

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2016

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Wanted: Rookie and veteran teachers for state's new mentoring program

PIERRE, S.D. – Teachers from across the state are invited to participate in South Dakota's new statewide mentoring program, which pairs teachers new to the profession with veteran educators. The program was established as part of the 2016 legislative package aimed at improving teacher recruitment and retention efforts in South Dakota.

Through the program, first-year teachers will be paired with teachers who have at least five years of experience. Matches will be made based on teachers who are located in the same geographic regions, who teach at similar grade levels, and if possible, who teach similar content.

“Compared to other professions, teaching has a high rate of attrition. The research tells us that those first few years in the classroom are critical to a teacher's development and long-term commitment to the profession,” said Secretary of Education Dr. Melody Schopp. “That's why mentoring is such an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to teacher retention.”

Following a kick-off event later this fall, where all the pairs will meet in person, the mentors will provide the new teachers with at least 34 hours of mentoring, including 18 hours of face-to-face contact. The mentors will provide support and guidance in areas such as planning and preparation, classroom environment, instructional strategies and professional responsibilities. At the end of the 2016-17 school year, the pairs will come together again to reflect upon and celebrate the completion of the first year. Participants will commit to two years in the program.

Teachers serving as mentors will receive a stipend for their work. After successfully completing the program, both new teachers and veterans will be considered to have met the requirements to renew their teaching certificate.

Applications for both new teachers and mentors are being accepted through Sept. 23. All participants must have their administrator's permission to participate. There is an option for districts to participate in the program as well.

For more information and to apply, visit doe.sd.gov/mentoring.