



Kansas Early Career Special Educator Mentoring Initiative **2015**

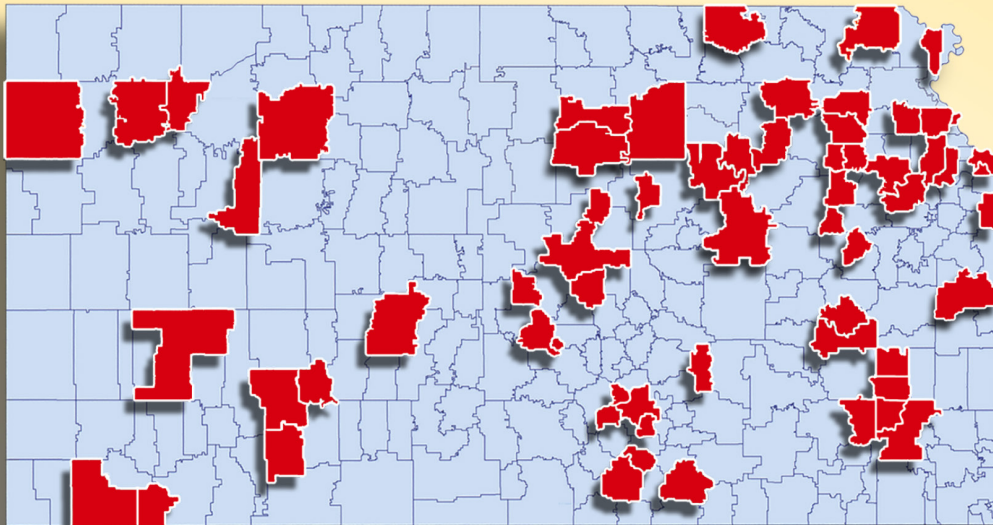


2015



The **Kansas Early Career Special Educator Mentoring Initiative** is designed to expand the skills and instructional competencies of novice special educators across Kansas. Participating educators are paired with qualified mentors with experience teaching students with similar exceptionalities at the same grade level. All individuals in their first three years as special educators in Kansas are eligible to participate. Through collaboration between partners at the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), the Technical Assistance System Network (TASN), the Kansas Education Employment Board (KEEB) at Greenbush Southeast Kansas Education Service Center, the New Teacher Center (NTC), Kansas Schools for the Blind and Deaf, and the Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC), the Kansas Early Career Special Educator Mentoring Initiative aims to retain highly qualified special educators in Kansas schools.

