

TEXAS TEACHER MENTORING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Report to the Texas Legislature



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Texas Teacher Mentoring Advisory Committee

Report to the Texas Legislature

January 1, 2015

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Introduction

Teachers encounter distinct challenges in their initial years in the classroom, often struggling in isolation to develop into effective teachers who remain in the teaching profession. It is important for the success of schools, the teaching profession, and the achievement of students that beginning teachers receive support through a high-quality mentoring program.

Effective mentoring programs that are comprehensive and systemic utilize carefully selected and trained mentors as well as provide structured time for interactions focused on improving the new teacher's content knowledge, instructional skills, and classroom management (DeAngelis, Wall, & Che 2013). Research suggests that comprehensive, multi-year mentoring programs accelerate the professional growth of first-year teachers making them more effective in a shorter amount of time, improve student learning, reduce the attrition rate of first-year teachers, and provide a positive return on investment (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Additionally, high-quality mentoring programs may indirectly reduce the cost to districts to replace teachers (Strong & Villar, 2007). In Texas, a 2000 report to the State Board for Educator Certification (Fuller, 2000) estimated the cost of replacing a teacher to be between \$3,000 and \$4,000. More recent estimates are as high as \$8,000 (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, n.d.). By implementing high-

quality mentoring programs, which reduce first-year teacher attrition rates, the cost to districts to replace teachers is inadvertently reduced as well.

A recent report from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) highlights the need to focus attention on first-year teachers now (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). The report identifies seven trends impacting the nature of the teaching force, three of which make the need for mentoring very evident:

From 2002 through 2012 the number of teachers in Texas increased by 12.9% to 329,352 (Texas Education Agency, 2014a).

1. *In the past 25 years, the increase in the number of teachers has outpaced the increase in student population.* The report cites that from 1987 to 2012 student enrollment increased by 19.4% and during the same period the teaching force increased by 46.4%. A partial explanation points to a reduction in teachers' workloads in regard to class size, number of classes, and hours worked that have required more teachers to be hired despite student enrollment not keeping pace with the increase.
2. *The teaching force has fewer experienced teachers.* Related to the trend of a larger teaching force, the need for more teachers means that there are many more teachers in their first five years of teaching. The report cites that in 1987–88 there were approximately 84,000 beginning teachers. The number of beginning teachers increased to 239,000 by 2007–08 and even though layoffs and reductions in force occurred during the economic recession, the number of beginning teachers was still 147,000 by 2011–12.
3. *The teaching force is less stable than in the past.* While every occupation has some level of attrition, the percentage of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of teaching has been increasing in recent decades. The report cites first-year teacher attrition in 1988–89 at 9.8% and steadily moving up to 13.1% by 2008–09: (see TX data on pg. 6).

The Texas Education Code (TEC) §21.458 allows for all beginning teachers (with two years or less experience) to be assigned a trained mentor teacher. Beginning teachers must participate in teacher orientation, which *may* [italics added] include specialized activities designed specifically for new teachers. Several mentoring program approaches have been implemented in Texas including the Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring (BTIM) grant program and the Texas Beginning Educators Support System (TxBESS).

The Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §153.1011 details the Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring (BTIM) grant program which was established to increase retention of beginning teachers. The program allowed for grant funds to be used for mentor stipends, training, and/or release time to meet and observe beginning teachers. Through the 2010–11 school year, Texas’ public schools gained more teachers than they lost in previous years. State funding for BTIM decreased significantly over time, ending in 2012, but in 2011–12, the loss exceeded the gain (TEA, 2014a). Beginning with the 2012–2013 school year, state resources for mentor programs as a stand-alone rider were not available or offered to school districts.

In 2012, Texas experienced the largest number ever of teachers (35,800) leaving the Texas teaching force (TEA, 2014c) with smaller districts bearing the largest percentage of beginning teachers leaving the profession (TEA, 2014b).

Another model, the Texas Beginning Educators Support System (TxBESS), has not been funded by the State since 2002; however, districts can obtain TxBESS at a cost through certain regional service providers. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) also recognizes the online program *Performance-Based Academic Coaching Team (PACT)*, which provides resources, tools, chat rooms, and electronic mentors, as a support system for beginning teachers.

In an effort to understand the extent, nature, and variety of mentoring programs in Texas, the Texas 83rd Legislature (2013) enacted House Bill (HB) 2012 that required a mentoring advisory committee to be appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House of Representatives. With the support of TEA, the committee was charged with developing and submitting a report of recommendations for improving Texas school-district mentoring programs to the Governor and Texas Legislature by January 2015.

