



---

Alternative Teacher Certification

# Mentor Teacher Handbook

MCC will grow and scale its mentor programming to increase capacity, scale up supports for Mentor Teachers, Intern Teachers and PK-12 districts, so that all Intern Teachers are confident, supported and trained by highly qualified Mentor Teachers, who have a plethora of strategies and resources to help support the Intern Teacher and grow alongside them. All PK-12 students will receive excellent instruction as a result of the growth and collaboration between the Mentor Teacher and Intern Teacher.

## McLennan Community College

### Alternative Teacher Certification Program

#### Professional Network

Adequately supporting a new teacher is vitally important to the success, effectiveness, and retention of that new teacher. To ensure that our Teacher Interns feel of sense of support and have an established network of professionals to reference for guidance during the first year of teaching, the following support system has been created:

#### **Mentor Teacher**

Each Teacher Intern will be assigned a Mentor Teacher in cooperation with the hiring ISD. The Mentor Teacher will probably become the Teacher Intern's strongest support during the Internship year. The Mentor Teacher will be an on-campus, experienced certified teacher, preferably teaching the same subject and/or grade level in which the Teacher Intern is to be certified. The Mentor Teacher and Teacher Intern will meet on a regular basis for observations and conferences. Conferences and observations will focus on instructional improvements and will be guided by the documents in this handbook.

#### **Building Principal**

The Building Principal will cooperate with MCC's Alternative Certification office to appoint a Mentor Teacher for each Teacher Intern and ensure that School Mentoring activities are implemented and maintained throughout the year according to the ISD and MCC ATC procedures.

#### **Field Supervisor**

A Field Supervisor will be assigned to each Teacher Intern. Field Supervisors are employees of MCC who have extensive experience working with new teachers. The Field Supervisor will make at least three to five observations of the Teacher Intern during the Internship year to evaluate the Teacher Intern's teaching methods and styles; these evaluations will focus on instructional planning and delivery. The Field Supervisor will also conduct pre-observation and post-observation conferences with the Teacher Intern and provide informal support when necessary, as well as conduct governance meetings with principals and Mentor Teachers.

#### **Alternative Teacher Certification (ATC) Program**

The Alternative Teacher Certification staff is available to support all Teacher Interns in their professional development as a quality teacher. Teacher Interns are encouraged to contact any of the ATC staff regarding questions, concerns, suggestions, etc. The Teacher Certification staff consists of:

- Laura Conrad, Program Director, [lconrad@mclennan.edu](mailto:lconrad@mclennan.edu)
- Dr. Kimberly Saffold, Assistant Program Director, [ksaffold@mclennan.edu](mailto:ksaffold@mclennan.edu)
- Lisa Snelling, Testing Specialist, [lsnelling@mclennan.edu](mailto:lsnelling@mclennan.edu)
- Lorie Crowder, Field Supervisor, [lcrowder@mclennan.edu](mailto:lcrowder@mclennan.edu)
- James Wright III, Field Supervisor, [jwright@mclennan.edu](mailto:jwright@mclennan.edu)
- Dr. Sharron Miles, Field Supervisor, [smiles@mclennan.edu](mailto:smiles@mclennan.edu)
- Mary Trotter, Administrative Secretary, [mtrotter@mclennan.edu](mailto:mtrotter@mclennan.edu)

## The Role of the Mentor Teacher

The Mentor Teacher provides support to the Teacher Intern on his or her campus on a day-to-day basis, ensuring that the Teacher Intern has the necessary tools and support to successfully navigate campus and curricular expectations through modeling, conferencing, and encouragement. This level of support will secure the development of the Teacher Intern's knowledge and application of skills, attitudes and values so that the Teacher Intern can be an effective and successful classroom teacher.

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

- Certification in the area and at the level of the Teacher Intern.
- Minimum of 3 years teaching experience.
- Demonstrated success of meeting student achievement outcomes and professionalism, as evidenced by data.
- Knowledgeable about campus specific norms, expectations, resources, and technology.
- Consistent attendance at teacher professional development and implementation of new ideas of classroom practice.
- Demonstrated communication, interpersonal, and public relations skills.
- Willingness to provide weekly feedback to the Intern, possessing good conferencing and problem-solving skills to provide the Intern with the highest level of support.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Attend, via Zoom, Mentor Teacher training with Mentor specialist (you will be emailed a link) or review Mentor Teacher online training located on the McLennan Community Alternative Teacher Certification website, scan QR code and fill out the Acknowledgement form.
- Provide to the Teacher Intern campus-based support and solution-oriented responses, relative to the culture of the campus, including building and district policies, timelines, procedures, technology and productivity resources, and paperwork.
- Observe the Teacher Intern at least 4 times during the school year, completing the observation form for each observation and providing feedback to the intern, followed by the Intern Teacher observing the Mentor Teacher modeling any focus areas determined during the Intern observation.
- Conference with the Teacher Intern on a regular (weekly preferred) basis.
- Arrange visits and observations for two-way learning: Mentor Teacher observes Intern, followed by Intern observing Mentor Teacher.
- Model coaching, team teaching, and other effective practices with the Teacher Intern.
- Assist with daily trouble-shooting and problem-solving.
- Assist Teacher Intern with use of and development of formative assessment strategies and implementing intervention strategies as needed for students that are struggling.
- Complete and submit all required documents to the ATC by the posted deadlines.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