Kansas Districts with Mentees

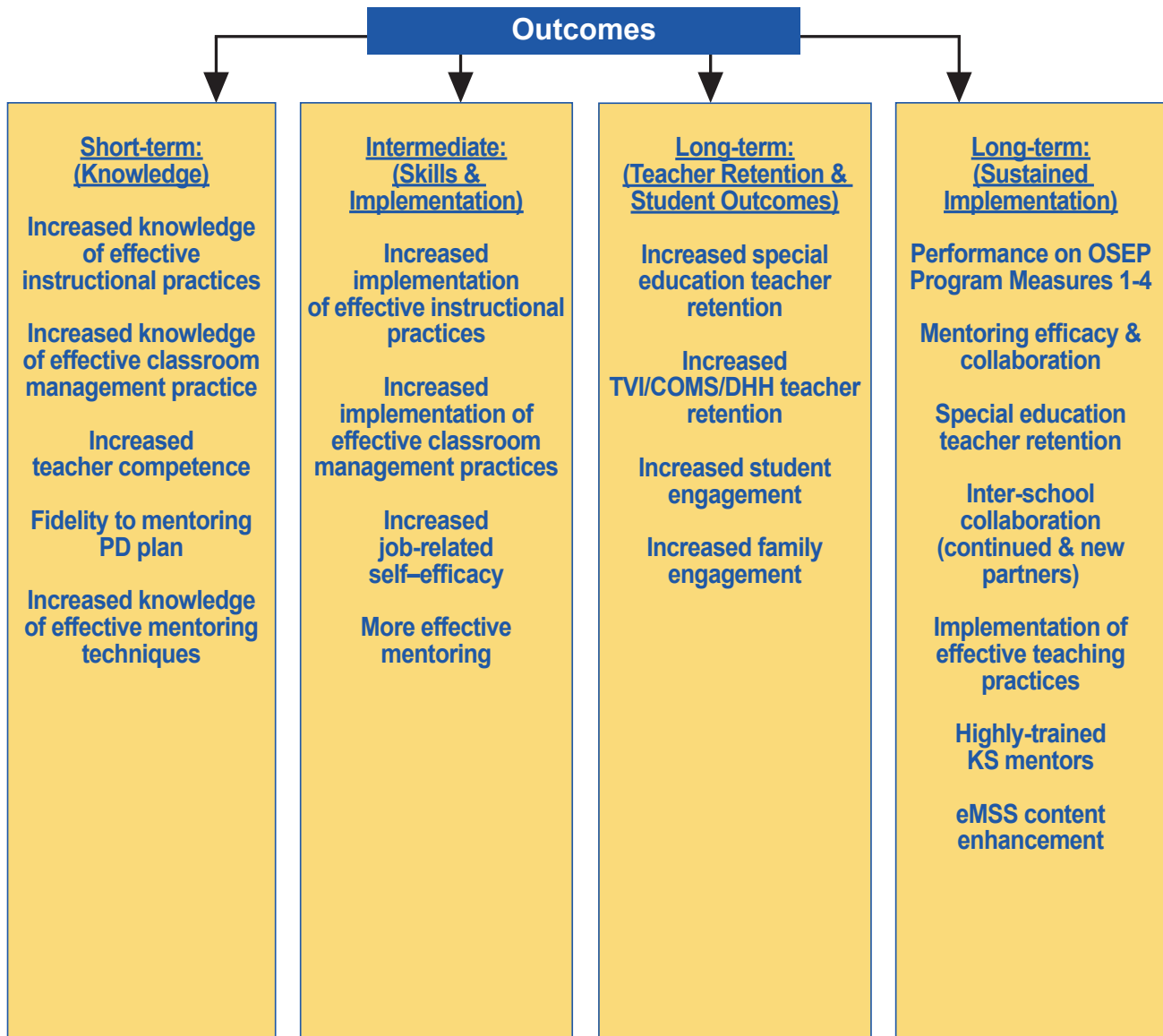


Additional participants not represented above:

- ANW Educational Cooperative
- Brown County Kansas Special Education Interlocal
- Greenbush - Southeast Kansas Education Service Center
- High Plains Educational Cooperative
- Kansas State School for the Blind/Kansas School for the Deaf
- Keystone Learning Services
- North Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative
- Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center
- Reno County Education Cooperative
- Sedgwick County Area Educational Services Interlocal Cooperative
- South Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative
- Southwest Kansas Area Cooperative
- Southwest Plains Regional Services
- Sumner County Educational Services

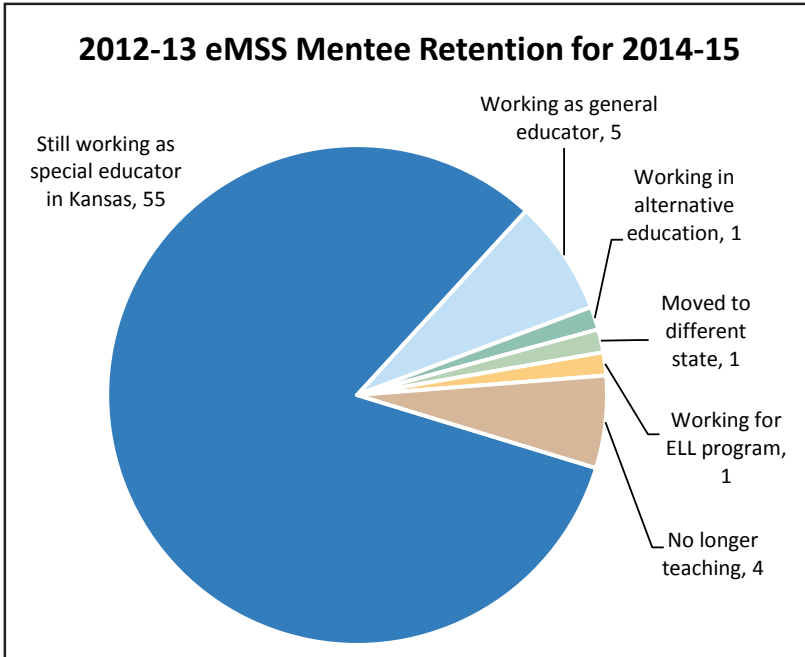
During the 2014-15 school year, 80 early career special educators in 29 districts participated in mentoring. Six of these mentees were returners from the 2012-13 school year, and eight were returners from the 2013-14 school year. In total, 80 districts in Kansas have been impacted by early career special educator mentoring throughout the project.

