El Paso Independent School District
El Paso, Texas

Making **E**ach **N**ew **T**eacher **O**ur **R**esponsibility Program
(MENTOR)

End-of-Year Report

Presented by

Evaluations Coordinator
Dr. Frank Ciriza

Evaluator
Rebeca Pérez, M.Ed., Educ. Spec.

To

Esther Natera, Director of Staff Development

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Research, Evaluation, Planning and Accountability
Art Jordan, Executive Director

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Making Every New Teacher Our Responsibility
(MENTOR) Program

Purpose: At the request of the 2004-05 EPISD Board *(Minutes of Meeting of Board of Trustees, May 25, 2004)*, the Staff Development Director took the necessary steps to have the MENTOR Program looked at by the Distirct Evaluation Department.

What is the program: Through the MENTOR Program at EPISD, new teachers receive professional guidance and support from a mentor teacher assigned to them during their first year with the District. The Mentor Program was first piloted at four schools in 2003, and it is now on its second year of implementation at every campus in the District. New teachers with less than three years of teaching experience also benefit from the many training sessions the Staff Development Department prepares for them.

Purpose of the Study:
The main focus of the study was to determine the number of new teachers that leave the profession during their first three years with the District. The study also looked at the quality and quantity of the mentorship training.

Major Findings:
Teachers in EPISD leave the profession of teaching at slower rates than teachers in the rest of the country. EPISD data show that of teachers who started their profession four and five years ago, 73 and 76 percent respectively, are still teaching in EPISD. Interestingly, four and five years ago there was no specific support program for new teachers to say that such program had any thing to do with teacher attrition rates.

Further study is recommended to identify and determine what has influenced new teachers to stay in the profession. It is imperative for district officials to identify district and campus initiatives, as well as principals' behaviors and practices that have had a positive impact in new teachers. Documentation of these best practices would benefit the District as well as the entire academic audience.

When reviewing new teacher attrition rates for El Paso Independent School District, it is important to keep in mind the socio-economic dynamics of the city; cost of living, unemployment rate, housing, etc. Further research is recommended to determine if other neighboring school districts have similar new teacher attrition rates, and how the other variables play a part in teachers staying or leaving the teaching profession in the El Paso County.

The majority of the mentors (87%) felt the training had been effective in preparing them to become highly qualified mentors; furthermore, mentors felt the quality of the mentor training was "Excellent" or "Good". Overall mentor teachers seem to be satisfied with the mentor training. Even though mentors seemed to be pleased with the mentor training, some mentor teachers seem to be concerned about not having time to meet with their mentee, or not knowing how to schedule meeting and observation times. Strong campus and district support is needed.

Mandatory participation should be considered by the District in order for new teachers to receive the support the program is supposed to offer. Mandatory program participation sometimes creates problems in the mentoring process, but "surveys of post-program protégés and mentors repeatedly report enthusiastic support of organized mentoring programs (Retrieved January 21, 2005 from http://www.ericdigets.org/pre-924/mentoring.htm). What this means is that new teachers and mentors could benefit from mandatory programs.

Studies have shown that the best method to keep good teachers is through multi-year (usually 3-5 years) induction programs. Induction programs are comprehensive, structured, and sustained group process that fosters a true learning community by continuing to provide support and training to new teachers into their tenure. The possibility of extending the current MENTOR Program to a three-year induction program should be considered by the Staff Development Office. Even though few new teachers are leaving the District, district officials might want to consider the program as a method of ensuring highly qualified teachers, increase collegiality, improve morale among teachers, and enhance professionalism (Wilder, 1992).

The study also pointed out that EPISD does not have a sound system in place to collect information from teachers as they leave the District; when teachers leave, the reason for leaving is unknown to the District. It is key to set up a process through the Human Resources Department where teachers would have to complete a short survey with questions such as; reason for leaving, reasons for moving, future plans, and teacher opinion on school climate and job perceptions.

There are more than five entities in EPISD that provide some kind of preparation for new teachers. These organizations are as follows: 1) Education Service Center - Region XIX, 2) A-STEP, 3) University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), 4) I Teach Texas, 5) Western Governors University, and the 6) El Paso Independent School District (EPISD). Teachers who are on the Alternative Certification Program select one of these entities to assist them in obtaining teacher credentials, as well as to provide them with a mentor during their first year of teaching. To more effectively implement a full district wide mentor initiative, it must be understood that there is a need to closely collaborate with the various training identities.

In order for this to happen, District officials need to institutionalize the MENTOR Program. A full time position needs to be assigned to oversee the overall implementation and monitoring of the program. A new job description needs to be created for this position to include: an enhancement of creation of a District MENTOR Plan that would include: revised goals, objectives, methodology, additional resources, and an evaluation plan. This full time person should also be responsible for all data collection activities such as the creation of processes and forms that would facilitate the collection of data from all stakeholders about the MENTOR program.

El Paso Independent School District

Making **E**ach **N**ew **T**eacher **O**ur **R**esponsibility Program
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I. BACKGROUND

Various studies report the well known fact that many teachers in all schools leave the profession; "fourteen percent of new teachers leave by the end of their first year; thirty three percent leave within threes years; and almost fifty percent leave in five years", according to a report released by Alliance for Excellent Education (Nov. 2004).

The Texas Comptroller's Special Report reported that "37,000 teachers leave the classroom each year for other professions or to retire, forty five percent (16,650) of them are new teachers with five or fewer years of experience that are no longer teaching in Texas in 2005." Retrieved January 18, 2005, from http://www.window.state.tx.us/special/teachersalary05.   In 2003, the Texas Education Agency estimated the statewide turnover rate at 15.6 percent.

School Districts across America are experiencing the demand for qualified teachers not only due to the teacher exodus but in part due to higher standards and greater accountability mandated by new legislature. In Texas, almost 37,000 new teachers leave the classroom each year for other professions or to retire. (Keeton Strayhorn) 2004).