- Observation times are an integral part of the Teacher Intern's program and should be scheduled to occur in September, November, January, and March in two ways: Mentor Teacher observing Teacher Intern followed by Teacher Intern observing Mentor Teacher. The focus of the Intern's observation will be for the Mentor Teacher to model the skill or focus area identified in the Mentor's observation of the Intern.
- Observations should occur at a mutually acceptable time and should be scheduled in advance.
- Observations are typically 45 minutes in duration, but may be shorter.

## **REGULAR CONFERENCES**

- Conferences should be conducted regularly with the Teacher Intern. Meetings should occur weekly. The purpose of the conferences is to allow both the Mentor Teacher and the Teacher Intern to chart strategies and directions in management, organization, evaluation, curriculum development and delivery by addressing the following:
  - orientation to the context, policies, and practices of the school district
  - data-driven instructional practices
  - specific instructional coaching cycles
  - professional development
  - professional expectations
- Regular conferences should typically last about 15-20 minutes and should occur as soon as is mutually convenient. Mentor Teachers and Teacher Interns should conference following each observation and otherwise meet as needed to support the Teacher Intern.

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR PAYMENT OF STIPEND**

Mentor Teachers are paid a \$250.00 stipend through the MCC Alternative Teacher Certification Program for their duties as a Mentor Teacher. In order to qualify for this payment, each campus Mentor Teacher must complete all paperwork associated with the Mentor program, including all paperwork required by MCC Human Resources for payment. Failure to complete requested paperwork may result in the loss of the Mentor Teacher stipend.

Documents required at the beginning of the fall semester include:

- The Mentor Information sheet,
- Acknowledgement of Completion of required online training,
- Letter from school principal of Mentor's Qualifications,
- Completed Application for Employment
- The Criminal History Verification (DPS) form

These forms can be found under Mentor Teacher Materials on the Alternative Teacher Certification page on the MCC website. Hard copies will also be given to Intern Teachers at first Intern class for you to fill out and return.

<https://www.mclennan.edu/alternative-teacher-certification/mentor-materials.html>

All conferences and evaluations and the documents related to those for the fall semester must be completed and submitted by December 1. Spring conferences and evaluations and documentation should be completed and submitted by May 1. The Teacher Certification Office will verify this completion and notify payroll to process payment. Payment of \$250 to Mentor Teacher will be issued at the end of the school year, assuming all paperwork is completed and submitted.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR TEACHER?

Mentor Teachers have a very important role in developing the Teacher Intern into a successful educator. The responsibilities of the Mentor Teacher fall into 3 categories: (1) orienting the Teacher Intern to the school and its culture and expectations;(2) assisting the Intern as a collaborator, coach and role model; and (3) as an evaluator and adviser, providing the necessary feedback and support for continued growth.

Mentoring is a form of teaching that benefits the Teacher Intern and the Mentor Teacher.

1. **Show the Intern how to find resources and use them effectively.** Understanding the typical needs and challenges of a beginning teacher, and developing and using a variety of strategies to assist the Teacher Intern is important to their success. Co-planning is a great way to do this. Model being a learning pro. Think aloud about your practice as a teacher, the good and bad. Also, give yourself as the Mentor Teacher, permission to not know. This can allow for both to grow in finding those answers together. It may be helpful for the Mentor and Intern to go and observe in other classrooms together and discuss practices observed.
2. **Model how things are seen and used through the lens of the learner- the child.** Children as learners are at the forefront- they are the primary responsibility of the Mentor Teacher and the Teacher Intern.
3. **Share why and how your planning decisions are made and how they relate to your teaching.** Make accessible for the Teacher Intern the wisdom of experienced teachers.
4. **Find topics of mutual interest and work together.**
5. **Decide when, whether and how to step in and help when needed.** This should be agreed upon beforehand, as to not undermine the Teacher Intern's classroom authority with students.
6. **Develop good communication with the Teacher Intern.** There must be trust and a safe and constructive relationship. View yourself as a co-learner. Knowledge is developed through collaboration. Beginning teachers need to feel accepted and supported within the school context.
7. **Regular discussions are very important;** don't allow things to build up, try to talk as things occur, or as soon as possible.
8. **Both the Mentor Teacher and the Teacher Intern must agree that feedback fuels growth and improvement; feedback is NOT criticism, but rather a critical part of the learning journey in the teaching process.** Be explicit about teaching practice, but also communicate that the Teacher Intern does not just need to copy the Mentor Teacher. Model for the Intern good teaching practice followed by a debrief and how the Intern could implement the focus in their classroom. Encourage them to develop their own practice and make their own decisions, but guide them with functional feedback and discussion to aid them in developing solid practice. Voice mistakes; be honest and open-minded.
9. **Establish how and when feedback is given and accepted by both.** Feedback is more impactful when delivered as soon as possible in the form of a written note or email, as opposed to being delivered in front of students.