Committee’s Approach

The eight-person Texas Teacher Mentoring Advisory Committee (MAC) first met on April 10, 2014. The Committee reviewed the expectations of HB 2012 and the current law and administrative code addressing mentoring in Texas. TEA staff and experts from the New Teacher Center presented data and research on effective mentoring practices

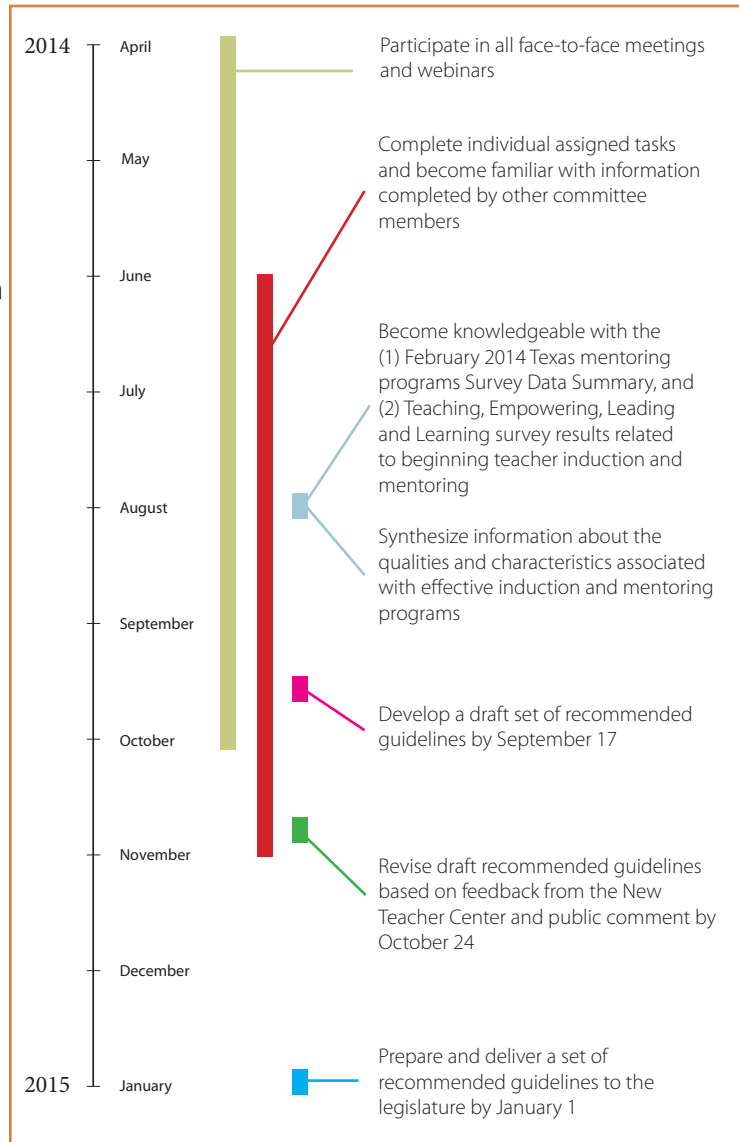
and components that support quality, comprehensive beginning teacher programs, polices, and initiatives. The Committee also developed a scope of work for the initiative, which included an outline of the major project actions and a timeline for completion.

In the following three months, the Committee participated in a series of webinars and utilized working templates to identify mentor-related research-based practices that would serve as the foundation of recommendations in this report. The TEA and the Texas Comprehensive Center (TXCC) at SEDL staffs provided members with mentoring-related research and materials and administrative support and capacity to carry out the Committee’s responsibilities.

MAC members used online templates developed by project staff to identify research-based practices and findings as viable practices for Texas’ diverse landscape. Members also identified

the policy spaces (i.e., statute, rule, or guideline) for the findings they determined important to improving mentoring practices and policies in Texas. These activities helped establish a foundation for the Committee’s second face-to-face meeting on August 7–8, 2014.

