

# EVERY STUDENT DESERVES AN EXCELLENT TEACHER:

Recommendations from New  
Mexico Teachers on Mentorship



The authors wish to thank the more than 650 classroom teachers of New Mexico who helped to provide their perspectives and experiences that were used in this report.

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## +++++ INTRODUCTION +++++

As Teach Plus Fellows who teach across a variety of high-need schools in New Mexico, we are invested in creating policies that support teacher accountability while investing in growth and retention. We know that staying and thriving in our profession begins with how we develop into the excellent teachers our students deserve. We believe that effective mentorship is at the core of high-quality teacher development and should be a priority reflected in state policy.

We investigated mentorship programs in New Mexico and teachers' perceptions of them with the ultimate goal of identifying policy proposals for mentorship reform going forward. In our study, we sought answers to questions such as:

- + Do mentorship programs in New Mexico reflect best practices in research and policy?
- + Who should be mentored and who should mentor?
- + What should mentorship look like in districts?
- + Does compensation for mentors need to change?
- + What criteria should be used to evaluate if mentorship programs are working?

We approached these questions by reviewing national research and collecting feedback from teachers in our state. In this policy brief, we present the following:

- + A review of New Mexico's current laws and policies on teacher mentorship
- + Findings from a statewide survey of public school teachers
- + Qualitative findings from focus group data collected at the 2017 New Mexico Teacher Summit
- + Recommendations for improving teacher mentorship in New Mexico
- + A review of the literature on mentorship policy (in the Appendix)

We conclude our report with a call for more teacher voice in the mentorship policy development process and program implementation.

## +++++ RECOMMENDATIONS +++++

- 1 State policy should expand mentorship to teachers in their first two years and to struggling teachers in every district through Teachers Pursuing Excellence.
- 2 State and district policies should outline priorities for mentor matching, guarantee dedicated release time and standardized stipends, and deliver ongoing professional development on adult learning to mentors.
- 3 State policy should establish uniform mentor qualifications, formal program standards, and reliable system evaluation measures for districts to implement.

## +++++ RESEARCH METHODOLOGY +++++

Between May 5 and June 27, 2017, we administered an online survey to current, full-time New Mexico K-12 public school teachers centered around four primary research questions:

1. Who should be mentored?
2. Who should be a mentor?
3. What does mentorship look like?
4. How should mentorship programs be evaluated?

Our study's sample of 637 responding teachers includes 52 percent from rural, 21 percent from suburban, and 22 percent from urban school districts. Eight percent of responding teachers teach at schools with less than 100 students, 69 percent serve 100-800 students, 17 percent serve 800-2,000 students, and four percent are in schools larger than 2,000 students. Ninety-four percent of our survey respondents are public school teachers in district schools, five percent are from public district charter schools, one percent are from non-district charter schools, and less than one

percent are from Bureau of Indian Education schools. The majority of participating teachers, or 72 percent, come from schools that qualify for Title I funding.

Additionally, on June 27, 2017 we conducted a focus group with 25 of our peers at the Second Annual New Mexico Teacher Summit in Albuquerque, representing teacher leaders from school districts throughout the state. Data from this focus group are included in the findings.

## +++++ MENTORSHIP POLICY IN NEW MEXICO +++++

In 2017, New Mexico was one of the first states to submit its ESSA plan to the Department of Education, which subsequently was named best overall in the nation by an independent reviewer.<sup>1</sup> One of the key causes of opportunity gaps for underserved populations identified in New Mexico's ESSA plan was poor mentorship and induction programs for teachers.<sup>2</sup>

As part of its ESSA plan, New Mexico states that it plans to develop a mentorship framework that is aligned with teacher effectiveness ratings using Title II funds by the end of 2017. The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) proposes a "new administrative rule" to align mentorship expectations with the NMTEACH Teacher Evaluation Framework (NMTEACH), reduce the degree of variability across the state in program quality, and ensure teachers' professional growth plans include mentorship to improve classroom instruction.<sup>3</sup>

Under current New Mexico law and statute, districts are held to minimum standards for practice in the design, implementation, and evaluation of their mentorship programs, but these vary widely from district to district.<sup>4</sup> Mentor programs are evaluated based on district retention rates reported every three years, with few practices in place to ensure correlation between program participation and measures such as teacher retention.<sup>5</sup> Currently, New Mexico is one of eleven states that require one year of mentorship for new teachers in public schools. Legislation passed in 2010 clarified that teachers are required to participate in a mentorship program for one year in order to become eligible for a Level 2 license, but that the state could fund local mentorship programs for up to three years if requested by the district and if sufficient funds were available.<sup>6</sup> The policy regulates a mentorship program, requiring but not standardizing mentor selection, program evaluation, compensation, and mentor

training components, but does not address mentor caseload, minimum contact hours, standardized compensation, sustainable funding sources, or release time.<sup>7</sup>

To address the need to identify and pilot best practices in state mentorship practices, NMPED has responded with a two-year teacher mentorship program modeled after Principals Pursuing Excellence (PPE) called Teachers Pursuing Excellence (TPE). TPE is a mentorship initiative in which mentors are assigned to ineffective or minimally-effective teachers, and districts work to support

specialized training based on each teacher's NMTEACH evaluation scores. TPE was piloted in eight schools in school year 2015-2016 and exemplifies how effective teacher development can impact teacher and student achievement.<sup>8</sup> Despite demonstrated evidence of its impact, TPE's reach is limited to less than one percent of New Mexico public schools and does not address critical facets of teacher development such as the needs of culturally-and-linguistically diverse New Mexico students.

## **RECOMMENDATION 1:** State policy should expand mentorship to teachers in their first two years and to struggling teachers in every district through Teachers Pursuing Excellence.

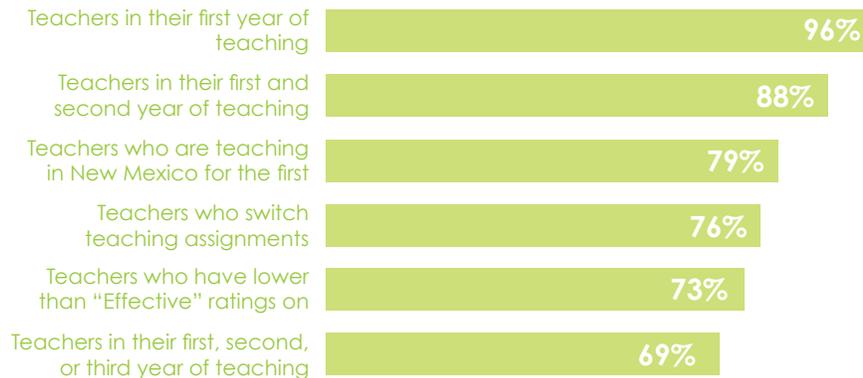
### **WHO SHOULD BE MENTORED?**

Although one year of mentorship is tied to licensure by state law in New Mexico, teachers and research support the extension of mentoring and induction practices to teachers in their first two years in New Mexico schools. Teachers in our survey overwhelmingly support the expansion of the current mentorship programs (See Figure 1.)