Even though there are a myriad of factors that contribute to the teacher shortage some studies suggest that the following factors influence this phenomenon; teacher retirements, increasing enrollments, and state and national initiative to reduce class size (Ganser, 2001).

Salaries, working conditions, preparation, and mentoring support in the early years of teaching are the four major factors influencing teacher attrition, according to documents from the Symposium of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (August 2002). Retrieved on August 9, 2005 from
http://www.ncsu.edu/mentorjunction/text_files/teacher_retentionsymposium.pdf#search='unraveling%20the%20Teacher%20shortage%20Problem:%20Teacher%20retention%20is%20the%20problem'.
Such document also points out that working conditions and salaries are both important reasons for leaving, but their importance varies. Poor administrative supports are mentioned more by teachers leaving low-income schools where conditions are more challengeable, while salaries is reported more by teachers leaving more prosperous schools.

Salaries are not a determining factor for teacher attrition but studies suggest that higher salaries appear to attract better-prepared and higher –quality teacher.

Teacher turnover is influenced more, some studies found by working conditions and salaries than by student characteristics in a particular school. A California survey found that teachers are more likely to say they plan to leave a school soon because of poor working conditions in challenging schools, such as poorer facilities, less availability of textbooks and supplies, fewer administrative supports, and larger class sizes, according to documents from the *Symposium of The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future* (August 2002).

In a report prepared by the Office of Research and Evaluation in the Texas Education Agency, it was reported that nationally, states and districts have dealt with the problem of teacher shortages in various different ways; such as increasing salaries, providing incentives for potential teachers, creating alternative certification, or allowing the use of emergency or temporary credentials. Retrieved on August 5, 2005 from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/prr6.pdf

Programs such as "Troops to Teachers" which are designed to encourage professionals from others fields to join the teaching profession misunderstand the phenomenon of teacher shortage. Programs like this, do nothing or very little to enhance teacher retention, *"it is a wrong diagnosis and a wrong prescription*," stated Bruce Torff in his review of the book "*Letters to the Next President: What We Can Do About the Real Crisis in Public Education.*" Retrieved on January 18, 2005 from http://www.aera.net/publications/?id=338.

Torffs' "*solution is not recruitment, but retention*," his recommendations also include: raising teacher salaries; increasing support for teachers, especially new ones, by providing adequate classroom supplies and opportunities for mentorship; increasing teachers' influence in school decision making; and taking steps to reduce classroom management problems linked to high turnover. Mentoring and induction programs are an attempt to respond to the need of retaining new teachers.

COST
Some studies estimate that American schools spend more than $2.6 billion annually replacing teachers who leave the profession. (Alliance for Excellent Education 2004). A recent study estimates that the high teacher turnover in Texas costs taxpayers $329 million a year. But the price tag could go as high as $2.1 billion a year if one includes the organization costs of termination, substitutes, the learning curve lost for teacher, and new training. Retrieved on January 20, 2004 from http://nea.org/goodnews/tx01.html

Good Mentoring Programs
Some school districts, including Cincinnati, Columbus, and Toledo Ohio, and Rochester, New York have reduced attrition rates of beginning teachers by more than two-thirds by providing mentors with release time to coach novice teachers in their first year on the job. Retrieved on August 9, 2005 from http://www.ncsu.edu/mentorjunction/text_files/teacher_retentionsymposium.pdf#search='unraveling%20the%20Teacher%20shortage%20Problem:%20Teacher%20retention%20is%20the%20problem

A paper based on the proceedings of NFIE's Teacher Mentoring Symposium, co hosted with the United Teachers Los Angeles in February 1999 reported a
surprising 100 percent teacher retention rate for four years of the *Pathways to Teaching Careers Program,* of which mentoring was a major component at the Armstrong Atlantic State University. Retrieved on January 11, 2005 from http://www/nfie.org/publications/mentoring.htm

What is a Mentor?
The concept of mentoring is as old as the Greek mythology. But now a day, the notion of mentoring is widely used in education, *"a mentor is someone who takes a special interest in helping another person develop into a successful professional." Retrieved on January 11, 2005 from* *http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/mentor/l.html*

According to the Council of Graduate Schools (1995), *"mentors are advisors, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge's supporters, people who give emotional and moral encouragement: tutors, people who give specific feedback on one's performance; masters, in the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed; sponsors, sources of information about and aid in obtaining opportunities; models, of identity, of the kind of person one should be to be an academic," Retrieved on January 11, 2005 from http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/mentor/l.html*

Benefits of the Mentoring Program
Research suggests that mentoring programs improve the quality of teaching. In an NEA document called *"Creating a Teacher Mentoring Program,"* it was stated that the National Center for Education Statistics reported on its January 1999 *Teacher Quality* study, that "seven in ten teachers who receive mentoring at least once a week believe that their teaching skills have improved "a lot' as a result." Retrieved January 27, 2005 from http://www.nfie.org/publications/mentoring.htm

It has also been documented that mentoring programs benefit all participants: the mentor, the new teacher, and the school system. Mentors get the satisfaction of supporting a novice educator; as Tamara Hightower stated in her comments about The Good Mentor (as cited in Rowley, J. B. 1999) mentor teachers "*demonstrate hope and optimism for the future by graciously helping a new teacher discover the joys of teaching."* Retrieved January 21, 2005 from http://www.garesa.org/_disc2100000074.htm

School districts benefits are two fold, teacher attrition rate is lowered when school districts offer a systemic support for the new teacher, and the early detection of instructional problems is observed through the close observation and supervision of the beginning teacher. (ERIC Clearinghouse. Retrieved January 19, 2005 from http://ericdigests.org/pre-924/mentoring.htlm

