

**Mentoring, Teacher Induction**  
**Dr. Eddie Peasant, Superintendent**  
**Starkville/Oktibbeha School District**

**Growing Teachers in Starkville**

Dr. Peasant shared some things that they were doing in Starkville that were helping to grow teachers and help with the Teacher Shortage.

**They have a collaboration with MS State University where the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade Middle School is housed on site with part of the College of Education.**

- Future Teachers are able to be in the building with the students and their teachers
- They have “Pods” outside the middle school classrooms designed for the Education Students to observe the classes without having to disturb the classes.
- The “Pods” also have access to sound, allowing the students to hear the teacher/student interactions in the classes.

The District holds a job fair every February. This helps to recruit teachers from other school districts, other universities and schools throughout the state. This is a great opportunity to share about their District and their ideas, but also teaching in general.

**Portrait of a Teacher** was designed by a group of current teachers, principals, and school administration to determine what the teachers within those districts should be.

Dr. Peasant believes that students should be included in the discussion about what they want their teachers to be as we heard from the group of students at the conference.

**Induction Program**

**This includes a 2-day program to prepare new teachers for the 1<sup>st</sup> day of class.**

- They become familiar with the school, the technology, the curriculum, their classroom and the expectations of the District.
- They are taken on a guided tour of the district and the schools within the district via school bus to open their eyes to where their students are coming from.
- They have impressed upon them the importance of the District’s Philosophy and beliefs.

New Teachers are assigned mentors who meet with them weekly depending on their needs. These mentors are assigned by the school principal.

**Novice Teacher Program is for the 1<sup>st</sup> year and sometimes 2<sup>nd</sup> year teachers.**

- This is ongoing throughout the year.
- They are assigned to observe 2 veteran teachers at their school.
- They are observed by a mentor teacher.
- They are asked to reflect on their experiences in their own teaching. They must review video of themselves.
- They attend PLC’s to help them continue to grow.

Mentors also meet to stay connected and to ensure they are on the same page with how they are mentoring new teachers. They have been able to implement a mentor/intervention teacher program that has allowed the District to hire a group of the best teachers to mentor teachers and intervene with children who need help. At this time, it is on a short-term basis, but they are hoping to be able to continue this practice.

**Answers pertaining to the Questions at the end of the Breakout Sessions:**

- Starkville Oktibbeha School District advertising for teachers/staff depends on their need. Generally, it is done on their website. It will utilize local news and will incentivize for positions when the need for a specific teacher (subject area) is great.
- Mentors also meet to stay connected and ensure they are “on the same page” with how they are mentoring the new teachers
- They decided not to attach a “number of years required to stay” to their incentive program.
- Their incentives went to all teachers within the needed subject area, not only to the new hires.
- They have been able to implement a mentor/intervention teacher program that has allowed the district to hire a group of the best teachers to mentor teachers and intervene with children who need help. At this time, it is on a short-term basis, but they are hoping to be able to continue this practice.
- Dr. Peasant would like the phrase “pay is not important” to be lost from the current vocabulary. He believes it is important because teachers should be paid what they are worth.
- Dr. Peasant feels the generational issues need to be addressed. There should be the proper level of support in place for the teachers as well as the students. There should also be teacher leadership possibilities available for the teachers who are strongly suited for the classroom instead of trying to draw them into the administration side of the education system.
- Dr. Peasant agreed with participants on helping teachers find the balance between work and home life so they and their families do not suffer which can also put a strain on the students.
- Dr. Peasant also thinks their needs to be a Teacher Academy in High Schools which is comprehensive of K-12 not just focused on Elementary Education.