NEW TEACHER SURVEY AND MENTEE TEACHER SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT: 2006-2007

The Title II, Part A grant provides federal funds to states under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110). The purpose of Title II, Part A is to enable state and local educational agencies to support the improvement of elementary and secondary educational programs that increase student achievement by improving teacher and principal quality, and specifically by increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in the classroom and highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools. A school district that receives Title II, Part A funding may use those funds to supplement efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and principals or assistant principals. This includes a strong emphasis on professional development activities. In the Austin Independent School District (AISD), both federal and local funds are used to support the professional learning and mentoring of new teachers. Prior to the beginning of the school year, all teachers new to AISD are required to attend a series of professional development sessions as part of the district's New Teacher Academy. In addition, all new teachers are expected to participate in a mentor-mentee program during their first, second, and third years in AISD. These new teachers are assigned to an experienced mentor teacher who works with them throughout the year, giving guidance and learning opportunities to help them adapt to their new roles in the school. As part of grant and local district requirements to assess the progress as well as the needs of new teachers, annual surveys of new teachers are conducted to gather their feedback about their experiences during the year, as well as input about the areas in which they would like more support or professional development. This report provides a summary of the new teacher surveys conducted in AISD during the spring of 2007.

SURVEY METHODS

On March 22, 2007, an e-mail invitation for both surveys was sent to 1,024 AISD teachers who either had attended at least one day of the AISD New Teacher Academy professional development program in August 2006, or who were teachers being mentored during 2006-2007, or both. By April 2, 2007, a total of 483 teachers completed the surveys, representing a 47% response rate. The mentee survey had a 49% response rate and the other new teacher survey had a 45% response rate. Using a 99% confidence level, results were reliable within plus or minus 5 percentage points.

SURVEY RESULTS

MENTEE TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Among teachers who answered the mentee teacher survey, 50% were in their first year of teaching, 40% were in their second year of teaching, 5% had three years of teaching experience, and 5% had four or more years of teaching experience. In addition, approximately half of respondents (51%) began teaching in AISD in the fall semester of 2006, and only 1% had just started in spring 2007. Approximately 29% began in the fall of 2005, and another 11% started in spring 2006. The remaining 7% began in spring 2005 or earlier.

When asked if they knew who their mentor teacher was, 96% of teachers said they did. Mentee teachers were asked how many minutes per week, on average, their mentor provided them with support (e.g., through meetings, staff development opportunities, e-mails, phone calls). As shown in Table 1, a wide range of times were reported, with most (54%) indicating an average of between 1 and 60 minutes. However, some mentees (11%) indicated they did not receive any mentor support. Mentee teachers were asked to estimate the percentage of time they received support from their mentors in different areas. As seen in Table 1, mentee teachers received the most support in the area of planning for instruction (32%). However, closer analysis of the data indicates a wide range of responses given for each area of support.

Table 1: Amount of Time Per Week and Types of Support Provided by Mentor Teachers to Mentee Teachers, Spring 2007

Survey Item	Percentage
Average minutes per week mentors provided support.	
None (0)	11
1 to 30 minutes	31
31 to 60 minutes	23
61 minutes to 5 hours	23
More than 5 hours	12
Average percentage of time mentors provided support in:	
Planning for instruction	32
Instruction and communication	21
Professionalism	19
Classroom environment	18

Source: Mentee teacher survey, spring 2007

Mentee teachers were asked how many new teacher support group meetings they had been able to attend thus far during the 2006-2007 school year. Most respondents indicated they had attended between one and five meetings (60%). Another 16% had attended six or more meetings, but 24% had not attended any such meetings.

Mentee teachers were asked to identify the areas in which they needed more support from their mentors. The top seven areas selected most often by teachers were: differentiation (in activities, groups, or lesson structure; 41%); designing activities (38%); knowledge of materials,

resources, and technology (37%); assessment methods and criteria (36%); motivating students (35%); engaging students in learning (29%); and maintaining accurate records (26%). Table 2 displays the percentages of survey respondents' answers by the areas in which they needed more support from mentors.