Of those surveyed, 88 percent support first and second year teachers participating in a mentorship program. Likewise, teachers in our focus group prioritized mentorship program expansion to all second year teachers. Our survey indicates that 73 percent of teachers support expansion of mentoring to teachers rated as minimally-effective or ineffective by NMTEACH. This opportunity currently exists

for New Mexico teachers who are part of the TPE program, but should be expanded to include teachers at every school site so that first year, second year, and struggling teachers have equitable access to programs with demonstrable effects on student achievement and teacher effectiveness.<sup>9</sup> We also recommend integrating the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction (CRLI) training and associated standards piloted by NMPED and the New Mexico Indian Education Department (IED) into an expanded TPE mentorship model, as this specific component is slated to be supported by internal funding from NMPED for the 666 (78 percent of) public schools in 23 school districts, along with six charter schools, in New Mexico with American Indian student populations.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1:** Question “Currently, New Mexico requires districts to provide mentoring to teachers in their first year of teaching. To what degree would you support or oppose offering mentoring to the following categories of teachers:”<sup>11</sup>



In addition to expanding mentorship to second year teachers, 79 percent of teacher surveyed support mentorship for teachers who are new to New Mexico, 76 percent support mentorship for teachers who change grade level or content area. Additionally, teachers responding to the open response portion of the survey suggested that alternatively licensed teachers be prioritized for mentorship, a sentiment that was echoed by many focus group participants. Teachers in our focus group were also in favor of allowing teachers at any point in their careers the choice of opting into a mentorship program. As one New Mexico Public School teacher put

it: *“Teaching, even for the most experienced teacher, develops a high degree of ambiguous situations, whether it be teacher to student, teacher to teacher, or teacher to administrator. The climate of the building can change rapidly with the introduction of a new administration or a collection of new teachers... so mentoring can have a positive effect on how to work in such an environment.”* Teachers across the state see mentorship as an opportunity to grow and improve their practice, and therefore support expansion of the existing program to struggling teachers in addition to first and second year teachers.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** State and district policies should outline priorities for mentor matching, guarantee dedicated release time and standardized stipends, and deliver ongoing professional development on adult learning to mentors.

**HOW MENTORING WORKS BEST**

Mentoring structure:

State policy should outline priorities for the mentor matching process, with the first priority given to mentors in the same school and same content area in order to optimize a one-on-one relationship with mentees.

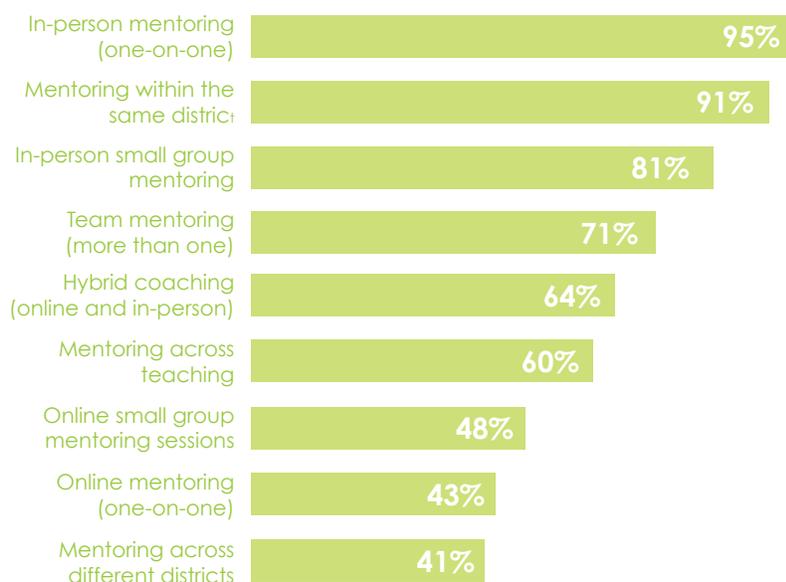
Survey respondents were asked to rank their most preferred formats for mentorship programs from a variety of options that research or other model programs have shown to be effective. Out of hybrid, in-person, online, and group formats, 95

percent of respondents support an in-person mentorship program. Secondly, 81 percent support an in-person program structured around a small-group setting. Teachers show moderate preference for virtual and hybrid program models, which are supported by

43 and 64 percent of teachers respectively (See Figure 2). Both teachers in our survey and focus group were supportive of supplementing, not supplanting, the in-person

element of mentorship with an online network of mentors and teachers to facilitate resource sharing and increased collaboration.

**Figure 2:** Question “Currently, mentorships take place primarily through one-on-one or small group meetings between mentors and mentees in the same district, but not within the same grade level and content area. To what degree would you support or oppose offering mentorship in the following formats?”<sup>12</sup>



Teachers we surveyed expressed a desire for utility in the mentor matching process; imploring us to consider the impact of content matching in a mentorship program: *“I can get some of the classroom management from teachers of other disciplines, and I can source for ideas, projects, etc. but the most helpful interaction is with individuals who teach my subject”*; *“My mentor was not teaching the same curriculum that I was and it really wasn’t helpful... If you switch content, in some ways, you start from scratch.”* Teachers in our surveys and focus groups want districts to move away from the “one-size fits all” and workshop style approaches to teacher development, and instead prioritize time for peer-coaching, observation, and iterative feedback within the school day that is aligned to a statewide rubric or set of expectations for mentorship programs and participants.

Furthermore, 91 percent support a mentorship program that is district-based rather than outsourced. Teachers expressed that, *“every school is unique, and on-site mentoring offers the most practical help to the mentee.”* While clear in their preference for mentor access and proximity, teachers likewise are open to various mentorship scenarios as long as they are based on prioritizing in-person meetings when available. This last point is essential for New Mexico’s rural schools, which often struggle to attract and retain experienced and effective teachers who could serve as mentors. Teachers readily understand the challenges of matching high-quality mentors to teachers given the diversity of districts and human capital distribution in our state, and are willing to adopt hybrid models (in-person/online) as long as the first year maintains a focus on in-person coaching and mentoring. If mentors cannot be found within schools, the vast majority of teachers are willing to accept a mentor that is based in the same district.

Dedicated release time and stipends

Districts should compensate mentors with standardized stipends and release time.

