

Description of Mentoring Programs

NISD instituted the Red Wagon Induction Program to provide support and development for Northside teachers new to the profession. Raba Elementary staff members participate in this program each year. The key elements include campus mentors, campus-based support, campus advisors and district-level support. The program objective is to develop and retain highly-qualified teachers to promote maximum student academic achievement.

Campus mentoring advisors are selected and assigned by their campus administrators to attend CMA Training through NISD prior to the beginning of the new school year. CMAs may then assist their administrators in assigning mentors to first-year teachers (and reassigning as needed). Within the first few weeks of school, the CMA conducts a Campus Induction Meeting and Get-Acquainted Celebration on the campus for First-Year Teachers and Mentors. Experienced teachers new to Raba and/or to NISD are also assigned a campus buddy to provide support and are included in the Get-Acquainted gathering.

First-year teachers are required to attend NISD's New Teacher Academy prior to the beginning of the school year. Mentors are required to attend Red Wagon Mentor Training to provide ongoing support for the first-year teachers as well as enable them to engage in collaborative observations with first-year teachers as needed. The CMA periodically meets briefly with the mentors and first-year teachers to offer support as needed and to keep the mentors and first-year teachers informed of staff development both on campus and through the district that can facilitate instructional practices that lead to higher levels of student achievement.

The Red Wagon Induction Program in many ways sets the standard for the entire staff on every NISD campus to support and encourage the development of first-year teachers in effective teaching practices, classroom management, and inclusion into the school family. At Raba, the emphasis has traditionally focused on all three simultaneously, with the understanding that different first-year teachers have different needs at different times during their beginning year. Experienced teachers at every grade level and in every department contribute their expertise by sharing as teams in a variety of campus activities as the year progresses. The intent is to include the first-year teachers as "one of the Raba family" and our intention has proven successful throughout our seven year history of growing and learning together. When asked what gave them the greatest support and feeling of professional inclusion during their first teaching year here at Raba, teachers responded:

*(that) the mentoring program gave (them) wonderful support (their) first year of teaching at Raba. (They) not only felt comfortable to go to (their) mentor for any questions but (they) also felt tremendous support from the administration and staff. (They were) able to journal (their) feelings and concerns to (their) mentor teacher who then would respond to (them) with useful advice.

*that (they) felt very included at (their) grade level and on the campus staff because the teachers listened to (their) ideas and input that (they) wanted to share...even though (they were) new to the profession, school, and school district.

*(that their) entire team was always providing (them) with instructional resources (they) could use, templates (lesson plans, class newsletters, etc.) and making (them) smile and laugh whenever (they) had a difficult day.

*(that) first and foremost was the Keystone Curriculum (used across all grade levels at Raba) and the way (their fellow) teachers truly cared about (their) particular situation (death of a parent just a week before school started!). (Those teachers) each took their time to talk to (them) as a person, not just a rookie or peer. They cared and believed in (them) in a way that was truly special.

*(that) the wonderful environment on this campus was amazing! Everyone here was friendly and supportive. Staff and students took time out to assist (them) in (their) growth. It really came down to the fact that they believed in (them) just like one of their students and would make any effort to get (them) ready!

In conclusion, as part of the Red Wagon Induction Program at Raba, an end-of-year survey to gauge the success and future needs of the program is completed by all participating Red Wagon personnel. Data collected from these surveys completed on campuses across the district will be reviewed to support future first-year teachers, their mentors and campus mentoring advisors. The administration and staff at Raba Elementary work to build a culture that supports beginning teacher growth and the success of all students; the NISD Red Wagon Program establishes another tier of the infrastructure required to provide that support and ensure that all new teachers receive the help they need.