Logic Model



The Kansas Early Career Special Educator Mentoring Initiative produces a number of outcomes ranging from short- to long-term as described in the logic model below. Short-term outcomes impact teachers' knowledge base, intermediate outcomes reflect educator behaviors and job satisfaction, and long-term outcomes provide encompassing impacts on teacher retention and the engagement of students with disabilities and their families. Mentee participation data is reviewed monthly to create a self-correcting feedback loop for continuous improvement and identify areas of need to be addressed in mentoring activities. During the school year, mentees also shared video observations of their classroom instruction with their mentors. These videos were reviewed by both the mentor and mentee to guide ongoing coaching on the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices.

Teacher retention is an important outcome of The Kansas Early Career Special Educator Mentoring Initiative. In 2000, the Council of Exceptional Children found that 40% of special education teachers entering the field leave special education before their fifth year of teaching. Through the mentoring process, the initiative seeks to provide new teachers with the resources and support they need to succeed at their jobs and feel empowered to continue providing high-quality instruction.



To measure retention, participants are tracked through an annual survey, which is administered to mentees in February/March of each year. When necessary, additional data and data verification is obtained from KSDE. Of the 67 mentees that participated during the 2012-2013 school year, 55 of them (82.1%) are still working as special educators in the state of Kansas. Five mentees switched to teaching as general educators, one mentee is now working in alternative education, one mentee moved to a different state, and one mentee is working in a program for English Language Learners. Four mentees are no longer teaching.

The graph above shows the status of the 2012-13 mentees two years after initial participation in mentoring.

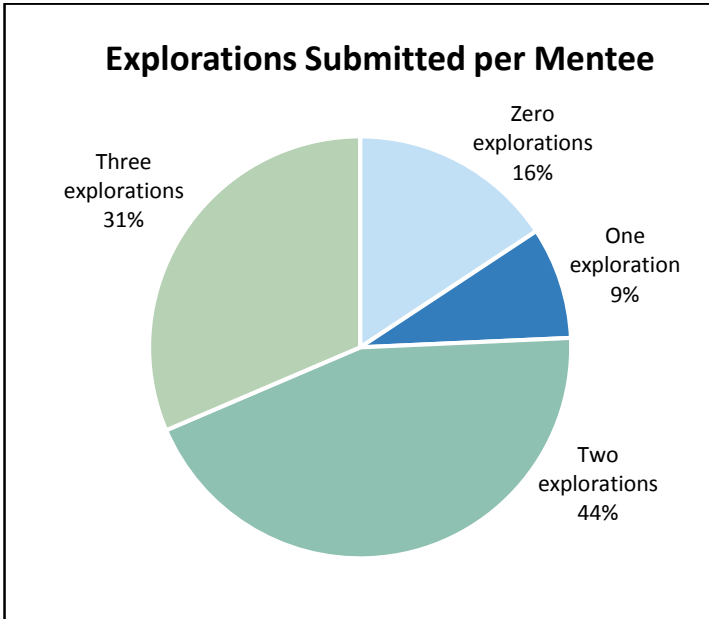
In addition to coaching support from their mentors, mentees are provided with additional online training through the eMSS training protocol. This training protocol has been developed and rigorously researched by the New Teacher Center. All training content is reviewed by national experts to ensure its quality and usability. Training consists of topical Explorations and Dilemmas. Explorations are eight-week focused inquiries in which a team of mentees and mentors investigate an instructional topic. These Explorations are designed to help mentees improve their instruction and connect more effectively with students. Mentees have the

Exploration	Completers
Developing IEPs	19
Accommodations & Modifications	11
Expanded Core Curriculum	10
Working with Paraprofessionals	8
Managing Student Behavior	8
Using Technology	6
Possible Selves	4
Reading Strategies	2
Social Emotional Learning	2
Common Core Math	1
Effective Labs	1
Scientific Articles	1
Small Group Instruction	1
Total	74

