
Q and A on Mentoring

NEW TEACHER INDUCTION/TEACHER MENTORING PROCESS Sections 1525 thru 1526

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IMPLEMENTATION

Q. Section 1526 references the first three "years" as the time frame for the induction of new/novice teachers/teacher mentoring, and 15 "days" of intensive professional development. How much time constitutes each of these units?

A. For the purpose of implementing section 1526, a year may be defined as at least 150 days. A "day" of professional development would be defined in the same way that the local contracts define a "day" of school.

Q. How must the 15 days required for professional development be disbursed over the three-year induction period?

A. No policy has been established on the disbursement of the 15 days for professional development. It is recommended that the needs of each new teacher be given primary consideration and that a plan to meet those needs be developed to comply with locally established guidelines and the district's resource capacity.

Q. What happens if a new teacher changes districts before the end of the three-year induction period?

A. Section 1526 outlines mentor support and the amount of professional development training each new teacher is to receive. It does not specify the arrangements or the provider of these. It is expected that new teachers will receive the support and training designated and that these may be provided on a progressive basis by the district or districts of employment. This means that the district of employment can decide how the 15 days will be disbursed but in a case where a teacher changes districts, each district is expected to assign a mentor and to continue contributing to the required amount of professional development. The district of employment at the end of the three-year induction period will be held responsible for assuring that the total number of professional development days (15) has been provided. At the end of each of the three years, the teacher should be provided a record of professional development and a copy maintained at the school district.

Q. Can the 15-day professional development requirement be met by including new teachers in training programs offered for other (veteran) building or district teachers, or must the programs offered new teachers be exclusively for them?

A. No policy regarding arrangements for the delivery of professional development training has been established. Considering the unique needs of the new teacher, it is expected that some specific professional development training might be needed to address these. This training might include or cover such areas as: facts about the community, district, and building; who to ask or where to find what is needed; and specifics about how "things" are done at that school, all of which teachers with experiences in the district would not need at this point. It is also logical that a new teacher would be included in any other professional development experiences offered at the building or district level, depending on the needs of the teacher as an individual or the group (grade level, building, district) of which he/she is part and the building or district plan for professional development.

Q. Can Section 1525, professional development funds, be used to pay mentor teachers and substitute teachers needed to cover the class of teachers released to participate in activities related to the new teacher induction process?

A. Yes, Section 1525, professional development funds can be used for the above purposes. It is expected, however, that the district application and plans for professional development funds would reflect the intent to do so.

Q. What amount of teaching experience is needed to be a mentor teacher?

A. No state-level policy has been established on this issue. While it is recommended that the mentor have at least five years of classroom teaching experience, it is expected that this issue will be addressed in locally established guidelines for implementing the new teacher induction/teacher mentoring process.

Q. Can incentives be provided to mentor teachers/new teachers?

A. Incentives can be provided to both mentor teachers and new teachers, but should be provided in compliance with guidelines established at the local level. The Michigan Department of education policy on activities eligible for State Board Continuing Education Units (SB-CEUs) has been amended to include teacher mentoring.

Q. If SB-CEUs are issued for teacher mentoring, will separate credit be awarded for the completion of mentor training and for actually mentoring the new teacher for the assigned period, or will a single credit award be issued for both training and mentoring?

A. In compliance with new policy on the expanded list of activities eligible for SB-CEUs, separate credit can be awarded for mentor training and for mentoring; however, only mentors who have completed the required training will be awarded credit for mentoring.

Q. Can the principal of the new teacher's school or one from a different school be assigned as a mentor teacher?

A. It is strongly advised that the mentoring process not be used to evaluate a new teacher. Since new teachers are usually evaluated by the principal of the building, it is logical to assume that the lines between being supportive and being evaluated might become blurred and that information and insight gained as a mentor would negatively impact the new teacher's evaluation. It might also be assumed that a new teacher might respond to a principal, more as a subordinate rather than a colleague and fear how information about their needs and efficiencies would be used. Considering these possibilities, it is strongly recommended that no persons employed as a principal or other administrator be assigned to mentor a new teacher.

Q. Should professional development needs identified through the induction/mentoring process be included in the new teacher's Individualized Development Plan?

A. It is expected that the observations and assessments of the mentoring teacher will remain a confidential matter between the mentor and new teacher. However, because the new teacher is also a "probationary" teacher and must, by state tenure law, be provided an Individualized Development Plan, the new teacher (and only he/she) may, based on their input for the development of their individualized plan request or recommend the inclusion of specific professional development experiences identified as the result of the mentoring process. Using this procedure, a correlation between the two is logical. Also, any professional development training or experiences addressed in the Individualized Development Plan may, if they fit within established guidelines, be counted toward meeting the "15 day" requirement of Section 1526.

Q. Should the "15 days" of professional development required for new teachers be reflected in the building/school improvement plan?

