Support for New Teachers, Year 2

A teacher's first year in the classroom is one of the most crucial. Even with years of preparation, the demands of the education profession can feel overwhelming. Without support, it can be difficult for new teachers to navigate the complexities of the profession. Elko County School District (ECSD), a large rural district, has long recognized the importance of supporting new teachers, as well as supporting teachers who are not new to the profession but are new to the district. The RISE (Retain, Induct, Support, Encourage) program for new teachers, provided through a partnership between ECSD and Northeastern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (NNRPDP), has been in effect for almost twenty years.

Supporting new teachers aligns with the specific goals of Nevada's 2020 Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils (STIP, 2021). Goal 2 states that "all students have access to effective educators" in the areas of equity, access to quality, success, inclusivity, community, and transparency. Providing induction programs and mentoring for new teachers increases retention (Ingersol & Strongl, 2012, Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Based on a review of thirty independent studies, teaching experience is positively associated with student gains beyond test scores (Boogren, 2022). The structure of the RISE program offers support for new teachers, increasing the retention rate of new teachers in ECSD, thus increasing the number of experienced teachers for students in the district.

The umbrella goal of RISE is effectively communicated through the acronym, which is to **retain** newly-hired teachers through an **induction** program that provides **support** and **encouragement**. With that goal in mind, NNRPDP professional learning leaders provided a week-long RISE induction program in conjunction with a mentor component that provided support to mentors, who then provided support to new teachers at their school sites. These two components help teachers navigate the essential workings of the district and their schools, understand and implement high-leverage pedagogical practices, and receive ongoing, job-embedded support throughout the school year.

In the past, most RISE participants have been teachers new to the profession or veteran teachers new to the district. In the 2022-2023 school year, ECSD faced the unique challenge of filling many open teaching positions with long-term substitutes and employees completing an alternate route to licensure (ARL) program. Thus, in the 2022-2023 school year, over 25% of the new teachers who attended the RISE induction week in August were long-term substitutes. Many participants were concurrently completing licensure coursework through an alternate route to licensure, i.e., they already held a bachelor's degree in another field and were working towards their teaching license while working full-time in the classroom. These challenges factored into the ECSD/NNRPDP plan for support.

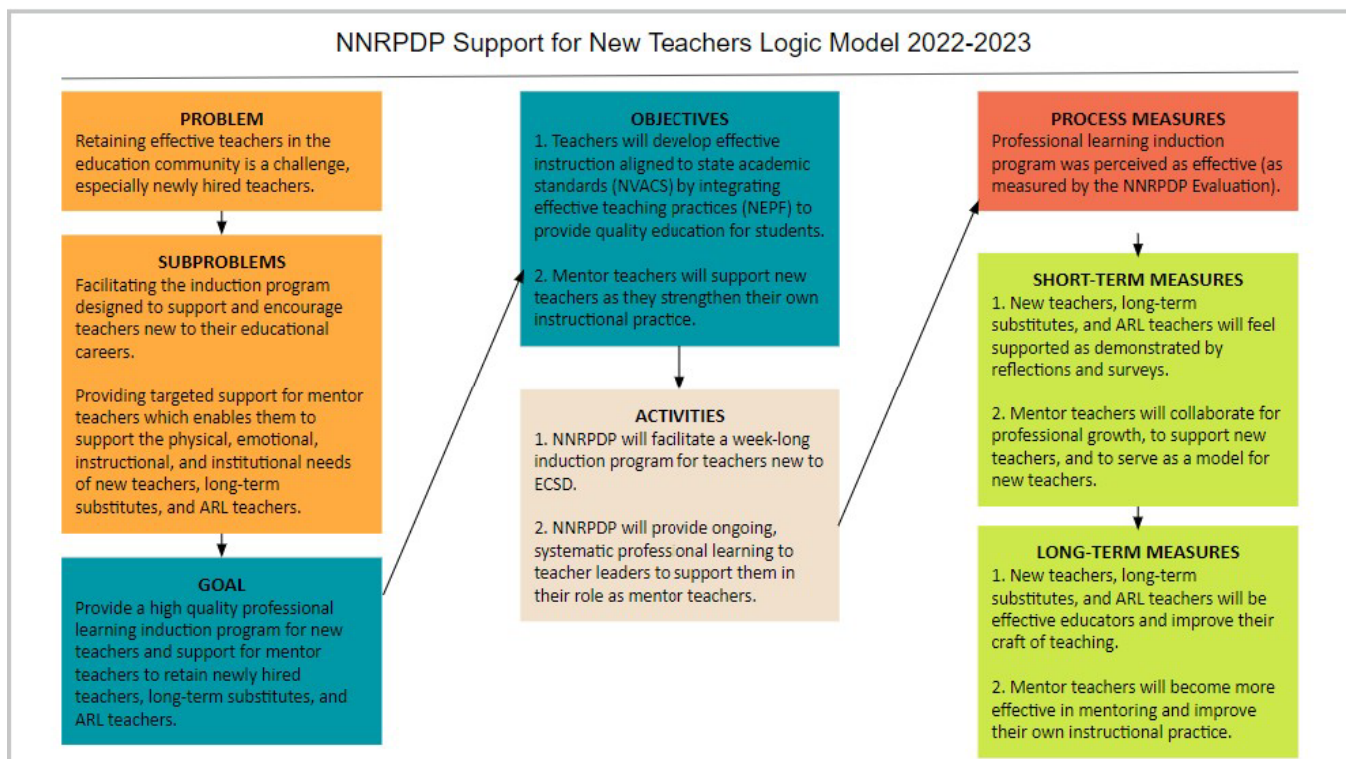**Initial Data and Planning**

Retaining effective teachers has been a challenge for the education community for many years. Every year, schools in the United States hire approximately three hundred

thousand new teachers for the first day of school, and that the high level of teacher attrition is a main factor in the teacher shortage (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, Carver-Thomas, 2016). Researchers report that approximately 44 percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years, and that those teachers who entered the profession through an alternative route (ARL) leave at a rate of almost 8 percentage points higher than their counterparts who graduated from a traditional teacher prep program (Boogren, 2022). Statistics like these suggest that districts and schools should focus on keeping effective teachers by providing additional support to first-year teachers.

