

MODULE 1

INTRODUCTION TO MENTORING SECTION 3: IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to share information about the importance of mentoring by providing relevant, up-to-date research that demonstrates the positive effects that come from a beginning teacher being assigned a mentor.

Objectives

Participants will:

- Familiarize themselves with research related to teacher attrition in South Carolina
- Understand the impact that teacher attrition has on districts and students
- Understand the importance of mentoring and how it can affect teacher performance and retention

Materials

- "Teacher Turnover in South Carolina" Document (supplemental resource)

Note to Trainers: The "Teacher Turnover in South Carolina" document is updated on an annual basis. Please visit the CERRA secure mentor trainer website for the latest information.

- Laminated copies of South Carolina district maps (1 per table)
- "Table Group Conversation Questions" from the participant handbook (pg. 10)



Overview

In this section participants will learn about the importance of mentoring through research and data specific to South Carolina public school districts. They will be provided scholarly evidence about the positive impacts that mentoring can have on teachers and students. Participants will have the opportunity to review teacher turnover data in our districts, and more specifically, they will learn about the number of beginning teachers who leave their classroom positions. Once participants have had a chance to review the data, they will be asked to discuss with other participants any trends that can be identified, likely reasons for these numbers, and potential implications that could result from such numbers.



Content and Relevance

Note to Trainers: The "Content and Relevance" information for Section 3 of Module 1 must be updated on an annual basis. Please visit the CERRA secure mentor trainer website for the latest information.

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Like many states in the country, South Carolina faces an acute issue with teacher retention. Over the last three school years, between 4,100 and 4,800 teachers left their teaching positions each year and did not return the following school year to teach in any South Carolina public school district. What is of even greater concern is the number of these departing teachers who are in the early stages of their careers. Of the teachers who left their positions each year, between 1,300 and 1,800 had five or fewer years of experience in the classroom. Furthermore, between 530 and 600 teachers had only one year or less of teaching experience. These statistics are troubling for many reasons, including the fact that 22% of the beginning teachers who were hired for the 2015-16 school year did not return the following year. That is more than 1 in 5 new teachers who left during or at the end of their first year in the classroom. Unfortunately, this occurrence is not unique to one school year. It is a multi-year trend, and the number of teachers who leave continues to grow.

Many of these early-career teachers left their positions for understandable reasons, such as relocating with a spouse or staying home with young children. Other departures were due to an involuntary dismissal. But, far too many teachers left for reasons related to frustration, a perceived lack of support, classroom management difficulties, and numerous other reasons. These teachers often feel so isolated and unsupported that they end up leaving the classroom or the profession altogether. This attrition not only impacts the learning that should be taking place in the classroom, but it is also very costly for schools and districts to recruit, hire, and induct new teachers every year. A 2005 report written by the Alliance for Excellent Education concluded that replacing public school teachers costs the nation \$4.9 billion each year, and South Carolina accounts for more than \$74.5 million.

Many of these occurrences of attrition among early-career teachers could be prevented with meaningful mentoring and induction programs. These support programs are designed to improve the performance and retention of beginning teachers, ultimately resulting in student achievement and growth. Today more than half of all states require that new teachers participate in some form of induction or mentoring program. South Carolina mandates both - a formal induction process that includes a mentoring component. Each district in this state is required to provide teachers under induction contracts with comprehensive guidance and assistance throughout the school year. While the structure of these programs can vary across districts, every program must include trained mentors who are assigned to work with induction teachers. Mentors receive explicit instruction during a two-day training on how to support a beginning teacher effectively, which is why the participants are in the training today and tomorrow.

Research and experience tell us that novice teachers benefit from mentor support early in their careers. This type of support, which we will begin to discuss in detail later this morning, is critical to beginning teachers as they are learning their trade. Mentoring has been proven to positively impact teacher satisfaction, retention, and performance. In a 2015 study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, it was determined that teachers who had first-year mentors were more likely to still be in the classroom. Results from a 2009 study concluded that the pace of new teacher learning increases when they are paired with

highly trained mentors. A recent examination of 15 empirical studies conducted since the mid-1980s about the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teachers revealed the following results:

- Beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction with a mentoring component had higher satisfaction, commitment, or retention.
- Beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction with a mentoring component performed better at certain aspects of teaching (i.e., keeping students on task, developing workable lesson plans, using effective questioning practices with students, providing differentiated instruction to meet students' needs and interests, demonstrating successful classroom management, etc.).
- Students of beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction with a mentoring component had higher scores or gains on academic achievement tests.

There is no shortage of evidence to prove that mentoring, if carried out appropriately, can lead to many positive gains in our state. We also know that depending on the size of a district and the comprehensiveness of its induction program, effectively supporting new teachers can be expensive. Many of the public school districts in this state experience budget shortfalls every year and are forced to make cuts in certain areas. With the growing number of teachers leaving early in their careers and an average of only 2,024 new teachers graduating from South Carolina institutions of higher education each year, our public school districts need to do whatever they can to retain teachers who have the potential to be successful. Since this training is not designed to figure out how to recruit more good teachers, we need to focus on keeping them in the profession by pairing them with quality mentors. This is the reason the South Carolina Mentor Training is so important.