Teachers who responded to our survey overwhelmingly want mentors to be compensated, either through time, stipends, or both. Similarly, the majority of teachers in our focus group identified compensation as a priority for mentors. Based on our survey results, 88 percent of teachers support

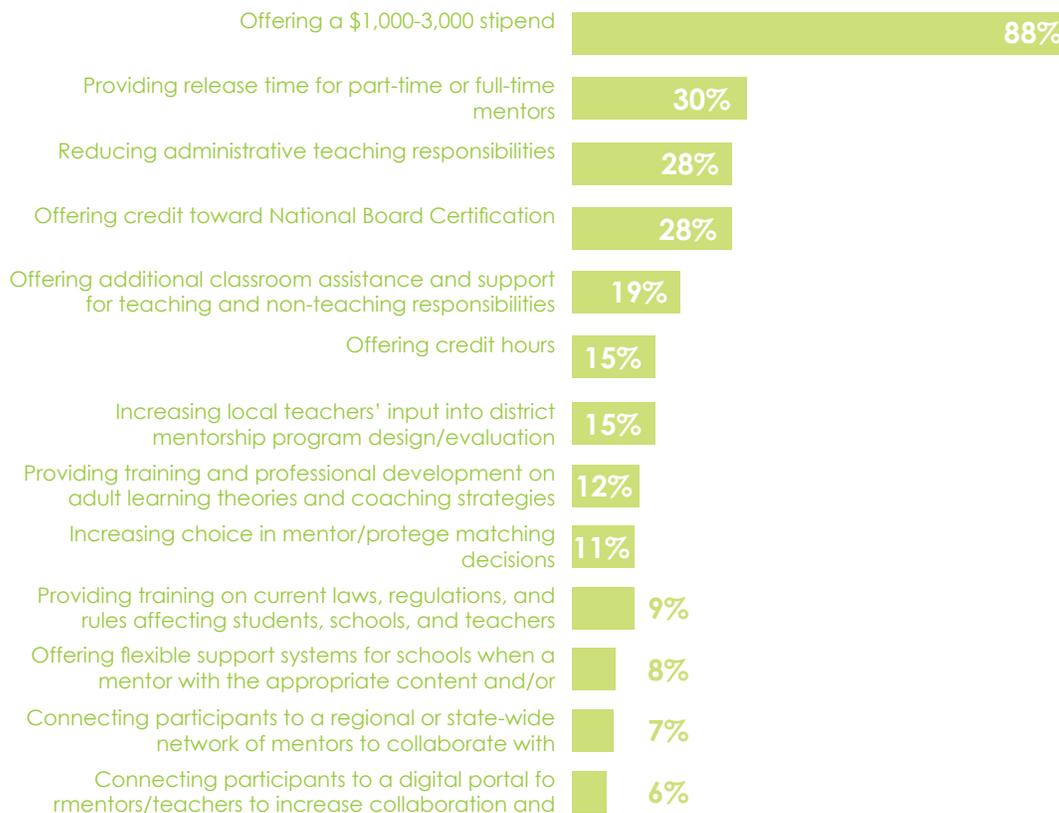
compensating mentors \$1,000 - \$3,000. Currently TPE mentors in participating districts such as Las Cruces Public School are paid \$3,500 annually, suggesting that the current amount for compensating mentors in the TPE model is similar to what teachers would expect for serving in this capacity.

*Mentors and first year teachers in mentorship programs should receive release time commensurate with minimum contact hours set by the state.*

Teachers in our survey indicated that behind a standardized mentor stipend, the most preferred means of compensation are providing release time (30 percent), reduced

administrative/teaching responsibilities (28 percent), and offering credit toward National Board Certification (28 percent) (See Figure 3).

**Figure 3:** Question “Currently, compensation for mentors is required by law, but varies widely across New Mexico districts. Which of the following compensation models do you think would motivate more teachers to serve as mentors assuming a 1 to 2 hours per week per mentee time commitment? (Choose the three most appealing options)”<sup>13</sup>



New teachers are still learning their craft when they enter the classroom and require extra time to plan units and lessons, grade papers, and learn alternative forms of pedagogy. We recommend that mentors and first year teachers participating in mentorship programs be given release time and reduced responsibilities equivalent to the minimum contact hours set by the state for the

program. Second year teachers and veteran teachers participating in the mentorship program need not have their participation contingent on release time, as much of their coaching and feedback could be imbedded into their professional development plans or more easily integrated into their teaching responsibilities.

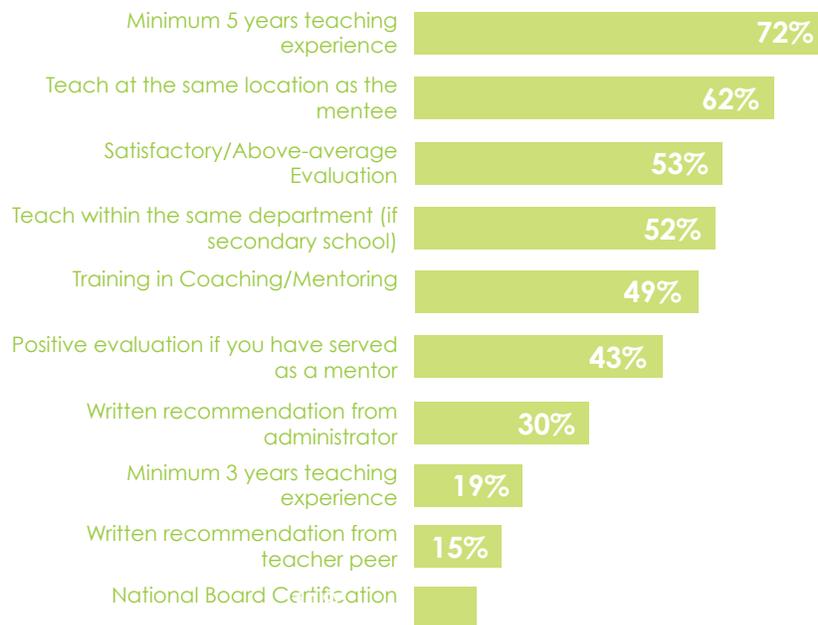
Professional development

*Mentors should receive ongoing professional development focused on adult learning and teacher development.*

Survey respondents reiterated the importance of initial and continued mentor training,

which includes adult learning theories, to adequately support them in their roles (See Figure 4.)

**Figure 4:** Question “In reviewing various district requirements for mentor teachers, we have identified several common criteria. Which of the following would you support as part of minimum qualifications for mentor teachers? (Choose as many as applicable)”<sup>14</sup>



Forty-nine percent of survey respondents supported a requirement for mentors to participate in professional communities and continuous training. Nearly half of the participants from the focus group reiterated this priority, and this point was addressed more so than reduced teaching responsibilities, reduced workload, higher evaluation scores on NMTEACH, or greater

leadership opportunities as compensatory items for mentors. One New Mexico Public Schools teacher specified that this type of training could clarify teacher and student accountability systems: *“Mentoring should include training in how the state’s evaluation system works and how to use it advantageously, including ongoing monitoring. This should include training in*

*how the state uses data from standardized tests and how to analyze data to target areas for improvement and to drive overall curriculum.*" Teachers want mentors with training targeted to their unique coaching

role, and many see the relationship as an opportunity to bridge communication and professional development gaps between state accountability measures and their classroom implementation.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3:** State policy should establish uniform mentor qualifications, formal program standards, and reliable system evaluation measures for districts to implement.

