

NDEO Mentorship Program for PK-12 Dance Educators

The Mentorship Program for PK-12 Dance Educators serves as a support system for dance educators with fewer than five years of experience in the PK-12 field of dance education. It will also give dance educators with five or more years of experience in PK-12 an opportunity to reach out and assist new educators.

Background:

The first few years of PK-12 teaching are critical for the development of dance educators and the PK-12 field alike. During this time, new dance educators encounter an array of responsibilities and issues related to teaching, curriculum writing, performance productions, and program establishment and administration. As new teacher evaluation systems emerge in numerous states across the nation, performing these responsibilities with proficiency is paramount to securing and then maintaining a contracted position and tenure, where applicable. This can cause new teachers to feel overwhelmed. Given that dance educators are frequently the only dance teacher in their school and/or district, they often lack the camaraderie and available mentorship from experienced dance educators that is commonly accessible to teachers in music, visual arts, literacy, or math, for example. Further, dance educators are often responsible for the creation and development of more curricular infrastructure (graded courses of study, multi-grade frameworks, and assessments for classroom and/or district) than their counterparts in the other, more traditionally offered arts disciplines. A dance educator may need to create these far-reaching documents “from scratch” with little or no guidance from administrators.

It is estimated that up to fifty percent of new educators leave teaching within the first few years (Moore, 2016; Curry et al. 2012) and out of this, it is suggested half leave for other career options, implying dissatisfaction with PK-12 education (Curry et al. 2012). As a portion of the resulting vacancies may not be re-filled by schools, this represents a decrease in dance education offerings within PK-12 and threatens educational equity for dance education for PK-12 students.

NDEO's Mentorship Program for PK–12 Dance Educators aims to address this disparity through quality support from experienced PK-12 dance educators. New PK-12 dance educators will be paired with experienced dance education mentors, basing matches on criteria such as similar job attributes, disposition, philosophical outlook, and needs.

As a mentee, you will have the opportunity to develop a relationship with an experienced dance educator who can help you negotiate the first few years of teaching dance in a PK-12 setting. We learn something new every day. This is especially true during the first few years of teaching in PK-12 as you work to juggle teaching responsibilities, curriculum development, program administration, performance productions, and your teacher evaluation and tenure process. As a mentee, you will have the support of an experienced mentor/coach selected to match your personal disposition and current teaching situation.

As a mentor, you will have the opportunity to further examine your process and beliefs and draw from your experience as an educator as you guide a newer dance teacher, significantly contributing to the sustainability of the PK-12 dance education field. If you work in a district with a qualified teacher evaluation system, your participation in NDEO's Mentorship Program may provide exceptional evidence of your service to the field, thus supporting strong ratings. Each of us can recall our first years in PK-12 teaching when we needed an experienced individual that "had been through it" to give us advice, guidance, and reassurance. NDEO's Mentorship Program is an opportunity for new teacher mentees to receive valuable guidance from experienced mentors who seek to share their wealth of knowledge.

On a more global level, preserving new dance educators is perhaps one of the most important issues affecting the right and need for every child to experience dance education. Preserving new PK-12 dance educators in their positions lowers the possibility of the overall attrition of PK-12 dance teaching positions, increases the stability of dance education in PK-12 education, and keeps our nation on course with providing equity of dance education to every child.

With NDEO's leadership, support, and guidance, the Mentorship Committee hopes to create relationships that will last beyond this project.

References:

Curry, J. R., PhD, & O'Brien, E. R., PhD. (2012). Shifting to a wellness paradigm in teacher education: A promising practice for fostering teacher stress reduction, burnout resilience, and promoting retention. *Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry*, 14(3), 178-191.

Gardner, R. D. (2010). Should I stay or should I go? factors that influence the retention, turnover, and attrition of K- 12 music teachers in the united states. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 111(3), 112.

Moore, A. (2016). Stepping up SUPPORT for new teachers. *Educational Leadership*, 73(8), 60-64.

If you have questions, please send an email to mentorship@ndeo.org