Table 2: Areas in Which Mentee Teachers Want More Support From Their Mentor Teachers

Area of Support	Percentage	Area of Support	Percentage
Differentiation (activities, groups, lesson structure)	41	**Reflecting on teaching**	21
Designing activities	38	**Using Instructional Planning Guides**	20
Knowledge of materials, resources, and technology	37	**Communicating clearly and accurately**	18
Assessment methods and criteria	36	**Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness**	18
Motivating students	35	**Contributing to the school growing and developing professionally**	17
Engaging students in learning	29	**Creating an environment of rapport and respect**	17
Maintaining accurate records	26	**Establishing a culture for learning**	15
Managing student behavior	25	**Organizing physical space**	15
Assessing student learning	24	**Serving as an advocate for students**	14
Using questions and discussion techniques	24	**Principles of Learning**	14
Establishing classroom procedures	23	**Knowing my students**	11
Communicating with families	22		

Source: Mentee Teacher Survey, Spring 2007

NEW TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Among teachers who answered the new teacher survey, 33% were in their first year of teaching, 6% were in their second year of teaching, 7% had three years of teaching experience, and 54% had four or more years of teaching experience. Thus, compared with mentee survey respondents, a greater proportion of new teacher survey respondents had more years of teaching experience. The majority of new teacher survey respondents (66%) began teaching in AISD in the fall semester of 2006, and only 1% had just started in spring 2007. Approximately 4% began in the fall of 2005, and 23% started in spring 2006. The remaining 6% began in spring 2005 or earlier. When asked to indicate how many new teacher support group meetings they had been able to attend thus far in the 2006-2007 school year, 23% of new teacher respondents indicated they had attended between one and two meetings, 25% had attended three to five meetings, and 20% had attended six or more meetings. In addition, 32% had not attended any such meetings.

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

All respondents from both surveys responded to questions about the degree to which they were implementing activities consistent with the Principles of Learning (POL), developed by University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning and adapted for use in AISD (see online at

http://www.instituteforlearning.org/develop.html). Table 3 shows that most teachers had implemented such classroom activities.

Table 3: Degree to Which Mentee Teachers and New Teachers Implemented Classroom Activities Consistent With the Principles of Learning, Spring 2007

Principle of Learning Activity (Principle)	% Never	% Sometimes	% Often	% Always	% Don't Know
Majority of students participate consistently throughout the discussion (Accountable Talk)	1	26	51	21	< 1
Teacher and students link speaker's contributions and show how ideas relate (Accountable Talk)	1	24	52	20	3
Teacher and students press for accurate and appropriate evidence for their claims (Accountable Talk)	2	29	49	19	1
All students explain their thinking using reasoning aligned to discipline being studied (Accountable Talk)	3	31	50	15	1
Criteria clearly align with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and AISD curriculum documents (Clear Expectations)	< 1	9	32	56	2
Criteria for quality work are explicit, accessible, displayed, and changed over time to respond to level of rigor as learning deepens (Clear Expectations)	1	18	42	38	< 1
All student work reflects public criteria and all students frequently use criteria to assess their work and the work of others (Clear Expectations)	4	30	45	19	2
All students know to align their work to criteria and have clear understanding of how it will be scored; all students revise their work to meet quality criteria (Clear Expectations)	3	27	48	19	3
All students complete challenging work aligned with TEKS and AISD curricula; tasks show rigor (Academic Rigor)	< 1	16	52	29	2
Assignments and corresponding student work show evidence of engaging all students in complex thinking in solving authentic, challenging problems (Academic Rigor)	< 1	20	52	27	< 1
All student work reflects students' thinking and understanding of why formula or procedures work; all students identify patterns, form generalizations, and support conclusions with evidence (Academic Rigor)	2	25	53	18	2
All students engage with underlying meaning of text; students interpret texts and use extensive evidence from texts to support their ideas (Academic Rigor)	3	30	48	15	3
All students consistently use skills of intelligent thinking specific to discipline being studied (Socializing Intelligence)	1	28	51	18	1
All students consistently use academic language specific to discipline being studied (Socializing Intelligence)	1	28	51	19	1
Classroom practices and student work show evidence that effort creates ability for all students; all students are told they are already competent learners and are able to become even better through their persistent use of strategies and by reflecting on their strategies (Socializing Intelligence)	< 1	9	42	48	< 1
Classroom practice holds all students accountable for learning, problem solving, and helping strategies (Socializing Intelligence)	< 1	8	38	53	< 1

