

**Duval County Public Schools Cadre Mentoring Program Evaluation
Report
(2007-2008)
Executive Summary**

What is the Duval County Public School (DCPS) Cadre Mentoring Program?

The DCPS cadre mentoring program was designed to develop mentor teachers who would further train, support, and retain beginning teachers. This program was built in conjunction with a federal Transition to Teaching grant. The program aimed at creating a coherent, sustained, and organized set of strategies by which trained mentors can guide the overall instructional improvement and teacher quality in selected schools. The program incorporates research-based practices combined with dialogue, interaction and collaboration among program participants – cadre members, mentors, and novice teachers.

How does the DCPS Cadre Mentoring Program work?

The DCPS cadre mentoring program was targeted at ten district schools (5 elementary, 3 middle, and 2 high) with a large number of novice teachers, and high levels of teacher mobility as well as teacher turn-over rates, including the Transition to Teaching novice teachers. Mentor teachers from each school voluntarily participated in mentoring program activities of training sessions from January to May of 2008. Mentors and novice teachers were placed in pairs by school, grade level, subject area and areas of interest. Mentor teachers were trained during sessions conducted by the district cadre. The mentoring program was designed to integrate cadre training sessions with mentor training sessions so that mentor teachers provide strong support services for beginning teachers. The cadre, as trainers of mentors, primarily followed the best practices outlined in the work of Debra Pitton's (2006) *Mentoring Novice Teachers: Fostering a Dialogue Process*. It is clear that the most important feature of this program was to deliver intensive, structured, and ongoing professional development for mentors that would enhance novice teachers' experiences in the classroom. The expectation was that trained mentors would serve novice teachers by being available to answer their questions, observe and provide constructive feedback on instruction, assist in the development of strategies for addressing classroom-based problems and issues, and talk confidentially to novice teachers about problems they may face in the real classroom environment. The DCPS cadre mentoring program was built on the notion that effective mentoring requires self-reflection on both the part of the mentor and novice

teachers that would ultimately lead to improved classroom performance and professional efficacy.

The following table defines the key roles of participants in the program.

Program Roles	Number of Participant	Definition
Cadre	16	The cadre was formed of highly effective teachers released from classroom responsibilities. Required to have completed a minimum of 5 years of successful teaching experience and to complete a district screening process.
Mentor Teachers	117	The mentor teachers were experienced teachers who had been in the classroom for a minimum of 4 successful years.
Novice Teachers	113	The novice teachers were beginning teachers who had less than 2 years of teaching experience.

What did we evaluate?

The evaluation of the DCPS cadre mentoring program for the 2007-08 school year was based on three primary data sources:

1. Electronic surveys related to program participants' experiences with the DCPS cadre mentoring program were sent to targeted school principals, mentor teachers, and novice teachers to obtain information about the program.
2. Focus group interviews with mentor teachers and the cadre were conducted to gather information about the program to obtain their current "read" on issues.
3. Mentor teachers were asked to complete the entrance/exit slips from mentor training sessions to gain insight about what they found to be effective in trainings, challenges they faced in helping novice teachers, and experiences they found most memorable in the program.

Results from surveys, interviews, and exit slips were used to answer several critical questions about the program's effectiveness.

What were the novice teachers' areas of need?

As displayed in the table below, novice teachers reported the areas in which they felt they needed most assistance, in rank order as: evaluating students' learning (43%), classroom management (39%), instructional strategies/alternatives (32%), planning instruction (24%), effective communication skills with staff (11%), using instructional time efficiently (9%), and 16% indicated "other." Other responses included differentiating instruction, assistance with parent conferences, classroom assessment, and etc.

Novice teachers' areas of need (in rank order)	Percentage
Evaluating students' learning	43%
Classroom management	39%
Instructional strategies/alternatives	32%
Planning instruction	24%
Effective communication skills with staff	11%
Using instructional time efficiently	9%
Other	16%

What were the areas of assistance novice teachers received from mentor teachers?

In an effort to compare the area in which mentor teachers needed the most assistance in to the areas novice teachers received the most assistance from mentor teachers, novice teachers were similarly asked to specify what areas they received assistance from their mentors. Novice teacher responses are listed in rank order in the table below.

Areas of assistance novice teachers received from mentors (in rank order)	Percent
Instructional strategies/alternatives	74%
Planning instruction	68%
Classroom Management	59%
Dealing with individual differences among students	50%
Evaluating student learning	49%
Motivating students	46%
Using instructional time efficiently	35%
Communicating with parents	32%
Other	12%

The most specific areas/topics that mentor teachers worked on with their novice teachers through the mentoring program were: classroom management (57%); lesson planning (25%); communication skills (12%), student engagement (8%); observation (7%), and questioning skills (7%). Other areas mentioned by mentor teachers were assessment/evaluation, demonstrating accomplished practices, action plans, and resources and support.

How satisfied were the novice teachers?

