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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Mentoring in Action: How To Design A Sustainable Mentoring Program**

The Project SUCCESS: Mentoring in Action program prepares teachers to become mentor leaders in their school districts to improve novice teacher retention rates. This state-wide hybrid training model, funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education, provides district Lead Mentors with the knowledge and practical tools to implement a “train the trainer” model in their districts. The goal of the program is to ensure that novice teachers have qualified mentors coaching them to be successful in the classroom so they will remain in teaching.

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Teacher Leaders Sustain District Mentoring Programs and Achieve SUCCESS for Students**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) selected CUSP to lead Project SUCCESS (School University Collaboration Committed to the Educational Success of All Students) with funds from the federal Race to the Top program. This “train the trainer” model trains teacher leaders to work as Lead Mentors as they prepare and support their district colleagues in becoming qualified mentors. Each district team also creates an action plan that outlines how the mentoring program will be sustained beyond RTTT and how the district can support novice teachers beyond year 1. The retention of qualified teachers is central to Project SUCCESS and the district plan.

“The interconnection between teacher quality and student outcomes is inherent,” said CUSP Executive Director Karen O'Connor. “By preparing Lead Mentors to support beginning teachers, we can help raise the bar of student achievement. There is no better support we can give to a beginning teacher than the best peer mentor there is to offer.”

In 2011, the cohort included 60 mentors hailing from 21 school districts. Last year, the cohort included 153 Lead Mentors from over 50 districts across the Commonwealth. This year the cohort includes 122 participants from 32 districts.

Now in its third year, the project is designed to help school districts retain new teachers while increasing skill levels through best practices. The goal of the program is to create a quality mentoring culture to strengthen the teaching profession statewide, ensure new teachers receive the support they need in their beginning years, and give Massachusetts students the best instruction possible. The Massachusetts Standards for Effective teaching practices guide the mentoring curriculum and promote alignment of mentoring conversations with successful teacher evaluation.

“A central goal of the state's successful Race to the Top application was to ensure that every student in every classroom in the Commonwealth is taught by a great teacher,” said JC Considine, spokesman for DESE. “Project SUCCESS is focused on improving teacher

effectiveness and retaining teachers by providing ongoing support to experienced teachers as they serve as mentor leaders to new teachers.”

This comprehensive program prepares Lead Mentors through a nine-month graduate-level course that is taught in 15 on-line modules that include video lectures, virtual office hours, live videoconferencing and phone consultations with instructors. Leadership training is provided to all participants in three face-to-face seminars offered in three regional site locations.

At the end of the program, successful Lead Mentors have the academic knowledge and mentoring skills necessary to mentor new teachers, and train other mentors in their home school districts so they can sustain their own district programs. All Lead Mentors who successfully complete the graduate course will be eligible to participate in the Mentoring in Action Massachusetts Academy, an on-line community where they are able to network and share ideas after their preparation year.

Project SUCCESS Director Carol Pelletier Radford designed the curriculum for the graduate course and leadership seminars with her faculty and staff. This team is responsible for keeping the curriculum current and relevant to district needs. Karen DeRusha, Karen Gannon, Shonna McGrail Ryan, Donna McDonald, and Joanne Mendes work directly with cohort participants and contribute to the success of the program

### **Rationale for Creating This Program**

One of the most imposing obstacles to developing and maintaining an effective educator workforce is the high turnover rate of new teachers. According to Ingersoll’s research (2003) he found that between 40 and 50 percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. When new teachers are provided with high-quality mentoring they are 30 percent less likely to leave the profession (Odell, S.J. & Ferraro, D.P., 1992). The Project SUCCESS: Mentoring in Action course offered by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth (2010), provides mentors with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to support a greater number of novice teachers in their districts. Using a practical school based curriculum designed for mentors (Pelletier, C., 2006) and their new teachers (Radford, C.P., 2008), lead mentors learn how to focus their mentoring conversations.

What new teachers need is sustained, school based mentoring that addresses their dilemmas of practice and provides them with practical strategies for effective teaching. New teachers need qualified mentors guiding their practice continually through their first years of teaching (Johnson S.M. and Kardos S.M., 2002).

Addressing the learning needs of the new teachers can improve both the rate of teacher retention and the quality of the teaching profession (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Using standards to frame mentoring conversations aligns these dialogues with current evaluation requirements and creates a common language for both the novice teachers and their mentors.

Sustainable mentor preparation and support is being developed in Massachusetts at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth through a Race to the Top grant titled, ***Project SUCCESS: Mentoring in Action!*** (2010). The program’s goal using a “train the trainer” model is to prepare Lead Mentors in school districts to create District Action Plans that support the needs of their novice teachers at all Stages.

