

Basic Education Finance Task Force—Dec. 8, 2008

Topic: Mentoring p. 16 and p. A-6 in Final Draft Report.

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Our Common Commitment

Creating structures essential for the student learning we expect in Washington State.

Sustained support for beginning teachers' learning is essential for student learning.

Background

Nearly 10 years ago, legislature re-considered effectiveness of the Teacher Assistance Program and funding. Rather than cutting such critical work, the legislature

- Revised the TAP law
- Established guidelines and expectations for districts receiving TAP funds
- Provided funding for mentor training.

Draft Final Report

Recognizes that

- Support for beginning teachers is not optional.
- A funding package must support mentoring throughout the first year AND continue it in subsequent years of induction.

Mentoring

- Extends far beyond helping new teachers with policies and procedures, and the mechanics of a building's instructional practices.
- An on-going effort that creates and fosters teacher learning opportunities that result in significant teacher growth and powerful student learning.
- Entails complex and sophisticated skills to support and promote teacher learning that results in improved professional practice and student learning. The skill set is related to but different from the skills required for successful classroom teaching.

Components for supporting effective mentoring across the state

- **Require all districts to provide standards-driven mentoring.** New teachers' experiences, and thus the learning of their students, cannot be left to the good fortune of a teacher landing in a district that provides intentional, carefully implemented new teacher support. *What happens to students in classrooms of new teachers who receive no support?*
- **Explicitly ensure confidentiality of the mentoring work.** New learning requires risk taking, and risk taking must be protected from evaluation. New teachers frequently discover that, regardless of their prior training and experience, they are not ready for the day-to-day challenges they face. *How will we ensure that beginning teachers have a safe place to admit and learn what they do not deeply understand or are not able to do?*
- **Provide a funding mechanism for state coordination and support of mentoring.** In the past 10 years, the state TAP office has done significant work to substantially develop mentoring practices. This work has been—and hopefully will continue to be—guided by standards of effective practice. Most districts do not have the capacity to provide the high quality and on-going training necessary for the development of mentoring skills that result in teacher growth. The TAP Mentor Academies are but one example of the good work that is already in place. *How we will provide structures, supports, and networks needed by districts to provide the support needed by their beginning teachers?*