At the August meeting, MAC members studied evidence-based research and best practices in mentoring, reviewed reports on how other states successfully implemented their mentorship programs, and engaged in consensus-building processes to build on their previous work to develop 12 draft recommendations to



improve beginning teacher mentoring in Texas. MAC members then identified a set of select stakeholders from whom to gather additional feedback. The 21 stakeholders were comprised of school administrators, teachers, and central office personnel. The stakeholders were asked to respond to three questions regarding aspects of each of the 12 recommendations:

- Is the recommendation feasible for Texas schools and districts?
- Is the recommendation fiscally viable for Texas schools and districts?
- Is the recommendation likely to improve the quality of mentoring programs in Texas schools and districts?

The stakeholders also had an opportunity to add their own comments about quality mentoring programs that were not addressed in the 12 recommendations.

A third in-person meeting was held on October 24, 2014. MAC members reviewed the results of the survey and revised the recommendations based on stakeholder feedback. One change was a reduction of the number of recommendations from 12 to 10 to consolidate redundant ideas. MAC members also discussed how to best present the report findings to the Legislature.

At the final meeting on November 18, 2014, MAC members reviewed and approved the final draft of the report. The 10 recommendations, along with supporting research, comprise the body of this report.



Texas Teacher Mentoring Committee Recommendations

The Texas Teacher Mentoring Advisory Committee has reviewed and studied the most recent research and best practices on mentoring in order to develop a set of recommendations that

- develop the capacity of beginning teachers (i.e., teachers in their first or second year of teaching),
- encourage high-quality beginning teachers to remain in the profession, and
- align Texas schools' and districts' mentoring approaches to current research describing effective mentoring programs.

The Committee identified seven key criteria of high-quality mentoring programs shown to improve the teaching ability of beginning teachers and decrease teacher turnover:

- Mentor Selection
- Mentor Assignment
- Mentor Training
- Mentor Roles and Responsibilities
- Program Design and Delivery
- Funding
- Accountability

Each of the 10 recommendations (see Table 1) in this report aligns to one of these seven criteria. The sections that follow further delineate each criteria according to:

- a rationale for the recommendation(s) with reference to supporting research;
- the current status of the mentor criterion in Texas;
- the Committee's recommendation(s); and
- the Committee's suggestion for incorporation into State statute, the Texas Education Code (TEC), Commissioner's Rule (TAC), and/or TEA guidelines.

Table 1: Recommendation Snapshot

<p>Mentor Selection (pgs. 12-13)</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: The State should require common criteria for selecting beginning teacher mentors. Mentors should demonstrate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal skills • Instructional effectiveness • Leadership • Work experience • Content and grade-level expertise (similar to mentee) preferred, but not required
<p>Mentor Assignment (pgs. 14-15)</p>	<p>Recommendation 2: The beginning teacher mentee assignment should be a maximum two-year term and should begin for the mentee upon their first day of employment.</p>
	<p>Recommendation 3: The number of beginning teachers assigned to mentors should be practical and easily handled.</p>
<p>Mentor Training (pgs. 16-17)</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: All mentors assigned to beginning teachers, along with district and campus leaders, must be trained prior to the beginning of the school year with additional embedded training throughout the year. The training should include best mentoring practices. Examples of these practices might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best instructional practices • Coaching skills • Standards-based instructional delivery • Adult learning • Conflict resolution • Behavior management • Student engagement • Classroom management
<p>Mentor Roles and Responsibilities (pg. 18)</p>	<p>Recommendation 5: Mentors and beginning teacher mentees should meet a minimum of once a week for at least 45 minutes or 12 hours a semester.</p>

<p>Program Design and Delivery (pgs. 19-20)</p>	<p>Recommendation 6: The scope of mentor and beginning teacher mentee interactions should include the following support topics through individual sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation to the context, policies, and practices of the district • Data-driven instructional practices • Instructional coaching cycle (e.g., pre-conference, observations, post-conference, etc.) • Professional development • Professional expectations
	<p>Recommendation 7: Mentors and beginning teacher mentees should have a regular release time or reduced class load to conduct classroom observations and/or participate in a supportive coaching model.</p>
	<p>Recommendation 8: Mentors and beginning mentees should have common time to meet during the school day.</p>
<p>Funding (pgs. 21-22)</p>	<p>Recommendation 9: The State should develop a formula-based allotment to school districts to fund mentor programs supporting beginning teachers in their first two years in the field.</p>
<p>Accountability (pgs. 23-24)</p>	<p>Recommendation 10: The State should add an additional indicator to the <i>community engagement component</i> evaluation tool focused on beginning teacher mentoring program design and implementation. Currently, under House Bill 5 passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature, all districts are required to evaluate the district’s performance and the performance of each campus in regard to community and student engagement in the following categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fine Arts, b. Wellness and physical education, c. Community and parental involvement, d. 21st Century Workforce Development program, e. Second language acquisition program, f. Digital learning environment, g. Dropout prevention strategies, and h. Educational programs for gifted and talented students.



