

# Executive Summary

## What Matters Most for Mentoring in NYC Schools?

In 2014, the NYC Department of Education Office of Leadership’s Mentoring Division commissioned a report to learn what conditions would lead to the best outcomes for mentoring in NYC schools. Researchers surveyed a subset of new teachers, mentors and principals using randomized sampling and found four conditions that seemed to matter most:

- 1) *Strong links between mentoring work and other school learning activities*
- 2) *At least one hour of interaction time between mentors and new teachers*
- 3) *Mentors with at least five years of experience*
- 4) *Completion of the DOE Mentor Certification Professional Development Program*

### 1) Strong links between mentoring work and other school learning activities

New teachers who reported their mentoring interactions were strongly connected to other school learning activities (i.e. grade/subject level team meetings, school-wide initiatives, etc.) were nearly twice as likely to be extremely confident that they are helping students achieve their fullest potential, compared with those reporting weak connections. They were also over three times more likely to feel extremely supported in becoming an effective teacher, and over eight times more likely to report that their mentor is extremely valuable. This is a powerful effect with important implications for mentor programs.

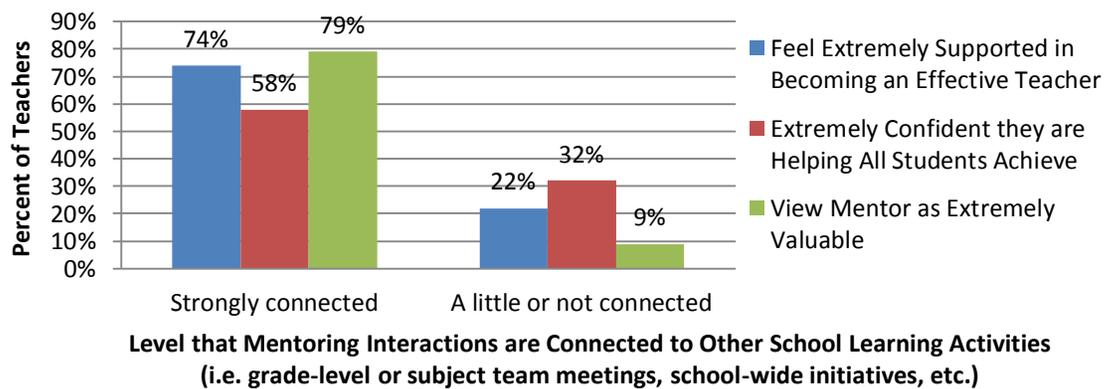
The finding might suggest that when a mentor helps a new teacher apply recently learned strategies to their own classroom context, the new teacher is much more likely to try out and succeed in using the new strategy.

Alternatively, if a mentor brings new information that is

disconnected from the other types of strategies the new teacher is learning at the school, it may feel overwhelming. Further, if the new teacher believes that the strategies being shared by the mentor are not being used by others in the school community, it may be of less value to the new teacher.

Interestingly, although NYC uses a school-based mentor model, only slightly more than a third of new teachers report that their mentoring is strongly connected to other school based learning activities. More information is needed to understand why connections are not naturally occurring on their own, and how to support better links between collaborative learning around promising teaching strategies and individual application of those strategies.

**Mentor Connections to Other School Learning Strongly Correlated with Teacher & Mentor Outcomes**

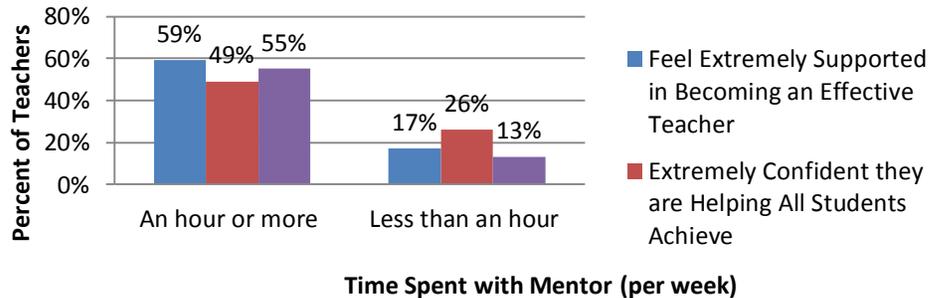


## 2) At least one hour of interaction time between mentors and new teachers

Reinforcing prior research on the topic<sup>ii</sup>, new teachers who reported spending at least one hour with a mentor per week were nearly twice as likely as those who spend less than an hour to feel extremely confident in their ability to help all students achieve at their highest potential. They were also four times more likely to say their mentor is extremely valuable and more than three times likely to feel extremely supported in becoming an effective teacher. This is an impressive effect with strong implications for those seeking to support high quality mentoring and more effective teaching.

The DOE currently requires at least 1.5 hours per week for mentoring interactions. However, 17%-24% of new teachers still report having less than an hour of mentoring per week. This is most likely due to typical challenges implementing central policies at the school level<sup>iii</sup>.

