring relationship, as one said:

Well, the [new teacher] I’m mentoring has been helpful to me. I think I’ve learned more from [my protégé] than [he has] learned from me....It shouldn’t matter if you’re a music teacher, if you’re mentor is a music teacher. Because you’re not really supposed to be evaluating their lessons....And I think that’s the hardest probably for everyone, is, it sounds to me like it’s more the onus of the new teacher to do all this work, and you’re just the one that guides them along and will listen to what they found out. Saying, ‘What do you think worked for you?’ or, ‘How did it go?’ rather than offer suggestions, unless it’s a serious problem.

Thus, the very process of analyzing teaching with her protégé led to this mentor’s reconsideration of her teaching strategies.

### **Pathwise**

No new teacher cited Pathwise *per se* as being helpful. At best they view it as a way to start a discussion or as a resource for teaching but few mentors and new teachers brought up Pathwise voluntarily during the interview. When asked, all five of the new teachers offered similar criticisms of Pathwise: too complicated and too much paperwork. The latter seems to represent the workbook aspect of the manual and too much filling out forms without a real substance. Each mentor-protégé pair internally agreed on its utility suggesting the enthusiasm and understanding of the mentor affected the attitude of the new teacher. The one pair that used Pathwise extensively judged it most positively. The mentor described the process as follows:

One of the things that I like the most about the book is the way that each event is organized. It gives an overview, and about how much time it’s supposed to take. It kind of summarizes things. And also the introductory pages are very useful. It’s allowed me to take the main ideas and kind of consolidate them, so it makes it very easy for me to explain to my protégé.

But outside of this dyad the reactions to Pathwise were not as supportive. One new teacher represented the feelings of several when she cited the time and paperwork costs of the program:

I think sometimes I’m spending a lot of time just figuring out what the next assignment is, and filling out all of the papers for that specific unit. I’d rather

spend the time looking at the big picture, and talking with my mentor more. And maybe deciding more what I want to improve for myself.

These concerns can result in a rejection or limited use of Pathwise. One new teacher illustrated this when referring to the Pathwise manual:

It just was very hard to follow. When we'd say, 'Okay, let's work on this,' then it was very hard to figure out what form do we have to fill out. Or, then there were things that we wanted to work on that didn't connect together the way that they were connected on the sheet.

The mentors note some confusion about Pathwise. One said, "I believe that the fact that it's a bit confusing, the program has probably caused us not to meet as frequently as we would have. If we could understand the steps more easily, we would have actually probably tried to accomplish more specific things." A more critical mentor was specific about the problems in Pathwise:

[My protégé] and I meet periodically and talk about what's working, what's not working. We try to follow the booklet, which I personally think is extremely difficult. The way it is laid out makes no sense to me...I just honestly cannot follow where to go next. And I have to constantly come in here and try to figure out if we're on the right track. We have this lovely form, but yet we don't start here. We start over here. And then we're not sure where to go next. It's very confusing.

## **Evaluation**

Three primary conclusions can be drawn from Penfield's experience with the mentoring/induction program. First, the program has helped distribute leadership within the school. As the site coordinator concludes, the four mentors serve as an informal advisory council to the administration and provide support and advocacy for the new teachers. They have become leaders on the faculty.

Second, almost all of those involved in the program feel positive about it. The program is seen by teachers and administrators as an important aspect of the school. For example, the lead mentor is quite positive about the program: "This is not just another thing we need to do," she said. Even its biggest critic concludes, "The intent is good." There was universal agreement that mentors are helpful, necessary, and make the transition more positive. The program ensures that new teachers are linked to experienced, trained mentors from the start of their first year in the school, that professional guidance is available—especially for classroom management—from the first day of school, and that each new teacher has a person to ask about their technical operational questions as they need assistance and advice. The issues lie in the program's implementation—time, busy work, the complexities of Pathwise.

New teachers and mentors view the impact of the overall mentoring/induction program on the new teachers' teaching and classrooms positively. It is apparent that the it has influenced the teaching and classroom actions of new teachers, and they recognize and appreciate the program. The effect starts with improving classroom management but then progresses into broader pedagogical concerns. One new teacher illustrated this transition:

The first thing that we did was classroom management and classroom arrangement. My mentor helped me with that. And then we worked on a system for absent students. And then we started working on curriculum, like writing lesson plans, and having goals and using the standards, the state standards, and matching that up with our core curriculum.

A subset of new teachers recognized that the program had changed how they approached teaching. One new teacher related in detail how this occurred during the unit that involves engaging the students in which the activity asks how teacher has done this in previous years and then create a more mentally engaging technique:

I was asked to interview some other teachers and ask how they create mentally engaging activities. And I read some articles about that subject. And then I went back and I applied them to the project, or the unit I had done in previous years. And I'm, right now, teaching the project, or doing the project with my groups. And I'm going to collect the information, and I'm going to go over it with my mentor at the end of the unit, and see what the improvements were.

One new teacher summarized the comments of several others, "Well, it sort of forced me to analyze my teaching, and critique myself, and come up with ways that I can improve myself. So I'm finding that I'm improving my teaching a lot on my own."

It is more difficult to ascertain which component of the program has had the greatest impact. The new teachers cite mentoring far more than Pathwise, but yet they appreciate the reflection that Pathwise generates.