Activity: Teacher Turnover in South Carolina (35 minutes)

In preparation for this activity, trainers must review the current year's teacher turnover data. While it is not necessary to memorize turnover rates or the number of teachers who did not return to a specific district in 2015-16, it is important that trainers understand what the reported data actually mean. The information below should assist trainers with this task:

- Teacher turnover rates come from the South Carolina Department of Education. The previous year's rates are reported during the current school year.
- The number of teachers leaving comes from CERRA's Supply and Demand Survey that is sent to all districts in the fall of each academic year. Districts are asked to self-report this information. With the exception of two or three each year, all districts provide this requested information. CERRA generates a report in January of each academic year that explains all of the survey data.
- The teacher turnover rates include everyone who left a position in the district (retirees and individuals who voluntarily or involuntarily left the district). It is fair to assume that some of the teachers included in the turnover rates have left the profession, while others have simply taken different teaching positions in the state/country.

- The “Numbers of Teachers Leaving” columns represent the raw number of teachers who left a teaching position, excluding those who left to teach in another South Carolina public school district or special school. The raw numbers include retirees; individuals who left a teaching position for a non-teaching position, left to teach in another state, and left the profession altogether; teachers who were not offered a contract or whose positions were eliminated; international teachers who returned to their country of origin; etc.
- Districts are asked to report the number of full-time equivalent (FTEs) teachers who did not return each year. Some positions may be classified as a .5 FTE or a .25 FTE. This results in districts (ex. Lexington 3) reporting that 7.5 teachers did not return in 2015-16.
- It is important to consider the size of the district when examining the raw numbers in the “Numbers of Teachers Leaving” column. A large district like Charleston will understandably have more teachers leaving than a small district like Greenwood 51. While it is not an exact “apples to apples” comparison, it is possible to use the percentages included in the “Teacher Turnover Rates” columns to better understand the raw numbers provided in the “Numbers of Teachers Leaving” columns.

Display the slide that contains the numbers 4,100 – 4,800 and \$74.5 million. Ask the participants what they believe these numbers represent. Allow several participants time to give their thoughts. Explain that over the last three years between 4,100 and 4,800 teachers left their teaching positions each year and did not return the following school year to teach in any South Carolina public school district. Further explain that a 2005 study found that replacing public school teachers costs the nation \$4.9 billion each year, and costs South Carolina more than \$74.5 million. Use the information included in paragraphs 1-2 under the “Content and Relevance” heading for this section to provide a statewide picture of teacher retention and turnover in South Carolina. Trainers should be sure to include the data on beginning teacher attrition, the reasons these teachers leave their positions, and the impact on students.

Before passing out the “Teacher Turnover in South Carolina” document and the South Carolina district maps, explain that this activity includes an opportunity for the participants to examine actual district-by-district teacher turnover data. The information allows participants to have an informed conversation about teacher retention in individual districts. While the trainer will highlight individual districts for the purpose of guiding the discussion, this is not intended to be a finger-pointing exercise. Trainers should use the appropriate slides to describe how to interpret the data participants are about to receive. Pass out the “Teacher Turnover in South Carolina” document (1 per participant) and the South Carolina district maps (1 per table). The maps give the participants a visual to help them understand the relative size of the districts and the district’s location in the state. Use the bullet points listed above to provide a brief overview of the included data. Give the participants 3-4 minutes to review the data on their own. Ask the participants to turn to page 10 in their handbooks and hold a 10-minute discussion around the following “Table Group Conversation Questions”:

- What trends (district and state) do you notice when you examine the teacher turnover rates?
- What do you notice about the number of teachers who did not return to your own district? How does this compare to similar districts?

- What percentage of teachers with one year or less of classroom experience do not return to your district (Number of teachers who did not return in 2015-16 after only 1 year or less of classroom experience/Number of teachers who did not return in 2015-16)? How does this compare to similar districts?
- What district characteristics might have impacted these numbers?
- What do these data tell us?

The trainers should circulate throughout the room answering questions and guiding the discussion. After 10 minutes, bring the entire group back together and ask the participants to share any insights they discovered while mining the data.

Explain that South Carolina requires districts to provide early-career teachers with an induction program with a mentoring component. Use the information in paragraph 3 under the “Content and Relevance” heading to briefly describe induction programs and the requirements for mentors. Recognize the fact that a great deal of research exists on the topic of mentoring and that as a result of this research, mentoring has been shown to have a positive impact on novice teachers. Ask the participants to predict or recall from previous learning the specific ways mentoring impacts beginning teachers. Participants should call out their ideas. Share the slides that contain the research findings. Use the information provided in paragraph 4 under the “Content and Relevance” heading to elaborate on the given data. Trainers should conclude the activity by sharing a personal or professional story that demonstrates the importance of mentoring. These stories should humanize the data and research that have been provided to participants.

Debrief

End this section by explaining that teacher retention is a necessary goal for the South Carolina mentoring program. It is possible to sum up our state’s retention challenge with data from the last three years: an average of 6,569 teachers are hired each year; 4,342 teachers leave their teaching positions each year and do not return the following school year to teach in any South Carolina public school district; 1,531 of these teachers leave within the first five years of being in the classroom; and only 2,024 new teachers are being produced in our state each year. When we fail to retain teachers who have the capability to be successful in the classroom, we quickly move the state toward a teacher shortage. Explain that while teacher retention is important, mentoring is also focused on improving teacher practice so that students are able to make more academic gains.

Transition

Participants are now familiar with the state and district-level teacher turnover data, the cost of attrition, and the positive impact mentors can have on beginning teachers. In order to support novice teachers properly, participants must have a thorough understanding of beginning teacher needs. Module 2, Section 1 will provide the participants with an opportunity to construct this knowledge through an interactive activity.