

Question 3

- **Why is mentoring important?**

Introduction

Research has shown over and over again that providing mentoring for your new teachers is an important part of helping them be successful in supporting the learning of the students in your school. Below is a list of what mentoring can provide (this list was provided in the Guidelines for Mentoring Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers from the Virginia Department of Education).

- Retaining quality teachers
- Improving beginning teachers' skills and performance
- Supporting teacher morale, communications and collegiality
- Building a sense of professionalism, positive attitude
- Facilitating a seamless transition into the first year of teaching
- Putting theory into practice
- Preventing teacher isolation
- Building self-reflection

The ACE Mentor Program at the University of Notre Dame has collected research that supports the use of mentoring. According to their research, strong mentors:

- cut new teacher attrition rates in half (Ingersoll, 2000)
- improve teacher quality - often moving the skill level of a teacher finishing the first year to that of a 4th year teacher (Villar, 2004) - **WOW!**
- improve student assessment and achievement (Claycolmb and Hawley, 2003)
- benefit veteran teachers through new leadership opportunities and time for professional reflection and development (Villar, 2004)

Teacher Retention Statistics

The number of teacher resignations in WELS during the 1980s was 287 while in the 2000s it jumped to 867 (Gurgel, 2012). That is a loss of 1000s of teachers in whom our synod has invested in preparing for ministry. The toll that these losses have on called workers, their families, and on those they serve is staggering. In the spring of 2016, a majority of administrators who used NTI

reported new teacher retention rates at or above 90% for the first five years of ministry. These numbers accounted for reported reasons as *new teacher's family plans* (marriage/ children), *accepting calls* away from their schools, or the *reassignment of tutors*.

A concern that some WELS schools and centers have is that some teachers leave the district in which they were originally called. They might want to consider this quote from Harry Wong, **“It is far better to train your new teachers and lose them, than not to train them and keep them!”**

Double Barrier to Assistance

. Novice teachers are hesitant to request assistance

DOUBLE BARRIER TO ASSISTANCE

Experienced teachers are reluctant to interfere and/or offer assistance .

As you can see from the above illustration, two things often get in the way of new teachers getting the information and support that they need. The first is that **they are hesitant to ask for what they need**; they want to appear competent and prepared, and they don't want to “bother” the more experienced teachers or their administrator. On the other side of the barrier is the experienced teacher, **who doesn't want to look like a know-it-all or appear “nosey” and interfere** with the new teacher's work. Acknowledging these natural hesitations and creating trusting relationships between the key members of our induction program (teacher, mentor, administrator) blesses all parties to break down the barrier and talk about what needs to be discussed in a Christian way.

In the end, we really have to ask ourselves **why in the world we would invest in and assign/call new teachers and then not provide them with support**. It is unreasonable to expect brand new teachers to step right in with all the skills and understanding of both teaching and of the culture of our particular schools and communities that they need in order to be successful in helping our kids learn. We must all work together to develop the kinds of teachers we want our kids to have!

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