A. Where deemed appropriate, the sections in which professional development is addressed should include new teachers.

Q. How might a district meet the requirements to (1) "include experiencing of effective practices in university-linked professional development schools," and (2) "regional seminars conducted by master teachers and other mentors"?

A. Regarding university-linked professional development schools, it is noted that for the specific purpose of implementing Section 1526, a university-linked professional development school is considered a school setting in which new and different pedagogical and organizational practices, and educational and management policies and technologies are proposed, employed, and assessed for the purpose of helping students achieve high standards of learning in core subjects and other areas of preparation for their adult roles. In Michigan, the term "professional development schools" are commonly thought of and discussed in relation to the Michigan Partnership for New Education and the schools which are participants in this

project. However, a larger network of schools exists which are partners with the Michigan Department of Education, colleges/universities, and professional organizations in initiatives which demonstrate a commitment to a reformed approach to teaching and learning for higher quality education.

These include, but are not limited to, projects/programs such as: Re: Learning Schools, Michigan Math and Science Center Programs, Michigan Education Association Pioneer Schools Project, Outcome-Based Programs, Comer School Development Program, etc. It is advised that compliance with the "experiencing of effective practices in university-linked professional development schools" may be achieved through special presentations (lectures, demonstration, workshops), visitation and observation, teacher exchange, distance learning, etc. Teachers identified as "master teachers" who agree to participate in the new teacher induction/teacher mentoring process may do so by conducting building/district level and/or regional seminars for novice teachers on education related topics. Under the provisions of Section 1526, participation in these sessions/seminars and other learning experiences can count toward meeting the "15 day" requirement for "intensive professional development of the new teacher.

Q. Section 1525 (2)(f) authorizes the use of funds appropriated to support professional development to be used for sabbatical leave provided by school districts for up to one academic year for selected master teachers who aid in professional development. What criteria will be used to select teachers for sabbatical leave? Will experience in the new teacher induction/mentoring process be a criterion for selection?

A. Criteria for selection of master teachers for sabbatical leave will be established at the local level. The requirement of experience in the new teacher induction/mentoring process as a criterion for the selection of teachers for sabbatical leave is a decision that will be made at the local level. (RESCINDED SUMMER 1996)

Q. Will new teachers employed temporarily for a long term on either a full year or emergency permit be affected by the requirements of section 1526?

A. No state-level policy has been established on this issue. Considering the unique needs of the new teacher, it is expected that some professional development training must be needed to address these, regardless of the hiring arrangement. It is recommended that this issue be addressed in locally established guidelines for implementing the new teacher induction/teacher mentoring, allowing local districts or governing boards the flexibility to decide.

Q. Are appropriate induction experiences for new teachers of special education, vocational education, music, art and other special subjects addressed in the law?

A. Section 1526 mandates that new teacher induction/teacher mentoring program covers all teachers. The legislation does not single out any one group of teachers. Specifically, Section 1526 states: For the first three years of his/her employment in classroom teaching, a teacher shall be assigned by the school in which he/she teaches to one or more master teachers, or college professors or retired master teachers, who shall act as a mentor or mentors to the teacher. The "Guidelines and Recommendations for the New Teacher Induction/Teacher Mentoring Process in Michigan" provides a variety of core experiences that are recommended for new teachers. Training related to diversity in the classroom and accommodations for students with diverse and/or special needs are included in the "Guidelines." Districts most certainly should be aware of and, if possible, provide training in these areas, not just for new teachers but for all teachers.

Q. Will the novice teacher be able to obtain the professional certificate if he/she fails to meet the 15 days of professional development requirement?

A. Yes, the novice teacher will be able to obtain the professional certificate. The 15 days of professional development are not required for the professional certificate. The professional certificate requires three years of successful teaching experience within the validity of the certificate, 18-semester hours in a planned program or master's or higher degree, and completion of three semester hours of reading methods course work for the secondary level certificate; six for the elementary level. The teacher/applicant is recommended by the college or university for the professional education certificate.

Q. Are part-time teachers required to have a mentor?

A. Yes, Section 1526 does not make a distinction between part-time and full-time teachers. Any teacher, whether full-time or part-time, within his/her first three years of teaching must be assigned a mentor and must be provided 15 days of professional development.

Q. Can college courses be used to meet part or all of the 15 days of professional development?

A. College courses taken as part of the 18 semester hours required for the professional certificate cannot be used to meet the professional development requirement. However, courses taken above and beyond the 18 semester hour requirement for the professional certificate may be used to meet a portion of the 15 days. It is highly recommended that the novice teacher's supervisor review the course syllabus of any class to be used for professional development to determine the appropriateness of the course content and the number of professional development hours to be counted. Section 1526, in part, states that "the teacher shall also receive intensive professional development induction into teaching..." This should be the basis for making any decision regarding appropriate professional development activities.

