

# POLICY BRIEF

## Putting North Carolina's Beginning Teacher Support Program Policy into Practice

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### Introduction

On May 3, 2018, the North Carolina Board of Education adopted Policy TCED-016, titled the Beginning Teacher Support Program (BTSP) (Beginning Teacher Support Program [BTSP], 2018). This policy, which revised and replaced the 2010 BTSP policy, was established after the 2010 Teacher Working Condition (TWC) survey results were released. The responses to the TWC survey revealed that, among beginning teachers (those who had 1-3 years of experience teaching), 58 percent did not receive release time to observe other teachers, 47 percent did not have formal time to meet with their mentor during school hours, 31 percent never met with their mentor to develop lesson plans, 53 percent never observed their mentor teaching, and 33 percent never analyzed student work with their mentor (Public Schools of North Carolina [PSNC], *n.d.*).

Completion of the BTSP happens after beginning teachers (BTs) meet the program's requirements within their first three years of teaching. The requirements of this three-year program include: (a) each BT must create a Professional Development Plan, (b) organizations must provide BTs with optimum working conditions, (c) BTs must complete an orientation, and (d) each BT must be assigned a trained mentor who observes and evaluates him/her (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2010). In order to ensure that all LEAs and charter schools in North Carolina successfully comply with the BTSP, evaluation of the policy's implementation includes five program

standards, five mentor standards, and five teaching standards. Lastly, the policy requires that each school thoroughly documents all aspects of the BTSP's implementation (BTSP, 2018).

The purpose of the BTSP is to support BTs in meeting the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, which range from professional development, to quality instruction, to purposeful reflection. According to the BTSP handbook: If the beginning teachers of North Carolina are going to be able to meet the state's professional teaching standards, impact the learning of all students in distinguished ways, choose to remain in the profession, and become future master teachers, teacher leaders, and skilled administrators and superintendents, then a quality induction program to support the instructional growth of beginning teachers must be in place in each of the school districts and charter schools in the state. (PSNC, 2018)

### Limitations

All LEAs and charter schools across North Carolina have established Beginning Teacher Support Programs in compliance with TCED-016. As previously stated, this policy was established in part because of unfavorable responses to the TWC survey. However, since its adoption in 2010, not much has shifted in BTs' perceptions of the support they are receiving. Figure 1 shows that the North Carolina TWC survey responses did not make much of a shift from 2010 to 2018.

In addition to the information in Figure 1, some of the other responses to

the New Teacher Support section of the 2018 TWC Survey include that 72 percent of BTs did not believe they were provided a reduced workload, and 45 percent did not teach the same content area and/or grade level as their mentor. Therefore, one of the limitations to the BTSP concerns the schools' follow-through. It is necessary to analyze the disparity between the comprehensive policy details, which were constructed in a way that directly address BT's expressed concerns, and the ways in which the policy is being implemented in North Carolina schools. In addition to analyzing the follow-through of NC schools, the ways in which the state is holding these schools accountable should also be reviewed.

Further, the BTSP handbook is an 88-page document, which calls its accessibility into question. This may contribute to schools' commitment to and accuracy with implementing the policy. Additionally, throughout the program and mentor standards within this document, there is much emphasis placed on the selection, development, responsibilities, and support of mentors. However, there is nothing directly stated in the handbook about a process of matching process mentors and mentees, though it is applied that they should teach the same content area and/or grade level. This missing component of matching is crucial to ensure the success of the mentor/mentee relationship and the subsequent success of the BT, as defined by the BTSP's vision (Bailey, Voyles, & Finkelstein, 2016; Ghosh & Reio, 2013; Lozinak, 2016).



## Solutions

According to the BTSP's vision for Mentoring and Induction, the program standards are set forth to challenge teachers toward reaching goals that include pursuing leadership opportunities and fostering productive, engaging, relevant, and inquisitive classroom environments. However, the policy is not producing the outcomes that will ultimately result in meeting this vision. Thus, this brief provides several suggestions to improve the practicality of the BTSP policy.

### Mentor/Mentee Matching

One improvement that can be made to the BTSP is adding more intentionality with matching mentors to BTs. Since none of the 2018 NC TWC Survey data on BT's mentor relations made significant improvements since 2010, it is necessary to examine the particulars of the mentor/mentee relationship. The only BTSP requirement that alludes to matching BTs with mentors is that they are to teach the same content and grade level. However, as previously stated, 45 percent of BTs in North Carolina did not receive this type of match. This may be due to a number of reasons; a likely one being a lack of mentor availability in the same subject and/or grade level as the BT. Thus, it is necessary to consider other methods of matching.

Research has shown that mentee expectations play an important role in the success of the mentoring relationship, and thus effort should be made for assigned mentors to match those expectations (Finkelstein & Poteet, 2007; Haggard, 2012; Sosik & Godshalk, 2004). This is important because successful mentoring relationships can lead to several positive outcomes among both mentors and mentees. These outcomes include career success, organizational commitment, job performance, and job satisfaction (Ghosh & Reio, 2013; Scandura & Williams, 2004), which may lead to increased retention. Thus, schools should continue in their attempts to match mentors and BTs based on content area and grade level, however additional attention should be placed on BT expectations. This can be gauged through a brief survey given to BTs at the beginning of their induction.

### Follow-through and Accountability

In order to ensure that the LEAs and charter schools across North Carolina are following through with the BTSP policy, there should be investment from all stakeholders and consistent accountability from the state. Because this is a required program, schools will likely comply with the basic policy

requirements. However, since schools are already tasked to meet a considerable amount of other expectations, without stakeholder investment, the details of the BTSP have a great potential to fall through the cracks. This is also why accountability is crucial.

Thus, in addition to the one-time initial training that is provided on BTSP, the state could deliver ongoing professional development to all school administrators, mentors, and mentees. This professional development could include team building among the mentors and mentees, group assessments on BTSPs being implemented around the district, and quarterly reflective analyses of BTSP implementation. Currently, BTSPs are monitored on a five-year revolving cycle, but by improving the type and amount of support given to BTs, mentors, and school administrators, there is likely to be more favorable results on the NC TWC Survey.

Figure 1. TWC Survey 2010-2018 Comparison Data

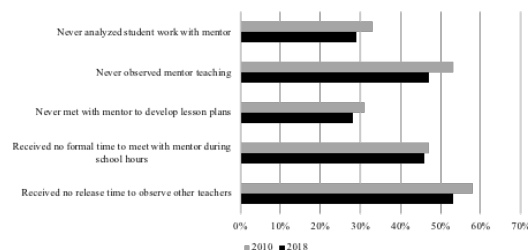


Figure 1. North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey results in 2010 as compared to 2018. Chart was generated using data from released NC TWC Survey results. 2018 data was retrieved from "NC TWC 2018" by the North Carolina State Board of Education, 2018, <https://ncteachingconditions.org/results/report/620174074.pdf>. 2010 data was retrieved from the "North Carolina Mentor Training for 21st Century Teaching and Learning" presentation made public by PSNC, n.d., <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/educatoreffectiveness/regional/jobfairs/nc-mentor-training.pdf>

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