

## PROFILE

# The New Teacher Center

## What they are doing:

The [New Teacher Center](#) (NTC) provides coaching and professional development, in person and online, to new teachers in its partner districts across the country. This year some 7,000 NTC mentors will work with more than 26,000 teachers who instruct an estimated 1.6 million students. NTC also works with school districts and state policy makers to develop programs to help new teachers succeed. While NTC has always considered academic mindsets and social and emotional learning (SEL) as part of its professional development model, it is capitalizing on current momentum in the field to integrate the development of SEL competencies with Common Core State Standards-aligned instruction.

NTC recently revised its Mentor Academy Series, a two-year curriculum for mentor professional development, to integrate SEL with the Common Core. This includes working with mentors to identify SEL competencies and get concrete about how to introduce them into teaching practice. NTC also has developed strategies and practices for school leaders to use in how they build relationships among faculty and staff, facilitate professional learning communities, and foster school climates that support SEL. The Acknowledge Alliance, a Silicon Valley-based organization that supports schools with counseling and mental health services, served as an early partner in integrating SEL more explicitly into their efforts.

NTC has just launched an [online resource](#) with tools and resources focused on SEL and academic mindsets to accompany its training and mentorship programs. These resources include observation and other formative assessment tools, classroom videos, lesson plans, articles, and blog posts, and strategies that enable teachers, mentors, and school leaders to explore the development of SEL and academic mindsets.



NTC mentors support new teachers to explicitly focus on SEL and growth mindsets in their teaching practice.

NTC regards implementation of the Common Core as a key entry point for SEL. It maintains that students will be more successful in learning Common Core content if they master SEL skills and behaviors, such as persevering in complex problem solving; valuing and understanding diverse perspectives; collaboration; giving sensitive, respectful, and critical feedback to peers; and articulating reasons for their decisions. One mentor noted: “With the SEL focus in our mentoring work, I notice the third-grade teachers are doing much better at working through problems in part because SEL gives them the vocabulary to support the problem solving process.” NTC uses a set of classroom videos and webinars to show new teachers what integration of SEL with the Common Core looks like in practice. (These are available through its [online resource](#).)

Many of the efforts focused on developing SEL and academic mindsets recognize the importance of developing these skills first in the adults who teach them. At NTC, mentors need to develop their SEL competencies and growth mindsets in order to effectively mentor new teachers, who in turn need to be aware of their own competency development. “Teachers need to have SEL competencies front and center the minute they come into teaching,” said Ellen Moir, CEO of NTC. By setting social and emotional learning goals and striving to improve, teachers and school leaders will ultimately improve their relationships as well as the school environment, thereby creating a place where students and adults thrive.

NTC has created observation tools and a coding system to help mentors and new teachers talk about SEL strengths and needs. Said one middle school mentor: “In a recent mentoring conversation with a first-year teacher, I drew upon SEL competencies to work on a range of issues related to judgment.... I thought if I guided the teacher to reflect on what judgment sounds and feels like, we could generate empathy and insight into how students may feel when they perceive they are being judged.”

Through a series of focus groups, NTC has sought to understand what tools and practices mentors and new teachers need. Topics like “Shaping Classroom Culture” and “Meeting Students Where They Are” have risen to the top. Thus, NTC is working to develop online and face-to-face professional development to support new teachers and mentors with these self-assessed areas of need, which clearly integrates social and emotional learning with learning differences.

In addition, NTC is pushing ahead in two additional areas. First, it is pursuing the addition of physical exercise into its focus on SEL and academic mindsets. This felt like a natural extension of the work underway, as research shows the connection between physical movement with SEL skills and academic performance. Second, NTC has been thinking about the integration of SEL competencies into its own organization and is working with its human resources team and other groups to develop and implement a plan for how SEL can become more a part of the culture and climate of NTC itself.

## What they are learning:

- **NTC echoes a core theme of many efforts in the field: SEL must be integrated into “every minute of every teacher’s practice.”** However, NTC wrestles with a key tension: a focus on SEL must be both explicit and also seamlessly integrated into the fabric of the day. It’s important to explicitly talk about SEL and academic mindsets but also have ways to practice and reinforce them implicitly embedded in all subjects. Because teachers will need to do this in their classrooms, NTC models this dual focus in its mentor academy.
- **New teachers as well as mentors have distinct challenges with their own social and emotional competencies.** For new teachers, they wrestle with feeling defeated, navigating school cultures and understanding their environments, and needing to build relationships with colleagues. For mentors, common issues include: developing trusting relationships with new teachers, developing healthy boundaries, learning how to manage difficult conversations with principals, and building leaders. For both mentors and new teachers, it takes practice as well as a supportive environment to build awareness and regulation of one’s own emotions.
- **For social and emotional development to be truly successful in a school, it must permeate the organization rather than being confined to a specific classroom or taught as a one-off program.** When adults in a school community or organization communicate in ways that show respect, empathy, inquiry, support, and compassion, overall well-being of teachers as well as students increases.

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*This profile is one of a series of profiles on organizations focused on developing effective learners.*

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