



**TONAWANDA
CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
PEER COACH
PROGRAM MANUAL
August 2021(revised)**

Program Description:

This description of the Peer Coach Program of the Tonawanda City School District is a component of the district's Professional Development Plan (PDP). It is intended to fulfill the requirement of a mentoring program under regulation 8 NYCRR §80.3.4 [b] [2] effective February 2, 2004.

Peer Coach Program Tonawanda City School District Goal:

To enhance teacher effectiveness and retain highly qualified teachers by providing a mentor program for new teachers.

Definitions:

A New Teacher is a teacher who is new to the district.

A Peer Coach is a tenured teacher with at least three (3) years of teaching experience in the mentored subject or grade level area (when possible).

Performance Criteria:

The new teacher and peer coach will work together towards demonstrating proficiency in the following four areas, in accordance with Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching by Charlotte Danielson:

A. Planning and Preparation:

Extensive content and pedagogical

Thorough understanding of developmental characteristics and different approaches to learning

Clear and suitable goals for diverse students

Awareness of resources available to school, district, and/or community

Lesson has defined structure - activities are organized around key ideas

Assessment criteria are clear and are clearly communicated

Knowledge and implementation of NYSED core curricula and TCSD curricular guidelines

B. Classroom Environment:

Teacher-student and student-student interactions are polite and respectful

Environment conveys high expectations for student achievement

Routines and transitions occur smoothly

Responsive to student behaviors and needs

Standards of conduct are clear to all students (classroom management plan)
Classroom is safe with resources equally accessible to all students

C. Instruction:

Directions and procedures are clear and appropriate
Engages students using high quality questions and active discussions in a successful manner
Subject content is presented appropriately
Daily activities and assignments are appropriate with lesson goals
Lesson has clearly defined structures
Feedback is consistently timely and constructive
There are a variety of approaches and strategies for students who have difficulty learning

D. Professional Responsibilities:

Makes accurate assessment of lesson's effectiveness
Maintains a recorded system on student progress
Provides communication with parents regarding student progress and instructional program
Has a supportive and cooperative relationship with colleagues
Participates in school events and/or school/district projects
Seeks opportunities for professional development
Participates in team/department decision-making

Peer Coach Selection:

The Assistant Superintendent and the TEA President will select peer coaches based on new teachers and the approved mentor list of trained individuals.

Training:

1. Peer coaches will receive training. The training of the peer coaches may include, but is not limited to, the following topics:
 - a. Needs of new teachers based on research and anecdotal testimony
 - b. Adult learning theory
 - c. Essential Elements of Instruction
 - d. Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching by Charlotte Danielson
 - e. The new teacher/peer coach relationship
 - f. The observation process

- g. Cooperative learning
- h. Differentiated instruction
- i. Integrating technology into instruction
- j. Time management and organizational techniques
- k. Best practices for instruction and classroom management

2. New teachers will receive a new teacher training and building level staff handbook.

Ratio of Coach to Teacher:

The ratio of peer coach to new teacher is either 1:1 or 1:2.

Stipend for the Peer Coach:

The stipend is in accordance with the TEA contract.

Contact and Release Time:

Both the new teacher and the peer coach receive four (4) one-half days of release time, spaced throughout the school year, for the purpose of peer coaching activities up to an additional 4 one-half days may be requested. The date should be thoughtfully planned with the building secretary to provide coverage for both teachers. This time should not interfere with contractual planning time.

Peer Coach and New Teacher Activities:

The new teacher and their peer coach engage in activities that support the goal of the program. Specifically, the goal is to enhance teacher effectiveness towards the ultimate end of improving students' achievement. These activities include but are not limited to:

- Observation of each other teaching
- Observation of other teachers
- Collaborative lesson planning
- Discussion of organizational and record keeping techniques
- Improving classroom management techniques
- Making parental communication effective
- Supporting best practices in education
- Understanding of observation process using Charlotte Danielson Framework

Mentoring is a partnership created to help support new teachers by providing them with a veteran teacher to confidentially discuss topics and to provide guidance. As a mentor, we hope you will

find that this experience provides you with great satisfaction by helping a colleague and an opportunity to grow as a teacher leader in the building.

Remember, we all faced our first days in our classroom with excitement, anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed. This will be your chance to pass your wisdom and experiences to help your mentee to discover how wonderful it is to be part of the Tonawanda City School District staff.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality is stressed and is ensured. The Peer Coach does not evaluate the new teacher. However, assessing guiding techniques are used for aiding instruction. The Peer Coach does not discuss problems with the principal. Problems or issues involved with the Peer Coach Program are shared only with the Peer Coach Selection Committee.