The novice teacher benefits in three ways: fast assimilation into the school environment, establishment of professional competence and introduction to teaching as a lifelong career. (ERIC Clearinghouse. Retrieved January 19, 2005 from http://ericdigests.org/pre-924/mentoring.htlm

In 1999, the United States Department of Education (USDE) through Title II, Teacher Quality Enhancement Program, awarded the State Board for Educators Certification (SBEC) a ten million dollar grant to develop and implement the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS) from 1999- 2002. The Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Education Agency, federal, state, and local funds continue to fund the TexBESS since the end of the federal grant period. . Retrieved on January 31, 2005 from State Board for Educator Certification (November 2004) *The Impact of the Texas Beginning Educator Support System 0 A proposal to use TxBESS for beginning teacher in target schools during the 05-06 and 06-07.* Retrieved on August 18, 2005 from
http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/SBECOnline/txbess/tchrtrnovrrsrch.pdf

The Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS) is a three-year pilot project that addresses three major goals (1) increasing teacher retention, (2) assisting teachings in developing and refining sound teaching practices that support high-quality instruction, and (3) improving students performance. After a successful implementation of more than 2 years, the State Board for Educators Certification is now sharing its TexBESS program with other states by submitting a proposal (11/2004) to the United States Department of Education for its implementation in different states. SBEC is also looking at doing a comprehensive evaluation of the induction program, where they would follow and collect data from a group of new educators to determine its effectiveness. . Retrieved on January 31, 2005 from
http://www.utdanacenter.org/downloads/evaluations/txbessyear2.pdf#search='Texas%20beginning%20educator%20system%20evaluation%20report%20for%20year%20two'

According to the Dana Center report, *Texas Beginning Educator Support System: Evaluation report for year thre*e, of the *"2,059 beginning teacher participating in TxBESS during 2001-01, 88% continued to teach in Texas in the following year- this rate is higher than the statewide rate of 81%. Of the cohort of beginning teachers who received two years of support, nearly 98% returned to teaching for a third year.*" Retrieved January 31, 2005 from
http://www.utdanacenter.org/downloads/evaluations/txbessyear2.pdf#search='Texas%20beginning%20educator%20system%20evaluation%20report%20for%20year%20two'

What is an Induction Program?

Induction is the process of preparing, supporting, and retaining new teachers for a long period of time. Studies have shown that the most successful programs to keep good teachers is with a well thought-out and continuous induction program of three years. Usually, induction programs are provided by districts and managed by staff developers and mentor teachers. Retrieved on January 18, 2005 from http://teachers.net/gasette/FEB03/wong.html

Mentoring is not induction; mentoring is a component of a sustained induction program. Mentoring is an activity that goes on between two teachers, the new teacher and the mentor teacher. The induction program is a collective initiative were a group of experience educators' work with a group of new teachers for long periods of time. Collectively, new teachers learn about the district philosophy, school culture, lesson plans, and discipline in the classroom, to name a few. Retrieved on January 18, 2005 from http://teachers.net/gasette/FEB03/wong.html

Mentoring is only a stand-alone method for supporting teachers. Many times, this relationship begins with a senior teacher being assigned to a new teacher resulting in a "blind date," as Jon Saphier (2001) explains it in his book, *Beyond Mentoring*. Retrieved on January 18, 2005 from http://teachers.net/gasette/FEB03/wong.html

Induction programs make teachers feel "*they are not alone in the process, they feel good that there is a whole team and in some cases a whole school, rooting for that teachers' success.*" Retrieved on January 18, 2005 from http/www.okvotech.org/expressions/2003/september03/teacherind.htm

II. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This study was guided by three evaluation questions upon consultation with the Program Initiative Manager from the Office of Staff Development. This report responds to the stated evaluation questions and includes information collected during the second year of project implementation (2003-04) through surveys and interviews of the mentor teachers.

1. How many new teachers to the district completed the school year 2004-05?

2. Quality and quantity of mentorship.
   a. Is there a mentor assigned to each new teacher?
   b. Are the mentor and the new teacher in the same content area?
   c. How often do mentor and new teacher meet?
   d. How available are the mentors?
   e. Are the needs of the new teacher met?

3. What is the principals' perception of the program?

III. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the evaluation questions, information was collected through surveys administered to 23 mentor teachers. The assistance of the Technology and Information Service Unit will be requested to obtain new teacher attrition rates.

Instrumentation

1. REP&A evaluator in collaboration Program Initiative Manager developed a questionnaire for each of the two groups surveyed. The reader may find a copy of these instruments in the Appendices section of this report.

2. The evaluators in collaboration with key central office administrators developed an interview instrument similar to the questionnaire used for the survey and used it in the interviews with mentor teachers

IV. FINDINGS

MENTORS' SURVEY

A questionnaire consisting of eight items was distributed to 23 teachers selected as *mentors* working for one of the following providers. New teachers under the Alternative Certification Program have the option of going with one of the following entities for training and assistance in obtaining their teaching credentials (Retrieved on August 24, 2005 from http://www.info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p__tac=&ti=1). The following entities hire experience teachers as mentors and provide services to new teachers through the alternative certification program in EPISD: 1) Education Service Center - Region XIX, 2) A-STEP, 3) University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), 4) Western Governors University, and the 5) El Paso Independent School District (EPISD). All mentors and new teachers are supposed to receive support through the in-house MENTOR Program regardless of which provider they have selected. Information was not available at the time this report was completed regarding the number of mentors by entity. Consequently, the return rate of the Mentors Survey is not available.

Spring 2005
Mentors' Survey

The following section of this report examines responses from the mentors' survey.

• **Item 1**
Teachers were asked to mark their appropriate level of instruction.
The majority of the participants in the two-day training session were elementary school teachers.