To address the issue of teacher retention of year-one teachers, ECSD, in partnership with NNRPDP, facilitated the RISE program in 2022-2023 with teachers newly hired by the district. Although the primary, initial focus of RISE was teacher retention, the increased number of participants who were long-term substitutes and completing ARL programs while entering a new role required adjustments to be made to the design and implementation of RISE with short notice. Both the week-long RISE induction prior to the start of school and the ongoing site-based mentoring support has received overwhelmingly positive reviews from past participants. The logic model below visually illustrates the plan and support for new teachers, no matter their experience level, and mentors provided by the NNRPDP.

Figure 1

Support for New Teachers Logic Model

NNRPDP Support for New Teachers Logic Model 2022-2023

PROBLEM
Retaining effective teachers in the education community is a challenge, especially newly hired teachers.

SUBPROBLEMS
Facilitating the induction program designed to support and encourage teachers new to their educational careers.

Providing targeted support for mentor teachers which enables them to support the physical, emotional, instructional, and institutional needs of new teachers, long-term substitutes, and ARL teachers.

GOAL
Provide a high quality professional learning induction program for new teachers and support for mentor teachers to retain newly hired teachers, long-term substitutes, and ARL teachers.

OBJECTIVES
1. Teachers will develop effective instruction aligned to state academic standards (NVACS) by integrating effective teaching practices (NEPF) to provide quality education for students.

2. Mentor teachers will support new teachers as they strengthen their own instructional practice.

ACTIVITIES
1. NNRPDP will facilitate a week-long induction program for teachers new to ECSD.

2. NNRPDP will provide ongoing, systematic professional learning to teacher leaders to support them in their role as mentor teachers.

PROCESS MEASURES
Professional learning induction program was perceived as effective (as measured by the NNRPDP Evaluation).

SHORT-TERM MEASURES
1. New teachers, long-term substitutes, and ARL teachers will feel supported as demonstrated by reflections and surveys.

2. Mentor teachers will collaborate for professional growth, to support new teachers, and to serve as a model for new teachers.

LONG-TERM MEASURES
1. New teachers, long-term substitutes, and ARL teachers will be effective educators and improve their craft of teaching.

2. Mentor teachers will become more effective in mentoring and improve their own instructional practice.

Method

Learning Design

Keeping in mind the overarching goal of RISE to support and encourage new teachers, and knowing that effective support and encouragement includes a variety of support structures at multiple levels, NNRPDP professional learning leaders planned to support new teachers through the implementation of two major components 1) week-long RISE induction program before the start of school, and 2) support for site-based mentors by establishing a mentor community of professional learning sessions, facilitated by the NNRPDP, at regular intervals throughout the school year.

The Support for New Teachers Professional Learning Plan 2022-2023 (Appendix A) describes the learning outcomes and evidence of participant learning, the design of both the induction week and mentorship program, and the structure of the learning opportunities. The learning design of the Support for New Teachers was also informed by Guskey's Five Levels of Professional Development (2002) and the state and national standards for professional development (Learning Forward, 2011; NDE, 2017).

Participants and Procedures

Elko County School District employs nearly six hundred teachers, hiring an average of 54 teachers each year over the past dozen years. Eighty-three new teachers (almost 15% of the teaching force) were hired for the 2022-23 school year. Twenty-two of those new hires were long-term substitutes. These educators teach in 36 rural and semi-rural schools filling an array of positions in grades K - 12, including regular education teachers in all disciplines, special education, career and technical education (CTE), music, PE, computer science, and library. They teach the district's student population (almost ten thousand students), including those with identified learning disabilities (nearly 13% with IEPs), those who speak English as a second language (nearly 9%), and those facing the challenge of poverty (34% free and reduced-priced lunch eligible) (Nevada Report Card, 2023, for 2021-2022 Data Set).

Instructional Context

Part I: Supporting New Teachers Through the RISE Program

Before the start of school, newly-hired teachers gathered at the NNRPDP presentation room for the induction week. Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday followed a predictable schedule designed to provide engaging pedagogical content differentiated by grade band, coordinated opportunities for connections and networking on multiple levels, and pertinent information regarding the practical details of working in the state of Nevada, specifically the Elko County School District. Monday and Tuesday of the following week were school site days, including collaboration time with their newly assigned mentors.

Content

To succeed in the classroom, new teachers must develop expertise in instructional practice. Content during the RISE induction focused on five major areas to support teachers in developing this expertise: Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS), Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF), Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Family Partnerships, and Equity. With such a large and varied group of new educators, NNRPDP professional learning leaders decided to differentiate instruction by breaking the participants into three grade bands: elementary, middle school, and high school. Each cohort rotated through two content area sessions each morning, thus allowing them to build relationships with other participants teaching similar grades and content.