Third, the mentoring/induction program helps to support new teachers and possibly to retain them. However, while it is seen as compatible with the school's mission and goals, it has not yet transformed the school. New teachers are not aware of what their peers are doing within the mentoring program, and the mentors just have a general idea of their peers' approaches to mentoring. It is far too early to determine if the program has achieved its goals of teacher retention and teacher professional development. The variation in approaches to the program and mentoring is great and the results generally positive. The school is on track toward full program implementation.

The school has no independent evaluation of the mentoring/induction program. Teachers, who are on one-year contracts, are evaluated by the three administrators, each of whom observes each new teacher once per year. New teachers are clear on this process and do not seem concerned that the mentoring process will play much of a role in the formal

evaluation. When asked how the program and teacher evaluation were related, one new teacher concluded, “I don’t think that they are related at all.”

The overriding theme of the teachers’ and mentors’ evaluations is that its “one size fits all” nature limits its utility and appropriateness. The special teacher prefers a mentor in her field rather than in the school. The experienced teachers want help but at a different level than the program requires. One subject-based new teacher and mentor want the professional discussions without the confusing requirements of Pathwise. Another said the program might be better “if the materials were not as structured.” She wants the program to “see more of the big picture. Look at the entire unit, not just the Pathwise assignment. I would like to decide on what I want to improve myself and come up with my own objectives.”

The school director and site coordinator agree that variability within the program is good. The site coordinator said:

They’ve got some good substance. And things seem to be moving along pretty well. I find, as with everything, the mentors vary in how they perform their duties, and so some are very compulsive about it, making sure every T is crossed. Others have more structured it to where they saw needs in a teacher. And sometimes that requires a student-teacher provide coverage so that they can go out and observe in a classroom with their protégée. And it’s been working. I get good feedback from both the mentors and the protégés that they feel good about it.

A second theme is the desire for more training in the program and more classroom observations, especially at other schools. One mentor said that the training is adequate but she would like more practice in evaluating classrooms and using what she learned. A second calls the one day inadequate, adding that “it takes time to figure out the forms.... You have to build in practice after training, like piano lessons. You need to practice.” One mentor favors more training or retraining of mentors, noting that the train-the-trainer approach has its limits since “it is hard to be a prophet in your own land.” Another mentor said, “Well, we had a quick one-day training. And not that I like a lot of downtime...I like to be in my classroom, but I think it would have been perhaps helpful to maybe break the training down a little bit.” Another mentor went into greater detail about the need for more training:

I think I would like to have a little more time...our training was compressed to one day. I would like to have had a little bit more time in evaluating certain classroom experiences. Part of what they had given us in the training was watching a segment of video tape, and then decide where the teacher would fall in terms of level of performance. Certain things to look for. And we did maybe three or four examples, whereas administrators take a whole course on assessing teachers, and looking for key things. I knew what I needed to do. I would have liked to have a little bit more practice with it. But I think the component, the way that they’ve listed this in the book, has helped as well. It’s presented in a little bit more detail than what we had in the training. So that certainly helps.

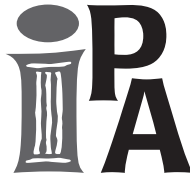
Several new teachers lauded the role of observing other classrooms in their development as a teacher. One new teacher said, “I’ve gone to observe one or two other teachers during the course of the year, and last year. And I would like to do a lot more of that. And I would really like to be able to go out and observe teachers [in my specialty area] in other school. And I’ve done that. But that has been on my own time. I’d like that to be part of this program.” The school director stresses the desirability of teachers observing other classrooms, though he envisions this effort occurring within the school.

A third theme revolved around time. One mentor called the time commitment great and indicated that both mentors and new teachers need flexibility. Indeed, the range of ways mentors and protégés approached the time issue suggests the need for flexibility. One mentor, for example, struggles with finding time to meet with a busy part-time teacher. If one thinks of the mentor and new teacher as two very busy people, with not only work obligations but also after-school commitments (for example, coaching, clubs) and a personal life and families, one can easily see the problem. The solution to this problem is not obvious. If teachers have common planning periods, the mentor cannot observe the new teacher during that period. If they have different planning periods, they find it difficult to meet.

A fourth theme revolved around the limitations and confusion of Pathwise. While most acknowledged that Pathwise had improved over the last year, several are critical of the confusion, paperwork, and imply there is too much make-work in the manual. Even an advocate concluded that “Pathwise could be more streamlined, more succinct.”

While it is far too early to reach definitive conclusions about the impact of the program at the school, there are some preliminary results to consider. First, the retention rate of new teachers has greatly increased since the implementation of the program. The school had lost several of its new teachers as it began. The school director indicated that the teachers he hired from the University of Delaware were great teachers but not all prepared for the rigors of the day-to-day grind of the teaching profession. But the school director indicated that all but one teacher, and all new teachers, would be returning for 2006-07 school year. The key question is: to what extent is this retention the result of the mentoring/induction program? Of the five new teachers in the program, all but one had previous teaching experience and two had extensive experience (five years or more). Perhaps hiring more experienced teachers helped retention. The school was no longer new and the stability could have helped as well. Or perhaps the administration had developed a better ability to hire teachers who are the right fit for the school. Whatever the cause, the result has been greater teacher retention.

New teachers, and to some extent mentors, believe they have improved their classroom management and pedagogy as a result of the program. But their perceived cause is the mentoring relationship and, with one exception, not Pathwise. Teacher perception, however, may not be reality. The impact of Pathwise may be in the process and not substance of professional development.

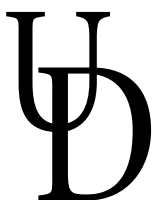


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