Level	Number	Percent
Elementary	13	56.5%
Middle	9	39.1%
High School	1	4.34%
Total	23	100%

• **Item 2**
Mentor teachers were asked how long had they been mentors.
Thirty six percent of the mentor teachers are on their second year, whereas the majority (59%) of the mentor teachers has only been with the program one year. One respondent did not address this item.

Mentor Experience	Frequency	Percent
1 year	13	59.09%
2 years	8	36.36%
3-5 years	1	4.54%
Total	22	100%

• Item 3
Respondents were asked to rate the quality of the mentor training they had received.
The majority of the mentors (87%) felt that the quality of the mentor training was "Excellent" or "Good"; two teachers felt the training was adequate, and one mentor stated that the training was "Poor".

• Item 4
Respondents were asked if the training had been effective in preparing them to become highly qualified mentors.
Almost all the mentor teachers (87%) felt that the training had been effective in preparing them to become highly qualified mentors. One respondent did not address this item.

• Item 5
Respondents were asked how helpful had the program support been in preparing them to become highly qualified mentors?
The great majority (68%) of the respondents indicated that the program support had been "Very Helpful" or "Helpful" in preparing them to become a highly qualified mentor. One respondent indicated this item was not applicable.

	Frequency	Percent
Very Helpful	12	54.54%
Helpful	3	13.63%
Somewhat helpful	4	18.18%
Not helpful at all	3	13.63%
Total	22	100%

• Item 6
Respondents were asked how they would rate the professional relationship between them and their mentee.
Fourteen respondents (63%) rated their professional relationship between them and their mentee as *"Excellent".* One respondent rated it as *"Adequate"* and another one did not address this item.

	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	14	63.63%
Good	7	31.81%
Adequate	1	4.54%
Total	22	100%

• Item 7
Respondents were asked how often they met with their mentee.
A great number (66%) of respondents meet every day with their mentees, and only 4 hold meetings "Bi-montlhy" or "Monthly".

	Frequency	Percent
Monthly	2	9.52%
Bi-monthly	2	9.52%
Weekly	3	14.28%
Daily	14	66.66%
Total	21	100%

• Item 8
Respondents were asked if they thought their mentee would stay in the teaching profession.
Most of the respondents believe their mentee will stay in the teaching position, with the exception of two mentors who believe their mentor would leave the profession. Three respondents did not address this item.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	18	78.26%
No	2	8.69%
No Data	3	13.04%
Total	23	100%

• Item 9
Respondents were asked, from the training they had received, what specifically had worked for them as mentors

Thirteen respondents had positive comments about the TexBess and coaching training sessions. The comments that follow are reported precisely as stated by the respondents.

- *"Being a listener and learning not to be judgmental."*
- *"Cognitive coaching, observations of mentees, sharing knowledge and experiences."*
- *"Not always giving my opinion and listening to her concerns and plans of teaching."*
- *"Paraphrasing and watching stress level of mentee."*
- *"I reflect on my performance and strategies and see if I am a model for my mentee."*
- *"The paraphrasing and waiting period and questioning techniques."*
- *"The TXBess steps and strategies have helped to organize my observations and discussions with my mentee."*
- *"Do not tell your mentor exactly what to do but through questioning you can guide them in coming up with ideas or information to help themselves.""*
- *"Shirley is always available. She is a great listener. Ester has planned terrific staff development that has kept us fed."*
- *"Reflective practices, building a relationship of trust, supporting new teacher."*
- *"Learning to listen to people before offering suggestions so they learn to come up with their own solutions."*
- *"Collecting data has helped me greatly as I work collaboratively with my mentee as well as seasoned teachers."*
- *"The Cognitive Coaching program, the TXBess program, the strategies you can use from cognitive coaching to help your mentee."*
- *"The thought that I don't have to have the answers – I guide them to answer their questions."*
- *"Time that was given for us to see the mentee. Also time given for mentee to view other teachers."*

Item 10
Respondents were asked what had not work for them as mentors.

The responses from the twelve respondents are mixed; three had no problems, and two felt the program was not practical. There were also two mentors that felt the lack of time was a problem; and two different respondents shared that 'being the boss' to the new teachers did not work well for them. The comments that follow are reported precisely as stated by the respondents.

- *"Advising, complaining, being the 'boss'"*
- *"Haven't come to that point yet."*
- *"It seemed difficult to get class time for observations. I believe we only had one day (or 2 half days) to complete observations."*
- *"Telling her/him what to do (as demanding) and judging their performance. I am there to facilitate."*
- *"I have not used this program because it is not practical."*
- *"It isn't practical. The test was phony they actually gave you answers if yours were wrong. Did not pay the $500 that was to be paid!"*
- *"All the different types of conservation."*
- *"Sometimes the lack of time has been a problem. It has been difficult to schedule talking to my mentee due to our other activities at school."*
- *"What hasn't worked is my continuing practice of cognitive coaching. Since I don't have a mentee this year it is hard to practice."*
- *"I haven't had any problems."*
- *"Nothing really."*
- *"Everything worked fine; I am pleased with the program itself."*

Item 11

Respondents were asked for suggestion(s) for improvement the training.

Sixty nine percent (69%) of the mentors provided suggestions for improving the mentor training, but only 3 truly addressed the training issue. One mentor recommends keeping the four-day training, another recommends more practice and feedback, and a third respondent would like to see a web site with questions and answers for mentor teachers. The rest of the assorted responses are listed below.