## Three Components

Project Success is focused on expanding the number of qualified and effective mentors throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. By providing a comprehensive mentoring program that is designed to develop leadership capacity our goal is to promote teacher retention and sustainability for mentor training.

The Project includes three components:

**1. District Consultation:** An individual consultation will be provided by the Project SUCCESS Director to customize the content to best meet the district's needs. This consultation will provide support to the district related to the design of an effective induction and mentoring program.

**2. Three Credit Graduate Course:** Using an integrative reflective practice approach, the course instructors will provide current knowledge and skills to participants as they learn mentoring strategies and principles. A leadership component will be included to provide participants with strategies for becoming Lead Mentors in their districts and schools. The Standards of Effective Teaching Practice for the Evaluation of Teachers and Educators (MA DESE 2011) will be integrated into coursework so that mentors can support new teachers in meeting new standards.

**Orientation and Graduate Course registration will be completed on-line and in person at the first face-to-face class.**

**The graduate course September - June includes (minimum 50 hours):**

- 1) Three face-to-face class sessions (5 hours per session) in regional locations {September, January, and April (15 hours)}.
- 2) Fifteen on-line modules using the Mentoring in Action book. This also includes guest speakers via Vimeo technology. Assignments will be posted on TaskStream. A year-long subscription to TaskStream will be provided to the mentors and can also be used in their classroom (25 Hours).
- 3) A clinical experience will be required for mentors to work with a new teacher in their school or district so skills learned can be applied in context (10 hours).

**3. On-going support for Mentor Leaders:** On-going support and follow up will take various forms through-out the year.

## On-Line Modules

Module topics align with the *Mentoring in Action* (Pearson 2006) text as well as current state evaluation standards for effective teaching. Each module contains a video lecture imbedded into the TaskStream module. The course instructor, Carol Pelletier Radford highlights key understanding in vimeo format in the introduction and a Recap at the end of the module. Each module has 5 steps that are consistent throughout the course. Course participants are assigned partners for the entire course and also participate in small and large group discussions. Guest speakers are included in selected modules to enhance the content. Activities for learning are differentiated to include reading, partner sharing, viewing videos, and writing. Every module requires an on-line POST to the DRF (Directed Response Folio) that is read by a Master Mentor Evaluator.

## Direct Response Folio (DRF) – TaskStream

All assignments are posted in the DRF and are read by the evaluator (MME). The course instructor (Radford) oversees the course and checks to ensure the MME is reading and responding appropriately. The assessment is a PASS FAIL system and the credit is graduate credit for professional development. At the end of the course participants may “pack up” their portfolio and maintain it as a professional file in their own computer to share with district leaders. They have access to all material on a university website for the “train the trainer” resources. Go to [cuspma.org](http://cuspma.org) to see samples.

Module	Topic	Format	Special Guest Speakers
1	Mentoring in Action: Your Role as A Mentor	Individual	
2	The Five Principles of Mentoring, Part 1	Partner	
3	The Five Principles of Mentoring, Part 2	Partner	
4	Differentiated Mentoring and New Teacher Evaluation	Small Group	
5	Orienting the New Teacher to School Culture and Managing Stress	Partner	Kristen Lee Costa
6	Providing the Beginning Teacher With Feedback	Partner	
7	Creating a Community of Learners	Small Group	Kristina Lamour Sansone
8	Classroom and Behavior Management Partner	Partner	Kristen Lee Costa
9	Teaching for Understanding	Large Group	Cameron Marzelli
10	Assessing Student Learning and Communicating with Parents	Small Group	Marcia Kessler
11	Engaging Learners	Partner	
12	Reflecting on Practice	Individual	
13	Observing the New Teacher—Strategies for Conferencing and Feedback	Partner	
14	Standards and Assessment	Large Group	
15	Completing the Year and Final Reflection	Individual	

## Master Mentor Evaluators (MMEs)

Teachers (retired or currently teaching) serve as evaluators for the course. They work closely with the course instructor (Radford) and are trained for their role. All MMEs have taken the course and use a common language and pedagogy for evaluating course participants.

### Summary

UMass Dartmouth's Center for University, School, and Community Partnerships (CUSP) is in Year 3 of ESE RTTT Project SUCCESS program. June 2014 will complete the final cohort and over 330 Lead Mentors in 70 school districts will continue as trainers for their districts.

Ideas are being considered to continue in 2014-15 with regional support groups with Lead Mentors so they will continue to be inspired to sustain the model. The on-line course may continue to be offered through TaskStream or another agency. If you are interested in this model and would like to help sustain it in other locations contact Carol Pelletier Radford [carol.pelletier.radford@gmail.com](mailto:carol.pelletier.radford@gmail.com) or go to [mentoringinaction.com](http://mentoringinaction.com) for more information.



