

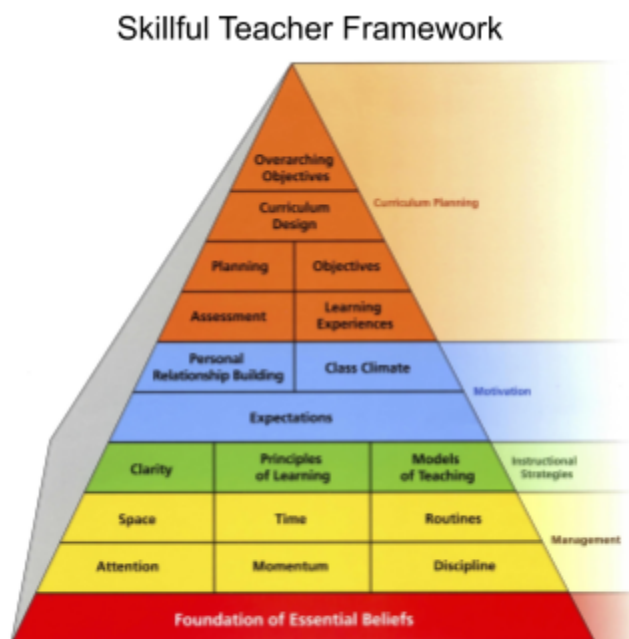
Capstone Summary

The stated goal of my capstone project was two-fold: to reduce turnover within the Pittsfield Public Schools and help new educators receive the support and mentoring needed to remain in the district. These goals are closely aligned, with the expectation that providing adequate support and instruction would both improve a new educator's evaluative feedback and also make them feel welcome and a critical member of the Pittsfield Schools.

Within this project, there are three areas of focus. First, a revised orientation program that both meets state requirements but also provides a welcoming foundation for new educators. The program I have designed provides room for smaller instructional groups, a greater level of participation from current faculty and administrations - creating more personal relationships early - and finally, respects an individual teacher's experiences and knowledge. By creating a conference-style format, educators can choose a path through orientation that meets their individual needs. New educators can focus on important skills and strategies as they adjust to the classroom while more veteran educators can improve their established practices and align their previous experience with the expectations of the Pittsfield Schools. This format also allows presenters to meet more specific administrative needs in small groups rather than forcing all educators to sit through technological instructions or curriculum programs meant for only a small number of teachers. This proposal has been adopted by the district and will be used in August.

The second area of focus was a revised and improved new teacher induction program. Another requirement of the state, Pittsfield had more than 100 new educators participate in this program in 2019-2020 and an additional 40 educators in its year-two program. Facing the same problems as orientation, I set out to plan a program that was more flexible, tailored to individual needs, and most importantly, grounded in a framework of educators skills to ensure that our newest educators were receiving the support they needed to become successful teachers in our district. My proposal has been

accepted by the district and next year, year one and two will be merged into a single program grounded in the Research for Better Teaching Skillful Teacher Framework. Sessions have been designed to target key skills and the syllabus is organized in a hierarchy based on which skills are needed first and which can be improved later in the year. Educators will need to attend a minimum number of sessions and can choose the sessions that are of most need to them. They may also attend additional sessions if they choose. Each session will be planned thoughtfully to allow for educators at different grade levels and with different experience in the classroom to walk away with a valuable and enriching experience.



The final component of this capstone was a revised mentoring program. Pittsfield currently assigns one mentor to each new educator, attempting to choose a mentor at the same school, at the same grade level or in the same subject area, and preferably, in a classroom relatively close to the new educator. The reality is that as our number of new teachers has continued to increase, there simply are not enough experienced educators to meet their needs. This year, we have many mentors mentoring several teachers, some at different schools, all while teaching full-time. My proposal, in the format of a revised mentor handbook, is to create full-time mentoring positions that would each mentor 12-15 new educators. These mentors would have no teaching responsibilities and would spend their time observing new teachers, providing feedback, and coaching. The goal of this proposal is to provide more intensive coaching and support for new educators so that they quickly learn the necessary skills and rapidly improve their instruction while also creating a more meaningful mentor/mentee relationship that would help new educators to feel supported and perhaps stay in the district. This proposal has not been adopted by the district due to cost, however, we will be moving to a mixed model next year of providing

mentor teams rather than a single mentor. Essentially, each building would have a small team of mentors that collectively mentor the new educators in their building. This would provide additional flexibility to work around class schedules, create additional mentor/mentee relationships, and allow the new educator to experience a wider variety of coaching styles, ideas, and feedback.

Attached to this summary, you will find three documents that serve as the foundation for this project: the schedule for new educator orientation, the syllabus and schedule for new educator induction, and a revised mentor handbook showing my proposed changes to the program. The first two documents will continue to evolve as they are now working documents for the district to plan and implement these revised programs. The attached copies are current as of Sunday, April 26.