

Part I: Characteristics of Strong Believe and Prepare Programs

MENTORING

Students need great teachers to unlock their learning potential. Likewise, teacher candidates need high-quality mentors to guide their development. TPPs draw on the expertise of Louisiana’s best teachers to ensure future educators develop the skills they need to help all students learn.

As with any great craft or profession, learning to teach takes practice and experience to yield results. In a teacher preparation program that integrates theory and practice, teacher candidates routinely put into practice what they are learning. Partners must also ensure that candidates receive frequent, targeted actionable feedback on their developing skills from faculty, mentors, and coaches, as well as **the Residency Supervisory Team which the state mandates be comprised of the Mentor Teacher, University Supervisor and the Principal or Designee.**

This feedback is invaluable because it prioritizes what is most important for candidates’ development and their impact on student learning.

Believe and Prepare program leaders know that one of the most critical features of a preparation experience is the mentor teacher with whom a teacher candidate practices. The table below illustrates some critical differences in how mentor teachers are recruited and trained.

In the past,	In Believe and Prepare programs,
Selection was often based on years of experience, education level, and completion of a single three-hour course.	Selection is based on demonstrated success with students and exhibited leadership qualities and skills.
Universities provided a three-hour course and initial training on procedures. Ongoing training was not required.	Training is delivered collaboratively throughout the year to develop and renew coaching and feedback skills. Mentor teachers undergo training every year to further hone their skills.
Placement of teacher candidates was based on certification area and mentor teacher availability.	Placement of teacher candidates is based on schools' staffing needs in specific certification areas and complementary personalities and skills.
Additional career pathways were limited or did not exist.	Teacher leadership career pathways are developed to provide effective teachers opportunities to lead and prepare the next generation of teachers.

SELECTING MENTOR TEACHERS: Mentor teachers must be leaders as well as content experts. Mentor teachers have achieved results in their own classroom by improving student outcomes and are respected by their colleagues. In addition to traditional academic markers, mentor teachers possess strong organizational and communication skills, the ability to motivate others, and a passion for children. Mentors may already be serving in leadership roles at the school level as Louisiana Teacher Leaders, serve on district-level curriculum teams, or at the state level as Louisiana Teacher Leader Advisors.

Effective September 1, 2020, Mentor Teachers will be required to hold the Mentor Teacher Ancillary Certificate.

Certain school districts are requiring only the use of teachers who have been approved by the district office.

The LDOE is requiring that placements by the TPP be prioritized by focusing on the Workforce Needs of the district and/or the lists of High Needs Schools and Comprehensive and Urgent Labeled schools.

The **job description for mentor teachers** articulates the knowledge and skills that mentor teachers must have in order to be effective.

MENTOR TEACHER JOB DESCRIPTION:

WHO YOU ARE

- An exceptional teacher who has demonstrated the ability to add a year's worth of growth and/or met IEP goals with all students
- An instructional leader committed to ensuring all students have outstanding teachers in Louisiana who are inspired and highly motivated to change children's lives through education
- The most important part in supporting the growth of aspiring teachers
- Part of the team that ensures every classroom is staffed by an effective teacher and all students are on a successful path to college and career

WHAT YOU BRING

- Experience making consistent, positive impacts on student learning
- Ability to teach and lead adults
- Leadership and coaching skills with a willingness to invest in colleagues to help them grow
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Ability to manage time and plan effectively
- A commitment to constant learning and improvement

WHAT YOU WILL DO

- Communicate frequently with preparation program faculty and school leaders about the candidates' development and readiness for certification
- Identify priorities for candidate development based on candidates' performance and resulting impact on student learning

- Observe and assess teacher candidates formally and informally
- Provide feedback (in real-time or on debrief) based on identified goals
- Model teaching skills through demonstration lessons
- Develop and implement individualized support plans for candidates, if needed
- Commit to additional professional development opportunities

In a co-teaching residency, such as UL Lafayette’s residency, you will:

- Host a resident and share your classroom for the full school year
- Co-teach and share instructional time, gradually releasing teaching responsibility to the resident

Mentor teachers must have **instructional expertise**, and **strong leadership and communication skills** in order to lead their colleagues and develop aspiring teachers. Often, mentor teachers’ instructional leadership has impact beyond new teachers, including coaching and supporting practicing teachers.

These mentor teachers must be selected with care by school system and preparation program leaders.