The NVACS vary depending on the content and grade level of each teacher assignment. Participants engaged in focused work time to locate and delve into the content standards applicable to them. This content was presented as the "what" to teach. Pedagogical content regarding "how" to teach included an opportunity to dive into each of the five high-leverage instructional standards and indicators comprising the NEPF (2019), which Nevada educators are expected to utilize and by which they are evaluated. As a continued effort to support teachers during the pandemic, SEL and Family Partnership sessions were included in the RISE induction program in 2021, and the Equity session was added in 2022. These three sessions encompassed "who" we teach and "who" we partner with for student success.

Connections

Fostering connections between new teachers and assigned mentors was an integral part of the RISE induction program. On day three, each site-based mentor met with the teachers new to their school. Mentors facilitated a short productive session intended to foster the relationship between new teachers and mentors by preparing them to learn and work together at their school sites. On days four and five, teachers became familiar with the school, set up their classrooms, and met others in the building. NNRPDP provided mentors with a comprehensive checklist to ensure that each new teacher received pertinent information concerning the complex details and systems particular to their school.

Teachers connected with site administrators and mentors during a luncheon hosted on-site, and the district provided a stipend for the induction program. Both were intended to show value and appreciation for new teachers' efforts and time preparing for the school year.

District Details

Each afternoon, participants completed the required "district details" sessions. These sessions included the following topics: harassment and boundary policies, Olweus (anti-bullying) training, special education policies and procedures, the employee portal, housing information, employee records, the state retirement program, district health insurance, the online grading system, and the teacher's union. District personnel facilitated these sessions.

Part II - Supporting Site-Based Mentors Throughout the School Year

Mentors for each school were chosen by the site administrator. The mentors received support from NNRPDP professional learning leaders, and they, in turn, supported newly-hired teachers at their schools. Mentors, who were paid a stipend by the district as a token of appreciation for the extensive amount of extra work required in their role, came together for an initial face-to-face orientation provided by NNRPDP professional learning leaders twice during the week of the RISE induction program. (See RISE Mentor Contract – Appendix B).

Critical Friends Group®

Critical Friends Group®(CFG) communities are a protocol-driven form of a Professional Learning Community (PLC). Based on past success, NNRPDP professional learning leaders chose to implement CFGs as the vehicle for ongoing professional mentorship and collaborative support for the mentors who, in turn, facilitated CFGs for new teachers at their school sites. The RISE mentor goals were as follows:

- Collaborate for Professional Growth
- Collaborate to Support New Teachers
- Serve as a Model for New Teacher CFGs

To accommodate all mentors in the 17-thousand square mile region of the district, mentors and NNRPDP professional learning leaders met via the online synchronized Zoom meeting platform following the initial face-to-face orientation meetings designed to build community. During each meeting, NNRPDP professional learning leaders supported mentors in their role with new teachers, correlating appropriate types of support with phases of teaching attitudes throughout a year, adapted from *The New Teacher Center* (Boogren, 2022), all while modeling effective facilitation of protocols. The mentors then used these protocols to facilitate new teacher CFGs at their school site.

The effectiveness of CFGs depends upon participants' voluntary attendance; therefore, new teachers and long-term substitutes were not required to attend; rather, mentor teachers developed relationships with new teachers inviting and encouraging them to attend but never requiring them to do so. Mentors also had the option to invite veteran teachers to join the CFGs to build community among the new teachers, long-term substitutes, and veteran teachers of a school.

Protocols

To provide relevant support and consistency, the NNRPDP professional learning leaders included two components in every CFG, which mentors then incorporated in the CFG they facilitated at their school. Each one-hour mentor CFG agenda included the following:

1. Engage in a mentoring dilemma protocol using The Consultancy Dilemma Protocol (adapted by NNRPDP from National School Reform Faculty, 2023—Appendix C), which provides a structured process to help a participant see new possibilities for a dilemma they face.
2. Participate in a success protocol using the Success Analysis Protocol (adapted from the National School Reform Faculty, 2023—Appendix D), which provides a structured process to share successes to gain insight into the conditions that lead to those successes, so participants can do more of what works in their contexts.

After engaging in the mentor CFG facilitated by NNRPDP professional learning leaders, mentors planned, scheduled, and facilitated a RISE CFG with new teachers at their school. Like the mentor CFG, the on-site new teacher CFG included:

1. Engaging in a teaching dilemma protocol encountered by a new teacher using The Consultancy Dilemma Protocol (National School Reform Faculty, 2023, adapted by NNRPDP).
2. Participating in a teaching success encountered by a new teacher using the Success Analysis Protocol (National School Reform Faculty, 2023, adapted by NNRPDP).

Responsibilities

Administrators, mentors, and NNRPDP professional learning leaders shared responsibility for the job-embedded year-long support provided at each site. Detailing, sharing, and effectively communicating responsibilities for the mentoring support for new teachers was essential for success, as noted below:

Principals
- Assign one or more mentors at their school site depending on the number of new teachers.

Mentors (See RISE Mentor Schedule of Responsibilities, Appendix E).
- Attend face-to-face orientation and planning meetings before the start of school.
- Provide an orientation and support new teachers at the school site before the start of school.
- Participate in monthly online synchronous mentor CFGs for a combined total of seven sessions with other mentors to collaborate, plan, and experience protocols to incorporate as a means of assisting new teachers.
- Schedule, plan, and facilitate six face-to-face new teacher CFGs over the course of the school year with new teachers at their school site(s).
- Share a written reflection through Google Docs for each of the six CFGs facilitated.
- Provide ongoing support to new teachers as needed.

NNRPDP Professional Learning Leaders
- Facilitate an orientation session for mentor teachers before the start of school

- Facilitate seven mentor CFGs over the course of the school year, which serve as a model for mentors to then replicate at their school site.
- Review and respond to reflections on CFGs and provide ongoing support for mentor teachers.

