



## Welcome To Enhancing Professional Practice

A mentoring program developed for Newport News Public Schools

**The Philosophy:** This mentoring program is based on the belief that we all make our own meaning from our experiences. While more practiced people can guide us in developing knowledge and skill, ultimately each of us 'learns' for oneself.

**Important Note:** *This program is designed strictly for professional growth. No information about the topics of discussion or the new teacher's performance is to be shared by the mentor with the new teacher's evaluating administrator. However, the new teacher is free to use the artifacts and the learning that results from the mentoring discussions as evidence for the Summative Assessment process as he/she wishes.*

**The New Teacher's Goal:** This mentoring program is designed to help new teachers in Newport News understand the practices of good teaching as defined in the rubrics of the **Teacher Performance Assessment Handbook** and to continuously improve professional practice through reflection and structured dialogues with another colleague who has been assigned as a mentor.

**The Mentor's Goal:** To assist the new teacher in Newport News in understanding the rubrics and the Summative Assessment process as defined in the **Teacher Performance Assessment Handbook** and to continuously improve professional practice through reflection and structured dialogues with a colleague who has been assigned as a mentee.

**The Practice:** Mentors and new teachers use the rubrics in the **Teacher Performance Assessment Handbook** as the guide for defining good teaching. As mentor pairs become more familiar with the rubrics and how they play out in classrooms, they engage in **collaborative inquiry**.

A brief definition of collaborative inquiry follows:

Superior [teachers] constantly evaluate their own performance and search for ways to improve it. That is why they easily recognize their need for good coaches: other people who can help them see and feel what they are doing, people who can help them understand what's going on and figure out how to do it better. The interesting thing about the really good [teachers] is that they *regularly* seek such help.

*Harvey Penick's Little Red Book.*

Subtitled "Lessons and Teachings from a Lifetime in Golf,"

**Mentors are not expected to have all the answers**, but rather to ask questions, share evidence, and help the new teacher make sense of his or her ideas, thoughts, and

perceptions. Mentors can gain as much insight into their own practice as they provide for mentees.

Mentors and new teachers **both are to play an active role** in this program. To be active agents rather than passive receivers of knowledge involves

- building into work regularly-scheduled times for reflection and for the examination of work;
- determining when the skillful help of others is wanted or needed;
- thinking through what kind of help is needed;
- finding others to meet the need in a way that can be used; and
- being available and open to the collaboration necessary for professional development.

**The Materials:** Each mentor and new teacher accesses the same materials. These materials are designed to provide structure for their dialogues. The materials align with the expectations of the Summative Assessment process for new teachers.

There is a materials folder for each quarter. Each quarter's folder contains the following standard items:

- **Discussion Prompts.** There are several of these in each quarter and indicate the ***minimum number of times that formal discussions are to be held*** between mentor and new teacher. These prompts correspond to the components that are part of the Summative Assessment process for the quarter.
- A **Discussion Summary** sheet per quarter, one for each formal conversation. The summary notes help to focus the conversation and assist the mentor and new teacher in determining what is working and what next steps to take. These are to be filled out by the new teacher.
- An **End of Quarter Reflection** to capture a summary of the work done by the pair during the quarter. Each mentor and new teacher has a form to fill out. Copies of the reflections are to be sent to the Staff Development Department.

**The Process:** The mentoring process follows a continuous improvement cycle: Selecting a topic for discussion, examining the topic, determining how it connects with the standard, deciding on next steps.

1. The new teacher chooses an artifact to discuss. This artifact corresponds to one or more of the components listed for the quarter. Artifacts include samples of student work, a teacher's plan (lesson, unit, or activity), testing or other data, and any other actual 'work' that is done by either the teacher or the students.
2. The mentor and new teacher discuss the artifact, using the dialogue prompts for the component.
3. The mentoring pair refers to the appropriate rubric(s) in the ***Teacher Performance Assessment Handbook*** as a way to understand the quality of the artifact under discussion and to determine a path for improvement.
4. The new teacher determines how this dialogue has helped him/her understand professional practice and how it is expressed in his/her classroom.
5. Records of the dialogues and next steps are kept by both the new teacher and the mentor

**New Teacher Expectations:** Each new teacher is expected to

- **Meet 3 times per month** (minimum) with his/her mentor.
- **Choose an artifact** to discuss at each meeting.
- **Actively engage** in the discussion using the dialogue prompts and by asking questions and sharing insights.
- **Determine** what influence future the discussion will have on future professional practice and how it will benefit the mentee's students.
- **Fill out** the discussion reflection sheet following each meeting and the End of Quarter reflection sheet.
- **Send** copies of all reflections to the Staff Development Department.

**Mentor Expectations:** Each mentor is expected to

- **Initiate and facilitate a minimum of 3 meetings** per month with his/her new teacher. ***A meeting is defined as a conversation that has depth and substance.*** It is held for the purpose of helping the new teacher 'make sense' of a situation and determine solutions or appropriate actions.
- **Actively engage** the new teacher in discussing the artifact that has been provided. Active engagement can be facilitated by using the dialogue prompts in the appropriate quarter folder and by asking questions.
- **Use the rubric(s)** for the component(s) discussed as a guide to help the new teacher determine the quality of the artifact being discussed, ways in which his/her practice can be strengthened, and his/her level of performance.
- **Remind** the mentee to fill out the discussion summary and the final quarter reflection sheets.
- **Log** time spent and discussion topics into the Professional Development management System (PDMS) <https://pdplanner.ahainteractive.com/nnpsva>
- **Fill out** the Mentor's End of Quarter Reflection sheet and send a copy to the Staff Development Department.

**Administrative Support:** The mentor program is a part of the New Teacher Academy for Newport News Public Schools. A Designated Administrator for the New Teacher Academy has been identified for each school. The NTA Designated Administrator works with all mentors and new teachers in the building and is the 'go to' person for answers to questions, suggestions for resources, and other types of problem solving.

The program is coordinated at the division level by the Staff Development Department. This department is responsible for program budgeting; developing and distributing program materials; conducting professional development activities for new teachers, mentors, and Designated Administrators; and evaluating the program according to state and local guidelines.

Questions can be addressed to

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**Additional information:** Research into the effectiveness of this approach began in 2004 and will continue through December, 2006. The anecdotal information collected from the reflection sheets is used strictly for research purposes and will be shared only in an anonymous format. Names of the teachers involved will not be connected to any of the information, though level taught (early childhood, elementary, middle, high) and/or school may be correlated with the information.