- *"More chances to do the tap from videos."*
- *"It was fine as it was provided to us."*
- *"This is not an improvement, but don't take the 4 day training and make it 3. We need the four days."*
- *"Probably, you need to send all mentors to the cognitive coaching workshops. It helps you how to handle your situation with the mentee."*
- *"Mentor-mentee follow-up in-services (release time)."*
- *Picking mentors that really want to work with a new teacher."*
- *"Only train mentors who want to be mentors and those who have mentor capabilities.*
- *"Use learning village and create a site where teachers can ask questions and get answers from the district."*
- *"It would be great if our principals or asst. principals could get more involved in this program. Also letting them know who their teachers are that have completed this training."*
- *"More practice and feedback."*
- *"Common sense."*
- *"There are so many different programs for certification – consolidate somehow."*
- *"Great work!"*
- *"If the programs were aligned, it might work. But every program seems to have different rules."*
- *"Nothing."*
- *"1) Classes starting in June; 2) assignments to mentees before school starts."*

Item 12
Respondents were asked for suggestion(s) for improvement to the program support.

Only thirty (30%) percentage of the mentors addressed this item. Some respondents would like to see improvements in the mentor selection process; others recommend release time for on-site visits. The comments that follow are reported precisely as stated by the respondents.

- *Probably, if you can have mentor and mentee to the same in-services would be very important."*

- *"Release time for on-site visits is hard to schedule. We were told to go through the campus (budget) first and then contact staff development for help w/ $ for subs if needed."*

- *"Make sure that all mentors have good people skills."*

- *"Please continue to bring Lucy. She is very inspirational."*

- *"Timeline."*

- *"Negative teachers – be asked to leave."*

Item 13
Respondents were asked what additional support activities they would recommend.
- *"More time for mentees to view experienced teachers."*

- *"Ensure that all principals have been trained in TXBess. Some were missed (new principals and no-shows)."*

- *"Possibly an in-service with mentors and mentees working together."*

- *"Continue these workshops."*

- *"Involvement/encouragement by Boeing Staff in career field."*

MENTORS' INTERVIEWS

Evaluators conducted group interviews with a group of randomly selected mentors on March 10 and 11, 2005; mandatory training had been scheduled for all mentors on these two days. The group interviewed on Friday, March 11, was held in the principal's office to ensure privacy. Mentor teachers shared with evaluators the components of the training program that had worked for them, and made recommendations on how to improve the program. The following section summarizes mentor teachers' responses. Comments were classified in four groups, "Things that are Working," "Things that Need Improvement," "Recommendations for Mentor Training," "Recommendation for the MENTOR Program".

Things That Are Working

Mentor Teachers believe,
- the mentor training has improved their teaching style,
- they have become better teachers, better listeners, and better spouses by *…not telling them (teachers) what to do…let people arrive at their own conclusions…come up with ideas on their own."*

- two mentors is what a new teacher sometimes needs. Mentors with the *Math/Science Program* have collaborated with them in providing support to new teachers.

- Other comments are as follows:

   o *"I liked cognitive coaching approach.*

   o *"The reflective practice is a great asset of the program."*

   o *"The mentor program works when it's well implemented."*

   o *"Training offers] vital communication tools."*

   o *"I think we are also advocates for our new teachers."*

<div align="center">Things That Need Improvement</div>

- Mentors reported not being informed of the different local entities that provide support to new teachers. Each organization has different standards and requirements for the participants. The following four organizations assist new teachers during their first year of teaching, and they are as follows: 1) Education Service Center - Region XIX, 2) A-STEP, 3) University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), and the 4) El Paso Independent School District (EPISD).

- Most of the new EPISD teachers are receiving support from one of these four organizations, which makes the job of the mentor more challenging since each organization has different standards and requirements for mentors and new teachers.

- The evaluation instrument utilized by the mentors is very subjective. New mentor teachers would prefer a more objective instrument.

- One mentor commented that other teachers at her campus "were not willing to help the new teacher since there was a mentor already assigned to do that."

<div align="center">Recommendations
For Mentor Training</div>

Mentor Teachers would like to have;

- a refresher course available every year for those mentors who need a review,

- a hot line where mentors could call in anytime with questions,

- an electronic site where mentors could write their questions and receive a prompt response,

- more observation practice that would allow them to affirm and practice the skills they have learned,

- to receive feedback from the new teachers; they feel it would help them in becoming better mentor teachers.

<u>Recommendations</u>
<u>For the MENTOR Program</u>

- New teachers need to be aware of the role of the mentors, if possible mentors recommend that new teachers participate in some of the mentor training sessions.

- Consistency amongst the four local programs is something mentors recommend.

- Mentors and new teachers should be in the same building, and teach the same course or grade level. According to the teachers, the right pairing of the teacher with a mentor makes the logistics of the relationship less challenging. A mentor commented, *"administrators should not 'choose' a teacher simply because she/he has been there for a long time."* Another mentor stated, *"The selection of mentors shouldn't be mandated. You should ask who wants to be a mentor."* A different respondent feels there is a *"need to have a mentor at every grade level."*

Overall, mentors feel that this program is great for new teachers; it is something that they themselves would have liked to have when they were beginning their profession; but they also commented that this program does not address the core issues of why teachers leave. Mentors believe that teachers leave the profession for a variety of reasons, and "*this program is not going to reduce or prevent teachers from leaving the profession"*, one interviewee commented.

How many new teachers have left the district since they were hired?

Data depicted in the following charts were provided by the *EPISD Department of Technology and Information System*, who extracted the data by teacher cohorts for this project. In general, According to Isaac (1997), "*a cohort is any group of individuals linked together in some way- usually by age, though not necessarily… where changes in behavior or attitude are the outcome of interest;*" in this case, these groups of teachers are linked together by the school year they started working for the District. The five-year study looks at 5 teacher cohorts starting in 2000 to 2004. Historical files utilized for this project are maintained by the Human Resources Department and they are as follows: Employee Basic/Employee Basic Extended files and the Employee Termination file.

The following section of this report will present and examine data from the five cohorts.

Of the 79 new teachers hired in 2000, ten (12%) had left teaching after their first year, and of those that remained, seven (10%) left after their second year, and of those that remained, four (6%) left after their third year of teaching.