Measurement

Providing a high-quality professional learning induction program for new teachers and support for mentor teachers were the goals of the professional learning intervention provided by the NNRPDP. The long-term outcomes are as follows:

1. New teachers will be more effective educators and improve their craft of teaching.

2. Mentor teachers will become more effective in mentoring and improve their own instructional practice.

The short-term outcomes and measures are as follows:

1. New teachers will feel supported, as evidenced by written critical reflections and an end-of-year survey.

2. Mentor teachers will collaborate for professional growth, support new teachers, and serve as a model for new teachers as measured by monthly reflections, dilemma and success protocol anecdotal notes, and the NNRPDP Evaluation (Appendix F).

New Teacher Evidence

NNRPDP Evaluation. New teachers completed an evaluation at the end of the whole group RISE induction program prior to school starting. This evaluation involved using a five-point Likert scale to rate the effectiveness of the induction process in the following ways: 1) The training will improve my teaching skills, 2) I will use the knowledge and skills from this training in my classroom or professional duties, 3) The training provided opportunities for interactions and reflections, and 4) My learning today will affect students' learning. New teachers also completed an end-of-year survey (Appendix G) reflecting on the school site support from their mentor teacher, what additional support they felt was needed, and whether they were planning on returning to their role next year.

Reflections. Participants' reflections from the whole group RISE induction program prior to school starting gave the NNRPDP professional learning leaders additional awareness of the effect of the components of the in-person, whole group RISE induction program, including specific reflections on the five content sessions.

RISE Mentor Evidence

NNRPDP Evaluation. RISE mentor teachers completed an end-of-year evaluation, including open-ended questions designed to determine if they felt their role as mentors would ultimately impact student learning.

Reflections. RISE mentors' written reflections from each monthly CFG they facilitated at their school provided rich anecdotal evidence of the success of this component.

Dilemmas and Successes. During monthly CFG meetings, RISE mentor teachers recorded both a dilemma and a success they attributed to their responsibilities as mentor teachers. Many themes emerged that were analyzed and used to support the intervention of support for new teachers and mentor teachers.

In addition to the measurements above, effective professional learning evaluation requires consideration of five critical levels of evidence. Guskey's Five Levels of Professional Development (2002) considers that sustainable change in teacher practice can improve student learning outcomes as seen in the table below.

Table 1

Guskey's Five Level's of Professional Development (2002) for the RISE Program

Evaluation Level	What Questions Are Addressed?	How Will Information Be Gathered?	What Is Measured or Assessed?	How Will Information Be Used?
1. Participants' Reactions	Did the participants like it? Was it time well spent?	NNRPDP Evaluations for mentors and RISE Induction Week New Teacher End-of-Year Survey	Initial satisfaction with the experience	To improve program design and delivery
2. Participants' Learning	Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills?	NNRPDP Evaluations for mentors and RISE Induction Week	New knowledge and/or skills of participants	To improve program content, format, and organization

Evaluation Level	What Questions Are Addressed?	How Will Information Be Gathered?	What Is Measured or Assessed?	How Will Information Be Used?
3. Organization Support & Change	Was implementation advocated, facilitated, and supported? Were successes recognized and shared?	NNRPDP Evaluations for mentors and RISE Induction Week New Teacher End-of-Year Survey	The organization's advocacy, support, accommodation, facilitation, and recognition	To document and improve organization support To inform future change efforts
4. Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills	Did participants effectively apply the new knowledge and skills?	NNRPDP Evaluations for mentors and RISE Induction Week	Degree and quality of information	To document and improve the implementation of program content
5. Student Learning Outcomes	What was the impact on students? Did it affect student performance or achievement?	NNRPDP Evaluations for mentors and RISE Induction Week	Student growth and achievement	To demonstrate the overall impact of the professional development

Results and Discussion

New Teachers: Impact of RISE Induction Program

New teachers completed an evaluation at the end of the initial, whole group induction program five days prior to school starting. This core component of the RISE program, while changing somewhat from year to year in content, has remained much the same in the overall structure. One change made in the 2022-2023 year based on feedback from previous years was to differentiate the content sessions by grouping teachers into grade bands (elementary, middle school, and high school) to rotate through content sessions to build relationships among a common cohort of teachers. An analysis of evaluation responses to four items and open-ended reflections indicates that this change in approach to this component of RISE had a meaningful, positive impact as noted in the representative statements below.

Making connections with students and a solid pathway of learning will ensure the best opportunity for students to make progress on their education and future goals.

Implementation of the skills I learned during the RISE Teacher Training will allow me to continue to foster the most positive learning experience I can for my students.

The training really opened my eyes and mind to many areas that I can make dramatic improvements in my teaching and connecting with kids. Thank you for making this training available to us long term subs.

I thought the training was informative and useful. It was great that long term subs were included this time in order to best prepare them as a new school year begins.

I enjoyed meeting other new teachers/professionals in the district. The activities that enabled us to practice what we learned and share thoughts, ideas, and concerns with others was very helpful.