Mentor Selection

Rationale

A rigorous selection process for mentors will ensure that those teachers who take on mentoring responsibilities have the background and qualities needed to support beginning teachers (Goldrick, Osta, Barlin, & Burn, 2012). Having state criteria as a suggestion for mentor selection will allow for a more uniform selection throughout the State (Potemski, 2014). A mentor in Houston, therefore, will meet similar criteria as a mentor from Lyford.

In Texas, after five years in the profession, 28.8% of beginning teachers leave the teaching force (TEA, 2014b). Feedback from the MAC stakeholders suggested that the number one reason beginning teachers leave the profession is due to “a lack of support.” Uniform criteria will also ensure that all beginning teachers have an effective and trained mentor (Goldrick et al., 2012). Mentors with the skill sets identified in this recommendation, and who have the ability to help develop those skills in mentees will help reduce the number of beginning teachers leaving the profession.

Current Status of Selection in Texas

TEC §21.458 (b) and TAC §153.1011(c) state that in order to serve as a mentor teacher, he or she must have

- a minimum of three years of teaching experience with a superior record of assisting students in achieving improvement in student performance,
- completed a research-based mentor and induction training program approved by the Commissioner, and
- completed a mentor-training program provided by the district.

Additionally, TAC §153.1011(b)(1) states that a process for recruitment of mentor teachers be included in any mentoring program approved by the Commissioner. Thus, the recruitment process varies by the mentoring program a district chooses. Other than years of teaching experience, a record of positive student achievement, and training, neither statute nor rule specifies specific qualifications for a mentor.

Recommendation:

1. The State should require common criteria for selecting beginning teacher mentors. Mentors should demonstrate the following:
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Instructional effectiveness
 - Leadership
 - Work experience
 - Content and grade-level expertise (similar to mentee) preferred, but not required

Suggested Incorporation of Recommendation:

The Committee recommends amending TAC §153.1011(b)(1) to include specific criteria for the recruitment and selection of mentors.

Mentor Assignment

Rationale

Mentor programs that offer more than one year of support provide the new teacher a positive experience early in his or her career (Potemski, 2014). Ultimately, this level of mentoring support could lead to better teacher retention rates, increased teaching effectiveness, and student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Evidence suggests that comprehensive, multi-year programs accelerate the professional growth of beginning teachers, reduce the rate of beginning teacher attrition, provide a positive return on investment, and improve student learning (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Current Status of Mentor Assignment in Texas

TEC §21.458 (a) and TAC §153.1011(d) state that each school district may assign a mentor teacher to a beginning teacher. In order for a teacher to be assigned as mentor teacher, the teacher must:

- to the extent applicable, teach in the same school;
- to the extent applicable, teach the same subject or grade level as applicable; and
- have completed a Commissioner-approved and district-approved mentor-training program.

Districts may elect to use funds to employ retired teachers or other instructional personnel who met the definition and qualifications of a mentor teacher as described in section TAC §153.1011(d).

Currently, there is nothing in statute or rule that sets a boundary on how many mentees a mentor can serve or the length of term for the mentorship relationship.

Recommendations:

2. The beginning teacher mentee assignment should be a maximum two-year term and should begin for the mentee upon their first day of employment.
3. The number of beginning teachers assigned to mentors should be practical and easily handled.



Suggested Incorporation of Recommendation:

The Committee recommends amending TAC §153.1011(d) to include guidance on the term of the mentor-mentee relationship. The Committee also recommends that TEA develop guidelines with regard to the number of teachers assigned to each mentor.

Mentor Training

Rationale

In order for mentors to adequately support beginning teachers, training is critical for a successful and collaborative mentor/mentee relationship (Matlach & Potemski, 2014). Additionally, research demonstrates that training needs to be continuous, job embedded, and targeted to needs of individual teachers (Matlach & Potemski, 2014).

Current Status of Mentor Training in Texas

TEC §21.458 and TAC §153.1011 state that to become a mentor, one must complete a research-based training program approved by the Commissioner of Education and a district must provide mentor training.

