



Empowering Music Educators Through Mentorship: Pathways to Professional Growth, Retention, and Longevity

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PANELISTS

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Session Summary

- Mentoring provides teachers with opportunities for professional growth and emotional support, which can lead to increased retention, career longevity, and impact on students.
- Music teachers often need mentors more than other content areas due to specialization and isolation in their buildings.
- Research supporting the importance of music teacher mentoring includes:
 - [Music Teacher Profession Initiative Report](#) (NAfME 2022)
 - [They Need Our Help: Mentoring First-Year Band Directors](#) (Zotz 2023)
 - [Digital Mentoring for Orchestra Teachers](#) (Vaughan-Marra 2017)
- Music Teacher Mentoring Program Example: Fulton County Schools
 - Program implemented in 2021 beginning with band then expanding to other areas
 - Funded through Title IV-A federal funds available to public school districts to provide a “well-rounded education”
 - Large, diverse school district with 100 schools and 88,000 students

How to Implement a Mentor Program in Your Situation

- **Scheduling & Travel**
 - In-person and virtual options are both valuable
 - Prioritize mentoring during work hours when possible
 - Consistency of conversations keeps topics and progress front-of-mind
- **Calendars & Accountability**
 - Mentor bears the responsibility of accountability
 - Avoid a “reach out if you need anything” approach (passive vs. active)
- **Support Models**
 - First Year teacher sample
 - Opening meeting/discussion on goals for year
 - Biweekly phone calls/Zoom meetings
 - Monthly rehearsal recording reviews (video or audio)
 - One in-person visit each semester (when possible)
 - Professional development sessions with all first year and early career teachers
 - Experienced teacher sample
 - Opening meeting/discussion on goals for year
 - Monthly phone calls/Zoom meetings
 - Monthly rehearsal recording reviews (video or audio)
 - Year-round availability to discuss issues, etc. that may arise
- **Identification of Topics**
 - Flexible to meet the needs of each teacher and situation
 - Can include:
 - Classroom engagement/management
 - Score study
 - Instrument pedagogy
 - Conducting
 - Assessment
 - Work/life balance
 - Leadership/relationships in your building
 - Planning and organization
- **Feedback**
 - Verbal and written feedback are both important
 - Promotes teacher development and autonomy
- **Videoconferencing & Purposeful Engagement with Peers**
 - Flexibility with scheduling
 - Builds community of practice with peers in different locations
- **Sustainability**
 - Participants should feel valued and understood
 - Improved teacher retention
 - Communication and accountability are key to sustaining any mentor program

- Funding
 - Sources
 - Title II (“to improve the quality of teachers”)
 - Title IV-A (“well-rounded education”)
 - Grant funds (e.g., PTSA, School Governance Council, local organizations)
 - Local school funds
 - Alternatives through state music education associations and professional organizations
- Qualities of Effective Mentors
 - Strong commitment to music teaching
 - Excellent communication skills
 - Reflective, open-minded, honest
 - Supporting and encouraging
 - Affinity groups and similar backgrounds are additional considerations that can make a positive difference in pairing mentors and mentees together

Sample Proposal for Music Teacher Mentorship Program

Individual Teacher

Title II

Objective: To enhance the professional development of [Teacher's Name], an early-career music teacher at [School's Name], through a structured mentorship program made possible by Title II funds provided to [School District Name]. This program aims to improve instructional practices, student engagement, and overall music education quality.

Rationale: Investing in the professional growth of our educators is crucial for maintaining high educational standards. [Teacher's Name] is the only band director at [School's Name] and unable to collaborate with band colleagues in the same building. A mentorship program will provide [Teacher's Name] with the opportunity to learn from an experienced mentor, gain new teaching strategies, and stay updated with the latest trends in music education.

Program Details:

1. Mentorship Selection:

- Identify and select a qualified and experienced music educator musician to serve as a mentor.
- Ensure the mentor has a proven track record in music education and mentorship.