**Carol Pelletier Radford Ed.D.** is on the staff at the Center for University, School, and Community Partnerships at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Currently she serves as the Program Director for Project SUCCESS, a mentoring and induction program, to support teacher leaders in Massachusetts. This state sponsored hybrid program is funded with RTTT (Race to the Top) district funds.

Dr. Radford received her Ed.D. from Harvard University where she focused her studies on teacher professional development and the role of the cooperating teacher in teacher education.

In more than 20 years as a public school teacher, she has received numerous teacher leadership awards, among them the prestigious Christa McAuliffe Fellowship sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. She is the author of four books: *Techniques and Strategies for Coaching Student Teachers*, *Strategies for Successful Student Teaching*, *Mentoring in Action-A Month-by-Month Curriculum for Mentors and Their New Teachers*, and *The First Year Matters: Being Mentored in Action*.

Carol is actively engaged in learning new ways to use technology to teach and communicate with mentors effectively on-line. She is an advocate for teacher leadership and the inclusion of student voices in classroom practice.

For more information and copies of videos go to [mentoringinaction.com](http://mentoringinaction.com)

## References

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[www.umassd.edu/cusp](http://www.umassd.edu/cusp)
- Radford, C.P. (2008). *The first year matters: being mentored in action*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. (Video producers, 2013).  
About the Course: Jay Correia (5 minutes)  
*In this video Jay Correia highlights the mentoring course goals. Provides and overview for teachers interested in enrolling in this course.*  
<http://cuspma.org/about-the-course/>
- Project SUCCESS: Mentoring in Action- Vision to Action (17 minutes)  
*Cohort 1 Project SUCCESS administrators and lead mentors share their insights about the program. Topics include:*
- *Project SUCCESS: An Opportunity for District Growth*
  - *Teachers Value Project SUCCESS*
  - *Developing a Vision: Individual and District Action Plans*
  - *Aligning a Vision to the Massachusetts Standards*
  - *Advice for Cohort 2*
  - *Remembering Our Purpose*
- <http://cuspma.org/vision-to-action/>

RTTT PROJECT SUCCESS: Mentoring in Action:  
District Action Plan Template

**1. Envision** an Effective Induction Program *Aligned to Teacher Evaluation*

- Review the *MA DESE Induction Guidelines (2001)-Planning and Preparation section* and the new *Standards for Effective Teaching Practices' rubric* to frame your vision. How will your plan support new teachers in successfully meeting evaluation requirements?

**2. Engage a District Team-** Who will be part of your team (*see steering committee reference in MA DESE Induction Guidelines (2001) for induction program plan suggestions.*)

**3. Design Formal Beginning Teacher Support Activities** – How will you support novices from August – June? What tools and resources will you use to support teachers in being more effective in the classroom? How will your activities improve retention of beginning teachers? How will your activities communicate the 4 Standards in the rubric? Estimate how much each component will cost. Refer to MA DESE Induction Guidelines 2001

**4. Design a Formal Mentor Preparation and Support Program to Create a Pool of Qualified Mentors** -What specific program activities does your district need to refresh experienced mentors and prepare new mentors? Note: This is the “Train the Trainer” component for this RTTT project.

**5. Measure Effectiveness: Induction Program Evaluation and Annual Report for MA DESE-** How will you collect data on program design, implementation, and outcomes of the induction program, including educator retention rates to measure program effectiveness? Use the *Induction Program Evaluation section in Induction Guidelines (2001)* to guide your response.

**6. Sustain your District Action Plan vision and maintain a qualified mentor pool using the *Train the Trainer* model learned in Project SUCCESS** List specific ideas for formalizing and sustaining your induction program and mentor training component. How will the “steering committee” be involved in sustaining the vision?

**7. Share** -How will your colleagues, and the community learn about the positive impact of effective induction and mentor development? How will this public awareness bring positive press to your district?

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## Appendix 2

### Project SUCCESS! Mentoring in Action Individual Action Plan Reflection: *Think Like A Teacher Leader!*

#### REFLECT ON YOUR STRENGTHS AND INTERESTS

As a Lead Mentor in your district *you will bring ideas to the District Action Plan Team* and assist in the implementation of your district's vision. Ideas are only as good as the people on the team who have the passion to move them forward to reality. It is important to think about what YOU would bring to the discussion and how you will support the induction of beginning teachers and preparation and support for qualified mentors in your district.

Remember you are the **LEAD MENTOR** on this project who is part of a team working with the District Administration responsible for MA DESE Induction requirements. It doesn't mean you do all the work! Effective leaders inspire and engage other people in the district to participate and feel involved. You are an effective leader!

