

BTSP (Beginning Teacher Support Program) Plan

Union Academy 2024 - 2029

Board Approved on 5.2.2024

Overview

Union Academy (UA) provides a research-based program of guidance and support for all beginning teachers in their first three years of teaching. Teacher education extends beyond higher education programs and past experiences. The UA Beginning Teacher Support Program (BTSP) assists with the transition from university training or past work experience, to novice teacher, and on to continued growth towards mastery teaching. The program takes the form of a Professional Learning Community and reflects a strong emphasis on support and clinical guidance (as distinguished from evaluation) for beginning teachers and a commitment to high-quality training and support for mentors.

The Beginning Teacher Support Program is designed to help new teachers make a smooth transition into the educational profession. Support is provided for all new teachers through an orientation, ongoing guidance, and opportunities to enhance each teacher's professional development while encouraging individuality and creativity.

A collaborative approach helps the beginning teacher acclimate to the educational setting and profession. A team comprised of personnel including their administrator(s), assigned mentor, the Beginning Teacher Support (BTS) Coordinator, school staff, and other support personnel are readily available to provide the nurturing and clinical guidance needed for beginning teachers.

The Union Academy Initial Licensure Program meets all state requirements as outlined below and is aligned with the standards:

Standard 1: Systematic Support for High Quality Induction Programs – This standard is designed to promote the commitment of all stakeholders in seeing mentoring and induction programs succeed. Key program elements include the creation of an institutional plan, demonstrating institutional commitment, and support and principal engagement.

Standard 2: Mentor Selection, Development, and Support – This standard articulates the process and criteria for mentor selection, discusses mentor roles and responsibilities, and delineates foundational mentor training. Key program elements include mentor selection, defining the role of mentors, and mentor professional development.

Standard 3: Mentoring for Instructional Excellence – Mentors are given protected time to provide beginning teachers with support to achieve success in the areas set forth by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. Key program elements include providing time for mentors and beginning teachers, ensuring mentoring is focused on instruction, and addressing issues of diversity.

Standard 4: Beginning Teacher Professional Development: Professional development is provided to beginning teachers that orient them to their new careers and support their efforts to meet the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. Key program elements include structured orientation to the school site, as well as professional development designed to meet the unique needs of beginning teachers that are aligned with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, and the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation System.

Standard 5: Formative Assessment of Candidates and Programs – New teachers and mentoring programs are monitored and supported using a formative assessment system to guide their work. Key program elements include formative assessment systems *and program evaluation*

Program Management

The Union Academy BTSP is managed by a BTS Coordinator under the direction of each level principal. The BTS Coordinator, principals, and Licensure Specialist work together to verify the status of incoming teachers with fewer than three years of experience to participate in the BTSP and ensure their teaching assignment is in the correct area of licensure. The BTS Coordinator, principals, and the Licensure Specialist also verify the eligibility of beginning teachers for a continuing license (teachers with an initial license are eligible to convert to a continuing license once all required coursework has been successfully completed, all NC State Board of Education (NCSBE)-approved exams have been passed, and three years of teaching have been completed); recognizing once the continuing license is earned in one area, additional teaching areas do not require participation in the BTSP. They will follow NCSBE requirements for all required licensure tests. The Licensure Specialist collects and submits Beginning Teacher data through the State of the Teaching Profession Report.

Orientation/Induction

As part of the hiring process, each beginning teacher is provided, within the first two weeks of employment, a system orientation with the administration team to learn about State and Local Board mission, goals and policy, benefits, and WCS system procedures. This includes the procedure for converting a Standard Professional I (initial) license to a Standard Professional II (continuing) license providing beginning teachers complete all coursework, pass all NCSBE approved exams, and complete three years of teaching. The new teachers also meet with the administration to learn about the BTSP. In this orientation, the novice teachers receive information and learn about available support services such as the mentor program, professional development for beginning teachers, and other pertinent information to help them be successful in their new endeavor. The teachers are also introduced to the NC Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES). Once at the school site, the principal continues this orientation by providing more in-depth information about the NC Teacher Evaluation Process and other topics specific to the school.