Program Evaluation:

At the conclusion of each year, the Peer Coach program is evaluated by the Peer Coach Selection Committee. The committee bases its evaluation on confidential surveys distributed to each peer coach and new teacher.

Appendix 1: Monthly Checklists

September Checklist for Teacher Mentors

- _____ Show location of resources (classroom supplies, copy machines, lab materials, bathrooms, parking and other teacher resources)
- _____ Established a scheduled time to meet with your mentee
- _____ Make sure the teacher understands the grading program, how to set up gradebooks, how to email student progress to parents, and input grades
- _____ Make sure teachers were supplied with curriculum guides for the courses they teach and ancillary resources
- _____ Introduce your mentee to other teachers, particularly staff members that can help
- _____ Make sure the technology including all necessary computer programs are working properly. Also make sure all their equipment is in the classroom and in good working order
- _____ Discuss and/or provide samples of classroom procedures, and classroom set up.
- _____ Make sure your mentee understands the safety procedures of the building you are located in
- _____ Discuss requirements for students with 504's and IEP's
- _____ Understanding ENL students and how to support their needs in your classroom
- _____ Navigating and Collaborating with colleagues



October Checklist for Teacher Mentors

“With the right leadership and work environment, employees will excel.”

~ Brenda Nyhus

For new teachers, after the anticipation of the first couple of weeks subsides they often reach a phase of survival. The survival phase is often a product of information overload. In the first month or so of teaching there are so many firsts that they often don't know if they are coming or going. So during this month, your mentee will need some extra attention, please take a moment to discuss the following topics and anything else that may be on your mentee's mind.

- _____ Discuss formal observation(s) or upcoming observations
- _____ Observe each others' classroom teaching sometime between October through December (one observation each during this time frame)
- _____ Debrief department, grade level, team, and committee meetings. Answer questions about unknown terms or unclear processes. Be prepared to explain the rationale for or history behind comments/decisions
- _____ Discuss how their classroom management & discipline plans are going. Encourage the teacher to keep a list of changes they may want to make and how they can be effectively implemented
- _____ Review grade book and how grades are reported & how grade reports will be distributed to parents
- _____ Discuss parent/teacher conferences including tips on how to conduct, handling parent issues, support staff available and what to prepare
- _____ Discuss Professional Growth and Development within the district
- _____ Discuss key events and school calendar of activities
- _____ Review attendance related procedures of illness, expectations for substitutes, etc.

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November/December Checklist for Teacher Mentors

"Life just is. You have to flow with it. Give yourself to the moment. Let it happen."

~Jerry Brown

The months of November and December often bring about a lot of stress in a person's professional and personal lives. Unfortunately for new teachers this is compounded by the fact that the rose colored glasses about their career choice start to fade and they may be growing frustrated because everything did not work out as perfectly as they imagined. Your mentee may feel overwhelmed, mental and physical fatigue may be setting in, and may even question their ability as an educator. In addition to the list below, take some time to share with your mentee times currently or from the past which did not work out as you had planned and some of the strategies you used to get past them. Please after meeting about the topics below, take a moment and point out all the wonderful ways your mentee has been successful.

- _____ Share with one another your parent teacher conferences experience
- _____ Discuss how busy both professionally and personally it is between Thanksgiving & Winter Break and how to keep the students engaged & productive
- _____ Discuss parent communication
- _____ Share "tricks of the trade" to get through the upcoming weeks and preventing burnout
- _____ Discuss concerns/successes of students
- _____ Talk about the end of semester procedures
- _____ Review snow day procedures and how they will be notified
- _____ Share information from observations of each other
- _____ Discuss district and school holiday events and local happenings
- _____ Start discussing changes the teacher would like to make for 2nd semester
- _____ Make sure the teacher has all necessary materials for new classes they teach in the second semester. (If no classes change, make sure they still have everything they need for all classes)

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January Checklist for Teacher Mentors

“The person determined to achieve maximum success learns the principle that progress is made one step at a time. A house is built one brick at a time. Football games are won one play at a time. A department store grows bigger one customer at a time. Every big accomplishment is a series of little accomplishments.”
~David Joseph Schwartz

Winter break provides everyone a chance to step away from the day to day and get a chance to rejuvenate the spirit. For your mentee this gives them a chance to catch their breath and find new promise in the career path they chose. Your mentee will return with new hope now that they have completed the first ½ of the school year. Often you will find that your new mentee has emerged from survival mode, has started looking more at long term teaching strategies, becoming more focused on curriculum, and has a sense of being more organized. As they look to the start of the new semester, your mentee will start reflecting on their practices from the first semester and may make adjustments to their classroom procedures. Your mentee has made it to the top of the hill and can see where they need to go from here.