Mentor teachers should be able to:

- Demonstrate consistent, positive impacts on student achievement
- Lead, support, and invest in colleagues to help them grow
- Reflect on instructional practice and seek opportunities for improvement
- Interact professionally with colleagues, parents, and students
- Communicate effectively with adults and students (e.g., performance expectations)
- Manage time and plan effectively

DEVELOPING MENTOR TEACHERS: Like teacher candidates, mentor teachers need support from multiple sources to effectively serve in their roles.

In strong partnerships, leaders jointly determine, recruit, select, and train mentor teachers.

The sample recruitment and training plan provides examples of training and development plans for supporting mentor teachers’ development.

The plans for the general training of mentor teachers is currently being developed by the local teacher preparation providers who have been deemed eligible by the LDOE to offer such training.

UL Lafayette currently has on-line training modules for all mentor teachers who have previously served and have a C-Number (required by the University for Payroll Purposes). This C# allows the mentor teacher to access the Professional Development for Supervisors/Mentors/Interns on MOODLE. All mentor teachers hosting interns from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette are required to complete these on-line modules. More information will be available after login or you may contact the Office of Teacher Clinical Experiences at otce@louisiana.edu.

YEAR-LONG RESIDENCY

Any complex skill takes time and practice to develop. Essential teaching skills – the foundation of great teaching – are no different. Because a classroom is where a teacher learns best, Believe and Prepare Residency programs are redesigning theory-based academic coursework into school-based, practice-oriented coursework to give candidates more time to engage with students and build essential teaching knowledge and skills.

Through this sustained practice, teacher candidates become prepared to teach independently. Believe and Prepare school system leaders have all focused on extending the practice time to at least a year-long clinical experience, or residency. Across practice-based partnerships, the emphasis on practice allows candidates to spend the majority of their time, often four to five days per week during a residency year, **co- or lead-teaching**.

UL Lafayette's innovative residency program is based on CO-TEACHING and the co-teaching strategies.

COMPETENCY-BASED COURSEWORK

Building preparation experiences around essential teaching knowledge and skills, or competencies, aligns what teacher candidates learn with what they will be expected to do on day one in the classroom.

UL Lafayette's innovative residency program embraces the competencies and offers a full complement of coursework prior to and through the first semester of the residency.

COLLABORATION

Practice-based teacher preparation programs depend on strong partnerships between school systems and preparation providers. While preparation providers need schools and classrooms in which to prepare prospective teachers, school systems need new teachers who are fully prepared for the realities of teaching and meet staffing needs. These partnerships cannot be formed and will not be sustained without collaborative structures.

Share the learning environment. For example, the teacher can explain how to:

- Share responsibility for planning and leading instruction with a teacher candidate
- Coach the teacher candidate in real-time without taking over the lesson
- Allow the teacher candidate to experience appropriate levels of struggle and provide feedback on debrief

Communicate effectively in difficult situations and provide targeted feedback to a teacher candidate. For example:

- Role-play explaining a recent lesson's design, delivery, and outcomes to a teacher candidate.
- Watch a brief clip (5-7 minutes) of a teacher candidate's teaching, identify 2-3 priorities for feedback, and role-play delivering feedback.
- Respond to scenario-based questions.

Mentor teachers need ongoing training and support throughout the school year in order to best support teacher candidate development. Each phase of the training schedule develops the skills for the corresponding roles and responsibilities of that phase. The role of the mentor teacher will vary by program. Additionally, the gradual release of responsibility to teacher candidates in co-teaching settings will vary based on the circumstances in each partnership, school, and classroom.

Undergraduate Resident Mentor is the instructional lead, modeling effective teaching and coaching the candidate while:

- Developing student learning goals based on assessment data with teacher candidate
- Modeling processes for designing instruction and assessments
- Deciding what co-teaching strategies to use
- Communicating with families and colleagues
- Gradually releasing responsibility to candidate

Intensive mentor training focuses on:

- Fostering new teachers in developing key skills from coursework to succeed in the classroom
- Facilitating reflective practice
- Establishing adult collaborative relationships
- Explaining state/district mandates
- Evaluating candidates through performance-based assessments
- Developing classroom observation skills
- Developing feedback skills
- Co-teaching in a supporting role
- Evaluating teachers through performance assessments
- Developing intervention plans

Excerpts taken from:

Believe and Prepare – 1. Developing Partnerships that Prepare Louisiana’s Next Generation of Teachers; 2. **Mentor Teacher Recruitment and Training Guidance**; 1. Mentor Teacher Job Description