Prior to the opening of school each year, a Beginning Teacher Orientation is required for all first-year teachers. During this four-day induction, beginning teachers are given an opportunity to network, meet certain school personnel, and meet their curriculum coaches. They are also given access to electronic and hard copy resources compiled by the BTS Coordinator that

contain information about the school and helpful information for beginning teachers including a copy of the BTSP plan upon board approval. The BTS Coordinator will document attendance in the BT Orientation and participation in the Lateral Entry process.

Topics covered during the four orientation days include

- WCS and SBE missions, goals and system services and policies
- proactive and positive classroom management
- instructional and technology support
- NC Professional Teaching Standards and Evaluation Process
- NC Standard Course of Study, the local pacing guides, and curriculum frameworks
- learning about exceptional children laws and procedures, including appropriate use of seclusion and restraint of students
- reviewing research-based educational best practices.

During orientation, distribute required working conditions guidelines

BT Identification and Verification Process

- Teachers with 3 or less years of experience are in our Beginning Teacher Program. They receive 4 observations (3 by administrator and 1 Peer), they are assigned a mentor and must attend the monthly BT meetings. These teachers are matched in their area of licensure and will work with their mentor to complete timelines/checklists for the year. Student services personnel, administrators, and curriculum-instructional specialists are not required to participate. We have a licensure specialist who keeps all data and documents for our beginning teachers. She is the one who submits for the licensure conversion process.
- Completion of the recent graduate survey by the Beginning Teacher (BT) and the employer survey by the principal of the school during the BT's first year of teaching as part of the requirements to measure the performance of Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) stated in GS 115C-269.35. The surveys must be completed at the end of the first year of teaching.

Required Working Conditions

- The BTs are assigned (when possible) someone on their grade level, subject area, and within close proximity. There are instances that we have had to pair teachers who aren't close together, but time is provided to work with each other.
- BTs are required to go to Wednesday Meetings
- Assigned in their area of licensure
- No extracurricular activities unless in writing
- Limited number of exceptional and/or behavioral students

Lateral Entry

Lateral entry teachers go through a more extensive orientation with the principal and the BTS Coordinator, focusing on their individual plans of study and school-related issues. Prior to beginning in the classroom, these lateral entry teachers must spend ten full days completing specific requirements that they record and submit to the BTS Coordinator for licensure purposes. In addition to information covered in the Beginning Teacher Orientation, these requirements include observing other teachers; meeting with administrators, school staff, and their mentor; and reviewing school and system policies.

Mentor Selection, Assignment, and Training

Potential mentors must complete an application and be nominated by their principal. When a teacher is nominated, he or she receives a Mentor Interest Form and a copy of Mentor Responsibilities. The mentor then attends leadership and coaching training before being assigned to work with a beginning teacher. These mentors are clinical mentors in that they are not involved in evaluating their mentees. The BTS Coordinator and principals collaboratively make all mentor assignments early in the summer or school year giving special attention to proximity in Beginning Teachers' schools, licensure area, grade, and prior mentor assignment. Special attention will be given to the mentor's NCEES rating as required by North Carolina State Board of Education Policy LICN-004:

- A teacher may be a mentor at a different school building from which the mentor is assigned if the principals of each school and the mentor teacher approve the assignment.
- Teacher must be rated at least "proficient" level on three of the five standards on most recent summative, or standards 1 and 4 on abbreviated)

- Retired teachers are eligible
- Priority consideration for mentors rated as “distinguished or accomplished”
- Principal to maintain records for reasons retired or teachers who are “proficient” are selected
- If an evaluation for the prior year is not available you may use the most recent evaluation. Teachers with 2 or more consecutive years of no evaluation data are not eligible (unless retired).
- No teacher whose evaluation during the year falls below a “proficient” level may continue to serve as a mentor.