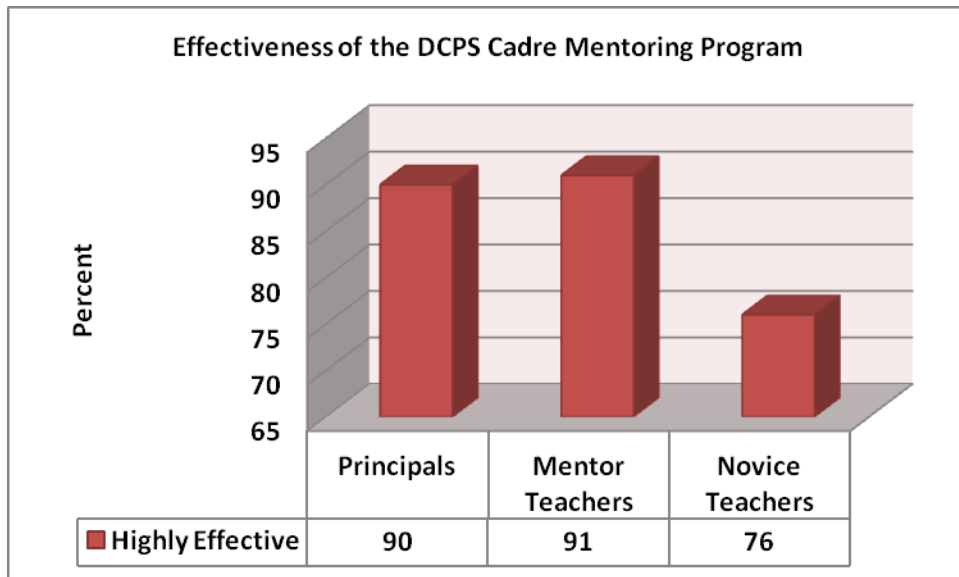
Novice teachers’ satisfaction with the cadre mentoring program was very positive:

- ❖ 89% of novice teachers felt that their mentors met their needs.
- ❖ 84% of novice teachers were satisfied with this year’s mentoring program.

How effective was the program?

- ❖ 91% of mentor teachers rated the program as “highly effective.”
- ❖ 76% of novice teachers rated their mentor teachers as “highly effective.”
- ❖ 90% of principals stated that they have seen improvement in the effectiveness of novice teachers.

The graph below illustrates the effectiveness of the program.



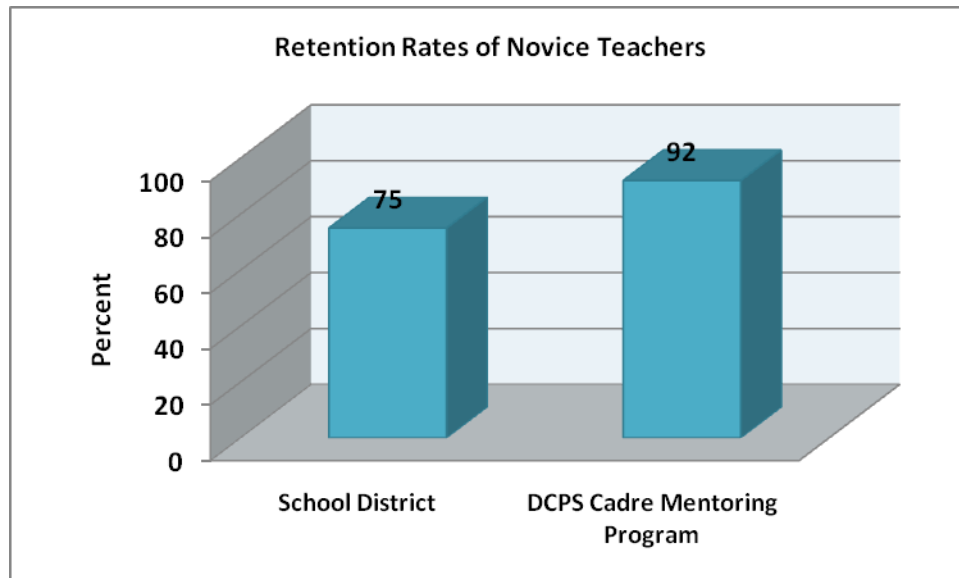
What were the challenges?

The biggest challenge faced by mentor and novice teachers was “time.” Time constraints in terms of mentoring activities as well as opportunities to schedule novice teacher observation were concerns listed most frequently. Other concerns outlined by mentor teachers and cadre were:

- ❖ lack of administrative support
- ❖ lack of communication between the program constituencies
- ❖ starting the cadre mentoring program late in the school year, and
- ❖ lack of better matching methods among mentors and novice teachers.

What was the conclusion?

Findings of this program evaluation indicate a high level of satisfaction and appreciation for the DCPS Cadre Mentoring Program. As displayed in the graph below, *the novice teachers’ retention rates (92%) in all targeted schools was significantly higher than that of the district’s beginning teachers (75%) during the current school year.*



The evaluation of this program concludes with a recommendation that this, and other such efforts continue by those who train teachers, and that continued plans to support professional development of mentors important areas:

- ❖ to alleviate a potentially demoralizing novice teacher's overwhelming workload,
- ❖ to build a cyclical positive relationship in which novice teachers can network,
- ❖ to build support, commitment, and confidence,
- ❖ to be a part of a Professional Learning Community,
- ❖ to begin the mentoring program before school starts,
- ❖ to incorporate a strong sense of administrative support, and
- ❖ to provide opportunities for mentor teachers to visit and demonstrate effective teaching strategies.

Clearly, feedback from surveys, focus group interviews, and entrance/exit slips data indicate that the DCPS Cadre mentoring Program was effective and should be continued with further refinement.

For more information or questions, please contact:

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