TAC §153.1011(b) further explains that a beginning teacher induction and mentoring program must include:

- a process for the recruitment of mentor teachers;
- a structured mentoring component based upon research in teacher induction, beginning teacher development, and quality professional development;
- regular teacher observations and standards-based assessments;
- continuous support and ongoing development tailored to the needs of beginning teachers that include: collecting and analyzing student performance data, classroom management, and pertinent topics related to pedagogy and student achievement;
- continuous support and ongoing professional development tailored to the needs of the mentor teachers that includes topics listed in the previous bullet, and scheduled release time in order for a mentor teacher to fulfill mentoring duties as described; and
- training for administrators on implementing and supporting an induction and mentoring program.

Recommendation:

4. All mentors assigned to beginning teachers, along with district and campus leaders, must be trained prior to the beginning of the school year with additional embedded training throughout the year. The training should include best mentoring practices. Examples of these practices might include:
 - Best instructional practices
 - Coaching skills
 - Standards-based instructional delivery
 - Adult learning
 - Conflict resolution
 - Behavior management
 - Student engagement
 - Classroom management

Suggested Incorporation of Recommendation:

Currently, TAC §153.1011(b) only requires school districts receiving funds from the Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program to provide mentor training, a program that is no longer funded. The Committee recommends that language be amended to address mentor training for all mentors.

Mentor Roles and Responsibilities

Rationale

Mentees need frequent feedback in the areas of lesson planning, lesson delivery, and classroom management (Matlach & Potemski, 2014). The contact time between mentors and mentees should be frequent, focused, and structured. The need for weekly meetings ensures a focus on helping beginning teachers enhance instructional delivery and increase student achievement (Stanulis & Floden, 2009).

Current Status of Mentor Roles and Responsibilities in Texas

TAC §153.1011(e) states that mentor teachers must:

- participate in beginning teacher orientation;
- meet weekly with the beginning teacher;
- maintain documentation of mentor/beginning teacher activities,
- attend regularly scheduled campus mentor support meetings and trainings;
- provide support to beginning teachers in collecting and analyzing student data, classroom management, curriculum planning, and other activities related to pedagogy and improved student achievement;
- conduct observations and assessments of the beginning teacher; and
- complete all requirements of the school district's beginning teacher and induction and mentoring program.

Recommendation:

5. Mentors and beginning teacher mentees should meet a minimum of once a week for at least 45 minutes or 12 hours a semester.

Suggested Incorporation of Recommendation:

The Committee recommends that language addressing minimum contact time for mentors and mentees be included in TEA guidelines supporting the implementation of TEC §21.458 and TAC §153.1011.

Program Design and Delivery

Rationale

Research says that states should provide the framework for the scope of interactions between mentors and mentees (Matlach & Potemski, 2014). The framework includes:

- Orientation to the context, policies, and practices of the district
- Data-driven instructional practices
- Professional development
- Professional expectations

Development of these competencies will accelerate growth of the beginning teacher, increase instructional effectiveness, and lead to increased student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Additionally, both mentors and mentees should have regular release time to be able to adequately address the needs of the mentee including classroom observations and formative feedback sessions (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Current Status of Mentor Program Design and Delivery in Texas

TAC §153.1011(e) states that mentor teachers must:

- participate in beginning teacher orientation;
- meet weekly with the beginning teacher;
- maintain documentation of mentor/beginning teacher activities;
- attend regularly scheduled campus mentor support meetings and trainings;
- provide support to beginning teachers in collecting and analyzing student data, classroom management, curriculum planning, and other activities related to pedagogy and improved student achievement;
- conduct observations and assessments of the beginning teacher; and
- complete all requirements of the school district's beginning teacher and induction and mentoring program.

Recommendation:

6. The scope of mentor and beginning teacher mentee interactions should include the following support topics through individual sessions:
 - Orientation to the context, policies, and practices of the district
 - Data-driven instructional practices
 - Instructional coaching cycle (e.g., pre-conference, observations, post-conference, etc.)
 - Professional development
 - Professional expectations
7. Mentors and beginning teacher mentees should have a regular release time or reduced class load to conduct classroom observations and/or participate in a supportive coaching model.
8. Mentors and beginning teacher mentees should have common time to meet during the school day.

Suggested Incorporation of Recommendation:

The Committee recommends that

1. More specific language addressing the scope of mentor/mentee interactions should be included in TAC §153.1011(e)(5).
2. The State should include language in TEC §21.458 that provides for release time for mentors and mentees.
3. More specific language addressing the scope of mentor/mentee interactions should be included in TAC §153.1011(b).
4. TEA develops a set of guidelines to support the implementation of TEC §21.458 and TAC §153.1011.



