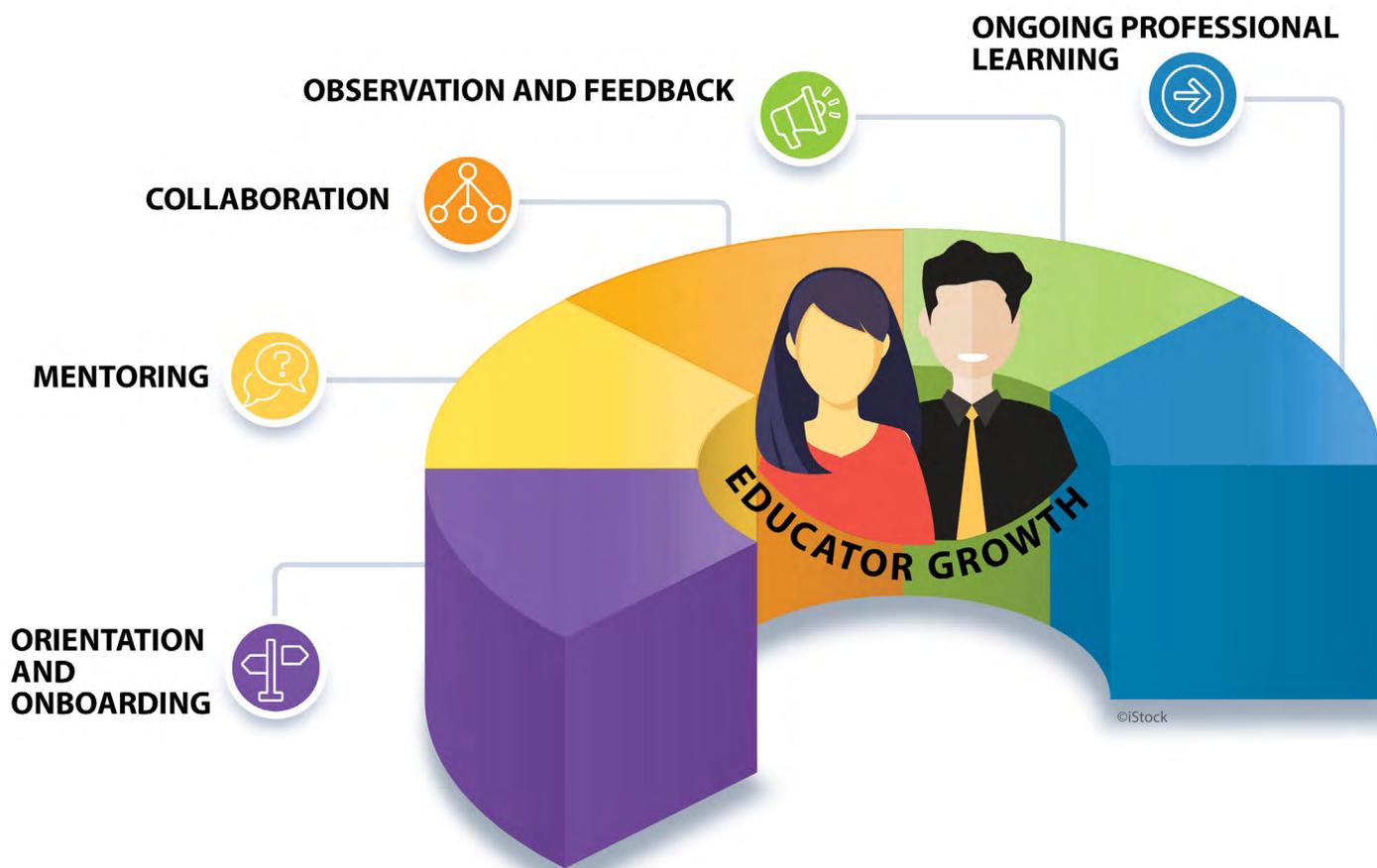


UTAH'S EDUCATOR INDUCTION GUIDEBOOK



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Sydnee Dickson, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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<https://schools.utah.gov/curr/educatordevelopment>

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UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring Programs* (www.doe.mass.edu).

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

A major focus of educational systems should be student learning and a sizable research base supports that a major contributor to student learning is educator effectiveness. To maximize learning, students need access to high quality educators. At the same time, national estimates suggest that nearly one-third of teachers leave within the first three years of entering the profession and nearly half leave within the first five years.¹ Utah data agrees with national data showing a historical annual teacher attrition rate between seven and ten percent. This trend is troubling considering that refining the skills needed to be considered an effective educator may take several years, as teachers become increasingly aware of educational best practices, adapt their educational strategies to meet the needs of evolving generations of students, and define and refine their identities as educators. If teachers leave the profession soon after entering it, they typically do so before having had the opportunity to fully develop the skills they most need to be highly effective.

Outside of education, professionals often participate in multi-year internships and residencies before “flying solo.” “Unfortunately, schools do not operate like hospital emergency rooms, where experienced personnel routinely watch novices work, spot their mistakes, give advice, and model new techniques.”² Instead, education is often plagued by a “sink or swim” mentality where the prevailing attitude is that teachers come from preparation programs as fully equipped masters of the art of teaching. But “teachers are not ‘finished products’ when they complete a teacher preparation program. Strong residency and mentored induction experiences during their initial years in the classroom provide beginning teachers with invaluable support as they lay the groundwork for becoming accomplished teachers. A well-planned, systematic program for new teachers is vital to maximize their chances of being successful in any school setting.”³

University educator preparation programs, regardless of their quality, cannot adequately prepare beginning educators for all experiences they will encounter. This, combined with the prolific number of educators who enter the profession through alternate routes, guarantees that those entering the profession need supports to guide them in their development as a professional. Comprehensive induction programs are a vital support for beginning educators. There is some evidence that teachers who participate in such programs over the course of two or more years are more likely to stay in the profession and that programs with more comprehensive supports are more successful in helping retain teachers than those with fewer supports.¹

BEGINNING EDUCATOR INDUCTION IN UTAH

The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) views educator induction programs as vital for encouraging the retention of quality educators in Utah. As used in this guidebook, an **induction program** refers to all programs, events, and processes designed by school districts and charter schools for the purpose of introducing beginning educators to the profession and their local work environment and supporting them through their early years in the classroom. The primary function of an induction program is to guide beginning educators' development as reflective and effective facilitators of student learning.

In considering who to include in induction-related initiatives, it is important to consider both teachers who are new to classroom teaching (i.e., are coming from university preparation programs, or alternative pathways into teaching for the first time) and those who have prior experience teaching in a different school district, charter school, or state (i.e., are continuing or resuming their teaching career in a new environment). Throughout this guidebook, the terms **novice teacher** and **transferring teacher** are used to respectively refer to these two groups of educators. Generally, when planning and implementing teacher induction programs, school districts and charter schools should be sensitive to the differing training and needs of these two groups of teachers. For example, while both types of teachers should participate in an orientation designed to acquaint them with particulars associated with working in a district or school, they may need differing levels of mentoring support and may benefit from different professional learning opportunities.

As outlined in Administrative Rule [R277-301](#), beginning educators in Utah possess one of three educator license types: an LEA-specific license, an associate educator license, or a professional educator license ([find more details related to teacher licensing here](#)). As of July 2020, administrative Rule [R277-308](#) requires school districts and charters to provide induction programs for:

- ▶ a minimum of three years for all educators holding LEA-specific licenses,
- ▶ all licensed employees who hold an associate educator license, and
- ▶ all licensed employees who hold a professional educator license with fewer than three years of teaching experience.

This same rule further requires that induction programs minimally include:

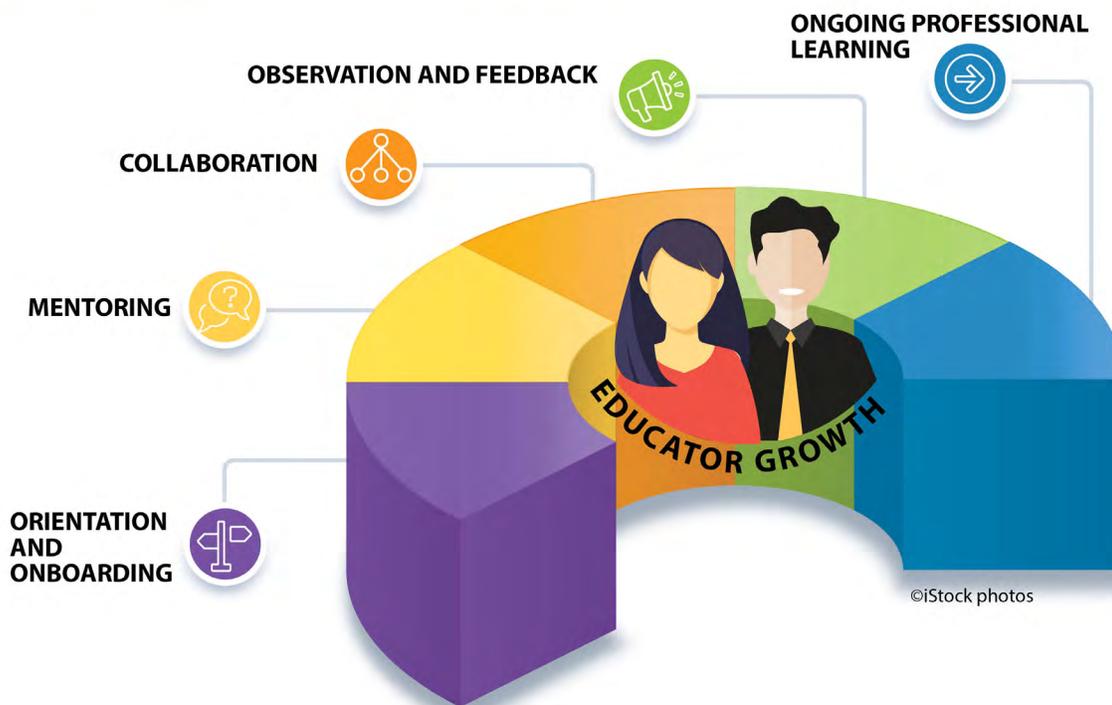
- ▶ a plan for ongoing support and development of an educator,
- ▶ LEA support in meeting requirements for a professional license for those educators holding an associate license,
- ▶ mentor observation and feedback,
- ▶ principal observation and feedback (also see [R277-533](#)), and
- ▶ assistance in meeting pedagogical requirements and passing applicable assessments required for a professional license.

UTAH'S EDUCATOR INDUCTION FRAMEWORK

To guide Utah school districts and charter schools in their efforts to implement and maintain induction programs, the USBE presents Utah's Educator Induction Framework. This framework, as depicted below, shows five overlapping research-supported best practices that should be interwoven to provide beginning educators with the supports needed to encourage their retention and guide their professional growth. While implementing each practice in isolation benefits educator development, schools and districts who work toward a strategic and cohesive intersection of all five practices are best positioned to support the professional growth of Utah's beginning educators.

Figure 1.

UTAH'S EDUCATOR INDUCTION FRAMEWORK



Orientation & Onboarding: Launch educators' experiences with a positive and engaging welcome and provide sustained onboarding experiences to acquaint beginning educators with important policies, help them feel part of their new school and/or district community, and establish expectations for reflective instructional practice.

Mentoring: Provide access to a more experienced peer trained to encourage meaningful reflection and provide socioemotional, institutional, and instructional support aimed at aiding beginning educators' professional and personal growth.

Collaboration: Encourage and facilitate the exercise of beginning educators' voices in school-based professional learning communities and provide opportunities for collaboration in external learning community seminars.

Observation & Feedback: Provide frequent opportunities for supportive and non-evaluative feedback regarding beginning educators' development as professionals from peers, mentors, and administrators.

Ongoing Professional Learning: Encourage and facilitate professional learning and skill development that is informed by data on student learning and contributes to the ongoing development of an educator.

INTENDED AUDIENCE & PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDEBOOK

Each of Utah's school districts and charter schools face circumstances and individualities unique to their local contexts. Consequently, there exists no one-size-fits-all solution to supporting beginning educators as they acclimate to a challenging profession and refine their ability to positively impact student learning. This guidebook is intended to support district and charter school leaders as they prepare to implement new induction practices or seek for ways to refine or extend their existing induction practices.

While the components of Utah's Educator Induction Framework are widely discussed as being critical to the support of educators as they begin their careers, these components may not universally address teacher needs in all circumstances. The purpose of the framework and this guidebook is to provide Utah's school leaders with guidelines and considerations that may be helpful as they examine existing induction practices and seek to add to or improve upon their current programs.

School districts and charter schools should evaluate and reflect upon their local circumstances and available resources to create induction practices that best serve the needs of the beginning educators in their schools. While the recommendations in this guidebook are not prescriptive mandates, they are informed by research and focus group conversations with Utah teachers and thus are consistent with what Utah educators need as they develop their professional capacities. School districts and charter schools who use the recommendations in this guide to inform their work will meet and exceed the minimum educator induction requirements outlined in [R277-308](#) and will find themselves better prepared to recruit, support, and ultimately retain teachers capable of providing Utah students with high quality educational experiences.

A NOTE REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

According to the Learning Policy Institute, the kind of preparation teachers have before entering the profession and the kind of administrative support they receive on the job are key variables that drive turnover. In a study that controlled for other variables, teachers who felt their administration was unsupportive were twice as likely to leave their schools as those who felt adequately supported.⁴ Local data also reveal that Utah educators want more personalized interactions with school leadership to help them understand expectations and navigate the particulars of their work.

One of the most important keys to implementing and sustaining teacher induction programs is the enthusiastic support and participation of school administration. While district and charter school leadership often organize and carry out initial induction activities, it is

ultimately the support and follow through of school-based leaders that have the greatest impact on the experiences of beginning teachers. Each chapter in this guidebook includes a section entitled *The Role of Administrators* intended to highlight school administrative practices that can support effective systems and support beginning educators' professional growth. We hope these considerations will be embedded in professional learning designed for school leaders to help them better understand and embrace their role in supporting comprehensive induction programs for beginning educators.