#### **BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PROGRAM**

##### State policy should establish uniform mentor qualifications for selection.

Teachers want uniform mentor selection criteria, and they want this done at the state level to ensure district accountability and consistency of mentor qualifications. Teachers in our statewide survey overwhelmingly (76 percent) desire a uniform selection criteria for mentors, and prioritized criteria for selection, favoring: five years of teaching experience (72 percent), location (62 percent), effective or above evaluations on NMTEACH (53 percent), matching content/department expertise (52 percent), and training for the role (49 percent). In addition to years of experience and evaluation scores, the majority of focus group participants also wanted prospective mentors to submit recommendations from peers and administrators as part of the selection process.

As teachers, we understand the importance of balancing experience and effectiveness in teacher coaching, and recommend that mentor selection criteria consider years of teaching or license level, previous NMTEACH rating(s), professional recommendations,

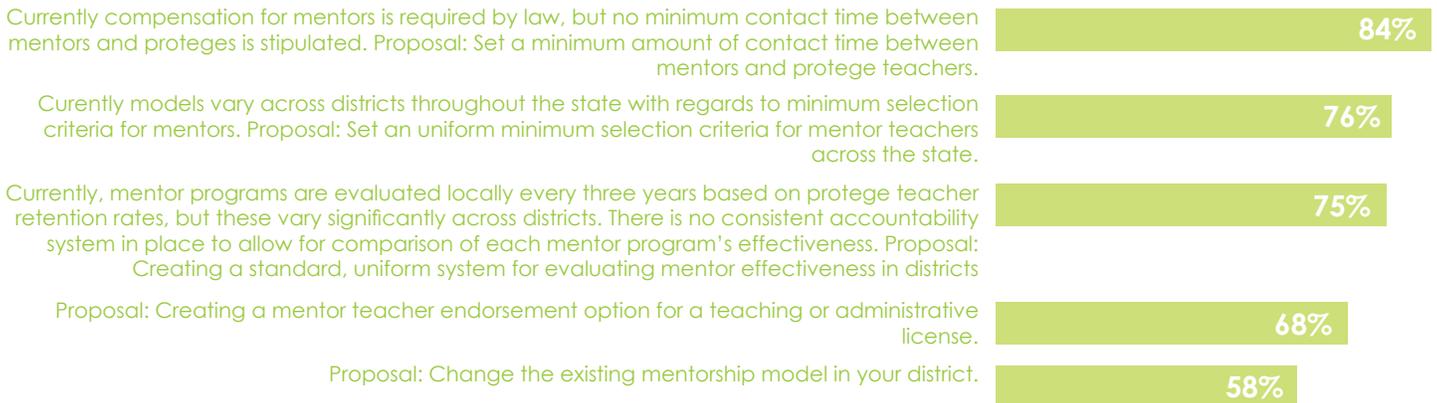
location, and content area/grade level expertise, components whose utility are echoed in recent studies.<sup>15</sup> In selecting mentors, schools should encourage matching mentor-mentee subject, grade level, and school—but not be overly restrictive with such requirements. We recommend looking to the District of Columbia's LEAP model, West Virginia's Teaching Lab, and the Louisiana Department of Education's "Pull" strategy as credible examples of how the state can facilitate district-led initiatives while maintaining high standards for program implementation and assessment.<sup>16</sup> New Mexico can stipulate minimum mentor qualifications in policy while aligning and reinforcing existing evaluation frameworks such as NMTEACH. Likewise, many teachers in our focus group voiced that serving as a mentor should be recognized by districts and evaluators as evidence to support highly effective or exemplary ratings in Domain 4 of NMTEACH evaluations. This recommendation could be incorporated into state-sponsored training of NMTEACH evaluators each year.

##### State policy should adopt formal program standards that can be used for annual evaluation of program effectiveness.

In addition to selection criteria, teachers want a standardized method for evaluating

program success on an annual basis (See Figure 5).

**Figure 5:** Question “There are several options to addressing the mentoring model in New Mexico. To what degree do you support or oppose the following proposals:”<sup>17</sup>



Most focus group participants requested statewide criteria be established for mentorship program evaluation, as did most survey respondents (75 percent). Eighty-four percent of teachers responding to the survey support creating minimum contact hours for mentor and protege programs. Within a multiple-measures evaluation model, a common theme that emerged from our focus group was the use of pre-and post-NMTEACH evaluation scores to measure program impact on teacher effectiveness, while 16 percent mentioned measuring its impact on student achievement. Teachers expressed a need for, *“a good ‘unit’ of high quality mentoring to be developed” and, “a consensus statewide to create rubrics for both [mentors and mentees] to prove there has been contact, self-evaluation, and accountability.”*

In 2001-2002, the NMPED offered training and technical assistance to district mentoring

programs through materials, suggestions, networking, and operational advice. In a summary of their research, the Synergy Group's 2003 report stated that, “there is no consistent accountability system in place for program evaluation. Gaps between the requirements in the law and the program operation in the districts are apparent”. Past programs implemented in New Mexico suffered a lack of consistent templates, criteria, performance measures, and reporting requirements, making it impossible to share best practices across various district mentorship models and methods. Though districts such as Albuquerque Public Schools and programs such as the New Mexico National Board Certified Teachers Network already have successful mentorship practices and criteria in place, such models need to be expanded and incorporated into a unified, statewide method of mentorship program evaluation.

*State policy should monitor mentorship programs through formal program standards weighed against mentor and mentee surveys, growth of participating teachers as measured by NMTEACH, and retention of participating teachers on an annual basis.*

Program accountability is instrumental to its success in improving new and struggling teachers, and leaving evaluation entirely to districts biases the reliability of these program measures. State policies should allow for monitoring and annual evaluations

by creating standardized criteria that are then used for evaluation at the district level. According to our survey and focus group data, New Mexico teachers feel that a multiple-measures evaluation tool would be most utilitarian to districts, teachers, and

mentors. Teachers in our focus group showed broad support for having a statewide rubric for program evaluation with measures such as teacher growth on NMTEACH evaluations, pre- and post-surveys, teacher retention, and impact on student achievement. Ultimately, teachers want accountability for districts to ensure quality and support. One teacher said: *“There needs to be a consensus statewide to create rubrics for [mentorship programs] to prove there has been contact, self-eval.,(sic)*

*accountability to state through submitted mentor rubric and packet.”* Teachers and districts have been calling for state policy to set common program standards and evaluation criteria for years, and with NMPED's desire to have a teacher leader in every school by the end of 2017-2018 school year, it is an opportunistic time to mobilize teacher leaders in the creation and implementation of such accountability systems.