Figure 2

Impact of RISE Induction Program Prior the Start of the 2022-2023 School Year

Impact of RISE Orientation Prior to the Start of 2022-2023 School Year: NNRPDP Evaluation Responses
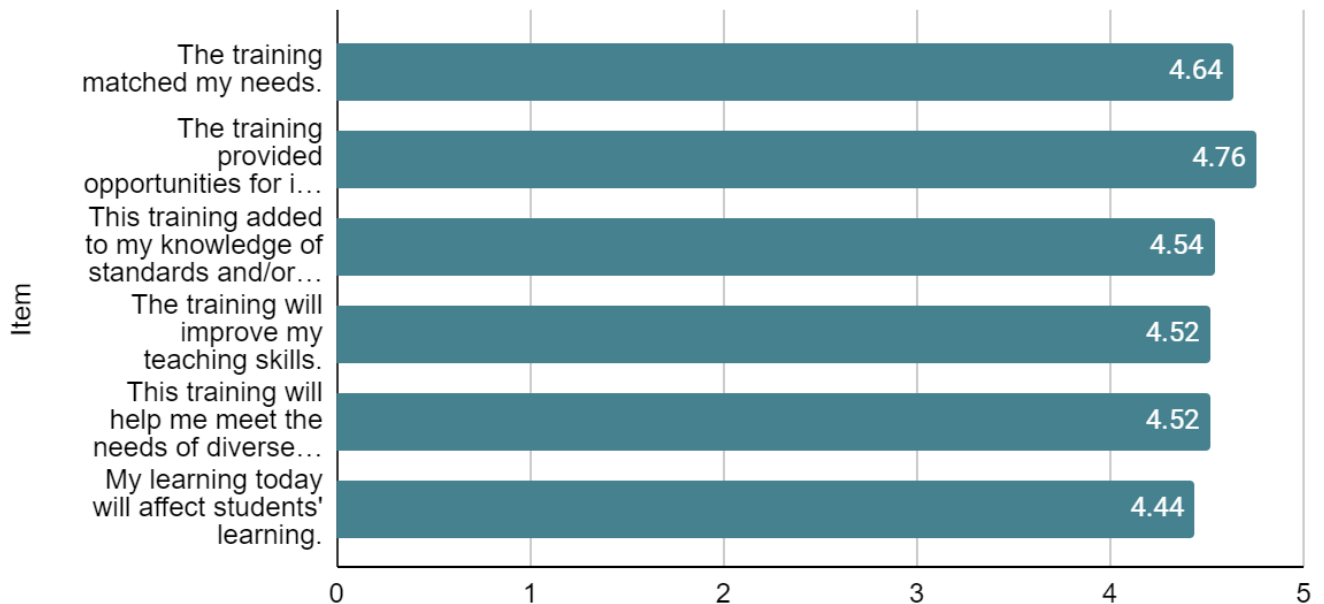
Scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = To a great extent

In the same evaluation, participants were given the opportunity to respond to three open-ended questions. One question asked, "From today's learning, what will you transfer to practice?" Four themes emerged reflecting the major components of RISE.

Table 2

Participants' Reflections on Transferring Their Learning to Their Practice

Theme	Examples
Equity	I will consider that *all students* have different needs.
	I will implement *equity* strategies in my classroom.
	I will transfer what I learned about *equity and inclusion* into practice.
	I will ensure all my students are treated *equally* and represented in the materials used.
Social Emotional Learning (SEL)	I will strive to implement equity and *social emotional learning* in the classroom to create a welcoming and safe learning environment.
	SEL is not just a program but a way of being human together and helping each other through positive interactions.
	I will use the information I learned from the training to incorporate *SEL* in my teaching practices.
Building Relationships	I will create easy access for *parents* to reach out to me.
	I will transfer how to be more *engaged with the community* along with the standards that are put in place.
	More wait time and *build relationships*
	Many things will be transferred to practice, whether it's regarding standards for lesson material and acquisition of that material, *creating a connection* for learning from the start, as well as *reaching out to families,* many new practices will be formed from this training.
Effective Teaching Practices	I will focus on *(NEPF) 4.1* to be sure that my students are learning what they need to be learning and will feel successful as they take ownership of their learning.
	I will apply all I learned from RISE to help *plan meaningful lessons*.
	The *background knowledge of the NEPF* as well as *breaking down the standards* to teach my specific grade level

New Teachers: Impact of Ongoing Site-Based Support from Mentor Teachers

At the end of the 2022-2023 school year, new teachers completed an end-of-year survey (Appendix G) that included reflections on mentor support. A majority of the new teachers who completed the survey stated that having a mentor made a positive impact on their school year as stated in the representative quotes below.

My mentor teachers made my first year in the classroom much smoother. I was supported through meaningful check ins from both. Both of my mentors always made time for anything I needed help with and anytime questions arose.

My mentor teacher was so helpful in my first year and has made a huge impact on the success in my first year.

It helped me when I had questions. There is so much to know and do and it was extremely helpful as a first year teacher to have someone to turn to when seeking information or advice.

NNRPDP seeks ongoing feedback from participants to improve the RISE program in supporting new teachers. One of the survey questions asked what additional support new teachers felt they needed to make their year more successful. Almost half of the respondents stated they had all the support they needed. Of those that made suggestions, the most common responses were additional training specifically designed for new teachers, more communication on district and school policies and procedures, and increased support from site administrators. Studies show that approximately 44% of teachers leave the profession within five years (Boogren, 2022). When asked if they were planning on returning to their teaching roles for the next school year, the majority of new teachers (71.4%) stated that they would return. However, it is important to note that approximately 30% noted they would not return or were still undecided.

Figure 3

RISE New Teacher End of Year Survey

New Teacher End of Year Survey

Question: Are you planning on returning to your role next school year?