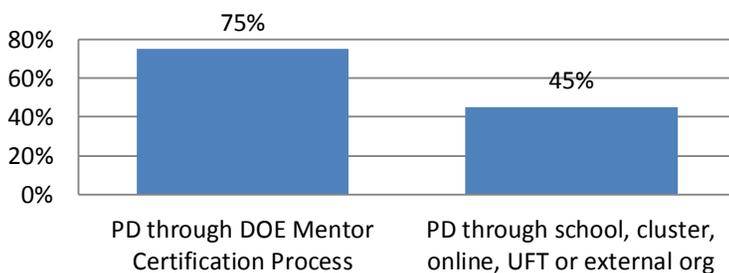
### Time for Mentoring Strongly Correlated with Mentor and Teacher Outcomes



## 3) Completion of the DOE Mentor Certification Professional Development Program

Those mentors who completed the 12 hours of coursework required for achieving DOE certification were more likely to report that their professional development was extremely valuable<sup>iv</sup> when compared with those who attended other types of PD for mentors (i.e. school PD for instructional coaches, training from external organization, UFT Teacher Center workshops, etc.). 27% of mentors reported not attending any mentoring PD.

### Mentors Reporting PD is Extremely Valuable

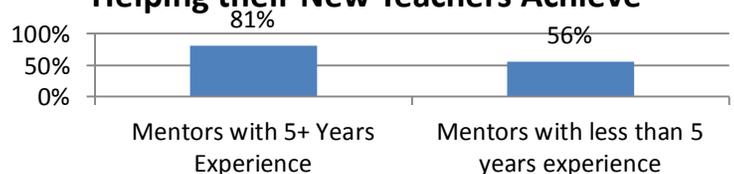


While mentors seem to strongly value the DOE's PD for certification program, only 12% of mentors throughout NYC have completed certification as of the 2012-2013 school year. This is likely due to the fact that the coursework is voluntary, and the knowledge about the certification process is still growing across NYC's 1700+ schools.

## 4) Mentors with five years of experience

Mentors who have at least five years of experience mentoring were more likely to feel confident in their ability to help their mentees become better teachers. This is not a surprising trend, as those who have been on the job longer will generally feel more confident in their abilities. However, the findings do suggest to school leaders that investing in the capacity of one or a few mentors and supporting their growth over time, may have stronger outcomes than changing mentors from year to year. Currently the majority of mentors in NYC schools have 2-4 years of experience.

### Mentors Extremely Confident They are Helping their New Teachers Achieve



## Principal Perceptions

In addition to the trends that were found to be statistically significant, principals were asked a series of questions to determine what mentoring looked like from their perspective. Some of the trends are included here:



- A little over half of principals (51%) thought their mentors were extremely effective, and over a third (36%) said they were somewhat effective in helping their new teachers accelerate student learning.
- The school-level stakeholders who are most responsible for supporting and overseeing mentoring activities varies greatly. In order of frequency of reporting, staff most responsible for mentoring include the asst. principal (51%), principal (48%), instructional coach (38%), lead teacher (28%), UFT chapter leader (18%), other (16%), mentoring coordinator (5%) and New Teacher induction Committee (2%).
- The vast majority of mentors (87%) were selected by the school leader, according to principals. Less than a quarter (23%) volunteered for the position, and 2% went through an application process with committee review.
- A number of principals were interested in using DOE Mentor Program resources in the future, especially DOE training (45%), cluster-based Teacher Development Specialists (32%), mentor training through an external organization (32%) and the Principal Guide to Mentoring (32%).

## Recommendations for Consideration

The following describes selected recommendations to improve central mentor programs and policies.

- ❖ **Strengthen communications to school, network and cluster leaders** to support more awareness of the power of high quality mentoring to improve teaching and learning throughout NYC. Within these communications, include the conditions necessary to ensure mentoring is of high quality and the steps needed to access resources that will support higher quality mentoring in schools.
- ❖ **Prioritize the connection between mentor work and other school learning activities** by making the link more explicit and more prominent in professional development, mentor protocols and communications about the mentor program.
- ❖ **Conduct additional research** to better understand:
  - a. The ideal amount of training necessary to support current or advanced mentor certification
  - b. Promising practices in linking mentoring efforts to other school based learning activities
  - c. Promising strategies enabling schools to prioritize and implement conditions of effective mentoring

## End Notes

<sup>i</sup> All data represented in the charts here reached statistical significance. Please see full report to view n and p values for each chart.

<sup>ii</sup> Rockoff, Jonah. *Does Mentoring Reduce Turnover and Improve Skills of New Employees? Evidence from Teachers in New York City*. National Bureau of Economic Research. 2008

<sup>iii</sup> See *Promising Practices and Opportunities in NYC Mentoring* (Barlin, 2012) for more insights on obstacles to implementation.

<sup>iv</sup> While most mentors experience of professional development through the certification program is extremely valuable, new teachers are not yet perceiving mentors who are certified as being more valuable. Please see full report for insights into potential reasons for the disconnect.