## +++++ CONCLUSION +++++

A collective vision of high-quality, instructionally-focused teacher development measures and practices can institutionalize effective mentor programs within local school and district cultures. New Mexico would do well to recognize this critical lever by embedding mentorship into existing school leadership preparation and training, and extending mentorship support for second year and struggling teachers to further build and sustain district support for these programs.<sup>18</sup> Trained and supported superintendents, principals, school board members, and mentorship program leaders are critical to program success in stable and unstable times, and can be bolstered through annual state-sponsored trainings of mentors, teacher leaders, and NMTEACH evaluators.

Our policy recommendations for statewide mentorship program reform are manifold and raise up the collective wisdom of national researchers and teachers from our own state. Teachers have overwhelmingly expressed their desire for the state to expand mentorship programs to year two and struggling teachers, and hold them accountable by establishing minimum criteria that incentivize program consistency and quality. Equally important are provisions for ongoing mentor development and adequate time for mentors to work with beginning teachers that are protected under state and district policy.

State policy can establish a common framework for mentorship programs that districts in turn have the flexibility to implement to meet local conditions and needs. Such policies should, however, emphasize accountability and program parameters for districts rather than being overly prescriptive. Districts retain the primary responsibilities of designing and overseeing mentorship and induction programs, but state policies need to delineate shared expectations for what quality mentorship looks like in practice. Our state has the opportunity to demonstrate the value it places on teacher development by setting requirements for district mentorship programs, thereby incentivizing equitable access to quality teachers in every school.

New Mexico schools need clear policies that specify the nature and duration of mentorship support as well as programmatic tools and resources that provide shared criteria for success and continuous improvement. We hope that New Mexico policy makers seize on the invaluable opportunity for improved collaboration and education reform that comes from having teacher voices at the table.

## I. ADVANCED NEW MEXICO CONTEXT

The latest evidence suggests that students are more likely to have an inexperienced teacher than at any point in the past twenty years.<sup>19</sup> In 1987-88 the typical teacher in the United States had already been in the classroom 15 years; by 2007-08, the most common teacher had only one year of classroom experience.<sup>20</sup> In New Mexico this reality is a matter of equity, as 31 percent of both minority students and economically disadvantaged students are taught by a less-than-effective teacher compared to only 23 percent of economically advantaged students and non-minority students in 2014.<sup>21</sup> Home to a majority minority student population, New Mexico faces an equity gap for students of color and Native American students, which are almost twice as likely to be taught by an ineffective teacher (4.64 percent) as non-minority students (2.74 percent). Non-minority, economically advantaged students are also more than twice as likely to have an exemplary teacher (2.2 percent) than minority or economically disadvantaged students (1 percent).<sup>22</sup> In a recent study by the New Teacher Center, principals in New Mexico identified teacher remediation and coaching, which mentorship targets, as the highest priority issue affecting the efficacy of their school leadership and culture, rated above student assessment.<sup>23</sup> Addressing the lack of consistent quality and accountability of mentorship programs across the state can serve as an invaluable strategy to improve equitable access to great teachers, and can reduce loss of investment by ensuring our best teachers play a part in retaining new and struggling teachers who are most likely to leave the profession. Rather than depend on hard-to-staff and Pay for Performance stipends, the Title II Equity Planning Tool, Human Capital Playbook for districts, and End of Course (EOC) assessments in isolation, New Mexico should be engaging its teacher leaders in the invaluable work of bridging equity gaps in our classrooms by mentoring new and struggling teachers.

In the vast majority of districts across the state, there is wide variance in new teacher mentor programs and no systemic oversight by the state to ensure quality and consistency in how funds, measures of effectiveness, and teacher support are applied.<sup>24</sup> Current programs such as TPE have achieved positive results, but these efforts are limited to ineffective teachers in select schools and funding is an obstacle to expansion. In the past the NMPED has emphasized, "a comprehensive, multi-year mentor program" as a worthy goal for our state, yet only one year is mandated by law.<sup>25</sup> The majority of current mentorship systems were developed prior to the adoption of the NMTEACH Teacher Evaluation Framework (NMTEACH), and widespread attention to the issue of teacher development has lagged since the law's passage in 2001. The last time a comprehensive evaluation of statewide mentorship programs was done was in 2002, and minimum program requirements were not tackled by state policy until 2008. While the legislature made a one million dollar appropriation to the NMPED in 2002 to support ten districts in the development of mentorship programs, this support was lost due to funding cuts. Additionally, the strong groundwork laid by Carol Carpenter in NMPED's New Mexico Transition to Teaching Professional Development Bureau in 2008 was not sustained due to a lack of financial and political backing.

Mentorship programs in our state must be updated to reflect the changes to teacher evaluation and national law on a wider scale. In doing so, New Mexico can seize the opportunity to set high standards for all teachers participating in district mentorship programs and can measure efficacy of federal and state funds directed toward these initiatives.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In our review, we focus our attention on research that highlights the most successful policy interventions associated with measurable outcomes in mentorship and induction programs nationwide. National and state reports indicate that beginning and ineffective teachers are inequitably found in schools in high-poverty and minority communities across the country.<sup>26</sup> This reality can hinder schools from closing opportunity gaps for many students of color and those from low-income families. Research demonstrates that comprehensive, multi-year induction and mentorship programs accelerate the effectiveness of struggling teachers, yield a stronger return on investment, and improve outcomes for students, teacher retention, and mentor impact.<sup>27</sup>

### **MAXIMIZING PROGRAM IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

While all schools and students can benefit from more effective teachers, the power of high-quality mentorship has special significance for schools that serve a disproportionate number of low-income and minority students. In such schools, teacher turnover is generally higher, and students taught by ineffective teachers are less likely to be college and career ready upon graduation. High-quality mentor programs can provide the support that struggling teachers need to have a greater impact on student learning and life trajectories.<sup>28</sup>

Research presents a strong argument for creating a multi-year mentoring program if evidence of student growth is a desired outcome. There is evidence that student test scores increase under new teachers receiving mentorship, but only after the second year.<sup>29</sup> Randomized trials have shown no evidence of a positive impact on Math and English test scores in districts that provide mentorship for one year, but evidence of significant positive impact in both subjects in districts that implement two-year programs.<sup>30</sup> A recent Institute of Education Sciences study found no impact on student achievement after one year of induction support, but significant, demonstrated impact after successful completion of two years of induction in the third year of teaching.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, the literature suggests that three features, including mentormentee match, mentor knowledge and ability, and the nature of mentor coaching relationships are the most important means of affecting teacher and student outcomes. When teachers are paired with high-quality, trained mentors and receive frequent, non-evaluative feedback, student achievement can increase between two to five months on standardized Math and English tests.<sup>32</sup> When mentors and mentees have secured, job-embedded time to meet, the number of active professional development activities more than doubled compared to those without allocated meeting time during the school day.<sup>33</sup> In some cases, substantial professional development amounting to roughly 50 hours a year is associated with boosts in student achievement of 21 percentile points.<sup>34</sup> In an effort to maximize benefits for student populations, many states have already set minimum contact time requirements for mentors and mentees totaling 70 hours a year.