CONCLUSION

The Utah State Board of Education is committed to ensuring that Utah's students are supported by well-prepared educators who are supported in the difficult work of teaching. "Every student deserves a great teacher, not by chance, but by design."⁵ Attracting and retaining effective educators requires a concerted effort to design, implement, and sustain supports and learning opportunities that bring out the best in every teacher. We hope that Utah's districts and charter schools find the information and resources in this guidebook helpful in their endeavors to make decisions about the design, implementation, and continual refinement of high-quality teacher induction programs.

“Every student deserves a great teacher, not by chance, but by design.”⁵



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Chapter 1:

ORIENTATION & ONBOARDING



OVERVIEW

Orientation and onboarding experiences provided to beginning educators should serve as a launch for a comprehensive induction program, rather than as a stand-alone for welcoming beginning teachers. Orienting educators to the work of teaching should be more than a one-day event. Educators' orientation and onboarding should be an ongoing process that extends well into an educator's initial year of employment. At a minimum, educators should be familiarized with important policies, procedures, expectations, and technologies needed to perform their day-to-day work, but orientation and onboarding experiences should also offer educators a personalized and engaging welcome to the profession, the district or charter school, and their new position.

When developing events as part of orientation and onboarding, school districts and charter schools should consider differences in the training and experience of novice and transferring educators. Events and experiences should be crafted and scaffolded to meet varying educator needs without usurping unnecessary time.

REIMAGINING TRADITIONAL ORIENTATION PRACTICES

In many cases, initial orientation experiences have traditionally been designed as one- or two-day events where educators are provided with scores of documents related to the more procedural aspects of their employment, are informally introduced to their principal, and perhaps engage in short bursts of professional learning. In an increasingly digital world, school districts and charter schools may better value the time and meet the needs of beginning educators by disseminating policy-related information digitally and designing ways to hold educators accountable for consuming the information over time.

Example: Leadership designs a series of CANVAS modules to walk educators through important information (e.g., policies, benefits and payroll information, school or district maps, personnel directories). Well in advance of the first day of school, educators are provided access to these modules and are given timelines for reviewing the more essential materials. Educators complete "quizzes" in CANVAS to demonstrate their understanding of critical aspects of each module. Later, district and school leadership lead a series of personalized follow-up Q&A sessions where educators are acquainted with key personnel, introduced to their formal workplace surroundings and expectations, and are allowed to raise questions specific to their circumstances.

Moving the more procedural aspects of an initial orientation online allows school districts and charter schools to capitalize on available time by designing extended onboarding experiences that promote an early emphasis on professional learning. Supporting the professional learning of new teachers at the outset sends a clear message regarding the importance of reflection and the ongoing professional growth of educators. See the section entitled Orientation Design Principles below for ideas related to designing these experiences.

THE “FOUR C’S” OF ORIENTATION

According to the Society of Human Resource Management, successful induction programs incorporate “Four C’s”: clarification, compliance, connection, and culture. As it pertains to initial orientation practices, the following checklists provide examples of items worth including in orientation and onboarding experiences in each of the four areas. School districts and charter schools should have a clear vision regarding who has primary responsibility for addressing these practices with each educator and should communicate that vision clearly to all vested parties.

CLARIFICATION

Ensure that educators understand their new job and expectations by providing:

- An overview of critical policies for students and staff (e.g., dress code, keys and access cards, visitor policy, medication procedures, attendance procedures, purchase requests or expense reporting, supply access).
- How to login to and use needed technology (e.g., classroom telephone, intercom and announcements, email, software used for attendance, grades).
- Building tour(s), including the layout and location of classrooms, bathrooms, cafeteria, office, bus entrance(s), teacher parking, etc.
- Explanation and models of school and/or district approaches to curriculum (e.g., development process and expectations, existing curriculum maps and timelines, lesson plan procedures and expectations, classroom assessment system, grading procedures).
- Details regarding student discipline expectations and processes (e.g., behavior expectations inside and outside the classroom, expected staff supervision outside of the classroom, referral process for students with discipline issues and those with special needs).
- Details regarding all induction requirements and expectations, including requirements for ongoing license renewal.
- Details regarding administrative observation and the evaluation process.
- Resources and information related to professional learning expectations and available professional learning opportunities.

COMPLIANCE

Ensure that educators possess requisite knowledge related to basic legal and policy-related rules and regulations by:

- Completing required personnel forms (e.g., I9, W-4, direct deposit, fingerprinting).
- Providing information on perks and benefits of employment (e.g., health insurance, retirement plans, discount programs).
- Distributing, reviewing, and having employees acknowledge an employee handbook.
- Explaining emergency procedures (e.g., fire, earthquake, intruder), security policies (e.g., building access) and school safety plans.
- Issuing employee ID badge, parking pass, building/classroom keys, etc.

CONNECTION

Ensure that educators feel connected to their school community and encourage the fostering of interpersonal relationships and information networks by:

- Providing opportunities to visit with and introduce new teachers to administration, staff, and other faculty.
- Explaining relevant organizational charts.
- Introducing key personnel (e.g., district personnel, principal, secretaries, counselors, instructional coaches, mentors, custodians).
- Introducing and providing information on how to access mentors, instructional coaches, and others who are serving in roles that can support educator development.
- Introducing other faculty inside and outside grade level, discipline, and school.

CULTURE

Ensure that educators understand organizational norms – both formal and informal – and feel part of the school culture by:

- Sharing the school and/or district values, mission, vision, and goals.
- Sharing historical data and a perspective about the culture of the school.
- Sharing advantages and challenges associated with the larger school community.
- Setting expectations for collaboration and positive interpersonal interactions.
- Providing resources and opportunities for educators to engage in self-care and conveying the importance of this in educator practices.

ORIENTATION DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Practices of packing beginning educators into auditoriums and lecturing about classroom management or distributing copies of instructional self-help books and expecting new educators to devour pages of information and master instructional techniques rarely result in the development of widespread instructional prowess among beginning educators. Instead, orientation and onboarding experiences should emphasize “comprehensive, sustained, and evidence-based approaches to improving educator effectiveness in raising student achievement,” or **professional learning** as defined in [Utah Code 53G-11-303](#). As school districts and charter schools prepare to design orientation and onboarding events

that promote professional learning it is vital that such events are aligned to the [Professional Learning Standards](#). These eight standards highlight effective practices in designing learning for adults and students. Orientation and onboarding experiences that are aligned to these standards:

- ▶ provide space and time for educators to communicate and plan for integration of their learning into their teaching,
- ▶ cultivate a culture of continuous learning and growth,
- ▶ provide opportunities for job-embedded application of the practices introduced,
- ▶ provide opportunities for educators to set goals for immediate, short-term, and long-term implementation of the practices discussed,
- ▶ connect new learning to prior learning and/or experience to build the collective knowledge of all attendees,
- ▶ include follow-up and feedback opportunities to monitor and support the practices promoted during onboarding, and
- ▶ establish a model for what classroom teaching and learning should look like.



The table below provides examples of how each of the eight professional learning standards might be embedded in the design of orientation and onboarding experiences for beginning educators. More specific information about the standards in relation to designing general professional learning experiences can be found in Chapter 5 of this guidebook.

| Standard | Example |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Learning Communities | During an initial orientation, beginning educators convene in grade level or content specific groups to discuss their anticipations/plans for how to effectively deal with a series of proposed student behavior issues that often arise in class. An experienced educator facilitates the group, posing strategic questions throughout the discussion that prompt beginning educators to reflect upon and refine their thinking while providing guidance related to successful strategies. The entire group is thus able to build collective efficacy for the future success of the teachers and subsequent success of their students. |
| Skillful Leaders | Teacher leaders, administrative personnel, and National Board-Certified Teachers are invited to share with beginning educators their evolution as an educator from their early days in the classroom to their roles of leadership and accomplishment. Their stories open the minds of beginning educators, helping them recognize potential career paths and opportunities for engagement beyond the classroom. |

| Standard | Example |
|------------------------|---|
| Resources | Designers of orientation events modify existing print resources to develop online modules that include video and written materials to streamline the more mundane and administrative aspects of orientation. This effort results in a more efficient allocation of time and fiscal resources and allows LEA leadership to develop sustained professional learning seminars (see Chapter 5) to support and sustain ongoing onboarding efforts. |
| Data | Prior to initial orientation, designers of orientation experiences meet to articulate intended outcomes of the experiences they plan to carry out for teachers. After these experiences are complete, having acquired necessary data for determining the impact of their efforts, designers assess whether the intended goals of the orientation and onboarding experiences were met and revise, as needed, for subsequent iterations. |
| Learning Design | Designers of orientation and onboarding events work with partners in higher education educator preparation programs to determine alignment between practices beginning educators are taught in their preparation program and school district or charter school practices. Professional learning experiences included as part of ongoing onboarding are designed to make explicit connections to teachers' preservice learning and what will be their on-the-job experiences. |
| Implementation | As part of the professional learning experiences included in onboarding efforts, new educators are tasked with implementing one key practice that most resonated with them during a prior orientation event. As part of the ongoing professional learning seminars (see Chapter 5), teachers later report back about their experiences (successes and failures) launching their intended practice, are provided time to reflect on and discuss how to revise their implementation efforts, and are challenged to "try again" or select a new practice to implement. A continuous cycle of reflection is embedded as this process continues through all professional learning seminars. |
| Outcomes | As part of onboarding efforts, beginning educators participate in a professional learning seminar (see Chapter 5) where they work in grade level or content specific groups, examining actual, or hypothetical student data and discussing possible Tier 2, or Tier 3 interventions (see UMTSS Framework) they could implement to support students that the data suggest need supplemental instruction. An experienced educator facilitates the discussion and guides educator interpretation of the data to ensure that realistic interventions are proposed and to model data evaluation and the type of discussions that should occur as beginning educators participate in their school-based professional learning communities (see Chapter 3). |

| Standard | Example |
|------------|--|
| Technology | Several small schools who each have only a few new teachers use collaborative planning and Zoom meetings to plan a collaborative initial orientation for their beginning educators. Because the schools are geographically separated, Zoom allows them to leverage each other's resources for the collective good of the group. They then use CANVAS and in-person meetings to provide aspects of orientation that are specific to their schools, to manage follow-up tasks, and to periodically touch base with beginning educators to provide clarification on policy or other supports as needed. |

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ▶ **Schedule initial orientation events such that teachers have adequate time to plan their learning spaces.** Teachers spend much of their day-to-day activity in a classroom and beginning teachers frequently find themselves in classrooms with filing cabinets of another teacher's files, or textbooks for courses they are not assigned to teach. It is important that they have time to set up their classroom and make sure they have access to needed classroom resources. Where possible, schedule orientation events during summer months well in advance of the first day of school.
- ▶ **Tailor orientation events to specific needs associated with grade level, content, student demographics, teacher experience and preparation, and/or teaching assignments.** Providing teachers with information that respects their training and preparation while also being relevant to their actual work will increase engagement and facilitate early collaboration among peers.
- ▶ **Provide access to digital documentation of informational items you present during initial orientation.** In all the excitement and bustle associated with beginning educators' early weeks, it is likely that most of the information disseminated in orientation will need to be periodically reviewed. If educators have access to digital versions of informational items and know where to find them, they can review them as needed.
- ▶ **Have a plan for educators who are hired mid-year and are unable to participate in orientation events that occur earlier in the year.** Not all educators are hired by the time school begins. Educators who begin mid-year also need to be oriented to their work. Have a plan that addresses how you will identify and meet the initial and ongoing onboarding needs of these teachers.
- ▶ **Resist the temptation to do too much too quickly.** Novice teachers are often overwhelmed with entering a new profession, while transferring teachers may be facing challenges related to relocating to a new school or district. The early days of a new school year may not be the best time to present new teachers with lists of things to do, or with numerous instructional tools to improve their practice. While many beginning teachers will need guidance on how to improve and refine their practice, the balance of that work should occur over several years through mentoring and as part of educators' ongoing professional learning. During the initial orientation, balance providing beginning teach-

ers with what they must know to start their careers with what they can gradually learn over time.

- ▶ **Make orientation experiences engaging.** Model the kind of educational practice you expect your teachers will employ with their students by creating engaging opportunities to collaborate, learn, and develop professional relationships with others. Beginning teachers who find their orientation experiences engaging and informative are more likely to feel like they are joining an educational family and will be more likely to persist through any turbulent times that await them.
- ▶ **Avoid making assumptions about what teachers know.** Be cautious about using too many acronyms that may not be well known to beginning educators or assuming that they have the technological expertise to figure out LEA-specific programs and processes. It is better to be explicit than to risk confusing an already overwhelmed beginning educator.
- ▶ **Avoid making assumptions related to who is responsible for aspects of orientation and onboarding.** It is easy for district personnel to assume principals will address certain aspects of onboarding and for principals to assume that mentors will show beginning educators the ropes. If something is important enough for a beginning educator to know, make sure it is explicitly stated and known who bears responsibility for conveying that information to the educator.

THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATORS

In the mind of a beginning educator, the building principal has the ultimate power in determining the quality of their performance and their ongoing employability. In a sense, principals and building administrators are often perceived as the “educational CEOs” of schools by those new to the profession. It is important that beginning educators are known and accepted by those holding administrative positions in a school. To help support the orientation and onboarding of beginning teachers, administrators can:

- ▶ **Take time to visit with and get to know beginning teachers on a personal level.** Ask questions about who the teacher is outside of the school building. Get to know about their family, their likes and dislikes, and learn to recognize what kind of support they need from administrative personnel.
- ▶ **Make it a priority to regularly check in with beginning teachers for non-evaluative purposes.** Because administrators are perceived as “the boss,” administrators may need to work a little harder at being seen as friend and not foe. Casual efforts to acknowledge the beginning educator can go a long way to ensuring that educators see administrators as partners and not as adversaries.
- ▶ **Convey support for the ongoing development of the educator by providing honest and helpful feedback about the work they do.** Acknowledge positive things beginning educators do both in and outside the classroom and be specific about things you notice. Beginning educators crave constructive feedback about the work they do. Do not be afraid to caringly provide the guidance you see they need to move them forward as a professional.