2. Mentorship Activities:

- **Observation and Feedback:** The mentor will observe [Teacher's Name]'s classes and provide constructive feedback. These observations will inform individual needs to be addressed in instructional sessions and collaborative planning.
- **Sessions and Training:** Conduct relevant sessions on advanced music teaching techniques, classroom management, and student engagement.
- **Collaborative Planning:** Jointly plan lessons and curriculum to incorporate innovative teaching methods.
- **Performance Reviews:** Regular reviews of student performances and progress to tailor teaching strategies.

3. Duration:

- The mentorship program will span one academic year, with monthly meetings and continuous support

4. Expected Outcomes:

- Improved teaching practices and student outcomes in music education.

- Enhanced confidence and skills of [Teacher's Name].
- Development of a sustainable model for future mentorship programs.

Budget:

- **Mentor Stipend:** [Insert amount]
- **Travel and Accommodation (if applicable):** [Insert amount]

Total Estimated Cost: [Insert amount]

Funding Source:

- Title II funds allocated to [School District Name] for professional development.

Evaluation:

- Regular communication between [Administrator's Name] and mentor.
- Feedback and survey data from [Teacher's Name] and the mentor.
- Final report summarizing the program's impact and recommendations for future initiatives.

Conclusion: This music teacher mentorship program represents a strategic investment in our music education department, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and excellence. By leveraging Title II funds, we can ensure that [Teacher's Name] receives the support needed to thrive and inspire our students.

Sample Proposal for Music Teacher Mentorship Program

School District

Title IV-A

Objective: To enhance the professional development of music teachers across the district through a structured mentoring program utilizing the expertise of retired teachers and college professors, made possible by Title IV-A funds. This initiative aims to improve instructional practices, student engagement, and the overall quality of music education.

Rationale: Investing in the professional growth of our music educators is essential for maintaining high educational standards. Music teachers are singletons in their school buildings without colleagues with which to collaborate in their discipline. A districtwide mentorship program will provide music teachers with the opportunity to learn from experienced mentors, gain new teaching strategies, and stay updated with the latest trends in music education.

Program Details:

1. Mentorship Selection:

- Identify and select qualified retired music teachers and college professors with a proven track record in music education and mentorship specific to each discipline (band, chorus, elementary, music technology, orchestra).
- Ensure mentors have extensive experience and are well-versed in contemporary music teaching methods.

2. Mentorship Activities:

- **Observation and Feedback:** Mentors will observe music classes and provide constructive feedback to teachers.
- **Workshops and Training:** Conduct districtwide workshops on advanced music teaching techniques, classroom management, and student engagement.
- **Collaborative Planning:** Jointly plan lessons and curriculum to incorporate innovative teaching methods.
- **Performance Reviews:** Regular reviews of student performances and progress to tailor teaching strategies.

3. Duration:

- The mentorship program will span one academic year, with monthly meetings and continuous support.

4. **Expected Outcomes:**

- Improved teaching practices and student outcomes in music education.
- Increased music teacher retention year-over-year.
- Enhanced confidence and skills of music teachers across the district.
- Development of a sustainable model for future mentorship programs.

Budget:

- **Mentor Stipends:** [Insert amount]
- **Travel and Accommodation (if applicable):** [Insert amount]

Total Estimated Cost: [Insert amount]

Funding Source:

- Title IV-A funds allocated for professional development and enrichment programs to provide students with access to a well-rounded education

Evaluation:

- Regular communication & supervision between [Administrator's Name] and mentor.
- Regular assessments through surveys, student performance data, and feedback from music teachers and mentors.
- Final report summarizing the program's impact and recommendations for future initiatives.

Conclusion: This districtwide mentorship program represents a strategic investment in our music education department, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and excellence. By leveraging Title IV-A funds, we can ensure that our music teachers receive the support needed to thrive and inspire our students.