State policy can further ensure mentors have manageable caseloads by setting maximum thresholds, thereby incentivizing program quality over quantity. Given that some mentors may be responsible for districtwide programs in rural regions, many state policies such as Kansas, Kentucky, and Mississippi have limited the number of teachers a mentor may support in a given year in an effort to protect against mentor burnout and in-person meeting time with mentees.<sup>35</sup> Both mentor's working conditions and quality of professional development are critical to

the implementation of effective mentoring in districts and to the ultimate success of state mentoring policy.<sup>36</sup> Although even the best mentor cannot compensate for an inappropriate teaching assignment or a weak school culture of collaboration and improvement, quality coaching and mentor relationships can have a positive effect on teacher instruction, which in turn can impact student achievement.<sup>37</sup>

A central component of states with quality mentorship programs is the existence of networks and resources that encourage weekly collaboration amongst mentors, regardless of whether those platforms are digital or in person.<sup>38</sup> While mentoring is a powerful professional development strategy for teachers, it also fosters a culture of continuous learning and increased teacher leadership within participating schools that has benefits for students, teachers, administration, and overall school performance. States can improve mentorship programs by enacting clearly articulated program goals, securing a focus on program quality, and creating evaluations tools for participating teachers and mentors. State initiatives that align mentorship programs with state-directed evaluation systems include Teacher+PLUS in Illinois and the North Carolina Mentor Program. Nonprofit partners such as Learning Forward and the Aspen Institute have collaborated with politicians, researchers, thought leaders, and practitioners from around the country to develop key elements of effective professional learning systems that could serve as evaluation criteria or program requirements set by the state.<sup>39</sup> New Mexico clearly has a wealth of exemplars to draw from nationwide to augment existing frameworks such as TPE, and teachers' views on mentorship evaluation and accountability pave a clear path forward for policymakers seeking to raise the bar for teacher development.

### **INCREASING PROGRAM IMPACT ON TEACHER RETENTION**

Retention of highly qualified teachers is an important economic and political investment for our state to make. According to Ingersoll and Kralik of the University of Pennsylvania, "there is a promise in the use of induction and mentoring as a means of reducing high rates of teacher turnover".<sup>40</sup> The strongest teacher retention rates exist in mentorship programs that include, "the assignment of a teacher mentor working in the same subject area and/or grade level, common planning time with teachers in the same subject, regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers, and participation in a network of teachers".<sup>41</sup> In the same study, qualitative measures pointed toward the importance of low-cost policy features such as having mentors in the same school with an evaluative role in order to build stronger mentorship relationships and outcomes. States that require mentors be in the same or a similar subject, the same or a similar grade, and/or the same school tend to see a stronger relationship between mentoring and a teacher's reduced likelihood of leaving than states that require fewer of these matches in induction programs.<sup>42</sup>

### **ENSURING MENTOR EFFICACY THROUGH TRAINING**

Countries with high-performing educators share the common practice of training for mentor teachers because effective teacher training requires a different skillset than effective classroom instruction.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, it is an improper assumption that a great teacher will also make a great mentor without training in how to do so. Not only will this require training in how to mentor, but training in the various techniques mentees are expected to learn.<sup>44</sup> Although it is most desirable to pair a new teacher with a mentor in the same content and grade level, this is not always possible, thus training in techniques beyond general pedagogy are necessary for a mentor to be effective. As a result, it is important to outline what mentor training entails and to engage

teacher preparation programs in its development. Past surveys and interviews of mentorship program coordinators across New Mexico revealed continued need for training in best teaching practices, training of mentor trainers, assistance in mentor training, finding qualified mentors, innovative program models, and “ongoing support for those taking on the influential role of the mentor teacher.”<sup>45</sup> Given the wide variation in how districts have interpreted the mentorship program components specified in law, NMPED has a pivotal role to play in ensuring all mentors understand what is expected of their role and how to achieve those results with adult learners.

### **FOSTERING STABILITY THROUGH STATE INVESTMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Comprehensive induction and mentor programs are more often the result of formal and systemic state policies that prioritize the needs of struggling teachers through dedicated funding and program infrastructure. In all states, program standards and networks aim to provide a common language, shared experiences, and opportunities to learn from exemplary mentor programs and practices. The most successful and enduring mentor programs across the country rely on the stability afforded by state policies that set standards of practice for local programs to interpret and build upon. When states outline program infrastructure and accountability, district focus shifts toward improving program quality and utilizing mentorship as an essential human capital development tool.

A 2007 benefit-cost analysis showed that after five years an investment of \$1 in teacher improvement programs produces a positive return to society, the school district, the teachers, and the students, and the state recovers \$1.66 on its initial investment in developing stronger human capital.<sup>46</sup> When states mandate induction, provide funding, implement program standards, and require some level of program accountability, the prevalence of comprehensive programs increases.<sup>47</sup> Research on best practices indicates that states should distribute induction and mentoring funds to all districts as opposed to creating competitive grant programs, which ultimately only have a small impact on program implementation statewide.<sup>48</sup> However, in a resource constrained-environment such as New Mexico, the NMPED should identify best practices in smaller pilot programs such as TPE, and then scale successful practices in a fiscally responsible way. The US Department of Education encourages states to use Title II, Part A funds to support mentorship that is evidence-based and designed to improve outcomes for students, including early release time for mentoring, compensation for mentors, and evidence-based professional development for mentors and mentees.<sup>49</sup> In addition to Title II funds, mentorship programs can leverage existing teacher quality grants under the High Education Act through the Teachers Are Leaders Act, which was introduced with bipartisan support on June 22, 2017 in the U.S. Senate. Finally, New Mexico can look to states like Maryland that support district mentorship programs through their school funding formulas, or create a matching grant system for districts to support mentoring and induction programs aligned to predetermined state criteria.<sup>50</sup> Financial resources are essential to support long-term program development and implementation.

## +++++ ENDNOTES +++++

<sup>1</sup> Adelman, C., Marchitello, M., & Pennington, K. (2017). An independent review of state ESSA plans. Washington, DC: Bellwether Education Partners. Retrieved from: [https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/Bellwether\\_ESSAReview\\_ExecSumm\\_Final.pdf](https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/Bellwether_ESSAReview_ExecSumm_Final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department. (2017). *New Mexico Rising: New Mexico's State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act*. Santa Fe, NM: Government Printing Office.

<sup>3</sup> See Endnote 2

<sup>4</sup> NM Stat § 22-10A-9 (1996 through 1st Sess 50th Legis); The Synergy Group, Ltd., (2003). *Mentorship Program Evaluation 2002-2003*. Retrieved from: [http://teachnm.org/uploads/docs/mentorship\\_programs.pdf](http://teachnm.org/uploads/docs/mentorship_programs.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> 6.60.10.8 NMAC; NM Stat § 22-10A-7 (2013)

<sup>6</sup> 6.60.10.8 NMAC; NM Stat § 22-10A-9 (1996 through 1st Sess 50th Legis); NM Stat § 22-10A-20 NMSA (1978)

<sup>7</sup> 6.60.10.8 NMAC; NM Stat § 22-10A-9 (1996 through 1st Sess 50th Legis)

<sup>8</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department. (2017). *2017 Student Assessment Results Final July 2017*. Santa Fe, NM: Government Printing Office.