- ▶ **Visit regularly with mentors to better understand how to support the growth of the beginning educator.** Once a mentor is assigned to a beginning educator, the administrator should periodically follow-up to make sure the mentoring relationship is progressing positively and to determine where administrative support may be needed to facilitate the mentoring process. It is imperative that all administrators value and respect the confidentiality inherent in the mentor/educator relationship. However, general conversation to inform how administration can support mentoring efforts is important.
- ▶ **Avoid placing beginning educators in positions that are overly demanding in preparation time, or volunteering beginning educators to lead additional committees and clubs.** The demands on beginning educators are vast and most struggle to balance these demands. Asking beginning educators to take on extra classes, or to advise extracurricular clubs and committees should be done on a limited basis to ensure they have time to devote to delivering quality instruction.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE

The following ideas were provided by Utah school district and charter school personnel as examples of how aspects of orientation and onboarding might be handled at a local level:

| Topic | Examples |
|------------------------------|--|
| Information Dissemination | <p>Set up a new teacher orientation course in CANVAS and use “groups” within the course to schedule periodic notification announcements to go out to various groups regarding follow-up on the information. You can then use CANVAS analytics to evaluate the relevancy of the information by looking at how frequently the information is accessed.</p> <p>Use “delay send” and calendar event reminders within email to establish revolving reminders to new teachers to access and/or complete key orientation processes.</p> <p>Establish a Google Drive location that is specific to housing informational components relevant to various topics of interest to new teachers. Advertise the location of the Drive and rely on Google Doc analytics in the Activity Dashboard to trace how often documents are accessed and assess their relevancy to new teachers.</p> <p>Establish and advertise specific locations on school/district websites that are specific to new teachers and that house the information they would find relevant and/or need quick access to.</p> |



| Topic | Examples |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Professional Learning Kickoff | When providing professional learning attached to skills, chapters, or sections of educational self-help books, have a scheduled plan for which skills, chapters, or sections will be covered over a specified time frame. Align your plan to the Professional Learning Standards and extend this plan over multiple years, providing a scaffolded emphasis on professional learning for beginning educators. Consider providing the same training to experienced teachers on the same revolving schedule to create a school, or district-wide focus on the development of multiple skills in all educators. (For more information, contact Susan Goldsberry at Quest Academy) |
| Professional Learning Follow-ups | <p>Seek initial and ongoing feedback from beginning teachers in surveys, interviews, or focus groups regarding their professional learning needs multiple times throughout the course of educators' early years. Use this data to inform the types of professional learning experiences you make available to new teachers and the extent to which you follow up with information provided during educators' initial orientation.</p> <p>Solicit feedback from teacher mentors and instructional coaches regarding the needs of teachers they are working with. Then, in collaboration with these mentors, develop professional learning opportunities aligned to the Professional Learning Standards that help provide just-in-time onboarding and ongoing professional learning for beginning educators.</p> |

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The resources in the table below may be directly disseminated to beginning teachers, embedded in existing orientation practices, or used to stimulate thinking among orientation and onboarding organizers regarding how to create effective initial orientation experiences that blend into ongoing opportunities for onboarding and professional learning.

| RESOURCES | DESCRIPTION |
|--|--|
| An Overview of Utah Educator License Renewal | A one-page summary of educator responsibilities associated with license renewal in Utah. |
| If I Knew Then: A Letter to Me on My First Day of Teaching | Inspirational 4-minute video where teachers write a letter to themselves on their first day teaching |
| New Teachers: A Primer on Assessment | A compilation of resources that provide information about five different types of assessment and how to use them to provide feedback to learners and inform instruction. |

| RESOURCES | DESCRIPTION |
|--|---|
| New Teachers: Designing Learning Environments | A compilation of resources that include tips and guides on classroom design and layout to help maximize the possibilities of the learning environment. |
| New Teachers: Fundamentals of Classroom Management | A compilation of resources for developing routines, fostering classroom community, managing disruptions, and building student relationships. Includes grade-based tips for primary and middle/secondary grades. |
| New Teachers: Lesson and Curriculum Planning | A collection of curriculum-planning tips, guidance, and other resources for planning effective activities, lessons, and units. |
| New Teachers: Preparing, Planning and Building Support Systems | A compilation of resources for preparing for the first days of school, time-management tips, self-care and more. |
| New Teachers: Technology Integration Basics | A compilation of tips, strategies, tools, and other resources to help new teachers successfully integrate technology to facilitate educational objectives. |
| New Teachers: Working with Parents | A compilation of resources for engaging and building trust with parents and creating supportive connections between school and home. |
| What I Wish I'd Known as a New Teacher | A veteran teacher offers essential advice for new teachers and the colleagues who support them. |

Chapter 2:

MENTORING



OVERVIEW

A critical component of any induction program is a formal partnership between a beginning teacher and a trained mentor. In Utah, mentors are educators who hold a professional level license ([R277-301](#)) and are “trained to advise, coach, consult, and guide the development of a new educator” ([R277-308](#)). As leaders within a school or district, teacher mentors play a fundamental role in helping beginning teachers acclimate to the teaching profession as well as to the communities of practice in their school and/or district. A mentor’s impact goes beyond merely showing beginning teachers where the copy machine or teachers’ lounge is located. At its best, mentoring is the fostering of a bi-directional learning relationship wherein both the beginning teacher and the mentor develop toward better professional and personal versions of themselves.

Two goals of high quality mentoring are (a) to provide psychosocial support as beginning teachers face disparities between what they thought teaching would be like and what is actually playing out in the classroom, and (b) to encourage and support beginning teachers’ ongoing reflection about their instructional practice and their development of the skills and expertise articulated in the [Utah Effective Teaching Standards](#). While the specific supports provided by a mentor to reach these goals should be tailored to meet the needs of each beginning teacher, effective mentors strive to develop long-term positive working relationships with the beginning teachers they mentor. They do so by accepting beginning educators as developing professionals while guiding educator reflection, encouraging instructional risk-taking, and aiding educators in establishing goals and assessing outcomes.



UNDERSTANDING BEGINNING TEACHERS' EARLY YEARS

As school districts and charter schools strive to provide mentoring supports, understanding the nature and progression of teachers' attitudes and experiences can facilitate the planning of mentoring experiences that more meaningfully meet beginning teachers' needs. According to Ellen Moir, founder and chief executive officer of the New Teacher Center, many teachers experience a cycle of mixed emotions as they progress through their first year of teaching⁶. While the specifics of the cycle depicted in Figure 2 are unique to each teacher, the cycle suggests that first-year teachers face a largely uphill emotional battle as they acclimate to the teaching profession.

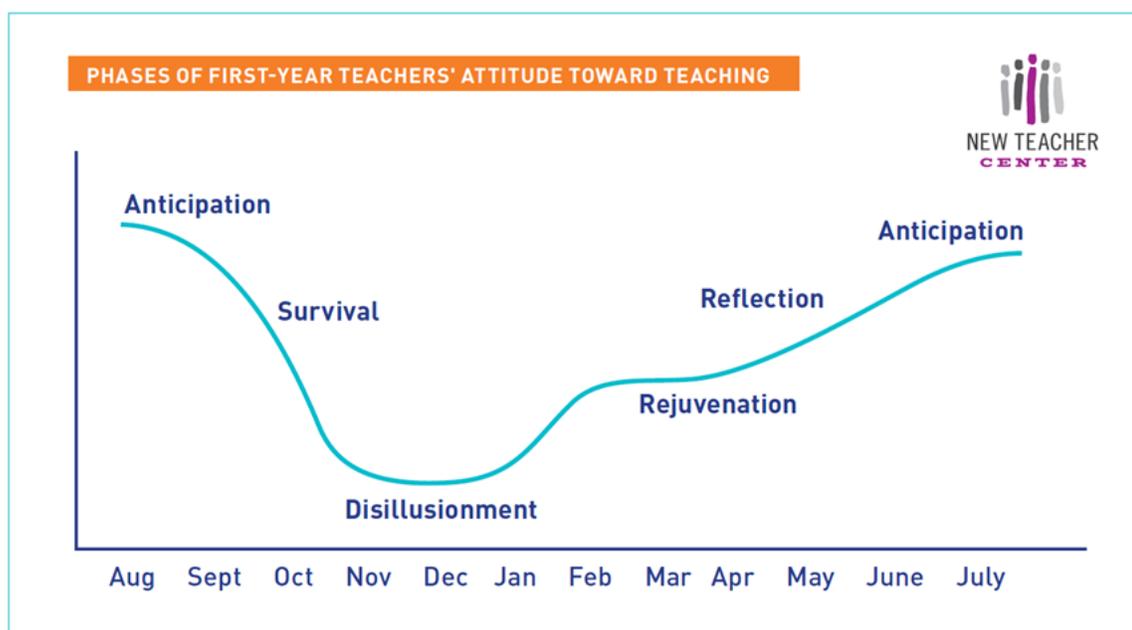


Figure 2. Shows the phases of beginning teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession.

During beginning teachers' preservice preparation, a sense of excitement and anxiety associated with obtaining their first teaching position grows. *Anticipation* builds as beginning teachers prepare their first classroom and anticipate what having charge of their own classroom(s) of students will entail. During this phase, teachers often romanticize teaching and their role as a teacher, developing an idealistic commitment to making a difference in the lives of young people. The positive emotions associated with this phase are heightened by teachers' experiences during orientation and carry the teacher through the initial weeks of the school year.

Within the first two or three months of the school year, the overwhelming demands of teaching begin to manifest themselves and beginning teachers are faced with having to learn a lot very quickly. As teachers enter the *survival* phase they are bombarded with a variety of unanticipated problems and situations that often catch them off guard. They struggle to keep their head above water as the day-to-day routines of developing curriculum, teaching, grading, and classroom management usurp their time in ways they had not expected.

It is common during this phase for new teachers to be in their classrooms well beyond school hours and to be spending enormous amounts of time on schoolwork while at home. They become tired and are surprised by the workload yet manage to harbor some hope that things will get better.

After running nonstop for six to eight weeks, new teachers realize that things are not going as smoothly as they had expected. A sense of *disillusionment* sets in as they begin to question their competence. In the light of looming parent conferences, possible evaluation by school administrators, and ongoing parent demands and expectations, teachers begin to feel like they may not be cut out for what it takes to be a teacher. During this phase, classroom management becomes particularly concerning as does balancing the demands of their career with their personal lives and relationships. Getting through this phase is perhaps the toughest challenge new teachers face.

If teachers make it through winter break, January typically brings a slow *rejuvenation* in attitude. The time away in December helps renew teachers as they have had time to rest and organize materials. They have a better understanding of the system and have come to accept the realities of teaching. If they have been successful in developing coping strategies during earlier phases, teachers are better able to manage the problems faced in the second half of the school year. This phase carries the teacher into spring and brings with it many ups and downs, including questions regarding how students will do on looming end of year tests and their own effectiveness as teachers.

As the school year draws to a close, teachers enter a phase of *reflection* wherein they examine the year and mentally highlight both their successes and their failures. They begin to consider changes to their instruction, management, and curriculum that will make the next year better. They start to look forward with a new sense of anticipation for summer and what the upcoming school year will hold.

These phases highlight the psychosocial struggle that most beginning teachers face as they seek to balance the realities of teaching with internal thoughts of inadequacy. However, progression through these phases may not be limited to beginning teachers. It is reasonable to assume that most, if not all, teachers experience similar emotions throughout their careers as educators. While school district and charter school induction efforts may not be able to prevent teachers' progression through this cycle of emotions, they can be foundational in helping support teachers through the progression. Mentors can help beginning educators understand that progression through these emotions is "normal" and perhaps even necessary, while simultaneously providing instructional guidance and emotional support that helps equip beginning educators with viable coping strategies.

THE ROLES OF A MENTOR

Unlike many professions where job-related responsibilities are released to beginners over time, new teachers are expected to perform the same duties as veteran teachers their first day on the job. As a result, beginning teachers are not only expected to master the art of effective teaching, but are also faced with managing large numbers of students with differing needs, demonstrating effective classroom management, keeping current on grading, navigating conversations with parents, and planning engaging learning experiences, all while maintaining balance in their own personal lives and growing as a professional.

Providing support and guiding professional growth ground the work of effective mentoring.⁷ Beginning teachers must embrace the reality that even highly effective teachers make (and learn from) mistakes and they must persist in their efforts to find and implement effective instructional strategies. Mentors must also embrace this growth orientation as they help beginning educators become professional problem solvers and decision makers. Thus, mentors must balance providing support with creating cognitive challenge and facilitating the development of a beginning educators' professional vision.⁸

Offering Support

Mentors may find themselves providing emotional, physical, institutional, and/or instructional support to beginning teachers.⁸ *Emotional support* includes providing a listening ear or a shoulder to cry on, celebrations of key successes, and everything in between. First-year educators are particularly susceptible to experiencing high levels of emotional stress and this stress can interfere with their ability to see the big picture of their evolution as an educator. A mentor models socioemotional wellness and helps a beginning educator maintain focus on the big picture view of the forest of his/her career through the trees of the often-troubling circumstantial events associated with early years in the classroom.

In addition to offering emotional support, mentors may be called upon to offer *physical support* (e.g., arranging the classroom, creating displays, setting up learning environments, assisting with grading) or *institutional support* (e.g., accessing the copy machine, introductions to custodial or secretarial staff, navigating parent conferences, understanding school/district policies and protocols). These types of supports are likely to be most necessary early in a teacher's first year and become less necessary over time.