EPISD New Teacher Attrition Rates*
By Years of Experience
(2000 Cohort)

Year	Termination Reason	Number	Percent
2001 (1st Year)	Resigned	10	12.6%
2002 (2nd Year)	Resigned	3	4.3%%
	Terminated	4	5.7%
2003 (3rd Year)	Resigned	3	4.8%
	Deceased	1	1.6%
Total		21	

* Teacher attrition refers to the number of teachers in one year who are no longer teaching the following year.

N= 79

Thus, during the three-year period shown, of the original 79 teachers who were identified for this study, 21 (26.5%) teachers left the district for the reasons noted in the table.

Of the 75 new teachers hired in 2001, seven (9%) had left teaching after their first year, and of those that remained, eight (11 %) left after their second year, and of those that remained, three (5%) left after their third year.

EPISD New Teacher Attrition Rates*
By Years of Experience
(2001 Cohort)

Year	Termination Reason	Number	Percent
2002 (1st Year)	Resigned	6	8.0%
	Terminated	1	1.3%
2003 (2nd Year)	Resigned	8	11.7%
2004 (3rd Year)	Resigned	3	5.0%
Total		**18**	

*Teacher attrition refers to the number of teachers in one year who are no longer teaching the following year.

N=75

Thus, during the three-year period shown, of the original 75 teachers who were identified for this study, 18 (24%) teachers left the district for the reasons noted in the table.

Of the new teachers who entered the profession in 2002, six (9%) had left the teaching after their first year, and of those that remained, three (5%) left after their second year, and of those that remained, six (11%) left after their third year.

EPISD New Teacher Attrition Rates*
By Years of Experience
(2002 Cohort)

Year	Termination Reason	Number	Percent
2003 (1st Year)	Resigned	5	7.9%
	Terminated	1	1.5%
2004 (2nd Year)	Resigned	3	5.2%
2005 (3rd Year)	Resigned	6	11.1%
Total		**15**	

* Teacher attrition refers to the number of teachers in one year who are no longer teaching the following year.

N=63

Thus, during the three-year period shown, of the original 63 teachers who were identified for this study, 15 (23%) teachers left the district for the reasons noted in the table.

Of the new teachers who entered the profession in 2003, four (6%) had left the profession after their first year, and of those that remained, eight (13.5%) left after their second year. It is unknown how many of the 12 teachers from the 2003 cohort that left the profession had a mentor teacher assigned to them.

EPISD New Teacher Attrition Rates*
By Years of Experience
(2003 Cohort)

Year	Termination Reason	Number	Percent
2004 (1st Year)	Resigned	3	4.76%
	Terminated	1	1.5%
2005 (2nd Year)	Resigned	8	13.5%
Total		12	

* Teacher attrition refers to the number of teachers in one year who are no longer teaching the following year.

N=63

Thus, during the two-year period shown, of the original 63 teachers who were identified for this study, 12 (19%) teachers left the district for the reasons noted in the table.

Of the 81 new teachers who entered the profession in 2004, 11 percent had left the teaching after their first year. It is unknown how many of the 9 teachers from the 2004 cohort that left the District had a mentor teacher assigned to them.

EPISD New Teacher Attrition Rates*
By Years of Experience
(2004 Cohort)

Year	Termination Reason	Number	Percent
2005 (1st Year)	Resigned	9	11.1%
Total		9	

* Teacher attrition refers to the number of teachers in one year who are no longer teaching the following year.

N= 81

In general, new teachers in Texas leave the profession early in their careers, 19 percent of the entering teachers left teaching after their first year, whereas in EPISD, over the past 5 years (from 2000-2004) the teacher attrition rate after their first year of teaching has been between 6 to 12 percent.

During this 5-year comparison study, EPISD had higher attrition rates than the state in two periods; 13.5 percent of the new EPISD teachers left after their second year in 2005, compared to the 12 percent in the state.

In 2005, higher percentage (14.8%) of EPISD NEW teachers left the profession after their third year. Texas had an attrition rate of 12 percentage points.

Overall, the percentage of teachers leaving the profession in EPISD is lower than the state's and national's percentage rates.

New Teacher Attrition Rates
By Years of Experience
(National, State and Local Data)

	National Data *	State Data**		EPISD Data				
				(2000 Cohort)	(2001 Cohort)	(2002 Cohort)	(2003 Cohort)	(2004 Cohort)
		N=10,381		N=79	N=75	N=63	N=63	N=81
1st Year	14%	19% (1988-89)		12.6% (2001)	9.3% (2002)	9.4% (2003)	6.3% (2004)	11.1% (2005)
		N=8,409		N=69	N=68	N=57	N=59	
2nd Year	33%	12% (1989-90)		10% (2002)	11.7% (2003)	5.2% (2004)	13.5% (2005)	
		N=7,400		N=62	N=60	N=54		
3rd Year	50%	12% (1990-91)		6.4% (2003)	5.0% (2004)	11.1% (2005)		

* Data Source: Alliance for Excellent Education (Nov. 2004).

**Data Source: Texas Education Agency Website. http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/prr6.pdf

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS/COMMENTS

<u>1. Conclusion:</u> Teachers in EPISD leave the profession of teaching at slower rates than teachers in the rest of the country. Data show that of teachers who started their profession four and five years ago, 73 and 76 percent respectively, are still teaching in EPISD. Interestingly, four and five years ago there was no specific support program for new teachers to say that such program had any thing to do with teacher attrition rates.

<u>Recommendation/Comment:</u> Further study is recommended to identify and determine what has influenced new teachers to stay in the profession. It is imperative for district officials to identify district and campus initiatives, as well as principals' behaviors and practices that have had a positive impact in new teachers. Documentation of these best practices would benefit the District as well as the entire academic audience.