<sup>9</sup> See Endnote 8

<sup>10</sup> See Endnote 2

<sup>11</sup> Question "Currently, New Mexico requires districts to provide mentoring to teachers in their first year of teaching. To what degree would you support or oppose offering mentoring to the following categories of teachers:" "Teachers who have lower than Effective ratings on NMTEACH evaluations" Responses (n = 627): "Strongly support" (44.7 percent), "Somewhat support" (27.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (9.6 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (7.0 percent), "Strongly oppose" (8.3 percent), "Unsure" (2.6 percent). "Teachers in their first year of teaching" Responses (n = 635): "Strongly support" (88.8 percent), "Somewhat support" (7.2 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (1.6 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (0.3 percent), "Strongly oppose" (1.1 percent), "Unsure" (1.0 percent). "Teachers in their first and second year of teaching" Responses (n = 628): "Strongly support" (61.5 percent), "Somewhat support" (26.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (6.4 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (2.7 percent), "Strongly oppose" (1.8 percent), "Unsure" (0.8 percent). "Teachers in their first, second, and third year of teaching" Responses (n = 623) "Strongly support" (31.5 percent), "Somewhat support" (37.2 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (17.0 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (7.5 percent), "Strongly oppose" (5.6 percent), "Unsure" (1.1 percent). "Teachers who switch teaching assignments (content subjects or grades)" Responses (n = 624) "Strongly support" (37.3 percent), "Somewhat support" (39.1 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (12.2 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (4.5 percent), "Strongly oppose" (5.3 percent), "Unsure" (1.6 percent). "Teachers who are teaching in New Mexico for the first time" Responses (n = 633): "Strongly support" (49.4 percent), "Somewhat support"

(29.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (13.0 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (3.5 percent), "Strongly oppose" (2.7 percent), "Unsure" (1.6 percent).

<sup>12</sup> Question "Currently, mentorships take place primarily through one-on-one or small group meetings between mentors and mentees in the same district, but not within the same grade level and content area. To what degree would you support or oppose offering mentorship in the following formats?" "Team mentoring (more than one mentor per mentee)" Responses (n = 630) "Strongly support" (34.8 percent), "Somewhat support" (36.5 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (14.1 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (8.6 percent), "Strongly oppose" (4.6 percent), "Unsure" (1.4 percent). "Online mentoring (one-on-one)" Responses (n = 627): "Strongly support" (15.2 percent), "Somewhat support" (28.2 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (19.5 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (18.3 percent), "Strongly oppose" (15.3 percent), "Unsure" (3.5 percent). "In-person mentoring (one-on-one)" Responses (n = 632) "Strongly support" (75.9 percent), "Somewhat support" (19.1 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (3.5 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (0.6 percent), "Strongly oppose" (0.3 percent), "Unsure" (0.5 percent). "Online small group mentoring sessions (one mentor to a mentee group)" Responses (n = 627): "Strongly support" (16.7 percent), "Somewhat support" (30.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (19.9 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (17.2 percent), "Strongly oppose" (12.3 percent), "Unsure" (2.9 percent). "In-person small group mentoring sessions (one mentor to a mentee group)" Responses (n = 627) "Strongly support" (39.2 percent), "Somewhat support" (41.3 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (10.2 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (5.1 percent), "Strongly oppose" (3.2 percent), "Unsure" (1.0 percent). "Hybrid coaching (online and in-person coaching)" Responses (n = 627) "Strongly support" (27.4 percent), "Somewhat support" (36.5 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (18.5 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (7.7 percent), "Strongly oppose" (6.5 percent), "Unsure" (3.3 percent). "Mentoring within the same district" Responses (n = 627): "Strongly support" (69.1 percent), "Somewhat support" (21.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (4.8 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (1.9 percent), "Strongly oppose" (1.9 percent), "Unsure" (0.5 percent). "Mentoring across different districts" Responses (n = 622): "Strongly support" (16.2 percent), "Somewhat support" (24.4 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (19.8 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (16.4 percent), "Strongly oppose" (19.0 percent), "Unsure" (4.2 percent). "Mentoring across teaching assignments (content areas and grade levels)" Responses (n = 631) "Strongly support" (25.7 percent), "Somewhat support" (34.4 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (13.5 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (13.2 percent), "Strongly oppose" (11.1 percent), "Unsure" (2.2 percent).

<sup>13</sup> Question "Currently, compensation for mentors is required by law, but varies widely across New Mexico districts. Which of the following compensation models do you think would motivate more teachers to serve as mentors assuming a 1 to 2 hours per week per mentee time commitment? (Choose the three most appealing options)" Responses (n = 637): "Reducing administrative/teaching responsibilities" (27.9 percent), "Offering a \$1,000-\$3,000 stipend" (87.8 percent), "Providing release time for part-time or full-time mentors" (30.1 percent), "Offering credit hours" (15.2 percent), "Offering credit toward National Board Certification" (28.1 percent), "Providing training on current laws, regulations, and rules affecting students, schools, and teachers" (9.3 percent), "Providing training and professional development on adult learning theories and coaching strategies" (11.8 percent), "Connecting participants to a regional or state-wide

network of mentors to collaborate with" (7.4 percent), "Connecting participants to a digital portal for mentors/teachers to increase collaboration and resource sharing" (5.7 percent), "Offering additional classroom assistance and support for teaching and non-teaching responsibilities" (19.2 percent), "Increasing choice in mentor/mentee matching decisions" (10.8 percent), "Offering flexible support systems for schools when a mentor with the appropriate content and/or grade level focus is not available" (7.7 percent), "Increasing local teachers' input into district mentorship program design/evaluation" (14.6 percent), "Other" (3.0 percent).

<sup>14</sup> Question "In reviewing various district requirements for mentor teachers, we have identified several common criteria. Which of the following would you support as part of minimum qualifications for mentor teachers? (Choose as many as applicable)" Responses (n = 637) "National Board Certification" (10.5 percent), "Minimum 3 years teaching experience" (19.0 percent), "Minimum 5 years teaching experience" (72.2 percent), "Teach within the same department (if secondary school)" (52.0 percent), "Teach at the same location as the mentee" (61.5 percent), "Satisfactory/Above-average Evaluation" (53.2 percent), "Training in Coaching/Mentoring" (48.7 percent), "Written recommendation from administrator" (29.5 percent), "Written recommendation from teacher peer" (15.4 percent), "Positive evaluation if you have served as a mentor" (42.7 percent).

