

ALABAMA TEACHER MENTOR PROGRAM (ATMP)

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Historical Background

On June 10, 2004, the Alabama Legislature passed a resolution to establish the Alabama Teacher Mentor Program (ATMP). The decision was based on the belief that the bedrock of quality education for all students lies in providing exceptional instruction for all students, most importantly, with an emphasis in the recruitment and retention of skilled teachers. Also, the legislature agreed with research that indicated formal, comprehensive, induction and mentoring programs accelerate the successful transitioning of new teachers into the teaching profession. Furthermore, providing ongoing support to new teachers is so critical to reducing the turnover rate of new teachers who may choose to leave the profession unless they receive support. To reach these conclusions, the Legislature relied on feedback and the recommendation from the Task Force on Teacher Quality backed by data gathered from its two-year pilot of an induction and mentoring program. The nine standards of excellence recommended by the Task Force were adopted as markers of exemplary induction and mentoring programs. The authorization to the Alabama State Department of Education to establish the ATMP was a result of this process.

Nationwide, it is estimated that anywhere from 10% to 50% of new teachers leave the teaching profession by the fifth year of entering the profession. This problem is exacerbated in Alabama due to teacher shortages in hard-to-staff rural counties and other hard-to-staff areas. Historical quantitative and qualitative data from the ATMP indicate that the program has been successful in providing support for new teachers across the state.

ATMP STANDARDS

- (1). Goals that reflect local needs and are aligned with the district and state.
- (2). Formal structures, policies, and procedures that support program implementation and address the following: Induction, Mentoring process, Mentor training, Collaborative problem-solving and decision-making.
- (3). Administrative leadership and commitment at the district and building level with designated persons responsible for implementation.
- (4). Confidentiality policies that guarantee the integrity of the mentoring relationship.
- (5). Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for mentors.
- (6). Identified criteria and methods for mentor selection and matching.
- (7). Adequate human and financial resources available to provide for effective implementation.
- (8). Mentor training and new teacher orientation provided prior to the opening of school and ongoing, high-quality professional development for mentors and mentees throughout the school year.
- (9). An evaluation plan for program improvement and accountability and the provision of feedback to all stakeholders, particularly the institutions where any new-to-the-profession teacher completed an Alabama State Board of Education-approved program.

Implementation

The Alabama Teacher Mentor Program (ATMP) is a voluntary program open to local education agencies (LEAs) statewide in the state of Alabama. The Alabama Legislature provides \$3 million line-item support for the ATMP on an annual basis. The ATMP provides LEAs with the structure to implement high-quality support to all new teachers in all schools with the focus to improve teacher effectiveness and reduce the rate of attrition and teacher turnover. The ATMP provides training and technical assistance to LEAs upon request. Also, the ATMP disseminates surveys to mentors and mentees for the purpose of gathering perception data used for evaluating program effectiveness.

The Alabama Teacher Mentor Program (ATMP) is located in the Office of Teaching and Leading Division of the Alabama State Department of Education. Questions regarding the program may be directed to Dr. Patience N. Oranika, Alabama Teacher Mentoring Specialist.

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