When reviewing new teacher attrition rates for El Paso Independent School District, it is important to keep in mind the socio-economic dynamics of the city; cost of living, unemployment rate, housing, etc. Further research is recommended to determine if other neighboring school districts have similar new teacher attrition rates, and how the other variables play a part in teachers staying or leaving the teaching profession in the El Paso County.

<u>2. Conclusion:</u> The majority of the mentors (87%) felt the training had been effective in preparing them to become highly qualified mentors; furthermore, mentors felt the quality of the mentor training was "Excellent" or "Good". Overall mentor teachers seem to be satisfied with the mentor training.

<u>Recommendations:</u> Review recommendations provided by mentor teachers described in the Findings Section of this report.

<u>3. Conclusion:</u> Even though mentors seemed to be pleased with the mentor training, some mentor teachers seem to be concerned about not having time to meet with their mentee, or not knowing how to schedule meeting and observation times. Strong campus and district support is needed.

<u>Recommendation:</u> Mandatory participation should be considered by the District in order for new teachers to receive the support the program is supposed to offer. Mandatory program participation sometimes creates problems in the mentoring process, but "surveys of post-program protégés and mentors repeatedly report enthusiastic support of organized mentoring programs (Retrieved January 21, 2005 from <u>http://www.ericdigets.org/pre-924/mentoring.htm</u>).

<u>4. Conclusion:</u> Studies have shown that the best method to keep good teachers is through a 3-year induction program. Successful Induction Programs include the following areas; *"1)a continuum of professional development through systematic training for two or three years, 2) provide study groups where new teachers can network and build support, commitment, and leadership in a leaning community, 3) opportunities for inductees to visit demonstration classrooms" (*Retrieved on February 03, 2005 from <u>http/teachers.net/gazette/FEB03/wong.html).</u>

Recommendation: Because teacher attrition rates in EPISD are lower than the national trend; District officials ought to provide an intensive professional development that would allow new teachers to observe others, to be part of study groups, to learn from each other, and learn to respect each other's work. The Staff Development Office is urged to start looking at the possibility of starting a three-year induction program for the school year 2006-07 (Retrieved on February 03, 2005 from http/teachers.net/gazette/FEB03/wong.html).

5. Conclusion: Studies have shown that the best method to keep good teachers is through multi-year (usually 3-5 years) induction programs. Induction programs are comprehensive, structured, and sustained group process that fosters a true learning community by continuing to provide support and training to new teachers into their tenure. *"Not to provide induction is like asking a pilot to learn how to fly while taking a plane load of passengers up for the first time*" (Retrieved on Feb 03, 2005 from http://teachers.net/gasette/FEB03/wong.html).

Recommendation/Comment: The possibility of extending the current MENTOR Program to a three-year induction program should be considered by the Staff Development Office. Even though few new teachers are leaving the District, district officials might want to consider the program as a method of ensuring highly qualified teachers, increase collegiality, improve morale among teachers, and enhance professionalism (Wilder, 1992).

6.Conclusion: Three states, California, Louisiana, and New York have created successful induction programs. Of the new teachers hired in the 2001-2002 school year, Newport-Mesa School District in California retained 143 out of 148 new teachers; Lafourche Parish Schools in Louisiana retained 45 out of the 46 new teachers, Islip Public Schools, in New York retained 65 out of 68 new teachers. The Lafourche induction program has been so successful that the Louisiana Department of Education has adopted the model for the entire state (Retrieved on Feb 03, 2005 from http://teachers.net/gasette/FEB03/wong.html).

Recommendation: The Staff development department is encouraged to visit the Louisiana's' induction program website, as well as other resources listed in the Reference Section of this report to learn about successful induction programs.

7. Conclusion: A great number of mentors rated the professional relationship with the mentee as 'excellent,' while thirty percent rated this relationship as 'good.'

Recommendation. Although the majority on the mentors seem to have a 'good' professional relationship with their mantee, it might be beneficial to look over the criteria for matching mentors and beginning teachers. The Teaching Research Department in the Western Oregon University has created criteria for selecting mentors, and has delineated the characteristics of effective mentors, as well as criteria for matching mentors and beginning teachers. It is recommended that the staff development department look over these practices to make sure the District has the best possible mentors (Retrieved on February 03, from http://www.tr.wou.edu/bridges/mentor-guide.htm).

8.Conclusion: Some mentor teachers feel that the current evaluation instrument utilized to assess and/or observe new teachers is very subjective. Mentor teachers feel very uncomfortable with the instrument, and indicated they need more practice observing and recording what they see during the observation.

Recommendation: When mentor teachers are saddled with evaluation responsibilities, the success of the MENTOR program might suffer; Griiffin (1984) believes this additional responsibility is a common cause of mentor program failure. Programs can resolve this conflict by appointing separate evaluators who meet with the teacher and the mentor teacher to discuss performance evaluations (Retrieved on January 19, 2005 from http://ericdigests.org/pre-924/mentoring.htlm). The Staff Development department is also encouraged to incorporate more observations sessions where mentors feel comfortable observing and using the instrument. It might also be beneficial to revise the current evaluation instrument with mentors' input.

9. Conclusion: Literature reviewed points out the importance of incorporating *Professional Ethics* as a component of any mentoring program. The EPISD Mentor Program could be enhanced by adding these courses to their program.

Recommendation/Comment: The Staff Development Unit might consider incorporating professional ethics sessions to the MENTOR Program. Experts believe it is important to expose new teachers to the notion of scientific integrity, discuss district policies, conflicts of interest, authorship credits, and who goes to meetings, to name a few topics (Retrieved on January 11, 2005 from http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/obas/).The following publication might be useful in addressing professional ethics to new teachers: *On being a Scientist: Responsible conduct in Research* (Retrieved on January 11, 2005 from http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/obas/).

10. Conclusion: Even though the MENTOR program is on its second year of implementation, the majority of the mentor teachers (59%) that are currently working in the program have only one year of experience.

