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Clarence Mentoring Program

In the 2018-19 school year, the Clarence School District hired thirty new teachers for probationary and long-term substitute positions. The District has a rigorous process for hiring which includes multiple committees, demonstration lessons, and extensive reference checks. We know that great teachers make all the difference in student learning and we strive to find the very best for Clarence.

In order to provide help and support for our new teachers the District revamped our Mentoring Program. Each newly hired first-year teacher is assigned a mentor. It's possible for second or third year teachers to also be assigned a mentor depending on need. Mentors offer first-year teachers explicit training, coaching, and serve as a conduit for feedback as the new teachers tackle the responsibilities and expectations of teaching in Clarence. The mentor teacher provides a structured system for new teachers to gain ideas, share their experiences, seek advice and master best instructional practices.

Mentor teachers are required to participate in specific training with the Office of Curriculum. In order to remain eligible as a mentor, the veteran teacher must attend a minimum of nine hours of approved professional development every three years. A Mentor Liaison helps to coordinate the training and helps to organize training activities and relationship building. There are three basic criteria for matching a mentor with a new teacher. Matching is coordinated by a team that includes the building principal, Director of Curriculum, and Mentor Liaison. First, we look for a mentor who teaches in the same building as the new teacher. Next, we try to match mentors who have the same certification as the new teacher. Finally, if possible, we want the mentor and the new teacher to share a common teaching assignment.

There are a number of activities in the Mentor Program that both mentors and new teachers are required to participate in. In the summer they are hired, new teachers must attend three days of new teacher orientation which emphasizes instructional practices, classroom management, and general teaching responsibilities. Mentors attend the final day of the orientation to assist new teachers and help them better understand our teaching and learning framework. During the school year mentors and new teachers must meet face to face for two hours each month (minimum of 20 hours annually) to debrief, discuss and reflect. Each mentor is also provided with release time to observe the new teacher in a classroom setting and provide targeted and specific instructional feedback.

We believe the support mechanisms we have in place for new teachers will help them improve their craft and enhance learning for our students.