Source: Mentee teacher survey and new teacher survey, spring 2007

FUTURE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

To obtain feedback from teachers about their needs for further professional development opportunities or for assistance, teachers were asked to indicate their top choices for additional learning opportunities in the coming school year. Some of the top priorities chosen by teachers included motivating students; differentiating instruction for specific student groups (e.g., special education, English-language learners, gifted/talented learners); modifying instruction or lessons for reteaching; managing behavior; clear expectations (e.g., rubrics and charts); and time management to use Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs) more efficiently. Table 4 shows percentages of teachers' responses for each future learning opportunity.

Table 4: Teachers' Top Choices for Additional Learning Opportunities

Areas of Future Learning Opportunities	% All Respondents
Motivating students	33
Differentiating instruction or lessons for students with special education needs	33
Modifying instruction or lessons for reteaching	31
Differentiating instruction for English-language learners	30
Differentiating instruction or lessons for gifted/talented learners	28
Managing behavior	25
Clear expectations, including rubrics and charts	24
Time management so that I can use IPGs more efficiently	20
Individual behavior management practices	20
Working with students from poverty	19
Issues of pacing and IPGs	18
Assessment for learning	17
Academic rigor	17
How to interpret data for purpose of making better instructional decisions	16
Developing beginning and ending routines	16
Connections between organizing for effort and behavior management	16
Making family contacts	15
Organizing for effort	15
How to use IPGs for lesson planning	14
Socializing intelligence	14
Setting up the physical classroom	14
Culturally responsive teaching	13
Accountable talk	13
Teaching procedures	12
Building effective relationships with students	11
How to read and understand IPGs	8
Connections between IPGs and clear expectations	8
Other	7

Source: Mentee teacher survey and new teacher survey, spring 2007

TEACHER COMMENTS

A total of 99 survey respondents provided comments at the end of the survey questions—50 from the mentee teacher survey and 44 from the new teacher survey. Most comments were either very positive or very negative, and they addressed the following issues:

- Experiences in the mentor-mentee relationship
- Inconsistency in how the mentor-mentee program is implemented

- Improvements needed in the mentor-mentee program
- Improvements needed in the content of new teacher professional development prior to school starting
- More preparation and professional learning time needed before the beginning of the school year
- Need for more support from campus administration
- Need for prioritization and guidance in handling all responsibilities new teachers have
- Need for more exposure to experienced teachers modeling instruction
- Need for additional support or professional development among all new teachers

The school district's evaluation records include a complete listing of survey comments. Some representative examples of teacher comments follow:

- "I think that it is a great idea for new teachers to have a mentor for their first few years in the district."
- "My mentor is wonderful!"
- "My mentor has been a great support this year."
- "I found that my mentor teacher was extremely helpful; however, the administration did little to support her in order to better support me."
- "Does not seem like there is a clearly defined mentor program at all campuses."
- "Overall, I was very disappointed with the mentor program at my school. I rarely had contact with my mentor."
- "I do not have a common planning period with my mentoring teacher. I have missed out on a lot because of that."
- "I would like to see more modeling. As a new teacher, I wanted to observe experienced teachers in their classrooms during various subjects."
- "Many times, as a new teacher, I did not know what to ask or what I needed as resources. It is important for a mentor to suggest resources and activities that have worked."
- "As a new teacher, I think the district provides a lot of training and resources, which is great. What I have experienced is that, especially this first year, all new teachers are overwhelmed and we need a little guidance in making priorities with our resources... I have found it difficult to keep up with all the paperwork."
- "At the very beginning of the year, I was very disappointed that there wasn't a school-level manual with information about campus practices."
- "I feel like all teachers, especially new teachers, need more assistance with students who have special needs."
- "Software application instruction for new teachers would be nice. It would have been a smoother transition for me had I known the grading software and attendance software."
- "I would have really liked a day to meet with all the other special education teachers… and receive [special education]-related training, regarding paperwork, SDAA, etc."
- "Too much information is given at the beginning of the school year and no time to digest it… New teachers would be [able to] retain more if the information was spread out over the course of the first year, rather than one week. This would also give the new teacher[s] time to meet with their mentors and ask questions."