Recommendation/Comment: It would be significant for the Staff Development Office to learn why the experienced mentors are not coming back to work in the program. This information could be utilized to better address the needs of the mentors and improve the overall impact of the MENTOR program.

11. Conclusion: EPISD does not have a sound system in place to collect information from teachers as they leave the District; when teachers leave, the reason for leaving is unknown to the District.

Recommendation/Comment: It is key to set up a process through the Human Resources Department where teachers would have to complete a short survey with questions such as; reason for leaving, reasons for moving, future plans, and teacher opinion on school climate and job perceptions. This information could later be used by the Evaluation Unit to analyze teacher attrition, mobility and turnover.

12. Conclusion: A report prepared by the Research and Evaluation Unit of the Texas Education Agency reported that "teachers entering low-income schools only hold minimal qualifications" (Retrieved on August 05, 2005 from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/prr6.pdf). Nation-wide, there seems to be a discrepancy between the credentials and qualifications of new teachers entering positions in low-income districts and those entering higher income districts.

Recommendation: In order to learn if this phenomenon exists in the EPISD, further study is recommended.

13. Conclusion: This report did not study the objectives of the MENTOR program; however, one of the main objectives is to prepare highly qualified teachers who utilize best teaching practices on a daily basis. In practice, new teachers learned about classroom management, lesson planning, action research, and discipline techniques to name a few.

Recommendation: The rational method of studying this specific objective would be to ask campus principals who supervise new teachers participating in the MENTOR program how often they observe new teachers utilizing some or all of the strategies learned through the program; thus measuring the effectiveness of the program. Another way of collecting information about the rate of implementation of strategies learned at the MENTOR Program is through the Professional Development Assessment System (PDAS). PDAS records, among other data, the names of the teachers that are on a growth plan to improve their performance, as well as the names of those who performed exceptionally.

14. Conclusion: There are more than five entities in EPISD that provide some kind of preparation for new teachers. These organizations are as follows: 1) Education Service Center - Region XIX, 2) A-STEP, 3)University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), 4) I Teach Texas, 5) Western Governors Univerlsity, and the 6) El Paso Independent School District (EPISD). Teachers who are on the Alternative Certification Program select one of these entities to assist them in obtaining teacher credentials, as well as to provide them with a mentor during their first year of teaching.

Recommendation: To more effectively implement a full district wide mentor initiative, it must be understood that there is a need to closely collaborate with the various training identities.

In order for this to happen, District officials need to institutionalize the MENTOR Program. A full time position needs to be assigned to oversee the overall implementation and monitoring of the program. A new job description needs to be created for this position to include: an enhancement of creation of a District MENTOR Plan that would include: revised goals, objectives, methodology, additional resources, and an evaluation plan. This full time person should also be responsible for all data collection activities such as the creation of processes and forms that would facilitate the collection of data from all stakeholders about the MENTOR program.

15. Conclusion: It was a challenging task for the program assistant to identify mentors and new teachers participating in the MENTOR program for three reasons: 1) There are over five entities providing services to new teachers, 2) there is no standardized process in place to identify memberships to the different providers, and 3) Human Resources data and campus surveys at times provided what seemed conflicting information.

Recommendation: All involved entities, including Staff Development, Human Resources, and the organizations need to discuss and develop a process that will ensure the collection of accurate data. Any future reporting should be done by subgroups.

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VII. APPENDIX

Appendix A

Mentors' Survey

_____

El Paso Independent School District
NOTHING LESS THAN SUCCESS!

Research, Evaluation, Planning, and Accountability

_____

The office of Research, Evaluation, Planning and Accountability is preparing a comprehensive evaluation on the *Making Each New Teacher Our Responsibility* (MENTOR) Program. We are interested in your opinions as a mentor teacher about the effectiveness of the **MENTOR Program** in training you and in developing confident and effective first-year teachers, as well as in assuring the retention of these educators to the filed, and more specifically, to the District.

Please complete this survey as completely and as honestly as possible. You will remain anonymous and your responses will be kept confidential. Use additional sheets, if necessary. Please turn in at the end of today's training or return via school mail by March 18, 2005. Thank you in advance for your input and participation!

MENTOR Teacher Survey

1. Please mark your appropriate level of instruction.
   ( ) Elementary School   ( ) Middle School   ( ) High School

2. How long have you been a mentor?
   ( ) 1 Year   ( ) 2 years   ( ) 3-5 years

3. How would you rate the quality of the mentor training you've received?
   ( ) Excellent   ( ) Good   ( ) Adequate   ( ) Poor

4. Has the training been effective in preparing you to become a highly qualified mentor?
   ( ) Yes   ( ) No

5. How helpful has the program support been in preparing you to become a highly qualified mentor?
   ( ) Very Helpful   ( ) Helpful   ( ) somewhat helpful   ( ) Not helpful at all

6. How would you rate the professional relationship between you and your mentee?
   ( ) Excellent   ( ) Good   ( ) Adequate

7. How often do you meet with your mentee?
   ( ) Monthly   ( ) Bi-Monthly   ( ) Weekly   ( ) Daily

8. Do you think your mentee will stay in the teaching profession?
    ( ) Yes   ( ) No

9. From the training you have received, what specifically have you found works for you as a mentor?

    _____

    _____

    _____

10. Conversely, what have you found does not work for you as a mentor?

    _____

    _____

    _____

11. What suggestion(s) for improvement to the training would you recommend?

    _____

    _____

    _____

12. Has the program support (i.e. cluster meetings, release time for mentor/mentee observation, on-site campus visits, trainer assistance/follow-up, etc.), you have received been adequate in providing the support necessary for you to become a highly qualified mentor?

    _____

    _____

    _____

13. What additional support activities would you recommend?

    _____

    _____

    _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!