As time passes and beginning teachers become more comfortable and confident, they may need *instructional supports* (e.g., establishing routines, managing behavior, designing quality lessons, improving aspects of the educator's instructional delivery). In some cases, a mentor may be able to provide these supports directly, while in others a mentor may call upon an instructional coach to help support the beginning teacher. In either case, it is important that this type of support is provided in a manner that is encouraging so that it is not viewed as an indication of one more way the teacher is failing to measure up. If a teacher is already questioning her competence, over-emphasizing ways she can improve may further perpetuate feelings of inadequacy. At the same time, beginning

teachers need a positive and supportive mentor who can encourage reflection upon the challenges being faced and how those challenges can be addressed. Providing strategic and intentional instructional guidance to support the beginning educator is an essential part of mentoring.

Creating Cognitive Challenge

While mentors could feasibly spend all of their time functioning in a support role with beginning teachers, effective mentoring should help transform beginning teachers into confident decision-makers who are equipped with the tools needed to analyze practice, set goals for improvement, and take action to meet those goals. Just as a vocal coach may prepare a singer for an upcoming performance by focusing on refining the vocalist's ability to project his voice clearly, mentors should strategically guide teachers to reflect upon their practice in ways that allow them to analyze their performance and identify areas for desired growth.

To guide beginning teachers through deep reflection regarding their practice, mentors may rely on what Jim Knight has termed the "impact cycle."⁹ This cycle consists of educator reflection to identify areas for desired improvement, goal setting aimed at that improvement, and then working toward meeting those goals and measuring the impact on student achievement. In cases where mentors themselves do not feel adequately capable of supporting educators through this cycle, they may rely on support from instructional coaches or other educators. As mentors guide the creation of cognitive challenge for beginning educators, they should be involved in regular non-evaluative observation of the teacher in action (see [R277-308](#)) and may also encourage beginning educators to observe other experienced educators' instruction. These observations provide opportunity for mentors to provide models of high-quality practice and guide beginning teachers' reflections, rather than impose or dictate instructional practices. As beginning teachers take time to deeply reflect on the work of others and their own efforts and progress, they are better prepared to develop a vision of their own professional capacity and work toward achieving that vision.

Facilitating Professional Vision

Given the certain challenges associated with teaching, beginning teachers often lack the experience and vision needed to see much beyond the day-to-day routines of their work. Another critical role of mentors is to help beginning teachers develop a professional vision of their future selves that includes seeing themselves as emerging professionals capable of growth and improvement. Acting in this capacity, mentors may provide beginning teachers with information regarding leadership opportunities within the school or district, or information about professional organizations and associated conferences and memberships, or they may help the teacher craft a five-to-ten-year career vision, outlining action steps the teacher can take to achieve that vision.

Mentor efforts to offer support, provide cognitive challenge, and facilitate professional vision will look different based on the unique needs of each beginning educator. To provide clarity around the actions of the ideal mentor, Utah mentoring experts have articulated six primary roles a mentor may play when engaging with a beginning educator: advocate,

colleague, confidant, facilitator, friend, and model. Competencies associated with mentors' skills and dispositions are articulated in the [Mentor Roles and Competencies](#) document. This document identifies what an "ideal" mentor does when acting in each role. It is unlikely that any mentor is expert in navigating all six roles for every beginning educator he works with. Still, as mentors strive to reflect upon and improve in their mentoring work, these ideals provide a model for self-improvement and a vision of what mentoring of beginning educators can look like.

SELECTING EDUCATORS TO SERVE AS MENTORS

The outline of the work of a mentor presented above illustrates the complexities associated with mentoring. Balancing the responsibilities of mentoring is challenging work that is facilitated when mentors and beginning educators work together to develop a mutually beneficial, multi-year relationship defined by care, concern, responsiveness, vulnerability, emotional connection, and commitment.¹⁰ Haphazardly selecting teachers to serve as mentors for beginning teachers is unlikely to create high impact relationships. Careful selection of teacher leaders who can effectively carry out the work of mentoring is essential to ensuring that mentoring positively impacts the support and retention of beginning educators.

According to research, and as supported by the voices of Utah educators, effective teacher mentors should have a lengthy and diverse record of past teaching experience themselves. Assigning relatively inexperienced educators to mentor beginning educators is potentially fraught with complications associated with neither educator having an adequate grasp of how to effectively deal with the complex realities of teaching. However, teaching experience alone does not qualify one to serve as a mentor. Instead, research suggests, and Utah educators echo, that the best mentors are committed to the role of mentoring, are able and willing to devote needed time to their mentoring role, are kind and accepting of the new teacher(s) they mentor, are skilled at providing instructional support, are effective in interpersonal contexts, are models of continuous learners, and are capable of communicating hope and optimism.¹¹

When considering who to place in mentoring roles, school districts and charter schools should prioritize as mentors those with leadership ability who exhibit aptitude for fulfilling the capacities and roles outlined in the document mentioned above. In addition, principals can rely on opportunities to provide professional learning to their entire faculty to develop these capacities in their broader community of teachers, thereby building the pool of educators who can effectively serve as mentors. Persistent efforts to develop the skills and dispositions needed to be an effective mentor in all faculty members will do much to foster a supportive school culture.



PROVIDING ONBOARDING AND ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR MENTORS

To effectively support and provide instructional guidance to beginning educators, mentors should engage in professional learning for their work well in advance of being assigned to work with beginning educators. Mentor learning experiences should be aligned to the vision and goals of your agency’s mentoring program and to the [Mentor Roles and Competencies](#) and should be developed with the [Professional Learning Standards](#) in mind. Examples of mentor learning experiences exhibiting this alignment are provided in the table below.

| Standard | Examples |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Learning Communities | <p>During mentor onboarding, new mentors are introduced to a CANVAS course where common concerns related to developing and cultivating positive professional working relationships are organized into a module entitled “Fostering Relationships.” The module contains preliminary guidance and resources from more experienced mentors and includes an open forum discussion board where a monthly “problem of practice” related to fostering relationships with mentees is posted. Mentors sign in during a specified week each month to respond to the problem of practice and collaborate on solutions. Mentor responsibility for selecting the monthly problem is rotated among participating mentors.</p> |
| Skillful Leaders | <p>A district mentor is assigned to oversee site-based mentors from five schools in the district. Each month the district mentor plans a one-hour professional learning session for all five school mentors wherein he leads a focused discussion on a principle of effective adult learning taken from “Learning to Listen Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults.” Because the mentors are engaging in a book study of this work, they each come prepared to discuss the ways they are experiencing success and/or struggling to implement the principles with their beginning teachers. Each district mentor who is engaging in this way brings their learning from these smaller groups back to inform district-wide professional learning around adult learning more widely across the district. These discussions lead to more focused district leadership around principles of adult learning.</p> |
| Resources | <p>After a beginning teacher laments that she is having difficulty communicating with the parents of her English language learners, the mentor contacts the foreign language departments in nearby high schools. After some conversation, it is determined that some of the more proficient high school students are willing and able to help translate parent communications. The mentor introduces the students to the teacher and facilitates weekly communication between them that helps the beginning teacher more effectively communicate with her students’ parents.</p> |

| Standard | Examples |
|------------------------|--|
| Data | Mentors from several local charter schools meet to discuss their perceptions related to the support needs of their beginning teachers. In a separate meeting, beginning educators from the same schools meet and discuss their needs. Both groups generate a “top five” list. Mentors use their list and that of the beginning educators to determine alignment between teacher needs and mentor perceptions of needs. They then adapt their professional learning for mentors to align with the needs the teachers identified. |
| Learning Design | The mentors at separate campuses of a charter school are working on building a plan for their professional learning for the upcoming school year. As the current school year draws to a close, they each have one-on-one discussions with several beginning teachers on their campuses regarding classroom management needs. These conversations are used to inform the topics and strategies the mentors work on during the summer in preparation for the next school year. |
| Implementation | District instructional coaches plan and facilitate professional learning on how to implement an Impact Cycle ⁹ to a group of teacher mentors. During a series of meetings, the instructional coaches engage the mentors in a sample learning cycle. The learning opportunity ends with mentors having an assignment to implement an impact cycle with one of their mentees. In a follow up learning experience, mentors share their experiences and are given the opportunity to learn from the collective experiences of the group. |
| Outcomes | In an initial mentor onboarding, mentors from multiple schools discuss their personal goals for the upcoming school year. As a group, mentors throughout the system determine that they will place a particular emphasis on establishing expectations for confidentiality with the beginning teachers they mentor. During monthly mentor check-in meetings, mentors share their established expectations and share problems of practice that are arising related to confidentiality. At the end of the year, each mentor evaluates his/her growth. Their self-reflection along with feedback from mentored teachers is considered as part of their annual mentor evaluation. |
| Technology | Several small and geographically spread out schools collaborate to organize Zoom meetings that allow their mentors to meet together monthly and engage in discussion about technological tools that can support their mentoring work. These meetings begin to function as “mentoring for the mentors” and the mentors begin to form a network of professional support despite their geographic separation. This allows them to provide each other with viable resources and skills they can use to support their beginning teachers throughout the school year. |

According to The New Teacher Center, care should be taken to ensure that mentors understand the vision, mission, and goals of the mentoring program and that they have sufficient foundational knowledge and skills to establish initial trust and credibility with beginning educators.¹² Furthermore, professional learning designed for mentors should include content that is research-based, be aligned with program, school and/or district goals and priorities, and allow mentors to collaboratively apply and extend new learning, reflect on practice, and examine data on student learning, beginning teacher practice, and in-field observations.¹²

Before being officially assigned to beginning educators, mentors should receive onboarding training in the following broad areas:

- ▶ The needs of beginning teachers
- ▶ The context, purpose, and value of effective mentoring
- ▶ The roles, tasks, and expectations associated with being a mentor
- ▶ Establishing and cultivating productive mentor-educator relationships
- ▶ Supporting the professional growth of a beginning educator

Once mentors begin working with beginning educators, they should participate in ongoing collaborative opportunities for their own professional learning. Again, the particulars of ongoing mentor training should be tailored to the needs of the mentors themselves. Topics for consideration in the sustained training portfolios of mentors include:

- ▶ Adult learning and development theory
- ▶ [The Coaching Cycle Model](#)
- ▶ District- and/or school-specific curricular objectives and frameworks
- ▶ Effective communication, including questioning and active listening skills
- ▶ Grade or content specific standards
- ▶ Observation and feedback skills
- ▶ Problem solving skills
- ▶ Promoting educator reflection
- ▶ Using data to evaluate and improve student learning
- ▶ The [Utah Effective Teaching Standards](#)

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ▶ **Whenever possible, mentors should have experience teaching the same grade level, or content as those they mentor.** While it is possible for dynamic mentoring relationships to result from pairing individuals with diverse experiences, mentors who have relevant grade-level and/or content expertise may better meet the needs of some beginning teachers.
- ▶ **When feasible, all mentors within a school district or charter school should be trained together.** This practice will improve the cohesiveness of mentor trainings and

provide mentors with access to a professional learning community (PLC) comprised of other mentors and mentor leaders on whom they can rely for ongoing feedback and support.

- ▶ **Mentors may also need psychosocial and job-related support.** To help mentors meet the demands of mentoring generally, and the unique personal needs of the teachers they service, mentors should meet regularly within their own PLC teams and participate in their own ongoing training and development. Having a network of support, or mentors for the mentors, helps refresh mentors' perspectives and personalize their growth in the mentoring process.
- ▶ **Mentoring relationships should be responsive to the potentially changing needs of both the beginning educator and the mentor.** The best mentoring relationships result in the growth of both the mentor and the beginning educator. As circumstances evolve, it may be appropriate to modify, or change mentor partnerships to better meet the needs of those involved in the relationship.
- ▶ **As teacher leaders, mentors are highly qualified professionals who should be compensated for their mentoring efforts.** Those who serve as mentors are typically chosen because they are well-respected in their school communities. They are frequently veteran teachers who are easy to talk to and who have positive relationships with teachers, staff, and administration. Thus, in their work as mentors they are demonstrating a skill set that sets them apart from other teachers. Asking teachers to take on these extra responsibilities without compensation fails to communicate their value as teacher leaders. Finding sources to compensate mentors for their work signals their value and communicates the importance of mentoring.
- ▶ **Whenever possible, mentors should have modified schedules that provide designated time for them to function in a mentoring capacity.** The ideal is that districts and charter schools create positions that allow educators to have mentoring as their sole job responsibility. However, in some cases, mentors are working as classroom teachers themselves. Mentors in these circumstances may have difficulty separating their mentoring and teaching responsibilities. Creating circumstances where these teachers can be released from their teaching responsibilities for at least a portion of the day will create circumstances where they can more easily balance the demands of mentoring as well as their own classroom responsibilities.
- ▶ **Establishing expectations for ongoing mentor development will, over time, build capacity for the most productive mentoring relationships.** Just as educators are periodically asked to reflect upon their work and are evaluated based on their performance, mentors should similarly be held accountable for demonstrating growth in their mentoring role. The competencies in the [Mentor Roles and Competencies](#) provide a relevant starting point for establishing expectations for mentor self-reflection, growth, and periodic evaluation.

THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATORS

Despite the best efforts of state or district personnel, when it comes to mentoring and ensuring successful mentoring practices, what happens between mentor and beginning educator at the school level can make or break educators' perceptions of the value and efficacy of mentoring. This makes school administrators' role in mentoring an important one. To ensure successful mentoring at a local level, school administrators can:

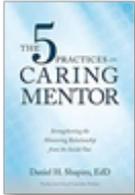
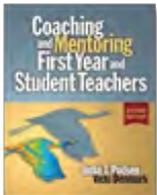
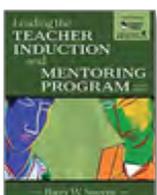
- ▶ **Thoughtfully assign mentors to mentees and make sure selected teachers are agreeable to being mentors.** After considering the needs of beginning educators as well as the strengths of school personnel, administrators should work to make mentor-educator assignments that build on strengths while providing needed supports. Issues of convenience, like scheduling or proximity, may need to be reconsidered to create more effective mentoring partnerships. Once an administrator has identified a "good fit" for a beginning educator, it is important to communicate with the teacher who will be assigned as mentor to ensure willingness to engage in this capacity. If teachers are asked to mentor without having consented to serve in the role, they are unlikely to provide quality experiences for the beginning educator or work to create a positive and supporting relationship.
- ▶ **Communicate clear expectations to mentors.** It is important that teachers who are assigned to mentor a beginning educator have agreed to and know they have a mentoring assignment. Administrators should never presume that a mentor knows what is expected. Instead, administrators should clearly outline expectations, including who the mentor can contact with additional questions related to the role.
- ▶ **Create feedback loops that allow mentors and beginning educators access to decision-making personnel.** If an administrator has clearly communicated expectations related to mentoring, then much of the day-to-day work associated with the mentoring relationship can be left to those involved. However, administrators can signal ongoing support of the mentoring relationship by establishing protocols that allow mentors and beginning educators to communicate their individual and collective needs and concerns to someone with decision-making power. Both mentors and beginning educators should feel like they can contact school administration with concerns or for additional support as needed.
- ▶ **Build faculty capacity for mentoring as part of the school culture.** School administrators who are familiar with the [Mentor Roles and Competencies](#) can work to support the development of faculty-wide capacity for these roles by embedding development of these capacities into faculty meetings and other faculty-wide discussions. Building a school culture of collaboration and establishing a clear vision for communication and support embeds a mentoring mentality across the school that can work to supplement and sustain formal mentoring efforts.
- ▶ **Provide professional learning to support mentors.** To improve their craft, mentors need access to ongoing opportunities for professional learning. Administrators should establish the professional learning needs of mentors as a priority because mentors' learning will directly impact the development of the beginning teachers they serve. Oc-

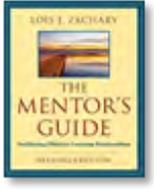
asionally allowing mentors and their assigned educators to attend professional learning opportunities together can also be of benefit.

- ▶ **Align schedules and calendars to prioritize time for mentoring activities.** Find ways to create extra time in mentor and beginning educators’ schedules to allow for quality mentoring activities such as observation to occur. Anticipate and provide beginning educators and mentors time to discuss how to navigate non-classroom expectations like parent-teacher conferences and school-wide assessments. Sacrifices of time to support quality mentoring interactions will reap benefits in teacher retention and student learning that will make the sacrifice worthwhile.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Several resources are available to support the implementation and sustaining of mentoring programs. Content for this chapter has come from the various resources shown in the table below.

| Resource | Image | Description |
|--|---|---|
| <p>“The 5 Practices of the Caring Mentor” ISBN: 1-7335808-0-8</p> |  | <p>Identifies key practices mentors can use to strengthen their relationships with mentees.</p> |
| <p>“Coaching and Mentoring First Year and Student Teachers” ISBN: 978-1-59667-039-6</p> |  | <p>Provides guidance to mentors associated with working with first year and student teachers.</p> |
| <p>“The Impact Cycle” ISBN: 978-1-5063-0686-5</p> |  | <p>Provides insight on the use of an impact cycle to coach teachers toward incremental instructional improvement.</p> |
| <p>“Leading the Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program” ISBN: 978-1-4129-4461-8</p> |  | <p>Provides guidance for implementing and supporting induction and mentoring programs.</p> |
| <p>Mentor Modules</p> | | <p>A series of free online workshops designed to train mentors.</p> |

| Resource | Image | Description |
|--|--|---|
| <p>“The Mentor’s Guide” ISBN: 978-0-470-90772-6</p> |  | <p>Training workbook that can be used to train mentors. (Also available: “The Mentee’s Guide” —designed to parallel “The Mentor’s Guide” —enabling simultaneous training of mentors and mentees.)</p> |
| <p>“Mentoring in Action” ISBN: 978-1-5063-4511-6</p> |  | <p>Month-by-month curriculum and guidance for mentoring. (Also available: “The First Years Matter: Becoming an Effective Teacher” —designed as a companion teacher workbook to facilitate simultaneous mentor-mentee training).</p> |
| <p>“Mentoring Matters: A Practical Guide to Learning Focused Relationships” ISBN: 978-0-9981770-1-4</p> |  | <p>A mentoring guide aimed at developing mentoring relationships focused on conversations that facilitate teacher learning.</p> |
| <p>“Starting Strong: A Mentoring Fable” ISBN: 978-1-118-76771-9</p> |  | <p>Provides insight into what the work of mentoring entails through a fable. Taken from a business-context, this story can be adapted to see educational relevance.</p> |
| <p><u>USBE Mentor Competencies Training Canvas Course</u></p> | | <p>Provides a high-level overview and self-paced training associated with <u>Utah’s Competencies of a Quality Mentor</u>. Open enrollment available year-round. (Update coming 2021)</p> |

Chapter #3

COLLABORATION



OVERVIEW

Mentors alone are rarely able to address all questions and concerns beginning educators have. A comprehensive teacher induction program supplements mentoring with other opportunities for educator collaboration. Generally speaking, schools functioning as professional learning communities (PLCs) provide a forum for teachers to “come together to share experiences and try to make sense of them, to collaboratively deal with issues that arise in the classroom or at school, and to provide each other with professional and moral support.”¹³ As highlighted in [Utah’s Professional Learning Standards](#), communities focused on learning promote collective responsibility and shared purpose, cultivate mutual accountability and trust, and incorporate a sense of belonging with supportive conditions. Providing opportunities for beginning educators to engage in communities of learning within as well as outside of their school buildings is an important part of an educator induction program.

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY?

Just before the turn of the century, Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker consolidated early work on communities of learning and defined the concept of a professional learning community (PLC). In their book *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*, DuFour and Eaker suggest that a school functions as a professional learning community when its members

- ▶ collectively pursue a shared mission, vision, values, and goals,
- ▶ work interdependently in collaborative teams focused on learning,
- ▶ engage in ongoing collective inquiry into best practice and the “current reality” of student achievement and the prevailing practices of the school,
- ▶ demonstrate an action orientation and experimentation,
- ▶ participate in systematic processes to promote continuous improvement, and
- ▶ maintain an unrelenting focus on results.

These characteristics have subsequently been synthesized into three big ideas that guide the work of educators working together in a professional learning community.¹⁴

Big Idea #1: ENSURING THAT STUDENTS LEARN

A key concept of professional learning community models is the assumption that the focus is on what students learn rather than what teachers teach. Helping all students learn and achieve at high levels is fundamental to the work of PLCs. Engaged in efforts to ensure equitable learning, members of PLCs are driven by three crucial questions:

- ▶ What do we want each student to learn?
- ▶ How will we know when each student has learned it?
- ▶ How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning what we intend?

Big Idea #2: A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

Within PLCs, collaboration is characterized by systematic processes in which teachers work together to analyze and improve practice. Working in teams, educators engage in ongoing cycles of questioning that promote the professional learning of all members of the team, which in turn leads to higher levels of student achievement. Such collaboration may be evidenced by educators developing common expectations for student mastery, developing common formative assessments, analyzing student performance on assessments, and making collaborative decisions regarding reteaching, or extending learning.

Big Idea #3: A FOCUS ON RESULTS

The effectiveness of PLC work is determined based on measurable results. Teams of educators set and hold themselves accountable for meeting goals for student achievement and use student data to measure their progress. Rather than disregarding or making excuses for unfavorable data, PLC teams use the data to hold themselves accountable for improving instructional practice.

In attempting to understand what a PLC is, it is important to bear the following in mind:

- ▶ **PLCs are dynamic and action-oriented and represent an ongoing evolution of thought and practice among members.** “The PLC process is not a program. It cannot be purchased, nor can it be implemented by anyone other than the staff itself. Most importantly, it is ongoing—a continuous, never-ending process of conducting schooling that has a profound impact on the structure and culture of the school and the assumptions and practices of the professionals within it.”¹⁵
- ▶ **The PLC is not a meeting.** “It is not uncommon for us to hear, ‘My PLC meets Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.’ This perception of a PLC is wrong on two counts. First the PLC is the larger organization and not the individual teams that comprise it. ... Second, ... the PLC process has a pervasive and ongoing impact on the structure and culture of the school. If educators meet with peers on a regular basis only to return to business as usual, they are not functioning as a PLC.”¹⁵ PLCs should be more than business meetings. They should be action-oriented work groups with an unyielding emphasis on growth toward measurable results.
- ▶ **High quality PLCs provide educators with a structured approach to considering and implementing the practices advocated as part of [Utah’s Multi-Tiered System of Sup-](#)**

ports (UMTSS). When educators are working together as PLCs to articulate learning goals and assess student attainment of those goals, they are better positioned to recognize when Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are needed to facilitate learning among their students. Further, a PLC culture provides structured support for collaborative identification and implementation of identified interventions.

So, what is a PLC? It is an “ongoing process in which *educators work collaboratively* in recurring *cycles of collective inquiry* and action research *to achieve better results* for the students they serve”¹⁵ (emphasis added). This process is frequently carried out in teams of site-based peers, but beginning educators may benefit from such collaborative opportunities outside of their schools as well.

BEGINNING EDUCATORS AS PART OF SITE-BASED PLCS

Site-based PLCs include the collaborative processes and culture of learning established within a school. For beginning educators, being part of a PLC environment has the potential to provide the following benefits:

- ▶ Access to more experienced educators who can support identification of curricular goals as well as efforts to plan and deliver quality lessons aligned with school- and/or district-specific learning goals.
- ▶ Opportunities to collaboratively develop instructional resources and assessments, thereby reducing the time required for beginning educators to develop these resources in isolation.
- ▶ Familiarization with the process of acquiring and analyzing student data to determine whether what was taught was learned.
- ▶ Experienced peer perspectives regarding effective instructional adjustments and interventions for students struggling to learn.

Site-based PLCs may involve grade-level or content specific teams, or they may bring together cross-grade, or cross-disciplinary teams. In some cases, blending combinations of homogenous and heterogenous groups may best meet the collaborative needs of the school. Regardless of their composition, communications within PLC teams should be centered around the three big ideas mentioned above.

Example: All five of a school’s 4th grade teachers study the Utah Core standards and school/district curriculum guides related to mathematics to identify the essential knowledge and skills 4th graders should have of fractions. They also meet with the school’s 5th grade teachers to better understand which fraction-related skills students should have mastered before they leave 4th grade. The teachers then collectively develop learning objectives to target the identified knowledge and skills as well as targets for student mastery. Next, the teachers develop common instruments that will allow them to formatively assess students’ progression toward intended objectives. Each teacher presents a series of lessons to his/her students and administers the agreed upon formative assessments. Before the conclusion of the unit, teachers meet to analyze student data. They agree upon criteria for judging the quality of student work and, using that criteria, determine whether intended learning objectives are being met for each student. Rec-

ognizing that many, but not all, students are experiencing success, the teachers use flexible grouping strategies that allow them to extend the learning of students who have met the intended targets while providing Tier 2 interventions for students who have not yet met the learning goals.

As beginning educators participate with their peers in collaborative activities like those outlined above, they gain proficiency in collaborative dialogue regarding instructional objectives and student success. Ensuring that beginning teachers have access to a collaborative network of knowledgeable peers as part of a PLC can supplement mentoring efforts by providing another layer of professional support to guide the development of the beginning teacher. Additionally, when a PLC culture becomes embedded in the day-to-day work of educators, a sense of collective efficacy for ensuring student success develops which provides additional incentive to work as a PLC.

BEGINNING EDUCATOR ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING COMMUNITY SEMINARS

While participating in site-based PLC work offers many benefits to beginning educators, they may also benefit from collaborations with early career teachers in contexts that differ from their own. **Learning community seminars** bring together groups of beginning teachers from a variety of school contexts for the purpose of sharing, reflecting, learning, and supporting one another and providing opportunities to openly discuss dilemmas with others.¹² Seminars should typically be scheduled less frequently than PLC team meetings (e.g., monthly or quarterly) and may be structured to model a support group with a single focused topic of discussion for each meeting, or as a mini-conference where beginning teachers select to attend discussions from a menu of available topics.

An advantage of single-topic, focused groups is the opportunity for school districts and charter schools to deliver targeted support in areas identified as high need for beginning teachers (e.g., classroom management, student discipline, managing grading, understanding and complying with special education practices, communicating with parents). This facilitates management of the professional learning from a central source and offers a prime opportunity to extend the professional learning begun as part of orientation and onboarding experiences.

Example: As part of initial orientation efforts, beginning educators learn about Utah's [Multi-Tiered System of Supports Framework](#). At the conclusion of orientation, they are challenged to notice instances during their first month in the classroom where their students may need interventions. One month later, during their first professional learning seminar, elementary educators are placed in grade-level groups and secondary educators are placed in content-specific groups. They share their experiences noticing student needs for intervention. They then work with an experienced educator who facilitates a group discussion related to identifying appropriate Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 supports they can try to embed in their work over the course of the next month. Teachers return to their classrooms to implement the intervention practices they identified and return the following month to share their successes and failures, rethink and revise their approaches, and discuss next steps.

As the above example highlights, there is incredible potential for topic-focused learning seminars to enhance educators' professional learning experiences around specific practices. At the same time, providing the option for educators to self-select topics that meet their individual needs has the advantage of allowing for learning experiences that are tailored to each individual educator, thereby providing experiences that are more personalized to specific needs educators have. While facilitation of these types of seminars may require more resources, they provide an opportunity to involve more experienced educators in showcasing effective practices and guiding beginning educator reflection regarding their own practice.

Example: Several small charter schools and two smaller school districts collectively plan a learning community seminar. Each school plans to invite one teacher from their LEA to facilitate a discussion around strategically identified topics of beginning educator interest. This allows them to offer beginning educators a choice of five different sessions. Beginning educators select one session to attend. During the seminar, each presenter spends 20 minutes describing their approach to the highlighted topic. The presenter then facilitates the self-reflection of the beginning educators around how they might embed or modify the highlighted practices in their own classroom. Beginning educators are guided through reflecting on their current practice, developing an action plan for modifying their current practice or implementing a new practice, and leave having articulated one implementation goal. During next quarter's scheduled learning community seminar, educators spend 20 minutes in their former groups reporting back on their efforts before selecting a new topic for that month's seminar. The five topics initially selected are made available during each quarter's seminar, providing beginning educators with the opportunity to attend three of the five available sessions throughout the school year.