10. **Mentor Teacher must meet the Teacher Intern where they are at the beginning.** Value what they bring to the conversation. Teacher Interns can be great resources of content. Everyone needs to contribute to learning to teach.
11. **Be direct without being hurtful or overly critical.** It is important to balance both strengths and growth areas. Feedback must be functional- specific and targeted with suggested remedies. It is also important to be aware and mindful of the Teacher Intern's sensitivity.
12. **Both Mentor and Intern must be willing to accept feedback;** it is a two-way conversation. Since each will observe the other during this process, being willing to give and accept feedback is critical to the learning process for the Teacher Intern, and both Mentor Teacher and Teacher Intern can grow together.
13. **Mentor Teachers should ask questions of the Teacher Intern.** Frame those questions to give the Teacher Intern a chance to reflect and grow, including questions about actions the Teacher Intern has taken in a situation. It may be necessary to restate and give the Teacher Intern time to reflect.

## HOW CAN THE INTERN LEARN AND RECEIVE HELP?

Mentor Teachers need to find ways to have those initial conversations with the Teacher Intern, starting with those basic issues that all teachers need to think about. Share information rather than just giving advice- gain insight from one another. Teacher Interns need information on those basics (staff meeting protocols, parent conferences, first report cards) that Mentor teachers are automatically wired to do well. They often do not know what to ask and need to be directed.

Frame problems to get to what is relevant for a given situation to make things manageable- don't take on too much at once; set boundaries, dealing with one thing at a time. Frequent visits help avoid things "piling up". Consider the consequences of the feedback you are giving- check reaction. Simply saying "that was good" when it wasn't is not productive and often the Teacher Intern knows it wasn't good. Be authentic in positive and negative feedback.

Examine the Teacher Intern's thinking on the problems, then extend their thinking through questioning, conversation and feedback that is specific to get them to consider things they had not before. Ask "why" questions in different ways- less alarming and more comfortable and informative for the Teacher Intern. Try to gain insight on the thought process behind the action/decision. Teacher Interns wish to be valued and treated as colleagues and professionals. They often can bring a fresh perspective to things.

Mention what is good- notice and comment on growth and point it out. We all need positive feedback, but get the Teacher Intern to be aware of the content of the positive feedback. That feedback may be different from what the Teacher Intern thought was important. Give good, honest feedback. When needed, give just the facts, correctable things- be specific. Help the Intern set realistic, attainable goals for their growth.

Always focus on student-centered learning; encouraging the Teacher Intern to see their teaching through the lens of the student's thinking and sense-making, and using that as a source of feedback on the effectiveness of the teaching.

Connect student learning to research and theory to help the Teacher Intern develop broader perspectives about their work.

Think aloud for the Teacher Intern about examples from your own teaching to show the Teacher Intern processes and how you respond to similar situations. Model for the Teacher Intern your "wondering"- the mental work behind visible teaching. When the Intern observes in your classroom, model for them areas of focus that have been determined following your observation of the Intern. When problems with teaching practice present themselves, examine different ways to approach a solution and solve them together. Plan together and model those solutions for one another. It is important to talk, ask questions, give feedback, analyze, negotiate and clarify.

Reach out to the field supervisor and include them in discussions when you can. Keep the field supervisor in the loop on focus areas that may need further attention. The field supervisor can help with further coaching, as well as making suggestions on ways that you as the Mentor Teacher can coach and guide your Intern to strengthen and improve practice.

**CRITICAL TASKS BEGINNING TEACHERS NEED HELP WITH**

<b>Classroom Management</b>	<b>Planning for Instruction</b>	<b>Teaching Content</b>	<b>Professional Growth</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Arranging and setting up a classroom.</li> <li>2. Bulletin boards.</li> <li>3. Planning (format, requirements, software, deadlines)</li> <li>4. Campus technology (phone system, copier, IWB, etc.)</li> <li>5. Teaching rules</li> <li>6. Policy/procedures (written/unwritten)</li> <li>7. Managing student work/setting up gradebook (software)</li> <li>8. Establishing a positive classroom climate (does campus/district have a specific climate or behavior management system?)</li> <li>9. Supporting good student behavior (reward systems, positive behavior management)</li> <li>10. Getting off to a good start</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Available resources</li> <li>2. Long-range, unit, and daily plans</li> <li>3. Cumulative records</li> <li>4. Student data</li> <li>5. Grouping</li> <li>6. Pacing</li> <li>7. Parental involvement (types of conferences and how to document)</li> <li>8. School and district policies</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Curriculum guides</li> <li>2. Special Student Populations (504/IEP/GT/ESL/Dyslexia)</li> <li>3. Testing</li> <li>4. Assessment expectations (diagnostic/formative/summative)</li> <li>5. Professional resources</li> <li>6. Motivating and engaging learners (centers, group work, PBL, use of technology, field trips, labs, library)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PLC's</li> <li>2. Professional organizations (ATPE, AFT, TSTA)</li> </ol>