*Respond to these three prompts in your journal and later share them with your team.*

- *What does your school/district need* in regards to preparing qualified mentors and/or supporting and retaining new teachers? *What is MISSING* in your district program that would make it more effective? For mentors? For beginning teachers?
- What are you good at that relates to this topic? i.e. your strengths and level of experience for designing and implementing a successful induction program aligned to current teacher evaluation standards. Review the **District Action Plan Template** to see what will be needed for your plan. *Is there one area that stands out for you that you might take the lead on?*
- *Where is your passion for this work?* i.e. do you love working directly with new teachers? Are you most interested in collecting data and assessing district effectiveness? Do you like to prepare and support qualified mentors?

*At the end of the course (Module 15) you will be asked to submit the responses to these prompts as a formal essay. You will be able to refer back to your notes in your journal and expand upon your ideas. We understand that your responses to these questions may not translate to the District Action Plan that will be submitted by the team.*

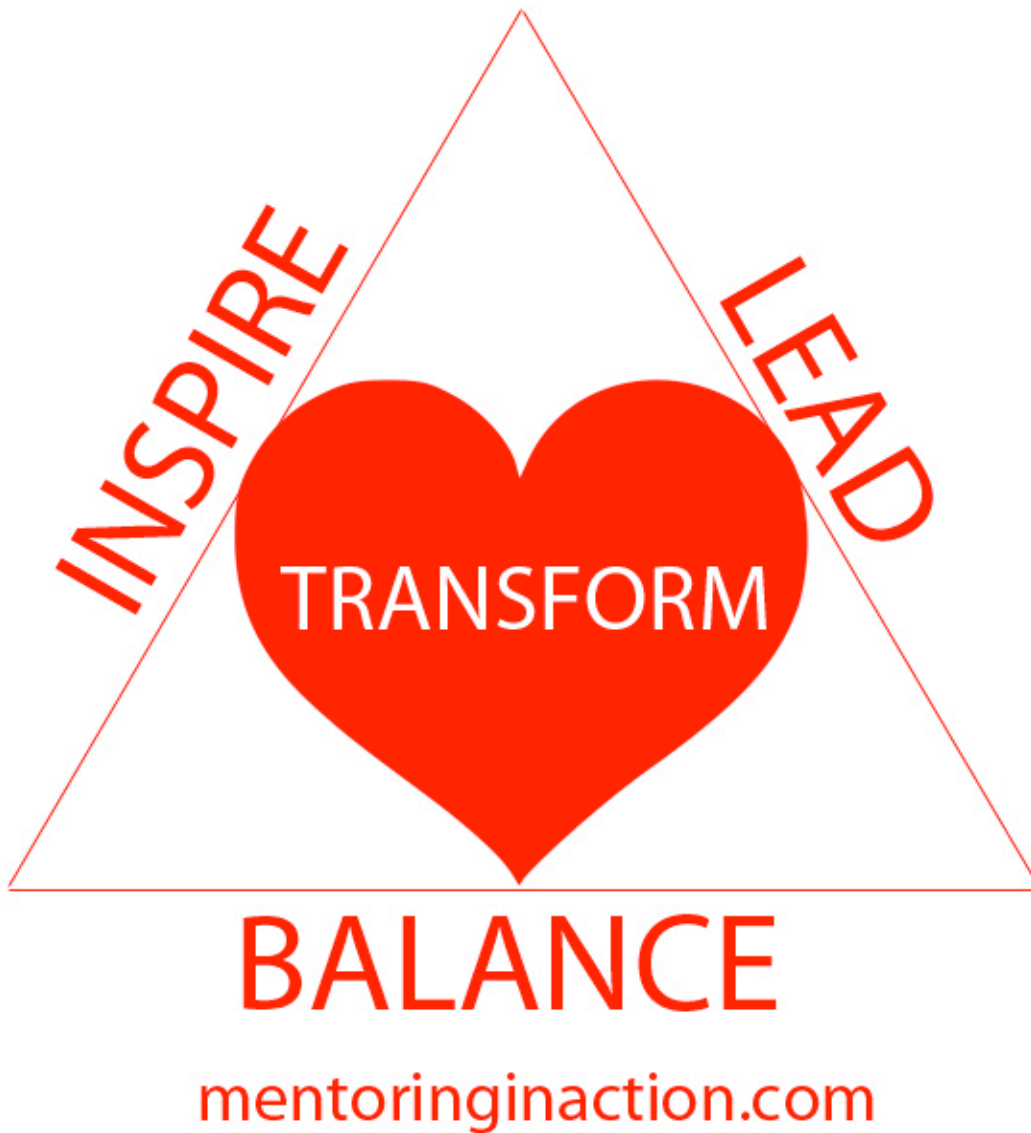
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Appendix 3. Sustainability Image – Carol Pelletier Radford Ed.D.



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*Appendix 4 - Qualities of Transformation*

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