School districts and charter schools might also be able to blend the idea of focused-topic seminars with providing educator choice in which seminars to attend, by providing repeated sessions of focused-topic seminars and allowing educators to select which sessions to attend throughout the school year. For an example of how this might work in practice, see the *Spotlight on Practice* section below.

As beginning teachers participate in learning community seminars, they build self-confidence and are better able to cope with the frustrations that accompany the early years of teaching as they realize that they are not alone in the struggles they face and their feelings of isolation. Additionally, they build efficacy for their value as classroom teachers as they learn from more experienced peers and form collaborative relationships that extend beyond their school walls. For teachers in areas such as career and technical education, who may not have site-based peers who teach the same content, well-structured seminars can also be crafted to provide the ongoing benefits of site-based PLCs.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

While the concept of professional learning communities (PLCs) has been making its way into the mainstream of educational practice for at least the last decade, implementing and

supporting effective learning communities is still difficult work. Lessons learned over the last decade provide the following recommendations for effective PLC work:¹⁶

- ▶ **Members of a learning community should share ownership of community vision and goals.** All members of a learning community should have a voice in drafting the goals of the community and how those goals will be achieved. Just because beginning teachers are new to the profession or school does not mean they cannot contribute meaningful ideas and perspectives. Providing beginning teachers with a voice in the learning community will help them develop a stronger sense of purpose and direction in their work, thereby encouraging their retention.
- ▶ **The work of learning communities should be focused on rigorous professional growth, student outcomes, and common problems of practice.** High-functioning learning communities work on manageable tasks and converse about student achievement data with specific goals in mind. At the heart of a well-functioning learning community is the ability of participating educators to support one another in their professional learning and growth. Effective learning communities provide all educators with group support, intellectual stimulation, and increased job satisfaction.
- ▶ **Learning communities may include learning from non-evaluative peer observation.** The prevalent practice of teachers working in isolation behind closed doors is in direct opposition to effective PLC work. Where reasonable, teachers should observe peers and engage in collaborative dialogue related to improving student engagement and learning outcomes. When done in a spirit of support, peer-observation can be particularly helpful for beginning teachers.
- ▶ **Learning community seminars should be organized, scheduled, and facilitated by trusted LEA personnel or teacher leaders.** Placing this responsibility on centralized figures of leadership helps ensure that seminars are scaffolded to be productive learning experiences and that they do not degenerate into unmoderated gripe sessions.

THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATORS

Establishing a school culture where PLCs are likely to thrive is the responsibility of school administrators. It is important that administrators establish and value time for learning community work during regular school hours. PLCs widely function on a school level and administrators should have and communicate a clear vision for the work their site-based PLCs accomplish. More important than having administrators evaluate outcomes of PLC work, however, is their full engagement in encouraging and supporting PLC members in developing a clear vision and following through on attempts to improve instruction and student learning. Administrators should send strong signals of support of PLC work rather than dictate or micro-manage outcomes of PLC work. To provide the most support to beginning educators in their efforts to engage in collaborative work, administrators should bear in mind the following:

- ▶ **If possible, beginning teachers should have reduced teaching loads that require them to teach fewer periods and/or a smaller variety of classes.** For those new to the subtleties associated with preparing instructional lessons, having to prepare for more than a few classes while also being expected to collaborate with a mentor and other

school-based peers can be overwhelming. When teachers are struggling to prepare for an excessive number of courses or are tasked with teaching additional periods, time for collaboration may seem to be a commodity. Beginning teachers frequently cite burnout as a primary reason for leaving the profession. Providing beginning teachers with schedules that facilitate their involvement in instructional planning, collaboration, and meaningful reflection will help mitigate against unnecessary burnout.

- ▶ **When possible, beginning teachers should have common planning time with one or more experienced peers with whom they can plan, develop, refine, and revise lessons and learning activities.** Assigning beginning teachers common planning time with an assigned mentor can be extremely helpful in facilitating the mentoring relationship. While dedicating common planning time during the day for an entire PLC team may be a logistical challenge, offering beginning teachers common planning time with a mentor or other educator(s) can help reduce the challenges associated with what and how to effectively plan, deliver, and evaluate instruction.
- ▶ **Beginning teachers’ classrooms should be in the main school building, rather than in isolated extension buildings or portables.** Including beginning teachers in the main school building prevents further feelings of isolation, facilitates more frequent observations, and increases engagement with colleagues, thereby extending the potential impact of collaborative efforts.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE

The following ideas were provided by Utah school district and charter school personnel as examples of how to effectively involve beginning educators in collaborative experiences:

| Topic | Examples |
|-----------------|--|
| Site-Based PLCs | <p>Beginning educators are more likely to feel welcome and part of a school community when their ideas are welcomed and even sought for as part of PLC work. To help break down perceptions of hierarchy among staff in PLCs, establish rotating role assignments as part of PLC work that allow beginning teachers the opportunity to lead discussions, share successes and hurdles, and/or provide meaningful data to drive the PLC conversations. Helping beginning educators feel equal, rather than inferior to, their more experienced peers will improve their job satisfaction.</p> <p>Encourage PLC teams to provide agendas to team members to facilitate members’ ability to acquire needed student data and artifacts ahead of time for their collaborative conversations. Assign mentors, or other faculty to help beginning teachers in acquiring these artifacts.</p> <p>Involve administrators in PLCs and maintain balance between administrative efforts to ensure compliance with mandates while supporting the organic evolution of PLC goals.</p> |

| Topic | Examples |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Learning Community Seminars | <p>Leadership identifies eight critical topics of interest for beginning teachers and develops one to two-hour learning sessions for each topic. They then craft a rotating schedule that offers each session four times during the school year. Beginning educators are required to attend at least four sessions during their second year of teaching and four during their third year. Sessions model best teaching practice, often involving master teachers in the design and delivery, and may be offered in hybrid format with online and live components. Because sessions are aligned to the Utah Professional Learning Standards, district standards, and Utah Effective Teaching Standards, educators may earn credits toward relicensure for their participation. (For more information on how this approach is used to support elementary teachers contact Allison Riddle, and for information on use of this practice to support secondary teachers contact Jenette Jenkins in Davis School District.)</p> |

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

The resource below provides additional information related to professional learning communities.

<https://www.allthingsplc.info/>

A collaborative, objective resource for educators and administrators that provides access to joining a collaborative community for insights, tips, and questions; examining evidence of improved learning and effective practices, and downloadable tools and resources.



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Chapter 4:

OBSERVATION & FEEDBACK



OVERVIEW

As teachers enter their first years of teaching, they often do so with limited experience in leading classrooms of students on their own. In contrast to possible clinical and student teaching experiences, beginning teachers have full responsibility for establishing and managing classroom expectations, sequencing, preparing, and delivering quality content instruction, and developing appropriate caring relationships with students. These new responsibilities can be overwhelming, leaving many to wonder whether they are doing things “right.” Beginning educators’ self-reflections about the adequacy of their efforts often lead them to inflate their inadequacies as they worry about whether they are meeting expectations.

Regular supportive feedback from colleagues, mentors, and school administration provides a way to help ease these concerns and guide teacher goal setting and reflection toward improving practice and student achievement. Without this feedback, many new teachers find themselves in the dark regarding their effectiveness, are surprised by summative evaluations that come without forewarning, and are left feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and hopeless. At a minimum, Administrative Rule [R277-308](#) requires that school districts and charter schools include both mentor and principal observation and feedback in their induction programs. Peer observation and feedback provided as part of supportive PLC work may also be effective in supporting the development of beginning educators.

While beginning teachers may initially rely on feedback from external sources regarding their performance, they also need to acquire abilities that will enable them to reflect internally on their development. Thus, the goal of all induction efforts, particularly providing feedback, should be to support beginning teachers in becoming reflective practitioners who are responsible for their own learning and who have the necessary knowledge and skills for evaluating their own practice.

“WALK-THROUGH” OBSERVATION VERSUS FULL LESSON OBSERVATION

Classroom observation and feedback capable of providing beginning educators with powerful insights for how to improve practice should be more than haphazard and unplanned “drop-in” evaluations. Some argue that a system of frequent, formative “three-minute walk throughs” can provide as much, or more, insight as more formal observations.¹⁷ Others suggest that more formal observations book-ended by pre- and post-observation discussions can offer powerful insights.^{18,19}

“Walk-Through” Observations

Proponents of this type of observation suggest that over time, short (less than 5 minute) and frequent observations allow the observer to become familiar with patterns and decisions teachers make on a day-to-day basis and provide ample information about an educator’s overall curricular and instructional decisions. Using this format, observers are *not seeking to evaluate a teacher’s performance in any single visit*, and may not even provide feedback after every visit. Instead, *the goal of a walk-through is to gain information about curricular and instructional practices and decisions a teacher is making by focusing on just a few key elements of the observed instruction and teacher-student interactions*. This is done by looking for answers to three to five questions during the brief observation:

1. Do students appear to be attending to the lesson when the observer first enters the room?
2. What objective(s) has the teacher chosen to teach and how aligned are they to the prescribed (district, school, or state) curriculum?
3. What instructional practices is the teacher using to help students achieve the intended objectives?
4. What evidence is there in the classroom of past objectives taught and/or instructional decisions used?
5. Are there any noticeable safety or health issues that need to be addressed?

Question one can generally be answered in just a few seconds and allows the observer to gauge learner engagement. Question two may take two or three minutes as the observer attempts to identify the curricular intent of the lesson and allows the observer to determine if the content being presented is aligned to intended curricular objectives. Question three then allows the observer to identify the types of instructional practices the teacher is using. Time permitting, questions four and five address prior instruction and areas that need to be addressed immediately.

Proponents of this type of observation argue that over time these consistent bursts of information provide more reliable data regarding what is happening in the teacher’s classroom than infrequent and lengthy observations can. This type of observation is particularly useful for busy administrators because the culmination of regular glimpses into educator practice paint a more comprehensive picture of educator quality than observing a single isolated lesson and requires a smaller time commitment from the administrator. Additionally, the frequency and regularity of visits allows the observer to highlight positives and pose reflective questions for educator consideration.

Example (adapted from [The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through: Changing School Supervisory Practice One Teacher at a Time](#)¹⁶):

As Principal Owens enters Mr. Elder’s 12th Grade classroom, she notices that all students are looking at the teacher, the teacher is at the board. On the board the words iambic and anapestic appear. Mr. Elder is pointing to the word iambic. [In response to question one, Principal Owens determines that students are generally engaged as she enters the room.]

Over the next couple of minutes, Principal Owens observes dialogues between Mr. Elder and his students wherein Mr. Elder is clarifying the difference between iambic and anapestic meters and highlighting for students key trouble spots that typically come up in trying to discern between these two poetry meters. [In response to question two, Principal Owens determines that the objective of the lesson is differentiating between iambic and anapestic meters and makes a note to verify whether this is part of the 12th Grade English Language Arts curriculum.]

At one point in the lesson, in response to Mr. Elder's question "What is the critical difference between iambic and anapestic foot?" only a few students raise their hand. Mr. Elder's response is "If you know, raise your hand with an open hand. If you know but don't want to be called on, raise your hand with a closed hand. If you don't know, raise your hand and cup your hand to tell me 'I don't know what the difference is and I'm confused.'" [In response to question three, Principal Owens notes that Mr. Elder has employed a useful instructional strategy to force all students to engage in a way that provides useful information to him about how well students are following the lesson.]

Noticing that nearly five minutes have elapsed since she entered the room, Principal Owens decides to skip question four, but quickly glances around the room to see if there are any health or safety concerns (question five). Finding none, she exits the room.

Because Mr. Elder is a second-year teacher, Principal Owens recognizes the need to provide positive reinforcement for what she observed. When she returns to her office, she writes the following on an index card that she leaves in Mr. Elder's faculty mailbox. "You used several effective approaches for providing a risk-free environment for student responses, i.e., raised hand and formation of the hand—open, closed, cupped. Such strategies increased student willingness to participate and to try to answer the question. Continue to use such strategies and to reflect on how you decide when to use this strategy. Loved being in your classroom today!"

Notice how Principal Owens' feedback is positive and specific. It focuses directly on what was observed and the effectiveness of the observed strategy while also encouraging Mr. Elder to reflect on how and when he chooses to use that strategy. By not placing evaluative judgment on Mr. Elder's performance, Principal Owens has provided encouragement while also prompting consideration of how Mr. Elder can best leverage this instructional strategy. Further, identifying specific aspects of the observed portion of the lesson that were effective provides direct information to Mr. Elder about his efficacy as an educator than comments like "good job" or "you're doing well" can.

This format of observation and feedback differs in many ways from what most beginning teachers experience and what many administrators are used to doing. Consequently, implementing a walk-through approach to observation requires thoughtful consideration. For more information on how to successfully implement a walk-through approach to observation of teachers, see the resources at the end of this chapter.

Full Lesson Observations

In contrast to regularly visiting a teacher's classroom for short walk-throughs, it can be helpful to engage beginning educators in more formal planned observations of entire classroom lessons. These types of observations may be of particular use when the observer is the educator's mentor because the lesson can be used to engage educators in instructional coaching cycles designed to foster educator goal setting and self-reflection. When engaging in full lesson observations, the observer should rely on three key steps of the Coaching Cycle Model referenced in [USBE's Instructional Coaching Resources](#) to make the most of these observations:

- 1. Collaboratively plan what will happen during the observation.** In an initial planning meeting, a collegial tone for the observation process should be established as the educator and observer discuss the teacher's philosophy, practices, and specific things the teacher would like the observer to focus on during the observation (e.g., student engagement, classroom management, effective use of student learning groups). Decisions about the focus of the upcoming observation should be based on needs the educator identifies and are ideally driven by student data and aligned to the [Utah Effective Teaching Standards](#). Jim Knight suggests consideration of the following questions to focus the observation:⁹
 - ▶ What is the purpose of the observation? (e.g., get a clear picture of reality, establish a baseline for setting a goal and monitoring progress)
 - ▶ What kind of feedback is desired? (e.g., affirmation, coaching, evaluation)
 - ▶ What (if any) data will be gathered?
 - ▶ When will the observation take place?
 - ▶ Should the observer talk with students?
 - ▶ What special information should the observer have about the students in the class?
 - ▶ Where should the observer sit during the observation?
 - ▶ Is it okay for the observer to walk around the classroom during the observation?
 - ▶ When will the observer and teacher meet to debrief?