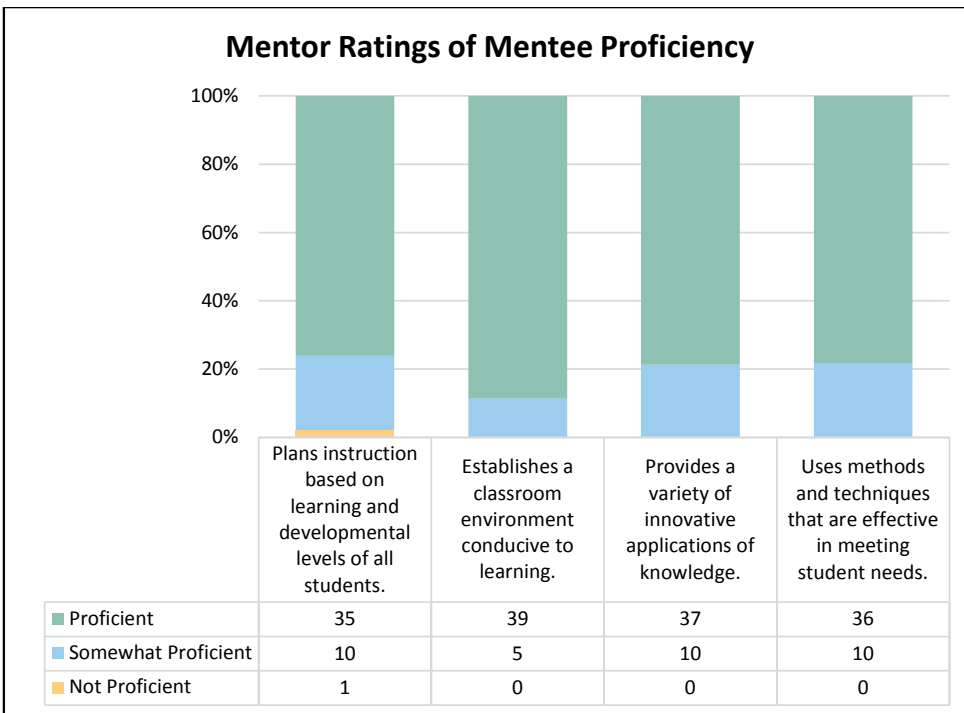
opportunity to participate in up to three Explorations per year during the Fall, Winter, and Spring cycles. The Kansas Education Employment Board had collaborated with the New Teacher Center to develop additional Explorations specific to the needs identified by Kansas educators. These Explorations include developing IEPs (released in 2013), supporting students with visual impairments (released in 2014), engaging families (released in 2015), and Multi-Tier System of Supports (anticipated release in 2016).

During the 2014-15 school year, participants completed explorations spanning 13 diverse topics. A summary of the completed explorations by topic is provided in the table to the left.

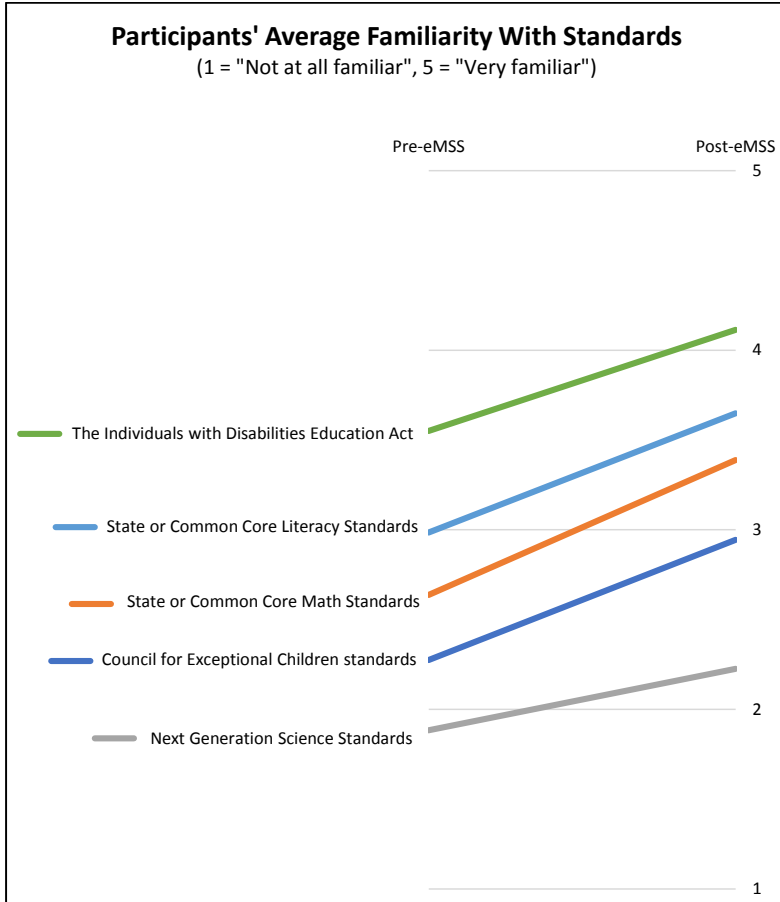
The online mentoring program also encourages teachers to participate in Dilemmas to gain input and guidance from the community of mentors and mentees. Dilemmas are structured, interactive discussions that provide guidance and ideas for addressing classroom challenges as they arise. These short discussions aim to offer practical solutions to pedagogical challenges.



