FY23 Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Report Form

Instructions:

Please send an electronic copy of the Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant (TMRG) final completed report **by June 30, 2023** to Laura.Dyer@state.mn.us.

Report components:

I. **Coversheet**

II. **Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Program Narrativ**e – Please describe how your proposed activities for the teacher mentorship program has strengthened and/or supplemented your existing or attempted mentorship or retention efforts and how the awarded funds allowed you to do the work.

III. **Program Data** – Please provide data from the past 3 years, as well as the year funded by the grant. Please also describe how grant funding has impacted the data from the most recent reporting year. You are welcome to include graphs.

IV. **Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Funds Expenditure** – Please list all awarded funds, differentiating between funds spent and funds yet-to-be-spent this fiscal year. Fill in the "method of progress monitoring" and "data" columns based on the information in sections VI of your proposal.

Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Report

Grantee Information

Legal Name of Applicant Organization	Regents of the University of Minnesota
Total Grant Amount	$43,440

Identified Official with Authority

Name of official with authority to sign	Nic Allyn
Title	Principal Grant Administrator
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City, State and Zip code + 4	Minneapolis, MN 55455-2070
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Primary Program Contact

Name of program contact	Lee Fisher
Title	Minnesota Writing Project Director
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City, State and Zip code + 4	Minneapolis, MN 55455-0228
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We are excited to report that interest in our program exceeded our expectations. After interviewing all of the applicants, we decided to rearrange the budget so that we could accept an additional three teachers to the project. Many of the participants noted the rarity to build community with other teachers of color across multiple districts without the expectation of producing anything as a significant difference in the programming and support they are typically offered as the reason for their interest. However, our recruitment efforts were mainly successful in Central Minnesota instead of attracting teachers from around the state. Based on feedback that we have, we found there to be three reasons for this. First, there were significantly less teachers of color in Greater Minnesota that we were able to reach. Second, many of those teachers noted they were simply not available because of other professional commitments at their schools or because of the exhaustion that continues in the wake of school closures from COVID-19. Third, there was less name recognition of both our organization and the teachers facilitating the institute.

Once the group convened, it was clear that our initial plan for mentorship activities did not meet the expressed needs of the participants. The facilitators used this as an opportunity to develop relational community by co-designing a new structure for the institute with participants that included writing groups and monthly stand-alone workshops on various topics chosen as the year progressed.

Making this shift supported mentorship in a way that disrupted hierarchical and quantitative measures of mentor/mentee relationships by positioning all participating teachers as both leaders and learners. Untenured teachers, newly tenured teachers, and tenured teachers with leadership roles in their districts, as well as the two facilitators were able to determine personal areas of interest, inquiry, and expertise based on their experience. Writing groups offered teachers opportunities to engage in literacy practices that honed their teaching skills while also providing opportunities for personal and professional reaction and to receive feedback on those reflections. Additionally, all teachers worked together as learners in the workshops, developing their own understanding and lines of inquiry with teachers from a range of different districts.

This structure strengthened our current mentorship and retention efforts in three key ways. First, it provided the resources to plan and implement a new program specifically created by and for teachers of color that has the potential to be self-sustaining in the coming years. Second, it provided a space for teachers of color to name what was important to them as professionals and become leaders in those areas of interest regardless of the number of years they have as a licensed teacher. Third, the workshop series focused on small and sustainable programming across a period of time instead of a single large event, emphasizing the long-term relationships that mentorship and retention goals require to be successful. By positioning all of the teachers we worked with as collaborators, we further developed a relational network of support that exists outside of any one program or organization.

Because our project changed, the initial monitoring plan did not apply. Instead, we have chosen to examine effectiveness by returning to the original goals of our work and asking if and how they were achieved by the new plan:

GOAL 1: Support IPOC teachers through professional development that honors their community and cultural knowledge, builds on their professional knowledge, and engages them in meaningful inquiry.
GOAL 2: Provide low-stakes and highly collaborative opportunities for IPOC teachers to reflect and discuss pressing issues outside of any particular school or district.
We were successful in both goals by creating a format which allowed participating teachers to (1) articulate the topics of interest for their learning, (2) engage as collaborators and producers of knowledge through cycles of feedback and sharing, and (3) develop and connect with a network of teachers from a range of districts.

Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Program Data

Table 1: Total number of teachers new to the profession or district that received mentoring as a result of this grant.

Number of teachers disaggregated by race or ethnic group	Tier 3 Teachers new to the profession or district	Tier 2 new to the profession or district	Tier 1 teachers new to the profession or district	Teaching residents	Teacher in license shortage areas	Teachers with special needs	Experienced teachers in need of peer coaching
American Indian or Alaskan Native							
Asian or Pacific Islander	1						
Hispanic	2						
Black	2						
Other							
Total	**5**						

Table 2: Total number of mentors who were paid stipends under this grant for providing mentorship to teachers.

Number of Mentors by race or ethnic group	Tier 3 Teachers new to the profession or district	Teaching residents	Teacher in license shortage areas	Teachers with special needs	Experienced teachers in need of peer coaching
American Indian or Alaskan Native					
Asian or Pacific Islander	1				
Hispanic	2				
Black	2				
Other					
Paid Mentors of color who received additional stipends					
Total	**5**				

Analysis of Data

It is important to us to note that, while we have filled out the above matrices to honor structural requirements that allow important funds like these to be made available, the above matrices do not accurately represent the mentoring relationships this project attempted to create, nor the mentoring relationships we feel are integral to teacher retention. The traditional mentor/mentee relationship in the model laid out by the above matrices sets up a hierarchy defined by the number of years teaching or type of license, disregarding other forms of knowledge and suggesting that learning is unidirectional. In contrast, a feminist co-mentoring model that we articulate in our proposal urges us to see all teachers as leaders and all leaders as learners. We believe such a stance has a powerful role to play in both the mentorship and retention of all teachers—particularly American Indian Teachers and Teachers of Color who have historically been disenfranchised by hierarchical models like the ones suggested by the matrices in this report—by encouraging a reciprocal community of learners where everyone's expertise and leadership is honored regardless of what type of license or they hold, their position within a district/school, or the number of years they have worked as an educator. As such, the first matrix notes the participating teachers who had tier 3 licenses during our project, but it does not list all of the people who applied and were admitted into the program as many of them had tier 4 licenses but expressed a desire for the type of mentorship the project offered (sometimes specifically noting the politically and socially toxic nature of professional development offered in their own districts that worked against their retention). The second matrix accounts for only the participants who had tier 3 licenses. There were an additional 8 participants and 2 facilitators who also were part of the project.

Lastly, the teachers participating in the project wished to include a different list that identifies how they would describe themselves racially and in terms of mentor/mentee status. That list is as follows:

African American: School Leader
Asian- Hmong: Learner
Black: Teacher Organizer and Student Advocate
Black - African American: Experienced Teacher
Guatemalteca: Mentor/Mentee
Latinx: Teacher, Organizer, Leader
Biracial Black: Engaged Learner
Southeast Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipina – American: Advocate for Students and Teachers
Mexican/Hispanic/Latinx: Community Builder
Hmong Asian American: Mentor/Mentee
Black/African American: Teacher Learner
Black: New Teacher
Black/African-Caribbean: Veteran Teacher
Black/Caribbean: Young Teacher, Teacher Leader, and Community Organizer
Hmong: Teacher and Organizer

Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Funds Expenditure

Table 3: Grant Funds Expenditure

Amount	Description of Use of Funds	Primarily Used for:	Method of Progress Monitoring	Data
$4,000	This stipend is for the two teacher-facilitators, in collaboration with Minnesota Writing Project leadership, to plan the Leadership Institute. This includes planning prior to the institute and collaboration time between two leaders and MWP Leadership during the institute. We have budgeted for 80 hours for each of the two facilitators. Not included in the budget is the in-kind pedagogical and administrative support leading up to the Leadership Institute offered by the Minnesota Writing Project Director and Assistant Director.	☐ Recruitment X Retention ☐ Induction	Regular meetings with facilitators in preparation for and during the project.	
$15,801.90	These stipends are for the two teacher-facilitators for the work during the Leadership Institute. Facilitation responsibilities include both synchronous time during the monthly sessions and check-ins with individuals and small groups between	☐ Recruitment X Retention ☐ Induction	Regular meetings with during the project.	

