

Mentoring of Initial Mathematics Educators
Position Statement
January 2008

The Wisconsin Mathematics Council supports the NCTM position on "Mentoring New Teachers" and the supporting recommendations.

WMC Position:

The Wisconsin Mathematics Council believes that school districts and universities must assume the shared responsibility of the sustained professional support of initial educators by providing them with a structured induction and mentoring program. This effort must include opportunities for ongoing development of appropriate PK-12 mathematics content, pedagogy and management strategies. Association with professionals who have strong backgrounds in mathematics, mathematics pedagogy, and classroom practice is crucial to this program.

Initial educators will:

- make a commitment to be actively involved in professional organizations such as National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and the Wisconsin Mathematics Council (WMC)
- participate formatively in the process of a professional development plan (PDP) of PI-34
- participate in activities that foster best practices in PK-12 mathematics education

School districts and universities will:

- offer professional development that includes a strong focus on content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and knowledge of the Principles and Standards for School Mathematics, and the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Mathematics and their applications to the classroom
- provide for mentoring of and collaboration on mathematics content and pedagogy
- create an environment that is sensitive to the demands on initial educators in making teaching assignments and other expectations that will ultimately lead to a successful life long career in teaching mathematics (ex: extra duties, room or various school assignments)
- support the meaningful implementation of PI-34
- provide significant and consistent training and additional remuneration or release time for mentees and mentors

NCTM Position Mentoring New Teachers

States, provinces, school districts, and colleges and universities share responsibility for the continuing professional support of beginning teachers by providing them with a structured program of induction and mentoring. These programs should include opportunities for further development of mathematics content, pedagogy, and classroom management strategies.

The retention of new teachers continues to be a concern in both the United States and Canada. Statistics show that nearly half of the new teachers in the United States leave the profession in their first five years of teaching, and Canadian and U.S. attrition rates are both around 30 percent for teachers in their first three years. These high rates of attrition contribute to the overall shortage of high-quality mathematics teachers, particularly at the middle school and high school levels. This attrition is especially alarming in the United States, where it is predicted that more than 2 million new teachers will be needed in the coming decade.

In far too many schools, new mathematics teachers receive challenging teaching assignments for which they are unprepared. These teachers, some of whom do not have strong backgrounds in mathematics content, are often isolated from professional involvement with colleagues. Frequently, they receive little content-specific professional development to support them in meeting the challenges that they face. As a result, their students may not be afforded the learning opportunities and quality instruction that the Council advocates as essential preparation for high-functioning adults in the workplace and everyday life.

Recommendations

States, provinces, school districts, and colleges and universities should provide professional development for new teachers by creating partnerships between experienced and novice teachers. These partnerships should ensure a strong focus on mathematics content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of Principles and Standards for School Mathematics (NCTM 2000) and its application to the classroom. Education agencies should establish mentoring programs for new teachers and provide funding for the programs and the training of mentors. In making teaching assignments, district and school-based administrators should consider the additional demands on beginning teachers and their mentors alike. Teachers who have been identified as mentors should receive significant and consistent training, as well as appropriate remuneration or release time for their services. Finally, beginning teachers need and deserve a strong, structured program of induction, which includes mentoring, to ensure their success and increase the likelihood that they will stay in teaching, growing steadily in professional expertise and finding lifelong satisfaction in a career of continued service to mathematics education.

(September 2007) <http://www.nctm.org/about/content.aspx?id=12376>