

MENTOR POLICY

I. Statement of Purpose

Tech Valley High School® (TVHS) seeks to assure that a Teacher Mentor Program is established for new teachers that will positively support the recruitment and retention of new teachers, strengthen teaching practice and provide opportunities for experienced teachers to grow as mentors. It is the intent that the TVHS Teacher Mentor Program will align with the Commissioner's guidance document on New York State Mentoring Standards.

TVHS recognizes that new teachers may experience difficulties during their first year of teaching and at TVHS which, if not addressed, may prevent them from reaching their full potential as professional educators. Teaching in a non-traditional environment like TVHS can compound this difficulty, even for experienced educators. Mentors can provide experience and guidance to lead and support new staff in instructional, curricular, behavioral and educational issues, facilitating a new teacher's transition from teacher preparation to practice. Mentors also can introduce new teachers to organizational protocols and give suggestions for teaching strategies that have proven particularly successful with TVHS students. Mentors will offer wisdom and best practices so that students in TVHS will have the best possible education. Mentors will have an opportunity to grow professionally while assisting new teachers to develop into skilled educators.

The establishment of a teacher Mentor Program at TVHS is designed to both fulfill regulatory requirements and to enhance retention of well-qualified teachers and certified staff. An effective teacher mentor program will require the active participation in, and support of, the TVHS Teachers' Association.

II. Application of Program

First year teachers shall participate in the Mentor Program. All references made herein to "teacher" shall be deemed to include eligible, certified support staff. The Principal and Chief Academic Officer (CAO), in consultation with the TVHS Teachers' Association, may make any additional mentorship assignments as it deems necessary. The Mentor Program adopted will not prohibit or otherwise limit the District Superintendents, or their designees, to assign mentors to any teacher pursuant to an improvement plan.

III. Professional Development Plans

Documentation of participation in the Mentor Program will be maintained for purposes of allowing new teachers to meet certification requirements.

IV. Standards for the Mentor Program

The Mentor Program will align with the ten standards for effective mentoring as set forth in the New York State Mentoring Standards:

A. *Program Philosophy and Purposes:* The philosophy of the Mentor Program upholds the assertion that induction is a crucial transition between teacher preparation and continuing professional development. The Mentor Program will facilitate the transition of the beginning teacher from success in his/her teacher preparation program to effective practice in TVHS classrooms.

B. *Program Design:* The mentor program is designed as a crucial component of a comprehensive induction plan and is embedded in an integrated professional culture. The Mentor Program will support the TVHS mission and vision.

C. *Program Implementation:* The Mentor Program is implemented to meet New York State Teaching Standards and sustain program activities that support the development of all beginning teachers. The Mentor Program will identify and assure that the resources, time, and staff will be dedicated to help ensure that beginning teachers receive a continuum of support and development in order to foster effective teaching and learning.

D. *Mentor Selection:* Mentors are recruited and selected through a transparent process guided by criteria that consider the mentor candidate's commitment to the profession and teaching experience. Mentors must be familiar with research-based practices, data analysis, and technological advances that promote student learning and growth at the various stages of development. The Mentor Program will identify and make provision for professional development for mentors and selection of mentors will take into account potential mentors' familiarity with research-based practices, data analysis, and technological advances that promote student learning.

E. *Mentor Development:* Mentoring is a professional practice with its own knowledge and research base, strategies, and best practices. The Mentor Program will provide for initial and continuing professional development for mentors.

F. *Mentors Roles and Responsibilities:* The role of the mentor is to engage, inspire, assist, encourage and advance the professional learning of a beginning teacher and to model professional conduct. The Mentor Program will include clear roles and responsibilities for mentors that will include but are not limited to expectations for contact time with mentees, development of joint activities that support integration of the New York State Common Core Standards and are aligned with the New York State Teaching Standards. Mentors' roles are non-evaluative and focused on assisting the mentee to develop as and continue the path of their teaching career.

H. *Shared Leadership and Administration:* Leadership of the mentoring program is a shared responsibility among all stakeholders. The Mentor Program will provide support to mentees and mentors which may include classroom visits and opportunities for joint attendance at conferences and workshops.

I. *Beginning Teacher Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions:* Beginning teachers bring valued knowledge, skills, and dispositions to the new context of the classroom, school, and districts where they are first employed. The Mentor Program will encourage and expect mentees to display a readiness to continue learning about teaching and will provide opportunities for them to invite support and guidance.

J. *Program Evaluation:* The mentor program includes a comprehensive system of formative and summative assessments. The Mentor Program will provide for periodic review and assessment in order to evaluate and analyze the program's effectiveness and lead to continual improvement.

V. Mentoring Committee

The TVHS Principal/CAO and at least 2 representatives of TVHS Teachers Association shall form the mentoring committee. The Committee shall be chaired by Principal / CAO. The Committee shall meet as needed to carry out its responsibilities set forth in this program document.

The Committee shall be responsible for developing and recommending the mentor program as part of the professional development plan to be submitted to the Operating Board. The Committee will receive applications for teachers to become mentors; recommend the selection of mentors to the TVHS Principal/CAO; assure that mentors are carrying out the responsibilities accorded them by their appointment as a mentor; assist with the resolution of any issues which may arise concerning the mentoring relationship; carry out formative and summative evaluation of the Mentor Program; and make recommendations for continuous improvement.

