



BEING FORWARD

Tom Manning

Louisiana is taking the lead in mentoring new teachers

Many of us have been lucky enough in our lives that we can identify someone we'd call a mentor, someone who taught us how things work and helped us navigate through the difficulties we face trying to establish ourselves. For some of us, our mentor may very well have been a teacher, but what about for teachers themselves?

Mentoring is the process by which a trusted and experienced person takes a personal and direct interest in the development and education of a less experienced individual. And new teachers facing new challenges absolutely need that type of support.

Research tells us that strong teacher preparation, which includes extensive practice under an expert mentor, has a positive impact on student learning. With many new educators reporting that they feel ill-equipped to lead their students to success from day one, there is a critical need for effective mentoring for new teachers across the country.

One state has a plan to address this issue. The Louisiana Department of Education is changing the way it prepares teachers by identifying and supporting mentor teachers in every parish in the state to work with new and aspiring teachers participating in a yearlong residency.

Learning Forward is providing that mentor teacher support and helping the Department of Education achieve its vision of creating a cadre of talented educators who have the knowledge

Learn more about the Louisiana mentor teacher work at www.louisianabelieves.com/teaching/louisiana-mentor-teachers.

and skills to mentor and support other teachers within their schools and districts.

Last year, more than 350 mentors went through Learning Forward's nine-day program to prepare them for mentoring new and resident teachers. We'll work with more than 600 mentors this year.

The mentor work focuses on four key goals for mentor participants:

- Build strong relationships with mentees.
- Diagnose and prioritize mentee's strengths and areas for growth based on quantitative and qualitative data.
- Design and implement a coaching support plan to develop mentee knowledge and skills in content, content-specific pedagogy, and classroom management and facilitate self-reflection skills. This includes:
 - Setting short- and long-term professional growth goals based on competencies and student results.
 - Creating a logical sequence of coaching supports to develop mentee skills over time to reach goals.
 - Identifying high-quality,

evidence-based resources to support mentee-specific needs.

- Facilitating effective coaching interactions grounded in student evidence.
- Tracking mentee progress.
- Assess and deepen mentor content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy to support continued development of mentor and mentee competencies in their respective content areas.

Mentors' learning is grounded in the Standards for Professional Learning and a mentoring cycle with three core components: diagnosing mentee needs, coaching mentees to improve their practice, and measuring their progress. Mentors work in cohorts throughout the year, and those who complete the program and successfully complete an assessment series receive a Mentor Teacher distinction from the Department of Education.

As we deploy members of our consulting team across Louisiana to facilitate these mentoring sessions, I'm always struck by the scope and potential impact of this work, and the role we're playing in developing a new generation of learning leaders in Louisiana schools.

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