Funding

Rationale

Research on effective mentoring programs indicates that when funds are specifically allocated for mentor training and mentor stipends, mentoring programs are more likely to have the intended impact on new teacher retention, improved instructional practices for beginning teachers, and improved student achievement (Matlach & Potemski, 2014).

The feedback MAC members received from stakeholders shows that they believe that the recommendations presented in this report would in fact improve the quality of mentoring but could not be implemented effectively without additional resources from the State. Feasibility and financial viability would remain a concern for the school if mentoring programs were left as a campus-based initiative only. Funding mentoring initiatives across the State demonstrates Texas' buy-in and level of support and commitment to beginning teacher development and retention.

The following are research-based justifications for state funding of beginning teacher mentor programs (Goldrick et al., 2012):

- Provides a base of support for districts,
- Legitimizes the State’s central role in accelerating beginning teacher effectiveness,
- Supports districts in high-need areas that often hire a large number of beginning teachers, and
- Ensures program sustainability.

Current Status of Mentoring Funding in Texas

Many districts and schools across the State provide some form of mentoring for beginning teachers. However, Texas current statute, TEC §21.458(a), does not require school districts to provide mentors to beginning teachers. Funding for mentor programs varies widely among districts with some districts funding research-based practices, stipends, release time, and training expenses while other districts do not.

There are sections in TEC §21.458 and TAC §153.1011 that outline how districts can use BTIM funds allocated for mentoring, but do not specify that funds will be provided.

Recommendation:

9. The State should develop a formula-based allotment to school districts to fund mentor programs supporting beginning teachers in their first two years in the field.

Suggested Incorporation of Recommendation:

The Committee recommends that the State include language in TEC §21.458 that provides for funding for mentoring programs in Texas.

Accountability

Rationale

The New Teacher Center developed 10 policy criteria based on sound research and best practices to guide states in thinking about and developing teacher induction and mentoring programs (Goldrick et al., 2012). Criterion 10 says, “The State should assess or monitor program quality through accreditation, program evaluation, surveys, site visits, self-reports, and other relevant tools and strategies” (Goldrick et al., 2012, p. 29). Requiring districts to include an evaluation of their mentoring program would allow the Commissioner more in-depth information to inform future reports to the Legislature. Evaluation data provides valuable information to guide future policy-making and program improvements.

Current Status of Mentoring Accountability in Texas

TEC §21.458(e) directs the Commissioner of Education to report to the Legislature regarding the effectiveness of school district mentoring program each year.

TAC §153.1011(h) refers to an expectation that districts awarded the BTIM grant submit periodic activity/progress reports to the Agency no later than 30 days after the close of the reporting period. The final evaluation report must include:

- the total number of beginning teachers and mentor teachers who actually participated in the beginning teacher induction and mentoring program,
- the use of funds and activities conducted; and
- any other pertinent information deemed appropriate by the Commissioner.

This requirement only applies to districts that have been awarded funds through the Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program.

Recommendation:

10. The State should add an additional indicator to the *community and engagement component* evaluation tool focused on beginning teacher mentoring program design and implementation. Currently, under House Bill 5 passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature, all districts are required to evaluate the district’s performance and the performance of each campus in regard to community and student engagement in the following categories:
 - i. Fine arts,
 - j. Wellness and physical education,
 - k. Community and parental involvement,

- l. 21st Century Workforce Development program,
- m. Second language acquisition program,
- n. Digital learning environment,
- o. Dropout prevention strategies, and
- p. Educational programs for gifted and talented students.

Suggested Incorporation of Recommendation:

The Committee recommends that the State amend language in TAC 61.1023 directing districts to include an indicator to the *community and engagement component* evaluation tool that will address beginning teacher mentoring program design and implementation.

Conclusion

The Mentoring Advisory Committee is committed to having Texas lead the way in policies that support beginning teachers. The Committee recognizes that there is a great cost to districts and schools when beginning teachers do not have the support they need as they enter the profession. The financial cost of replacing teachers who leave is outweighed by the impact that teacher turnover has on student learning. Keeping highly qualified teachers from leaving the profession should be a high priority for the State and acting on the recommendations contained in this report would be a great step forward for the teachers and students of Texas.



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