<sup>15</sup> Curtis, R. (2013). *Finding a new way: Leveraging teacher leadership to meet unprecedented demands*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute. Retrieved from: <http://www.aspendr.org/portal/browse/DocumentDetail?documentId=1574&download>

<sup>16</sup> Weiner, R. & Pimentel, S. (2017). *Practice what you teach: Connecting curriculum & professional learning in schools*. Washington DC: The Aspen Institute. Aspen Institute Education & Society Program. (forthcoming, 2017). *Professional Learning Systems for Adults in Service of Student Learning*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute.

<sup>17</sup> Question "There are several options to addressing the mentoring model in New Mexico. To what degree do you support or oppose the following proposals:" "Proposal: Change the existing mentorship model in your district" Responses (n = 620): "Strongly support" (31.5 percent), "Somewhat support" (26.8 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (25.6 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (5.5 percent), "Strongly oppose" (3.5 percent), "Unsure" (7.1 percent). "Currently, compensation for mentors is required by law, but no minimum contact time between mentors and proteges is stipulated. Proposal: Set a minimum amount of contact time between mentors and protege teachers." Responses (n = 630): "Strongly support" (52.1 percent), "Somewhat support" (31.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (10.0 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (3.5 percent), "Strongly oppose" (1.6 percent), "Unsure" (1.0 percent). "Currently, models vary across districts throughout the state with regards to minimum selection criteria for mentors. Proposal: Set an uniform minimum selection criteria for mentor teachers across the state." Responses (n = 622): "Strongly support" (42.4 percent), "Somewhat support" (33.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (13.7 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (6.1 percent), "Strongly oppose" (2.3 percent), "Unsure" (1.6 percent). "Currently, mentor programs are evaluated locally every three years based on protege teacher retention rates, but these vary significantly across districts. There is no consistent accountability system in place to allow for comparison of each mentor program's effectiveness. Proposal: Creating a standard,

uniform system for evaluating mentor effectiveness in districts." Responses (n = 626): "Strongly support" (43.0 percent), "Somewhat support" (31.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (13.9 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (5.8 percent), "Strongly oppose" (3.5 percent), "Unsure" (1.9 percent). "Proposal: Creating a mentor teacher endorsement option for a teaching or administrative license." Responses (n = 625): "Strongly support" (37.6 percent), "Somewhat support" (30.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (16.2 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (5.9 percent), "Strongly oppose" (6.6 percent), "Unsure" (2.9 percent).

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, L.S., Goldrick, L., & Lasagna, M. (2010). *New teacher excellence: The impact of state policy on induction program implementation*. Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center. Retrieved from: [https://newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/NTC\\_Policy\\_Brief-NewTeacherExcellence.pdf](https://newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/NTC_Policy_Brief-NewTeacherExcellence.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Goldrick, L., Osta, D., Barlin, D., Burn, J. (2012). *Review of state policies on teacher induction*. Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center. Retrieved from: <https://newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/brf-ntc-policy-state-teacher-induction.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Carroll, T. and Foster, E. (January 2010). *Who Will Teach? Experience Matters*. Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.; Ingersoll, R. & Merrill, E. (2010). "Who's Teaching Our Children?" *Educational Leadership*, 67: 14-20. University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. (Fall 2010). "The Changing Face of the Teaching Force." *A Review of Research*, Vol. 7, No. 3: 1, 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department. (2015). *New Mexico Educator Equity Plan*. Santa Fe, NM: Government Printing Office.; Montañño, M (2017, June). *Equity in Education*. Session presented at the meeting of the New Mexico 2nd Annual Teacher Summit, Albuquerque, NM.

<sup>22</sup> Montañño, M (2017, June). *Equity in Education*. Session presented at the meeting of the New Mexico 2nd Annual Teacher Summit, Albuquerque, NM..

<sup>23</sup> New Teacher Center. (2014). *Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) New Mexico Survey*. Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center. Retrieved from: <https://tellnewmexico.org/results/report/131/59054>

<sup>24</sup> The Synergy Group, Ltd., (2003). *Mentorship Program Evaluation 2002-2003*. Retrieved from: [http://teachnm.org/uploads/docs/mentorship\\_programs.pdf](http://teachnm.org/uploads/docs/mentorship_programs.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> See Endnote 4

<sup>26</sup> NM Public Education Department. (2015). *New Mexico Educator Equity Plan*. Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/nmequityplan060115.pdf>; Howard, T. C. (2003) Who Receives the Short End of the Shortage? Implications of the U.S. Teacher Shortage on Urban Schools. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, vol. 18 (2), 142-160; Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). "Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence." *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Vol. 8 (1).

<sup>27</sup> Glazerman, S., Isenberg, E., Dolfín, S., Bleeker, M., Johnson, A., Grider, M., & Jacobus,

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<sup>28</sup> Schmidt, R., Young, V., Cassidy, L., Wang, H., & Laguarda, K. (2017). *Impact of the New Teacher Center's New Teacher Induction Model on teachers and students*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

<sup>29</sup> Ingersoll, R. & Strong, M. (2011). "The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research." *Review of Education Research*, 81(2), 201-233. doi: 10.3102/0034654311453323

<sup>30</sup> Glazerman, S., Isenberg, E., Dolfin, S., Bleeker, M., Johnson, A., Grider, M., & Jacobus, M. (2010). *Impacts of comprehensive teacher induction: Final results from a randomized controlled study (NCEE 2010-4027)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>31</sup> Yoon, K. S., Duncan, T., Lee, S. W.-Y., Scarloss, B., & Shapley, K. (2007). *Reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2007–No. 033)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest. Retrieved from: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>

<sup>32</sup> See Endnote 27

<sup>33</sup> Polikoff, M., Desimone, L., Porter, A., & Hochberg, E. (2015). "Mentor policy and the quality of mentoring." *The Elementary School Journal*, 116, 76-102. <https://doi.org/10.1086/683134>

<sup>34</sup> See Endnote 31

<sup>35</sup> See Endnote 18

<sup>36</sup> Carver, C. L., & Feiman-Nemser, S. (2009). "Using policy to improve teacher induction: Critical elements and missing pieces." *Educational Policy*, 23, 295-328. doi:10.1177/0895904807310036

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<sup>43</sup> Goldrick, L. (2016). *Support from the Start: A 50-State Review of Policies on New Educator Induction and Mentoring*. Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center. Retrieved from: <https://newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016CompleteReportStatePolicies.pdf>

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<sup>45</sup> See endnote 24

<sup>46</sup> Villar, A., & Strong, M. (2007). "Is mentoring worth the money? A benefit-cost analysis and five year rate of return of a comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers." *ERS Spectrum*, 25(3), 1-17.

<sup>47</sup> See Endnote 18

<sup>48</sup> Humphrey, D. C., Wechsler, M. E., Bosetti, K. R., Park, J., & Tiffany-Morales, J. (2008). *Teacher induction in Illinois and Ohio*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. Retrieved from: <http://www.siu.edu/ierc/projects/pdf/JoyceTeacherInduction2008.pdf>; Humphrey, D.

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