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report summarizes results from the AISD spring 2007 mentee teacher survey and new teacher survey. More than 1,000 mentee teachers (who had an assigned mentor) and other new teachers, all recently hired in AISD, were sent an e-mail survey invitation in March 2007. Of the 482 who responded to the surveys, the majority (66%) were in their first or second year of teaching. Of these respondents, a greater percentage of mentee teachers (50%) than of other new teachers (33%) were in their first year of teaching. Most respondents reported being hired in AISD during fall 2006 (51% mentee teachers, 66% other new teachers).

Most teachers being mentored indicated they had regular support from their mentors on a weekly basis. This support was provided in such areas as instruction, communication, and planning for instruction. However, some of the survey results pointed to potential areas of concern for the district's new teacher support activities. For instance, 5% of mentee teachers did not know who their mentor was, and 11% of mentee teachers said they did not receive any support from their mentors. Among first-year teachers in particular, 15% indicated they did not get any time with their mentors. Among mentee teachers, 24% reported not attending new teacher support group meetings. Among other new teachers who responded to the survey, 32% said they did not attend new teacher support group meetings. What is not known is whether such meetings were held at new teachers' campuses and whether, if such meetings were held, some new teachers chose not to attend. Regardless, some new teachers in the district reported not having enough support during their first few years in AISD. This may indicate a need to reexamine and monitor new teacher induction and mentoring program efforts so these support activities can be implemented consistently across the district.

Most new teachers who responded to the survey reported they were implementing classroom activities that were consistent with the district's curricula and the POL. However, teachers expressed a need for further support and professional development in many areas. Mentee teachers suggested many topics for which they wanted more support from their mentors, including activity/lesson differentiation, activity design, knowledge of materials and resources, assessment methods, and motivating students. Similarly, new teachers who responded to the surveys wanted future learning opportunities in more than 28 areas. The most commonly cited topics for future learning included motivating students; differentiating instruction for students with special needs (e.g., special education, English-language learners, and gifted/talented); modifying lessons for reteaching; managing behavior; and clear expectations.

Comments submitted by 20% of the respondents ranged from very positive to very negative impressions of how new teachers are supported. These comments also seemed to support the need to revisit the way in which new teachers are mentored and supported across the district.

Using this report and other available information, some suggested actions for improving new teacher retention and support include:

- Using available district data on staff turnover, in combination with other information, to develop effective methods for new teacher retention

- Identifying and recognizing campuses that have effective methods for retaining and supporting new teachers, and sharing that information on best practices with other campuses
- Interviewing small groups of representative new teachers on a regular basis to gain critical feedback about how new teacher support efforts are working
- Monitoring mentor-mentee relationships more frequently during the school year, allowing for adjustments when necessary
- Improving professional development provided to principals, mentors, and other key district staff by including strategies on how to provide the best support for new teachers, including steps to take when teachers are having difficulty
- Reexamining new teacher professional learning plans and activities to provide a smoother transition for teachers when they arrive in AISD, and possibly providing a longer follow-up period to ensure professional development needs are being met.

Overall, the new teacher support system should be strong across the entire school district organization—from campus to central support. As district and campus personnel make decisions about the use of critical resources to attract and retain teachers, these survey results should be used together with other district data to improve plans for ensuring consistency across all campuses in the district's new teacher professional development and support efforts.