The Committee shall prepare informational material as it deems necessary or desirable to assist mentors and mentees consistent with this policy.

VI. Qualifications of Mentors

It is recognized that both TVHS and new teachers will be best served through the appointment of mentors who will be committed to the successful undertaking of a mentoring assignment. The Committee will be responsible for preparing an application form and evaluative instruments that will allow the Committee to ascertain whether potential mentors exhibit the following personal and professional qualities:

- A. Demonstrated personal commitment to the role of mentoring, including an agreement to commit to a professional training relating to mentoring during the school year as provided in the Mentor Program;
- B. Permanently certified (or, where appropriate for support staff, licensed) to the extent practicable and rated as effective or highly effective (or its equivalent) in annual professional performance reviews;
- C. Highly respected with demonstrated classroom success.
- D. Strong interpersonal skills;
- E. Demonstrates consistent enthusiasm for teaching;
- F. Is tenured at TVHS;
- G. Demonstrates excellence in pedagogy;
- H. Can demonstrate evidence of commitment to lifelong learning;
- I. Demonstrates excellent leadership and communication skills; and
- J. Possesses a high degree of knowledge about the organization, its policies and procedures

VII. Application Process

Principal/CAO will announce opening to qualified candidates as in accordance with section VI of this policy. Potential mentors must email the Principal/CAO for transmittal to the Committee. The Committee shall review and evaluate each application presented.

VIII. Identification of New Teachers

The Principal / CAO will notify the Mentor Committee of each newly hired teacher for the potential assignment of a mentor.

IX. Selection and Assignment of Mentors

The Committee shall recommend mentors, after reviewing and evaluating applications as provided by this policy. The Committee shall provide the Questar III Director of Human Resources with its recommendations on the selection of mentors. The Director of Human resources shall provide the Operating Board with these recommendations.

The Committee shall assign approved mentors to new teachers as needed. Any issues relating to the mentoring relationship, including requests for new assignments, shall be made to the Committee

X. Training for Mentors

The Committee shall offer, or arrange to offer, after school programs and workshops for mentors and mentees in accordance with the Mentor Program, needs identified by mentors and mentees, and needs identified through periodic program evaluation.

XI. Mentoring Activities

The mentor shall be responsible for providing guidance and support to the teacher assigned to him or her as a mentee. Mentors may advise their mentees on matters relating to classroom management, classroom set up, pedagogical matters, lesson plans, issues relating to the mission and organization of TVHS and any other matter relating to the mentee's role at TVHS. Mentors are expected to respond to questions posed by mentees with the utmost professionalism and, where necessary, provide the mentee with an appropriate referral.

The team will participate in orientation on mentoring offered by TVHS. During this time, mentees will engage in a self-assessment of their professional development needs as related to Project Based Learning; state learning standards; use of assessments utilized by TVHS; data-driven instruction; developing student learning objectives and other relevant areas that may be identified by TVHS or required by the New York State Education Department.

Activities and professional development also will take into consideration the various key events throughout the year on the TVHS calendar (e.g. PBL training, parent conferences, and building events). Each mentor/mentee team will use the self-assessment data and the calendar of key events during the academic year to determine the focus of their jointly planned activities and to identify significant learning opportunities during the year.

Mentors are expected meet with mentees on a regular basis, but 1st year mentors will meet no less than as follows:

- A. Once a week during the first three weeks upon assignment of the mentor; and
- B. Twice a month for the remainder of the school year.

The mentor's role shall not be evaluative. Information obtained by a mentor cannot be used for purposes of evaluating or disciplining a new teacher, with the following exceptions, where it will be the responsibility and duty of a mentor to immediately advise the Principal;

- A. Where withholding information poses a danger to life, health or safety of an individual;
or

- B. Where the information indicates that the new teacher has been convicted of a crime or has committed an act which raises a reasonable question as to the new teacher's moral character.

Notwithstanding the above, *willful failure* of a new teacher to participate in a Mentor Program may constitute insubordination and may result in disciplinary action and/or termination.

XII. Documentation of Mentoring Activities

It is the responsibility of the mentor and the mentee to provide the Principal / Chief Academic Officer with timely documentation of mentoring activities. The Principal / Chief Academic Officer is authorized to promulgate forms, to be executed by the mentor and the mentee, for the purpose of documenting that such activities have taken place. Such documentation will be utilized for purposes of assuring completion of both a mentor's and mentee's respective professional development activities and for purposes of assuring that the mentee has participated in a qualifying Mentor Program for certification purposes. Such forms shall include the following information:

- A. The name and New York State Teach ID number of the teacher being mentored;
- B. The name and New York State Teach ID number of the mentor.
- C. A description of the mentoring activity (e.g. classroom observation, consultation); and
- D. The number of hours successfully completed in the mentoring activity.

The Mentor Committee shall monitor each mentorship relationship to be assured that the mentor and the mentee are consulting, each is observing the other's classroom, and that appropriate documentation of mentoring activities is being maintained and submitted. The Committee shall refer any information relating to the failure of a mentee to participate in the mentoring relationship to the Director of Human Resources

XIII. Annual Review

The Committee shall review mentorship relationships and Mentor Program activities at the end of the school year in order to determine whether the purposes of this program were met. The Committee will make such recommendations to the District Superintendents regarding the mentorship program as it may deem necessary or desirable.

Adopted: 11/22/2019

References: 8 NYCRR 100.2(dd)