	synchronous sessions.		
$850	Registration for participants to participate in a local professional conference related to the work of our project	☐ Recruitment X. Retention ☐Induction	Attendance at the conference and feedback from participants
309.85	Materials, specifically journals for each participant	☐ Recruitment X. Retention ☐Induction	Check-ins with participants during writing groups
$8,998	A childcare stipend is to remove a barrier to participation (cost of childcare) for participants and facilitators. This number is based on 8 people needing childcare 9 times over the course of the year.	☐ Recruitment X. Retention ☐Induction	Checking in with participants who have children about their availability and the degree to which the stipends are helping
$13,000	This covers stipends for 13 participants to recognize the time and commitment involved in participating. Teachers in general, and teachers of color and American Indian teachers are often asked to donate their time as part of their professional work. These stipends are meant to interrupt that practice and honor that, though this is professional development, it is also a part of their profession and they should be compensated in some way for their work.	☐ Recruitment X. Retention ☐Induction	Letting participants know during the recruitment process that this was the compensation available for their participation

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Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Report

Grantee Information

Legal Name of Applicant Organization	Regents of the University of Minnesota
Total Grant Amount	$22,236

Identified Official with Authority

Name of official with authority to sign	Nic Allyn
Title	Principal Grant Administrator
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City, State and Zip code + 4	Minneapolis, MN 55455-2070
Phone Number and Email	(612) 625-7054 (ally0007@umn.edu)

Primary Program Contact

Name of program contact	Lee Fisher
Title	Minnesota Writing Project Director
Address	10 Nicholson Hall, 216 Pillsbury Drive SE
City, State and Zip code + 4	Minneapolis, MN 55455-0228
Phone Number and Email	(612) 625-6323; lcf@umn.edu

Our Early Career Teacher Institute supported a group of 8 teachers in the first three years of their career while utilizing the expertise of three veteran teachers. Recruitment was difficult with most teachers explaining that they were too overwhelmed as new teachers to take on additional programs, even those designed to provide support and mentorship. The teachers who did join our project expressed the value of in-person programming since they were exhausted by the distance and isolation of online opportunities, so we found opportunities to meet in person as much as possible. Even still, we always had a few absences for meetings that were held after school during the school year because of various school related responsibilities.

In the event of absences and participants feeling overwhelmed, we were thankful for the structure of having mentors assigned to small groups of teachers. This offered opportunities for participants to receive personal emails checking in throughout the year including reaching out after an absence. The personal connections offered the early career teachers a point of connection, many of which reported as important to a feeling of belonging even if they were able to participate in every event.

The opportunities for the tenured teachers (formally known in the language of this grant as mentors) to lead workshops also served to aid their own retention. The workshops became opportunities for them to practice facilitating adult learning as well as work through ideas they were thinking about as they navigated their own school context and saw the navigation the early career teachers were doing. Relatedly, the tenured teachers also reflected on the ways in which they were able to use their own experiences to support and problem solve with early career teachers worked to affirm their thinking, and even push it forward in some instances.

This structure of large group workshops, one-on-one mentoring, and small group case studies provided a variety of ways for the tenured and early career teachers to build relationships and process their experiences. While these were successes worthy of celebration, the project ended on a difficult note as many of the teachers struggled to feel welcome in their schools. School building administration such as principals and counselors who were identified by early career and tenured teachers as White were described as antagonistic and unsupportive. One teacher recounted that, although they were glad to have the opportunity to work at their school, they weren't sure if they were hired because of their skills as an educator or because the school wanted to have a person of color to take pictures of or point to as an example of equity. Another recounted hearing that their principal called them an angry person of color because, in the teacher's view, the teacher was asking why White colleagues had low expectations for students of color. Yet another was simply exhausted because they were asked to do so much, leading equity groups, talking to the school board, taking on a greater number of preps than other teachers because the teacher was seen as able to be successful at teaching a variety of classes. The teachers were grateful for professional development opportunities but wished that their workplaces weren't so toxic. As one teacher put it, "It's not that I don't feel capable. It's that I don't feel safe or supported."