The collaborative planning meeting should be relatively short and should occur well in advance of the observation, allowing both parties adequate time to prepare for the observation. Addressing questions like those above will focus the observation and ultimately lead to feedback that is more useful for improving instructional practice and student learning.

- 2. Implement the observation, adhering to the agreed upon protocols.** During the observation itself, it is important that the observer rely on the plan formulated in the collaborative planning meeting and adhere to the agreed upon protocols. To maintain the respect and trust of the educator, the observation should be conducted in the spirit of providing feedback related only to the agreed upon aspects of the lesson. If the observer deviates from the agreed upon foci, there should be a compelling reason for doing so. Staying true to the agreed upon aspects of the observation helps build

trust in the working relationship between the beginning educator and the observer and maintains a focus on the growth of the educator as a professional.

3. Engage the educator in reflection during a follow-up meeting. A follow-up meeting should occur as soon as possible after the observation. During the meeting, the observer should not monopolize time mentioning everything she observed. Instead, the observer should engage the educator in dialogue that stimulates educator reflection related to the aspects of the lesson that were observed. The following questions, suggested by Jim Knight⁹, may be used to guide the discussion:

- ▶ On a scale of 1–10, with 1 being the worst lesson you have taught and 10 being the best, how would you rank this lesson?
- ▶ What pleased you about this lesson?
- ▶ What would have to change to move the lesson closer to a 10?
- ▶ What would your students be doing differently if your class was a 10?
- ▶ Tell me more about what that would look like.
- ▶ How could we measure that change?
- ▶ Do you want that to be your goal?
- ▶ What are your next steps?

Notice that the above questions are designed to get the educator to do most of the talking and to lead the educator to set goals for improvement. These questions naturally lead teachers to a level of self-reflection that helps them take ownership of their own progress. As the beginning teacher develops his/her craft, this periodic guidance supports the educator in learning to independently engage in this kind of deep reflection to guide their practice.

As it relates to observation, induction efforts that incorporate observations that combine the “best of both worlds” (walk through and full lesson observation) may provide the greatest support to beginning educators.

Example: Recognizing that demands on administrators’ time often challenges their ability to effectively observe entire classroom lessons for all teachers in the school building, administrators at a school collaborate with the mentor(s) assigned to their beginning educators and agree that mentors will conduct full classroom lesson observations at least monthly for all beginning educators while administrators will conduct informal three-minute walk-through observations bi-weekly in the classrooms of beginning educators. Both mentors and administrators conduct these observations as formative visits with an eye on supporting the development of the educator and recognizing positive educational practice, rather than offering evaluative judgment regarding performance. Near the end of the school year, the principal meets with the mentor and the educator to hear about the formative development the educator has experienced throughout the year. This discussion, combined with the ongoing formative walk-through observations the administrator has conducted regularly throughout the year, provide full context for the administrator to complete a year-end summative evaluation of the educator’s performance and growth.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO TEACHERS

Speaking generally, feedback may be provided to beginning teachers for one of two primary purposes: to inform the educator's continued learning and development (**formative feedback**), or to place evaluative judgment on observed performance (**summative feedback**). While both types of feedback have a place in supporting the development of beginning educators, this section focuses on formative feedback given by peers, mentors, and administrators with an intent to guide the development of desired dispositions and abilities in beginning teachers.

Formative feedback commonly follows observation of the educator's practice and is of most benefit when it occurs frequently and well enough in advance of year-end evaluations that beginning educators have time to reflect and act upon the formative feedback they have received. Regardless of whether formative feedback is the result of walk-through or full lesson observations, the process used to provide feedback requires careful navigation. Human nature often leads us to react to feedback in emotional ways and these emotions may unintentionally sabotage the potential learning experiences associated with giving and receiving feedback.

As discussed above, keeping the focus on the self-reflection of the teacher is essential to fostering a positive observation–feedback cycle. At the same time, feedback from the observer is a necessary aspect of guiding the development of beginning educators. To increase the chances of effective delivery and reception of feedback, the following guidelines are recommended:^{19,20}

- ▶ Rely on concrete evidence and data rather than subjective evidence to inform feedback.
- ▶ Use descriptive language focused on behaviors and observations, not language focused on a person (e.g., *"I noticed that the boys in the class were called on to give responses to your questions more often than the girls"* instead of *"You favored calling on boys and not girls to answer your questions"*).
- ▶ Allow opportunities for educator-observer dialogue regarding the feedback.
- ▶ Listen carefully and non-judgmentally to what the educator has to say. This includes observing body language and vocal tone and expanding on points the educator raises.
- ▶ Discuss strengths, avoiding the use of broad evaluative statements (e.g., *"fantastic lesson"*) and negative comments. Instead, use focused, positive language such as *"You did ... well."* or *"I appreciated how you..."*
- ▶ Use grammatical second person statements to convey positive information (e.g., *"You were very successful at getting all of your students engaged"*).
- ▶ Limit negative feedback to between two and four main ideas and "sandwich" negative feedback between positive feedback.
- ▶ Use grammatical first or third person statements, or questions to convey negative information (e.g., *"I thought I understood the outline of the lesson, but about half way"*

through the class, I wasn't sure if we were talking about Hitler or Stalin," "The male students got far more opportunities to speak than did the female students," "What do you suppose the students in the back row were thinking?"

PEER OBSERVATION

In addition to benefitting from having others observe and provide feedback regarding classroom instruction, beginning educators may benefit from having the opportunity to observe their more experienced peers. For educators new to the classroom, having the opportunity to observe others teaching the same grade(s) and/or content can have a significant impact on their perceptions and practices. Engaging in peer observation provides benefit to all educators but is of particular benefit for educators struggling to establish and refine their own approaches to developing classroom management routines and student engagement strategies. Establishing time for beginning educators to occasionally be released from their classroom responsibilities to observe all or part of other educators' classroom lessons can help supplement mentoring and collaboration efforts and provide additional avenues for beginning educator growth.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

How well an educator delivers a classroom lesson is only one of many aspects relevant to teaching. Great care should be taken to ensure that feedback received by beginning educators is constructive and focused on helping the teacher improve, rather than judgmental in conveying that the teacher has failed to "measure up." To increase the chances of beginning educators feeling supported by feedback, the following are also noteworthy considerations:

- ▶ **Include feedback from multiple sources related to many aspects of teaching.** While feedback from a mentor and at least one administrator is required by Administrative [Rule R277-308](#), it may be helpful to obtain feedback from students, or other educators teaching at the same grade level, or in the same content area. In addition to providing feedback about directly observable behaviors, consider providing beginning teachers feedback related to other aspects of their work that contribute to their ability to be effective (e.g., articulation of learning outcomes, engagement in school or community activities, or organization skills). Genuine feedback related to all aspects of teaching is important to affirm and guide beginning educators in their development.
- ▶ **Regular informal peer colleague "check-ins" can supplement mentoring efforts to help beginning teachers feel part of the school community.** The periodic efforts of colleagues to drop in and have friendly conversation with beginning teachers, as opposed to dropping in for observation purposes, can also be helpful. Educators who are unaccustomed to having other adults in their classroom are more likely to feel like they are on trial, or that they have done something wrong when other adults do visit. Collegiality among the adults in the school can help reduce overwhelming feelings beginning educators may feel with regards to observation and evaluation and establishes a culture of support throughout the school.
- ▶ **Constructive criticism is more likely to have an impact on educator practice than non-specific positive feedback.** During focus group discussions, beginning teachers in

Utah advocated for strategically delivered constructive criticism that allows them to identify their strengths and areas for improvement over what often feels like false positives of praise. Administrators and mentors should feel comfortable engaging beginning educators in tough discussions aimed at improving educator practice when necessary. Simply giving teachers a “pat-on-the-back” after each observation is unlikely to be perceived as useful or constructive.

THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATORS

Administrators bear primary responsibility for evaluating the performance of beginning educators and determining their eligibility for ongoing employment, but this should not prevent them from being partners in supporting and encouraging beginning educator growth. The following action steps can be taken to support beginning educators:

- ▶ **Make regular observation and feedback of beginning educators a priority.** Administrators have limited time and it can be difficult for them to regularly observe all the educators in a building. Placing emphasis on ensuring that beginning educators are receiving needed feedback regarding their performance will help secure their retention and over time the frequency of feedback can be decreased.
- ▶ **Establish a collaborative school culture where observation is not seen as punitive, but supportive.** When observation occurs sporadically and is used primarily to inform summative year-end evaluations, educators develop a negative perception of administrator observation. Administrators must make a conscientious effort to cultivate a supportive culture when it comes to observation, including using observation for formative as well as summative purposes. Conveying the message that the goal is improvement, not perfection is essential to boosting the confidence and morale of beginning teachers.
- ▶ **Communicate regularly with mentors to solicit their perspectives on the growth of the new educator, while allowing the mentor to maintain confidentiality with the beginning educator.** Mentors are an invaluable resource to administrators who cannot always provide the same kind of personalized guidance and support. Administrators should feel comfortable visiting with mentors regarding how they can support the development of the beginning educator but should also remember that a mentor’s role is strictly supportive and non-evaluative. While the combined perspective of mentors and administrators may help provide guidance tailored to the needs of beginning educators, administrators should respect the nature and confidentiality of the mentor/mentee relationship.
- ▶ **Provide opportunities for beginning teachers to observe their more experienced peers.** Finding ways to periodically release beginning teachers from their own responsibilities in the classroom can provide opportunities for them to benefit from observing how their more experienced peers motivate students, establish classroom routines, and deal with classroom management concerns. Focus group conversations with beginning teachers from all over Utah, revealed that early career educators see opportunities to observe other teachers’ classrooms as having a significant positive impact on their instructional practice.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE

The following templates were developed with the input of Utah school district and charter school personnel as examples of effective observation and feedback tools that can be used to engage educators in developmental cycles of reflection as part of regular mentor and administrative observation. You may copy or modify these instruments for use in your local context as long as you keep the relevant attributions that appear on each form. Fillable versions of the documents can be found on USBE's [Educator Development website](#).

Pre-Observation Planning Template

Date: _____ Teacher: _____

Grade/Subject: _____

What is the content and structure of the class that will be observed?

Describe the students in this class. Is there anything the observer should know about them?

What have students been asked to do in preparation for this class?

What is the goal for the lesson? What should students learn or be able to do as a result?

Will this lesson be a typical example of the educator's teaching? If not, what will be different?

What kind of feedback is desired? What should the observer focus on?

Should the observer walk around the room and/or visit with students during the observation?

What else should the observer be aware of prior to the observation? (e.g., anticipated problems or trouble spots)

Logistics: Confirm the time, place, and where the observer should sit.

Other Comments:

Adapted from Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation. (2017). *Peer observation of teaching: Effective practices*. Toronto, ON: Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation, University of Toronto.

UTAH EFFECTIVE TEACHING

STANDARDS (UETS)

1. The teacher understands cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas of student development.
2. The teacher understands individual learner differences and cultural and linguistic diversity.
3. The teacher works with learners to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, positive social interactions, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
4. The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline.
5. The teacher uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, monitor learner progress, guide planning and instruction, and determine whether the outcomes described in content standards have been met.
6. The teacher plans instruction to support students in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, Utah Core Standards, instructional best practices, and the community context.
7. The teacher uses various instructional strategies to ensure that all learners develop a deep understanding of content areas and their connections and build skills to apply and extend knowledge in meaningful ways.
8. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who uses evidence to continually evaluate and adapt practice to meet the needs of each learner.
9. The teacher is a leader who engages collaboratively with learners, families, colleagues, and community members to build a shared vision and supportive professional culture focused on student growth and success.
10. The teacher demonstrates the highest standard of legal, moral, and ethical conduct as specified in Utah State Board Rule R277-217.

Formative Classroom Observation & Feedback Form

Date: _____ Teacher: _____

Grade/Subject: _____

1. Observation Focus or Guiding Question(s) Aligned to Selected UETS:

2. Evidence supporting effective practice aligned to the focus/guiding questions: I saw ...

3. Evidence that was missing: I expected to see but did not see ...

4. Growth Question(s): Questions to guide educator reflection.

Crafting Growth Questions to Promote Educator Reflection

Growth questions that promote educator reflection are composed of five key elements:

- ▶ A situation (and possible conditions) is described,
- ▶ Teacher thinking and/or practice is outlined,
- ▶ A choice is identified,
- ▶ A decision is identified, and
- ▶ Student impact is identified.

Examples:

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Situation | "When you are teaching and asking questions | "When you are planning your units of study | "When you evaluate your teaching | "When planning your lessons around the Utah Core Standards |
| Teacher thinking and practice | and thinking about when to provide wait time and how much time to give, | and thinking about the selection of objectives to build into the units, | and are deciding whether students are learning what you intend to learn | and thinking about what activities you might use |
| Choice | what criteria do you use | how do you decide among all the objectives you could teach | what considerations do you make | what thoughts go through your mind |
| Decision | to make wait time decisions | which objectives to teach | to decide how you will | about which activities to select |
| Student impact | that provide each student the opportunity to learn the objectives of the lesson?" | to move students forward in their learning?" | assess whether students are experiencing 'success?'" | to impact student achievement?" |

Adapted from *The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through: Changing School Supervisory Practice One Teacher at a Time*.

Post-Observation Debriefing Template

Date: _____ Teacher: _____

Grade/Subject: _____

Observer Summary Notes:

Instructor Rating: "On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst lesson you have taught and 10 being the best, how would you rank this lesson?"