Undecided 17.9%

No 10.7%

Yes 71.4%
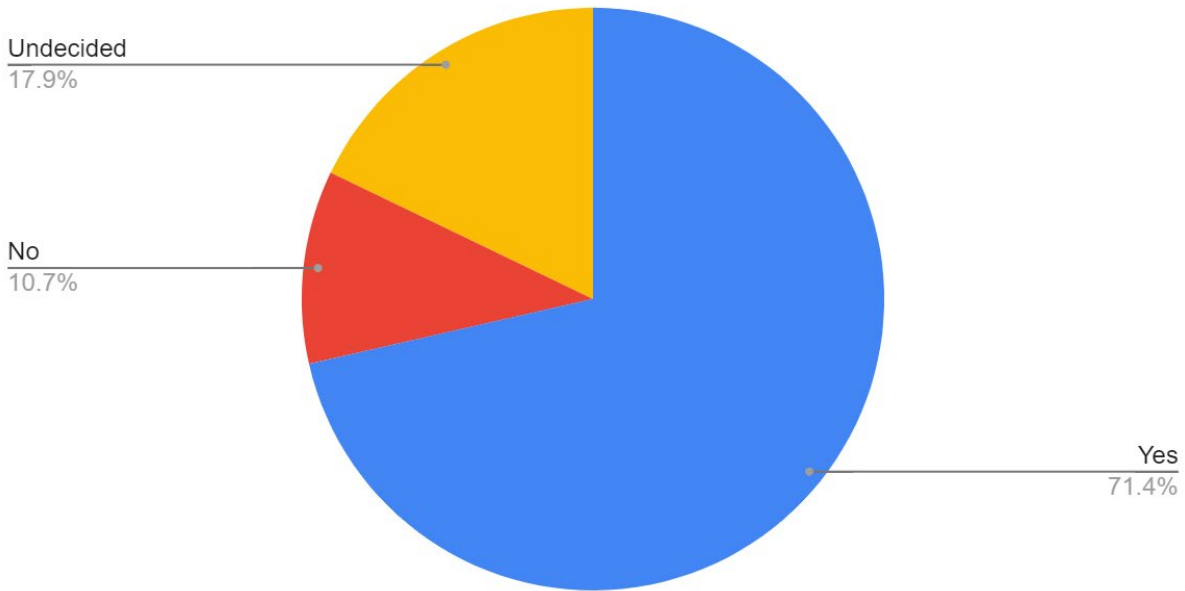
Mentors: Impact on New Teachers Through Ongoing Site-Based Support

Mentor-Reported Dilemmas

      The Dilemma Analysis Protocol allowed mentor teachers the opportunity to present a challenging situation they encountered while supporting their new teachers. Once presented, a culminating decision by all mentor teachers was made on which dilemma would be the focus for the rest of the protocol. Tapping the power of the collaborative group in addressing dilemmas of practice, mentors were able to add: input, a new perspective, or even some possible solutions to try to mitigate or solve the dilemma. The most common or recurring dilemmas are illustrated below as evidenced by anecdotal notes shared during the mentor CFGs.

Table 3

Themes from Mentors' Dilemma Analysis Protocols

Themes	Mentor Teacher Dilemmas
Time Management	Mentees have many deadlines all at once. How do we prioritize how to help them?

Themes	Mentor Teacher Dilemmas
	How to get my mentee to scale back some of her coaching (track, basketball, volleyball) to make more time for the classroom?

I have a mentee that struggles with time management. My gut tells me to sit down with her and set timers for start and finish times. |
| Workload and Burnout | Our mentees are working at keeping up with the fast pace of teaching. There are so many deadlines to do with AMP Plans, Dibbles, lesson plans, observations, Opal, Evaluwize, etc… We are trying to support and not let burn out over take them.

The amount of Reading AMP plans our teachers are having to write and the lack of guidance and assistance is very overwhelming for our new teachers/long term subs.

We have a new teacher who is having a hard time with the workload of school and teaching. How can we offer more support? |
| Communication and Collaboration | One of my mentees has over 25 years of teaching experience. At times, it has been difficult to connect the purpose of her showing interest in meeting with her "mentor" that has 15 years less experience teaching than the mentee.

Collaborating with other departments and why it is important. |
| Relationships and Behaviors | A long term sub we have been working with is really struggling with the amount of behaviors she is seeing in her classroom.

Some of our mentees are having trouble with balancing being "too nice" and "too strict".

How to help mentee adjust her classroom management mid year. She has realized that one of her classes is way out of control with disrespect, talking over her, not getting work done, goofing off etc. I talked with her earlier on in the year and suggested she start sticking to her guns and following through with consequences. At this point when she does try to discipline her students are ignoring it or laughing it off. |

Mentor-Reported Successes

Sharing successes through the Success Analysis Protocol allowed participants to gain insights into conditions that lead to those successes so participants can do more of what works. Ending mentor CFG meetings with successes was also a great way to build relationships with and among mentor teachers. The table below depicts the four themes that emerged with

corresponding authentic examples of a teacher's success from anecdotal notes shared during the mentor CFGs.

Table 4

Themes from Mentors' Success Analysis Protocols

Themes	Mentor Teacher Successes
Teacher Retention, Satisfaction, and Confidence	New teachers are enjoying their job and working well with others. My mentee is gaining confidence in her abilities and her last evaluation went really well for her. They love what they are doing and want to teacher forever.
Positive Communication and Collaboration	We've been able to share little tips with each other and help each other with challenges that pop up. The trusting and judgment-free environment was a success. I feel like we worked as a team to make this year successful and all of the teachers are planning to return next year.
Professional Growth	My mentees are finishing up degrees and one has decided to go forward with getting a bachelors to be able to be a full-time teacher. They are reflecting on what they are doing and trying to find new ways to be better. My mentees are taking advice and trying it.
Building Supportive Relationships	We've built both a friendship as colleagues and out of work as well. [New teachers] say they appreciate all we have done and that our CFGs are something they looked forward to.