- _____ Discuss the highs and lows of the semester
- _____ Changes they would like to make for second semester
- _____ Take a look at their new schedule and verify they have all necessary materials to effectively teach this course
- _____ Discuss strategies for working with struggling students
- _____ Review the assessment schedule
- _____ Establish times for mentor/mentee meetings for the second semester.

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February/March Checklist for Teacher Mentors

"The dream begins, most of the time, with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes, and leads you onto the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called truth."

~Dan Rather

During the months of February and March, your mentee should start adjusting to the new semester and possibly the new faces in front of them. February often brings about a sense of exhaustion from the students and staff. The effects of the winter blahs start sinking in and people are starting to look forward to spring. During this time it is important to check in with your mentee to make sure they are able to keep what they are feeling right now in perspective.

_____ Reflect on positive changes they made throughout the year

_____ Point out that they should focus on how much they have learned about being an educator over their short time in this position. This should help them see the big picture instead of the one or more puzzle pieces they are still trying to figure out.

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April Checklist for Teacher Mentors

“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome”. ~Anne Bradstreet

April brings to the school new challenges for all new teachers. Students are shedding their heavy clothing, the winter blahs are starting to subside, and spring fever starts to set in. For teachers who have seniors, the season ailment called senioritis becomes an epidemic. Students are spending less time focused on what they can be doing in the classroom and more time thinking about the approaching summer or spring break trip. Keeping a student who has always been motivated and focused on the task at hand becomes a huge challenge even for the most seasoned veteran. Your mentee may face new frustrations and need to lean on you again at this midpoint in the semester.

- _____ Discuss their evaluations
- _____ Marking grades
- _____ Continued partnerships with parents through communication
- _____ Discuss your observations of your mentee’s classroom. Remember to keep criticism constructive, highlight improvements and things they do well, and provide references to people, websites, or books which may assist them in preparing for next year.
- _____ Discuss their visit to another teacher’s classroom. Inquire what they liked, what they thought might work well for them, and observations they made about how the teacher related to the students.
- _____ Review upcoming building events.
- _____ Discuss strategies for dealing with spring fever/events.

NOTES:

May/June Checklist for Teacher Mentors

Your mentee is probably feeling a great sense of relief and success for they survived the year. During this time take a moment to celebrate both your guidance as a mentor and the growth your mentee has made. May and June are great times to reflect on what happened over the course of the year and build anticipation for a great year to come. During your final meetings this year with your mentee make sure you also find time to discuss the topics below.

- _____ End of Year Activities
- _____ Closing the classroom for the end of the year and check out
- _____ Look at next year's calendar
- _____ Discuss any changes the mentee wants to make and how to proceed for next year.
- _____ Make sure you share summer contact information just in case.
- _____ Cover how to mark final grades and other documents.

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Appendix 2: Peer Coaching Tools

PEER COACH – INTERN MEETING LOG

Coach Name: _____

Intern Name: _____

Date of Meeting: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Total Hours: _____

Location:

Topics Discussed:

Date/time of next planned meeting: _____

TONAWANDA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
PEER COACH PROGRAM EVALUATION- JUNE

In order to improve the Peer Coach Program, please respond to the following questions.

Please indicate if you are a: ☐ PEER COACH ☐ NEW HIRE Date: _____

Please check off the appropriate boxes below.

- 1 means *Needs Improvement*
2 means *Fair*
3 means *Good (meets expectations)*
4 means *Excellent*

Part A: Compatibility

1	2	3	4		Comments:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Certification Area	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grade Level	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Building	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	General Teaching Style	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule and Availability	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personality	_____

Part B: Professional Development between Peer Coach and New Hire

1	2	3	4		Comments:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Peer Observation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Release Time	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Visits to other classrooms or districts	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Training and/or In-service	_____

Part C: Time and Meetings- What type of meetings would be most valuable to you (frequency & time)

	Comments:
<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly peer coach-new hire meetings	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> One hour per week meeting time	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Peer coach-new hire large group meetings	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Small group meetings at building level	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> New hire meetings only	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Peer coach-only meetings	_____

Part D: When and how do you meet with your peer coach or new hire? Check all that apply

☐ **Formal** meetings arranged ahead of time ☐ **Informal** meetings that occurred spontaneously

☐ Before school

☐ After school

☐ During planning periods

☐ During lunch period

☐ Via e-mail

☐ Other (please identify here) _____

Part E: What aspects of the Peer Coach Program are going well?