Our stated goals were

GOAL 1: Create a learning space that is safer for early career teachers to be honest about struggles.

GOAL 2: Provide experiential learning in critical literacy that supports teacher learning and offers models for classroom instruction

GOAL 3: Engage teachers in critical practices that support mental and emotional health that are crucial for professional retention

We believe we met our first goal as evidenced through the opportunities for teachers to share their struggles and the openness teachers engaged in those opportunities.

We believe we met our second goal through the workshops we led as well as the case studies tenured teachers talked about with the early career teachers.

And we believe we met our third goal by openly and directly discussing structures of power and equity as it pertained to teachers' abilities to advocate for and take of themselves.

Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Program Data

Table 1: Total number of teachers new to the profession or district that received mentoring as a result of this grant.

Number of teachers disaggregated by race or ethnic group	Tier 3 Teachers new to the profession or district	Tier 2 new to the profession or district	Tier 1 teachers new to the profession or district	Teaching residents	Teacher in license shortage areas	Teachers with special needs	Experienced teachers in need of peer coaching
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1						
Asian or Pacific Islander	1						
Hispanic	1						
Black	2	1					
Other	3						

Total	9						

Table 2: Total number of mentors who were paid stipends under this grant for providing mentorship to teachers.

Number of Mentors by race or ethnic group	Tier 3 Teachers new to the profession or district	Teaching residents	Teacher in license shortage areas	Teachers with special needs	Experienced teachers in need of peer coaching
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1				
Asian or Pacific Islander	1				
Hispanic	1				
Black	2				
Other	3				
Paid Mentors of color who received additional stipends					
Total	**8**				

Analysis of Data

It is important to us to note that, while we have filled out the above matrices to honor structural requirements that allow important funds like these to be made available, the above matrices do not accurately represent the individual identities, mentoring relationships this project attempted to create, nor the mentoring relationships we feel are integral to teacher retention. First, a few of the participating teachers hold multiple racial identities.

Second, the traditional mentor/mentee relationship in the model laid out by the above matrices sets up a hierarchy defined by the number of years teaching or type of license, disregarding other forms of knowledge and suggesting that learning is unidirectional. In contrast, a feminist co-mentoring model that we articulate in our proposal urges us to see all teachers as leaders and all leaders as learners. We believe such a stance has a powerful role to play in both the mentorship and retention of all teachers—particularly American Indian Teachers and Teachers of Color who have historically been disenfranchised by hierarchical models like the ones suggested by the matrices in this report—by encouraging a reciprocal community of learners where everyone's expertise and leadership is honored regardless of what type of license or they hold, their position within a district/school, or the number of years they have worked as an educator. As such, the first matrix notes the participating teachers who had tier 3 licenses during our project, but it does not list all of the people who participated in the program as many of them had tier 4 licenses but expressed a desire for the type of mentorship the project offered. The second matrix accounts for only the participants who had tier 3 licenses, and (again) a few of the teachers have multiple racial identities that they wished to be reflected instead of being placed in the "other" category.

Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Funds Expenditure

Table 3: Grant Funds Expenditure

Amount	Description of Use of Funds	Primarily Used for:	Method of Progress Monitoring	Data
$3,000.00	Minnesota Writing Project facilitating the 3-day summer kick-off	☐ Recruitment ☐ Retention X Induction	Daily feedback forms	
$3,150.00	Mentor Teacher Planning Stipend	☐ Recruitment ☐ Retention X Induction	Weekly meetings during planning	
$3,900.00	Mentor Teacher Participation and Facilitation Stipend	☐ Recruitment ☐ Retention X. Induction	Monthly meetings	
$3,700.00	Childcare Stipends	☐ Recruitment ☐ Retention X Induction	Checking in with participants who have children about their availability and the degree to which the stipends are helping	
$4,000.00	Participant Stipends	☐ Recruitment ☐ Retention X. Induction	Attendance at programming	
$1,286.08	Food at in-person meetings	☐ Recruitment ☐ Retention X. Induction	Attendance at programming	
$324.95	Parking	☐ Recruitment ☐ Retention X. Induction	Attendance at programming	