The model of support new teachers received from their mentors included mentor support at their school site prior to school starting, monthly new teacher CFGs, and just-in-time support and check-ins. Reflecting on their mentors this year, new teachers had many positive comments that demonstrate the effectiveness of the mentoring aspect of RISE:

My mentor teachers made my first year in the classroom much smoother. I was supported through meaningful check ins from both. Both of my mentors always made time for anything I needed help with and anytime questions arose.

My mentor was so helpful and understanding. Being able to go ask questions and for help made this year go so much smoother. I can't imagine how hard it would have been without her help.

It was nice to have a resource for any information that I needed that you usually have to find on the job as my mentor knows the school and its little ins and outs as well as the district. He was amazing!

Other comments indicated that some teachers desired or would have benefitted from more specific support. This feedback is important and can be used when planning next year's RISE induction and mentorship program. These reflections included:

It would have been nice to have another RISE day or half day maybe partway through the first quarter with a site person to discuss issues, concerns, questions that arise.

The mentorship program was not sufficient for SPED teachers. We did not get the support that we needed as SPED teachers, the trainings were not relevant to our positions and they tended to support Gen Ed [sic] Teachers more than anything. I feel that the training over the summer was also more geared towards gen ed teachers and did not include what I needed to be supported in my role as a special education teacher.

RISE Mentor End of Year Survey

Mentor teachers were asked to reflect on whether the support from NNRPDP professional learning leaders met their professional needs as teachers and mentors. This survey used a five-point Likert scale, with 1 being "not at all" and 5 being "to a great extent." They also responded to open-ended questions regarding the implementation of their learning in their own classroom, as well as with their mentees. The quotes below capture mentors' perspectives on the effectiveness of the provided support:

I have learned a great deal on dealing with broad and specific diversity when it comes to mentoring colleagues.

I feel with some 'dilemmas' presented, I was able to do some self-reflection and adjusted some of my own teaching practices.

This program helps guide our new teachers by using experienced teachers and the NNRPDP which will create better teachers and increase learning.

Results indicate that mentors believe collaborating with colleagues during the monthly CFGs was an effective way to strengthen both their own practice and that of their mentees.

Figure 4

Mentor CFGs: NNRPDP Evaluation Responses

Mentor CFG: NNRPDP Evaluation Responses

Scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = To a great extent
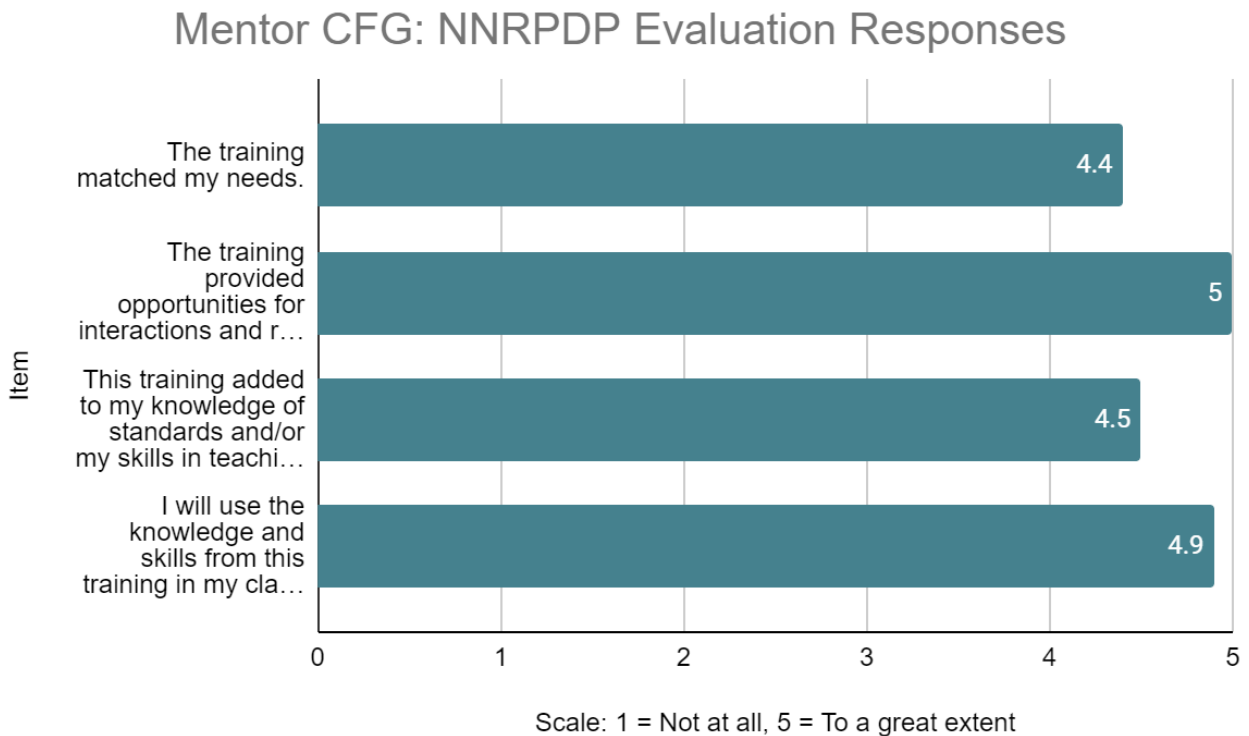
When asked how NNRPDP professional learning leaders could better support mentors, many participants expressed gratitude for the support provided and the changes made for the 2022-2023 school year based on previous input. Some offered suggestions that are worthy of consideration for the next RISE program for the 2023-2024 school year, including:

- Offer virtual or in-person workshops for mentors and mentees to attend together with specific agendas based on feedback and reflections from CFGs once or twice a year.
- Keep working with new teachers during their second or third year of teaching to help strengthen their practice.
- Time for new teachers to observe effective veteran teachers at their own site or at other schools.

