

# SUPPORTING TEACHER INDUCTION AND MENTORING PROGRAMS IN LIGHT OF COVID-19

According to a 2019 NEA policy brief titled, *Advancing the Teaching Profession: Investing in Comprehensive Induction and Teacher Mentoring*, there are “numerous studies [that] demonstrate that the implementation of comprehensive induction cuts new teacher turnover rates in half. Comprehensive induction is a sound investment to address teacher recruitment and retention.”

In this policy brief, components of a comprehensive induction program were identified as:

1. New Educator Orientation Week at the beginning of the school year
2. Mentoring by qualified and trained teacher mentors the first two years of teaching
3. Support teams (i.e., grade level and department colleagues, staff development teachers, and consulting teachers) that meet once a week in addition to formal mentoring by a mentor
4. Courses and workshops for beginning teachers from school district central office on relevant topics
5. Continuous training for mentors throughout their coaching career
6. Training for principals on how to support beginning educators and mentors
7. Evaluation process that focuses on developing teaching skills and professional knowledge

When the novel coronavirus started to spread across the country, many school districts suspended in-person instruction in March 2020.

For aspiring and new educators, the pandemic interrupted student teaching, teacher residencies, and induction programs. Therefore, there are likely thousands of new teachers who are not fully prepared to meet the needs of students and are not receiving the critical support they need to be successful. This situation further exacerbates the teacher shortage and the ability to attract, retain, and train new teachers. While there are many educational priorities at this time, supporting teachers who are new to the profession is of the utmost importance.

Given the NEA’s previous policy recommendations, there are four areas that state and local affiliates can continue to prioritize in the midst of the pandemic. Below are proposed solutions that can be implemented now, along with ways in which NEA can offer support.

**Component # 2:** Mentoring by qualified and trained teacher mentors the first two years of teaching

- Help state and local affiliates shift from in-person mentoring support to online mentoring and coaching
  - ▶ Create an online coaching program that states and affiliates can easily lift and adopt that includes a research-informed framework, structures, resources, and support for an online coaching and mentoring program. Teachers can submit videos of their instruction and student interactions for feedback from coaches.

- *Note: There are online platforms specifically for virtual coaching that comply with privacy policies adopted by many school districts.*

**Component # 3:** Support teams (i.e., grade level and department colleagues, staff development teachers, and consulting teachers) that meet once a week in addition to formal mentoring by a mentor

- Help state and local affiliates create an online community for new teachers
  - ▶ Build upon NEA’s monthly webinar series and create professional learning communities within local or state associations to explore topics in depth. These sessions would focus on growing the teacher’s content knowledge and pedagogical practices.
    - For teachers in an online coaching and mentoring program, professional learning from these sessions could help to inform teacher goals and the focus of coaching

**Component # 4:** Courses and workshops for beginning teachers from school district central office on relevant topics

- Provide support to help states and local affiliates utilize microcredentials and existing blended learning programs that focus on the needs of new teachers

- Create additional blended learning courses to address learning gaps and needs
- Partner with other organizations to create a video series that highlights pedagogical practices and approaches to classroom management
- Partner with other organizations to create a free resource bank of editable commonly needed and used classroom tools that support classroom management and teacher organization

**Component # 5:** Continuous training for mentors throughout their coaching career

- Create an online train-the-trainer program for state and local affiliates to train and support mentors

Teacher induction and mentoring programs are critical to attracting and retaining new teachers to the profession. While COVID-19 presents new challenges, local associations and school districts can support new educators by repurposing existing resources, developing strategic partnerships, and leveraging technology to meet the professional and personal needs of educators.