Q. Who is considered to be a new (novice) teacher?

A. Section 1526 which requires new teacher mentoring/teacher induction, became effective, for practical purposes, at the beginning of the 1994-95 academic year. Anyone entering the teaching profession at that time and thereafter is considered to be a new/novice teacher. Even if an individual received his/her teaching certificate prior to 1994, but did not begin teaching until 1994, he/she should be assigned a mentor(s). However, it is noted that although induction and mentoring is not required under the Revised School Code for new teachers hired before the 1994-95 school year, it does not preclude schools from providing mentoring and professional development as described in Section 1526 to those hired prior to this time should a district choose to do so. It is expected that a district will provide the mandated professional development to all teachers.

Q. Are school counselors, school librarians, speech pathologists, and school psychologists required to be assigned a mentor and complete the 15 days of professional development?

A. Using the Administrative Rules for the Certification of Michigan Teachers as a reference, the response to these are as follows:

School Counselor: In order to work as a school counselor, an individual must hold a Michigan teaching certificate with a counseling endorsement. In most cases, the counseling endorsement on a teaching certificate is earned by a veteran/experienced teacher. However, it is possible for an individual who has completed all requirements for a provisional teaching certificate to go directly into a master's program for school counseling and earn a counseling endorsement prior to ever being employed as a teacher. Therefore, if upon entry into the profession the individual is hired as a counselor, and has never been employed before as a teacher, this person should be afforded all the provisions under Section 1526.

School Librarian: Under Michigan law, either an individual with a provisional elementary certificate covering all subjects in grades K-5 and K-8 in a self-contained classroom, or one who has a separate endorsement for library science on their provisional elementary or secondary certificate, can work as a school librarian. Therefore, if an individual who has never been employed as a teacher before is hired for the first time as a school librarian, that person must be afforded all the provisions under Section 1526.

Speech Pathologist: This endorsement is conferred based on the completion of a master's degree. However, the provisions of Section 1526 are applicable based on an individual's status as a new entrant into the profession of teaching and not on the level (undergraduate or graduate) of study or type of degree. It is conceivable that a person could complete all requirements for certification as a speech pathologist teacher and never have been employed as a teacher before. In this case, all of the provisions of Section 1526 would apply.

School Psychologist: Under Michigan law, teacher certification is not a requirement for certification as a school psychologist. For this reason the provisions of Section 1526 do not apply.

Q. Can the professional development days required in Section 1527 for all teachers be used to meet part or all of the 15 days required for new teachers under Section 1526?

A. The professional development days required in Section 1527 are applicable to all teachers including

new teachers. Section 1527 clearly states, AProfessional development days provided under this section shall not be counted toward the professional development required under Section 1526. Therefore, the new teacher must still be provided with the 15 days of professional development required under Section 1526.

Q. How does Section 1526 relate to noncertificated, nonendorsed teachers?

A. Section 1526 applies to new teachers who are within their first three years of classroom teaching regardless of their certification status.

MONITORING

Q. Will there be a record of a new teacher's three year period of induction?

A. Section 1526 mandates the implementation of a new teacher induction/teacher mentoring process. Therefore, a system for documenting compliance has been developed and must be maintained.

Q. What format/procedures will be used to record the assignment of a teacher mentor and the 15 day professional development requirement for each new teacher?

A. The Michigan Department of Education has developed and disseminated the "Annual Record of Professional Development" form which must be maintained by the district to record activities and experiences related to the induction of each new teacher.

Q. Who will be responsible for keeping the record of activities and experiences related to section 1526 and where should these records be kept?

A. The Annual Record of Professional Development activities and experiences should be completed annually for each new teacher and signed and dated by the building principal or individual with authority for professional development. The form should be maintained on file by the board of education of the school district or governing body of the nonpublic school and, each year, a copy provided to the teacher for his/her personal record. This form must be completed for each of a teacher's first three years, and should be available for monitoring and auditing purposes.

Q. How will the new teacher induction/teacher mentoring process be monitored by the Michigan Department of Education?

A. The monitoring of the teacher induction/teacher mentoring process will be conducted after the completion of the third year of teaching (i.e., the initial monitoring will be conducted in the 1997-98 school year and each school year thereafter). Each school district that employed one or more teachers who had completed three years of teaching will be asked to verify that the teachers had an assigned mentor each of their first three years and that at least 15 days of professional development were provided over the three year period. Specific details on how this information will be collected for review is under study.

EVALUATION

Q. How will the new teacher induction/teacher mentoring process be evaluated?

A. For each of the first five years of the implementation of the new teacher induction/teacher mentoring process an evaluation of the effectiveness of the mentoring and professional development will be conducted. The evaluation will include a sample of beginning teachers. The evaluation process will focus on the appropriateness and usefulness of the services that are provided to the new teachers. The evaluation results will be made available to suggested professional development facilitators at intermediate school districts and will focus on suggested improvements in these services.