Video observations of classroom instruction were conducted during the school year using a system of project-provided iPads and Swivl mounts to track the teachers’ movement throughout the classroom during the observation. Each mentee was asked to share up to three recordings of their instruction throughout the year with their mentors. After reviewing the video, the mentor met virtually with the mentee to providing coaching and feedback. Of the 80 participating mentees during the 2013-14 school year, 59 submitted a total of 134 observations. This represents a median of two observations submitted per mentee.



These observation sessions, along with the online coaching provided through eMSS, provided the basis for mentors to assess their mentees’ proficiency on indicators aligned with the Kansas Educator Evaluation Guidelines. In March 2015, mentors received a survey asking them to rate each mentee’s level of proficiency on these constructs. A total of 17 mentors provided data on 61 of the 80 mentees. The chart shows mentors’ assessment of their mentees’ proficiency in several instructional constructs.



Mentees were surveyed by the New Teacher Center before and after participation in the eMSS program. After participation, mentees indicated that they had improved their familiarity with a variety of educational standards, including Literacy Standards, Math Standards, and Council for Exceptional Children standards.

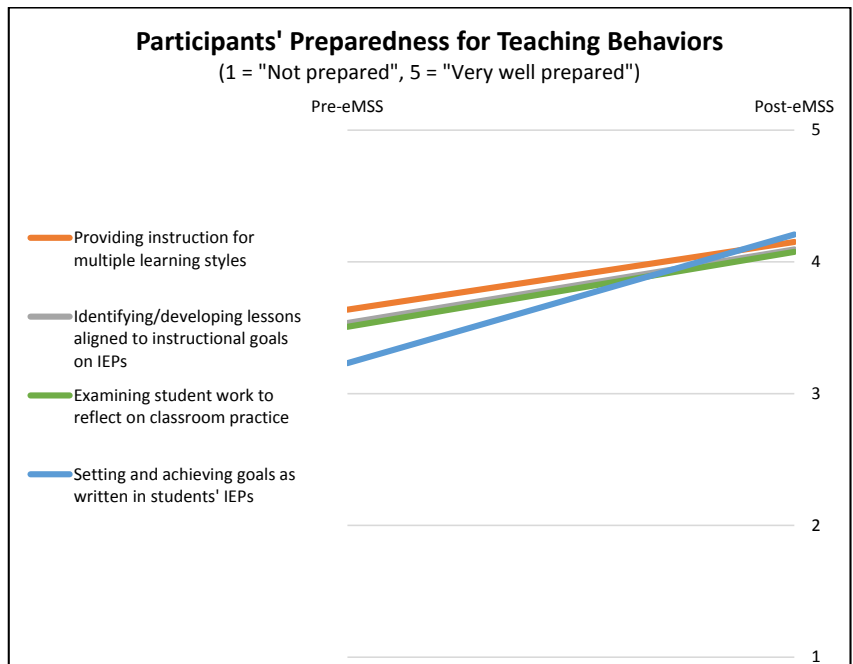
“ It helped me to plan more effective assessment and reflect more effectively on my teaching practices, grading practices, and data collection. ”