Initial training is provided to all mentors using the program developed by the Department of Public Instruction. Additional information is provided as needed on topics related to beginning teacher support. Mentors will meet with their protégé within the first ten days of employment. Mentors have opportunities to participate in professional learning communities of mentoring practice. Training is based on the NC Mentor Standards.

Support from School Administration

As required in SBE Policy, the principal is ultimately responsible for training and orientation to the NC Educator Effectiveness System. Principals are also strongly encouraged to monitor frequently the progress of beginning teachers and provide assistance to any teacher needing additional support. Principals will ensure beginning teachers have limited class preparations, limited non-instructional duties, and a balanced roster of students. Principals will not allow beginning teachers to participate in extra-curricular assignments unless requested in writing. Principals will arrange for each beginning teacher to meet with their mentor.

Evaluation Process/Professional Development Plans

As required in SBE Policy, UA will provide for each beginning teacher to receive the four required observations, each one at a minimum of 45 minutes, the first observation will have a pre-conference and all will have a post-conference within 10 days. One of the observations is done by a peer, and at least one must be conducted by the principal. Mentors are assigned to Beginning Teachers and will observe them informally only. They do not do the formal peer observation. The first observation must be done by Oct. 30th. The second observation must be

complete by Jan. 15th. There will be at least two formal observations for the BTs completed by the first semester.

Principals and mentors will assist BTs in developing the Professional Development Plan (PDP). The PDP will be monitored and signed at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year by the Beginning Teacher, their principal, and mentor. To ensure appropriate spacing, a schedule of due dates has been established. The final summary evaluation is set to be completed by the end of May each school year. The PDP will include goals, strategies, and assessment of the BT's progress in improving professional skills and will be signed by the BT. Monitored growth plans and directed growth plans must be implemented when necessitated by ratings. The PDP should be based on the NC professional teaching standards.

Identifying and Delivering Services and Technical Assistance

Beginning teachers are required to fully participate in a three-year Beginning Teacher Professional Learning Community, with monthly school meetings. The information discussed during these meetings is aligned with the NC Professional Teaching Standards and includes information regarding topics of concern to beginning teachers such as testing, working with data to improve student achievement, classroom management, exceptional children's issues, and instructional delivery. In addition, opportunities are provided for teachers to network and share ideas and concerns. These meetings are expected to take priority over any other after-school events.

Mentors provide services to beginning teachers; services include informal observations, planning meetings, advice regarding classroom management and instructional strategies, and one-on-one support. By the end of August, mentors will conduct one coaching cycle with each beginning teacher. The mentor will document this cycle on a monthly mentor log which is submitted to the administrator. This process will help prepare the teacher for the first formal observation by a school administrator.

Mentors communicate at least monthly with their school principal via logs, phone calls, email, and face-to-face meetings. When concerns are first identified, the mentor takes steps to provide assistance. If concerns continue, the mentor works with the Mentor Coordinator and the principal to provide additional assistance.

Cumulative Beginning Teacher File

The BTS Coordinator maintains a file on each BT containing mid-year and final summary evaluations and PDPs. They are also recorded in NCEES. For teachers who come to UA during their BT Program, a request will be made to the prior employing agency for a copy of the cumulative beginning teacher file and documentation of participation in BTSP activities from that school system. Files of BT meetings/agendas are also kept by the principals. These files are currently stored in the licensure specialist's office (locked daily). If required, within 10 days of the request, the BTS coordinator will transfer any BT files to other LEAs, charter schools, or non-public institutions within the state.

BTSP Evaluation

UA will monitor the quality, effectiveness, and efficient management of the BTSP throughout the year by reviewing feedback from monthly mentor logs and plus/deltas from teachers attending support sessions. In addition, all professional development is evaluated. UA also evaluates the BTSP success through a combination of interviews, surveys, and data analysis. To gather information on the effectiveness of the program and suggestions for improvement. Based on the results of this information, the principals will revise the BTSP plan as needed. The Union Academy Beginning Teacher Support Program will participate in the 5-year BTSP monitoring cycle conducted by NC DPI and the annual Peer Review process.