RISE Mentor Reflections

Each mentor CFG meeting began with a five-minute reflection period where mentors reflected on their mentoring experiences in a shared Google Doc. These reflections reveal teachers are deeply committed to the profession, their schools, and the new teachers they

have been charged with mentoring. Many, if not most, went above and beyond the requirements of the contract to provide the support they believed their new teachers needed.

Based on the unique group of new teachers for the 2022-2023 year, including the high number of long-term substitutes and ARL teachers participating in RISE, NNRPDP professional learning leaders looked to the "Phases of First-Year Teaching" to guide mentors through the monthly CFGs (Boogren, 2022). In turn, the mentors' monthly reflections followed a similar path in which common themes emerged.

Fall Reflections. In the fall, although new teachers were overwhelmed by the teaching workload, they were adaptable and willing to seek help. Mentors focused on building relationships and providing support while addressing specific needs based on the levels of experience their new teachers brought with them. Time was a recurring issue for both mentors and mentees: time to meet, time to plan, and time for responsibilities outside of the classroom (IEPs [individual education plans], AMP [annual measure of progress], SLGs [student learning goals]), required by Nevada for teacher evaluation.

> *My mentees have already built some strong bonds with other teachers within their content areas. They come to me when they have logistical questions, but seem to be getting more comfortable asking for more content specific questions from their peers.*

> *The extra work (AMP plans, SLGs, Self-Assessment) is pretty overwhelming for the new teachers. Once again, time is an issue, not enough of it!*

> *The mentees ask questions when they need to. They feel that they can come to me anytime when a problem or question arises.*

> *I feel like I haven't had time to check in with my mentees lately in person.*

Winter Reflections. In the winter, mentors and NNRPDP professional learning leaders noticed that the current group of new teachers faced more instructional and classroom challenges than previous participants. Therefore, opportunities for peer learning were offered through NNRPDP. Mentors focused on providing guidance while addressing concerns about work-home balance and creating a supportive and collaborative environment for participants' growth and learning as evidenced in the statements below:

> *This [peer observations] will be a great opportunity that we and our vice principal are getting set up. We are excited to reflect with our mentees and other teachers after observations. I am excited to be part of the discourse.*

> *I would like for the mentees to observe some rockstar teachers at our school; see what works for them in their classrooms. Rigor has been a large focus and I would like them to see different strategies to engage in rigorous tasks.*

A couple of teachers have been comfortable enough to come and talk to me about the personal stress they are experiencing that is affecting them at work. We were able to talk about it and help them to find that balance between work and home life. We held a virtual meeting with a focus on mental health and setting boundaries. The mentees seemed to share their feelings and appreciated the focus on taking care of themselves.

In our last CFG, we focused on classroom management. Some great ideas were presented and teachers felt they walked away with a new strategy they could implement immediately.

Spring Reflections. In the spring there was an overall expression of the successes and challenges of the overall year based on fostering new teachers' growth through collaboration and support. Many mentors used these reflections as opportunities to look ahead to the next school year as highlighted in these quotes:

Our new teachers took their job and ran with it. One has created the robotics/computer/art program all with little guidance. She is doing some really neat things with math. The ELL aide and SPED aide tell me I really need to go watch how she teaches and that she is doing amazing.

One of our mentees has struggled with finding success in her day and seems very overwhelmed to the point that she has become very sensitive. I have struggled finding ways to keep her self confidence up.

My mentees are doing a great job. The primary grades are starting to meet as grade levels to discuss the end of the year push and what is going to happen next year. Those mentees are having good input with their grade levels. We are very lucky here to have amazing staff to take the mentees in with open arms and to have such a supportive team in the different grade levels.

My mentee is doing a really good job this year. We are starting to plan for next year and figure out a daily routine that will work for a 55-minute block.

Conclusion

Through the partnership between Elko County School District and NNRPDP, the RISE induction and mentorship program offered new teachers ongoing and effective support and encouragement. The two components of RISE, induction and mentorship, gave new teachers the necessary information and inspiration prior to the start of the school year as well as ongoing support throughout the school year. The evidence strongly indicates that both components were necessary and effective, working in tandem, to accomplish this primary goal of RISE: to support and encourage newly-hired teachers with high-quality professional learning and mentorship.

The evidence also suggests that effectively supporting new teachers during their first year requires a significant amount of time and commitment from mentors. With such intense effort, mentors themselves risk burnout, suggesting that future revisions to the program could include increased support for mentors. Increased support could include having NNRPDP professional learning leaders attend at least one CFG meeting at each school site throughout the year in order to provide just-in-time support, as well as providing additional coaching for mentors beyond the CFG sessions. One additional overall revision that might be considered, although it is more robust in nature, could be to extend the ongoing mentorship for all new teachers from their first year through their first two years in the profession.

Finally, as the diverse needs of new teachers and the increasingly varied experience levels of new teachers grow, the types of support needed change and require different approaches, requiring flexibility and adaptability by the NNRPDP professional learning leaders. Thus, the overall evidence suggests that a differentiated approach in future RISE programs for both new teachers and their mentors would be beneficial so that the amount of support matches the needs of the individual teachers.

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