

New Teacher Mentoring

Manor Middle School, Manor, Texas

Manor is a burgeoning Central Texas community located just outside the city limits of Austin. As a result of unprecedented growth in the area over the last few years, Manor Independent School District (ISD) has experienced an explosion in its student enrollment. More than 4,500 students attend the district's 2 high schools, 1 middle school, and 5 elementary schools. The district has a diverse ethnic base with a student population approximately 54% Hispanic, 26% African-American, 18% Caucasian, and 2% other ethnic backgrounds (2005-06 AEIS District Profile).

The Challenge

Data from the Texas Education Agency shows that almost half of new teachers hired in Texas public schools will leave the profession by the end of their fifth year of teaching. High attrition rates equate to a smaller pool of experienced teachers. This can result in an overall lower quality of instruction being delivered to students. In addition, large teacher turnover rates also lead to a lack of mentors available to support new teachers. Since 2003, Manor ISD has experienced rapid growth in its student population. New teaching positions have been created to ease over-crowded classrooms. At Manor Middle School, a majority of these new positions have been filled by first year teachers, resulting in a disproportionately high percentage of novice teachers on the campus. In an effort to better support some of these new teachers, Creative Fire LLC was hired by Manor ISD to provide consultant-based teacher mentoring to 8 novice teachers at Manor Middle School.

"You have to start where people are, because their growth is going to be from there, not from some abstraction or where you are or someone else is."

— Myles Horton

The Solution

Needs Assessment. Creative Fire LLC began this project by conducting a needs assessment on each new teacher. This assessment utilized multiple sources of data including: district benchmarks, AEIS reports, classroom observations, interviews with administration and teachers, and surveys completed by new teachers. Following the collection and analysis of data, Creative Fire worked with new teachers to develop Individualized Educator Development Plans (IEDP).

Individualized Educator Development Plans. Based on the results of the needs assessments, IEDPs were created for each teacher. The IEDP identifies areas of professional growth to be targeted during job-embedded coaching. These professional development plans include:

- (1) a summary of areas for improvement based on needs assessment process
- (2) target areas selected for improvement during the specified time frame
- (3) strategies/interventions/resources to be utilized in addressing areas of improvement
- (4) a timeline for achieving expected outcomes/results

Job-Embedded Coaching. Finally, Creative Fire consultants served as job-embedded coaches for the new teachers, providing ongoing training and feedback in reflective teaching practices based on goals identified in teachers' Individualized Educator Development Plans. Creative Fire consultants also worked with these new teachers to help them implement instructional strategies presented by curriculum specialists/outside consultants. Job-embedded coaching is one of the most promising new approaches to professional growth in education. This method allows learning to occur as teachers engage in their daily work activities.