Instructor Highlights: "What pleased you about this lesson?"

Instructor Improvement: "What would have to change to move this lesson closer to a 10?"

Validation of Strengths: (e.g., What was done particularly well? What stood out? Where were students most engaged?)

Growth Question(s) to Promote Reflection:

Next Steps:

Adapted from Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation. (2017). *Peer observation of teaching: Effective practices*. Toronto, ON: Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation, University of Toronto.

Possible Post-Observation Questions to Ask

When you consider the planning and execution of this lesson, what overall rating would you assess to the outcome on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the worst lesson you've taught and 10 being the best?¹

- ▶ What do you think it would need to change to move this lesson closer to a 10?¹
- ▶ What would students be doing differently if this lesson were a 10?¹

What did you find particularly pleasing about this lesson?

- ▶ What action steps did you take to promote these satisfactory aspects?¹

What did you find particularly frustrating about this lesson?

- ▶ What action steps might help avoid these frustrations in future lessons?¹

Looking at this lesson objectively, what stands out?

- ▶ What is emerging?
- ▶ What is missing?²

How can I support you?²

What feels like a challenge for you in this?²

Where were you challenged?²

What feedback would be most valuable for you right now?²

What needs your immediate attention going forward?²

What might be possible next?²

If you could do this any way you wanted, what would it look like?²

Keeping yourself out of the equation, how would you describe the problem(s) you are having?²

What question(s) do you want to ask yourself right now?²

¹adapted from *The Impact Cycle*

²adapted from Sharpe, K. & Nishimura, J. (2017). *When mentoring meets coaching: Shifting the stance in education*. Toronto: Pearson Canada Inc.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources provide further supports for understanding how to implement walk-through observations.

| RESOURCE | DESCRIPTION |
|---|--|
| A New View of Walk-Throughs | A five-page Educational Leadership article encouraging a focus on building administrator understanding of student learning, as opposed to checking off lists of best practices. |
| Classroom Walk-Throughs: Learning to See the Trees and the Forest | Part of an eight-page article from The Learning Principal that provides guidance for implementing classroom walk-throughs and sample observation form. |
| Seeing Through New Eyes: Walk Throughs Offer New Way to View Schools | An eight-page article from the National Staff Development Council that provides sample walkthrough plan and feedback form. |
| The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through: Changing School Supervisory Practice One Teacher at a Time | <div data-bbox="678 814 818 1010" data-label="Image"> </div> Outlines the rationale and presents a framework advocating for frequent three-minute classroom observation to improve instructional practice. |



Chapter 5:

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



OVERVIEW

Educators should model the quest for lifelong learning they desire to instill in their students. However, no two beginning educators enter the classroom with the same knowledge base or skill set. Novice educators who are entering the classroom for the first time will likely need professional learning experiences that differ in significant ways from those needed by teachers transitioning from one school to another. Educators prepared in university preparation programs will have needs that differ from educators prepared in industry, or who have met other competency-based requisites for teaching. Professional learning opportunities provide a way for schools and districts to signal a commitment to ongoing improvement. They can also help bridge gaps in educators' preparation and experience and create a common vision around the kinds of instructional strategies and dispositions school districts and charter schools want their educators to exhibit.

At the same time, beginning educators are often stretched to the limit when it comes to availability for coursework, conferences, or other formal professional learning. If school districts and charter schools have implemented the ongoing onboarding experiences and learning community seminars mentioned in earlier chapters, they may already be asking for a significant time commitment from their beginning teachers in the name of professional learning. It thus becomes important for school districts and charter schools to balance requiring formal professional learning with embedding opportunities for professional learning to occur within the context of already existing induction supports. When effectively embedded into beginning educators' practice, even day-to-day reflection opportunities provide a context for ongoing professional learning.



LEVERAGING FORMAL AND INFORMAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

School districts and charter schools should seek to develop and provide professional learning opportunities that support identified instructional priorities for students as well as educator-identified goals for professional growth. In some cases, beginning teachers may still be engaged in completing formal coursework as part of their degree or certification for licensure. In other cases, leadership may identify conferences or other formal learning opportunities of particular benefit to beginning teachers. However, even informal professional learning opportunities provided as part of standard induction practices can benefit most beginning educators. As school districts and charter schools embed regular engagement and constructive feedback between beginning teachers and their peers, mentors, and administration into day-to-day work, they set the stage for informal professional learning to be as impactful as more formal activities.

Research suggests that it takes at least 50 hours of continuous professional learning for the behaviors and knowledge learned to reach students.²¹ Thus, for professional learning to have the greatest impact, educators need to do more than just attend a conference. To expand the impact of professional learning provided to beginning teachers, it may be beneficial to arrange for beginning teachers and mentors to participate in learning experiences together. Doing so provides a catalyst for ensuring that the educator and mentor collaboratively find ways to implement learned skills and dispositions in educators' daily practice and gives educators time to practice and refine learned skills while under the tutelage of an experienced peer.

Earlier chapters in this guidebook have advocated for and outlined action steps toward encouraging the development of reflective beginning educators. Perhaps the professional learning opportunities with the greatest potential impact are those that engage beginning educators in honest examination of their and others' practice, experimentation with new ideas or approaches, and analysis of impact on student learning. Educators are not "finished products" as they complete preparation programs and enter the classroom. Thus, Administrative Rule [R277-308](#) requires that induction programs include "a plan for ongoing support and development of an educator." While such a plan may involve beginning educator participation in formal learning such as conferences or additional university coursework, it may also simply be an extension of the quality reflective goal-setting and guidance taking place as part of mentoring. As mentors and administrators participate with beginning educators in regular cycles of observation and formative feedback using instruments like those provided in the previous chapter they are contributing to the informal professional learning of the educator.

Regardless of whether beginning teachers are asked to participate in formal or informal learning experiences, leadership should be cognizant of the time demands placed on beginning teachers and should balance providing or requiring engagement in professional learning with these time demands. If professional learning opportunities are leveraged in ways that allow them to become part of educators' daily work experiences, the experiences will feel far less burdensome to beginning educators who are often stretched to the limit acclimating to the teaching profession.

ALIGNING ACTIVITIES WITH UTAH'S PROFESSIONAL LEARNING STANDARDS

Professional learning experiences offered by a school district or charter school, whether formal or informal, should be informed by goals, standards, and learning targets that exist at the state, district, school, and classroom levels. Administrative Rule [R277-302](#) requires that school districts and charter schools provide professional learning opportunities to teachers that result in educators having the opportunity to receive a minimum of 20 license renewal points annually. While school districts and charter schools have flexibility in determining the scope and content of these opportunities, Utah Code [53G-11-303](#) requires that educators are provided with high quality professional learning that is designed with the following Professional Learning Standards in mind:

- 1. Learning Communities**—professional learning occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, individual and collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
- 2. Skillful Leaders**—professional learning requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.
- 3. Resources**—professional learning requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning to advance student learning.
- 4. Data**—professional learning uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.
- 5. Learning Design**—professional learning integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.
- 6. Implementation**—professional learning applies research on improving practice and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.
- 7. Outcomes**—professional learning aligns with performance standards for teachers and school administrators; and performance standards for students as described in the Utah Core Standards.
- 8. Technology**—professional learning both incorporates the use of technology in the design, implementation, and evaluation of high-quality professional learning practices and includes targeted professional learning on the use of technology devices to enhance the teaching and learning environment and the integration of technology in content delivery.

To support school districts and charter schools in establishing learning opportunities that support professional growth for educators and results in improved student outcomes, the USBE has created the [Professional Learning Standards Toolkit](#). All professional learning created or offered within a school district or charter school should reflect the above standards as should any third-party professional learning experiences Utah's educators participate in.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

As school districts and charter schools prepare to create and make professional learning available to their teachers, it is important to know that a growing base of research suggests that professional learning has the largest impact on educator knowledge, dispositions, and

practice when the following principles guide overall professional learning decisions.²²

- ▶ **Effective professional learning is content focused.** Job-embedded professional learning that allows teachers to focus on discipline-specific curricula within the context of their own students and environment has higher impact on student learning.
- ▶ **Effective professional learning engages educators in active learning.** “Sit-and-listen” professional learning is less effective than professional learning that engages educators in activity and involves use of authentic artifacts, interactive tasks, and other strategies that embed learning within action. Use of video, peer observation, and student work samples as part of professional learning increases educator engagement.
- ▶ **Effective professional learning opportunities are sustained in duration.** “Episodic, disconnected incidents that are scheduled periodically throughout a school year [typically] have little or no connection with one another and little chance of producing substantial change.”²² One day professional learning sessions without follow up and opportunity for sustained educator engagement and reflection rarely “stick” with teachers and consequently fail to impact student achievement. Effective professional learning occurs over time and embeds time for practiced implementation and reflection.
- ▶ **Effective professional learning opportunities link teacher knowledge and action to student outcomes.** Be purposeful and clear about how professional learning opportunities will directly benefit students. After participating

in a professional learning opportunity, it should be clear how teachers will directly implement what they learn and how students will directly benefit from the learning.

In determining what kinds of professional learning experiences will be most beneficial for beginning teachers, remember that new teacher induction should span a minimum of three years. There is time to be purposeful in the timing of formal professional learning and there is time for teachers to refine their practice through informal learning opportunities. Consider the following general principles related to adult learning that will improve professional learning:²³

- ▶ **Be clear and tap into the “why”.** Data overwhelmingly supports that teachers enter the profession because they want to be able to make a difference in the lives of young people. As you plan professional learning, find a way to connect teachers’ learning to the reasons they came to the profession in the first place. For new teachers, making this connection can help them maintain optimism in the face of the many challenges they face. Professional learning that taps into the “why” brings greater motivation and energy to teachers.
- ▶ **Provide voice and choice.** As often as possible, let teacher choice drive the selection of which professional learning activities they wish to engage in. Asking for teacher input and soliciting their feedback regarding the professional learning they have available and participate in will help establish a sense of belonging while ensuring that you are designing and engaging educators in learning experiences that they find useful and motivating.

THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATORS

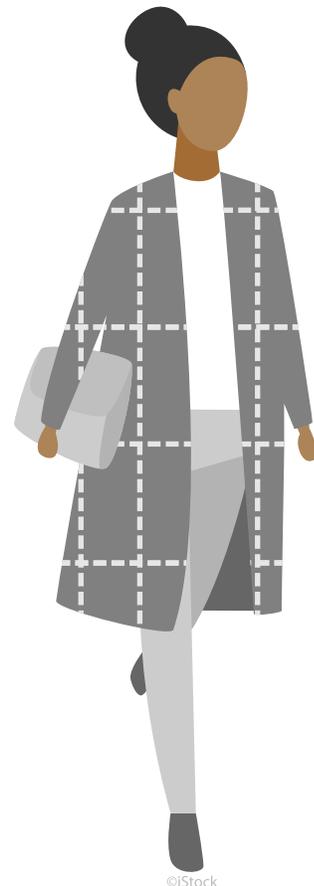
Administrators can have a dramatic impact on the quality of professional learning teachers experience in their buildings and they typically control decisions related to school spending. Supporting a culture of professional learning within the school and setting priorities for beginning educators' professional learning can be accomplished by:

- ▶ **Establishing a school culture that supports the ongoing professional learning of educators.** When administrators send clear messages to faculty in support of their personal development and the development of collective efficacy for student learning, educators know their efforts to improve are valued. Establishing expectations and providing fiscal support for all educators to engage in learning experiences that will further school improvement and student achievement goals will help establish the school as a place where students and teachers learn together and from each other.
- ▶ **Offering individualized support and thought partnership with beginning teachers regarding participation in professional learning opportunities.** Asking beginning educators where they see need for improvement in their own work and what kinds of learning opportunities would be beneficial signals administrative support for providing individualized growth opportunities. Administrators can rely on formative observations to inform their understanding of educator needs and seek support from district or school personnel regarding learning opportunities that can support educators in areas of identified need.
- ▶ **Establishing fiscal support for beginning teachers to participate in learning opportunities.** Educators who want to improve may lack the financial resources to seek out needed learning. This is particularly true for those on the lowest rungs of the salary ladder. Designating funding pools that can be drawn upon specifically by beginning teachers for participation in learning opportunities allows administrators to support beginning educators' growth and establish a learning culture within the school.
- ▶ **Developing and providing cohesive and focused faculty-wide training aligned to school goals and priorities.** In determining what goals to include in school improvement plans, administrators should be cognizant of developing sustained efforts at building capacity to meet goals. When administrators jump year to year to a new "flavored" learning initiative, faculty learn that sustained effort at improving is less important than biding time until the next thing comes along. Consistent and focused efforts to improve faculty-wide, even when the effort spans multiple years, provides faculty opportunity to define, implement, and refine instructional practices that support school improvement.
- ▶ **Providing support for implementation, decision-making, prioritization, and facilitation of impactful professional learning.** While administrators may not design or directly facilitate professional learning, they do have a duty to ensure that the systems they oversee are ones where there is administrative effort to ensure accountability for collective efficacy among faculty aimed at improving student learning. Ensuring that educators have access to high-quality learning experiences within the school building and supporting educators' implementation of high-quality instructional practices are paramount to administrators' responsibilities regarding professional learning.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To support identification of quality professional learning and the development of quality plans for the ongoing growth of beginning educators, the following resources may be helpful:

| Resource | Description |
|---|--|
| Utah's MIDAS Education System | Shows all available professional learning experiences throughout the state. Searchable by provider (district, school, Utah State Board of Education, Utah Education Association, etc.) |
| Planning a Scope and Sequence for Beginning Teacher Professional Learning | American Institutes for Research workbook for planning a sequence of professional learning experiences for beginning teachers. |
| USBE Professional Learning Resources | USBE's website for housing professional learning resources and highlighting available professional learning opportunities. |
| Utah High Leverage Practices Course | Course designed to help educators understand and implement high-leverage classroom practices. |



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