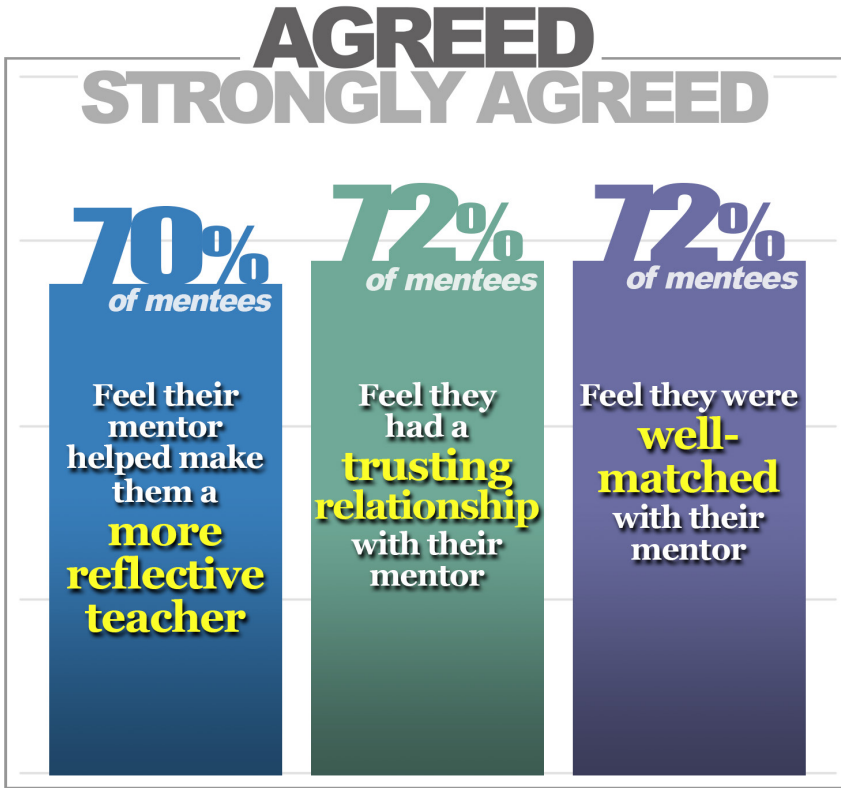
Mentee

Mentees also indicated they were better prepared in a variety of teaching behaviors and strategies. The greatest increase in preparedness was for setting and achieving goals as written in students' IEPs.

“ I was able to better serve my students on their individual levels. ”

Mentee





Mentees' survey results indicate several positive outcomes related to closeness with their mentor and reflective practice from participation in the mentoring program. Some of the reported benefits of participation include becoming a more reflective teacher, building a trusting relationship with the mentor, and feeling well-matched with the mentor.

“ I learned how to implement strategies that directly impacted student learning. **”**
Mentee



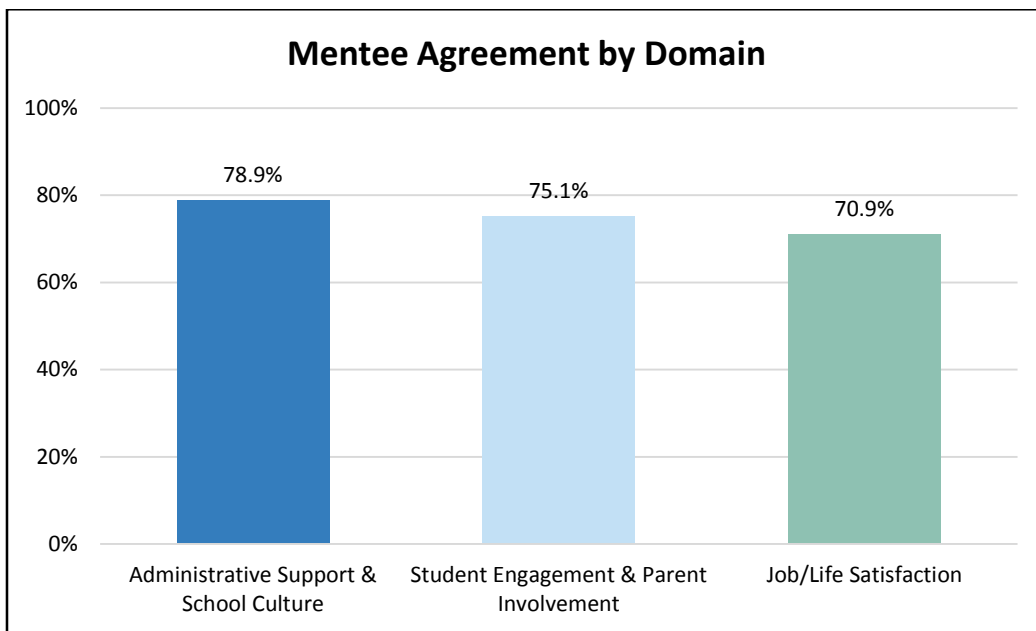
Participation in the eMSS program also had benefits for mentors. Mentors reported that they felt they were effective in providing content support and helping their mentees use effective instructional strategies in the classroom. Additionally, mentors reported that their engagement with eMSS helped them feel more encouraged to take a leadership role in other educational opportunities in their careers.

In addition to the New Teacher Center’s survey, for which results are reported on the previous pages, mentees were asked to complete a Kansas-specific survey in March 2015. A total of 56 mentee responses were collected. The survey consisted of two sections: the first contained 18 items covering topics relating to the teaching environment, and the second included 10 items assessing the constructs consistent with the Kansas Educator Evaluation Guidelines.

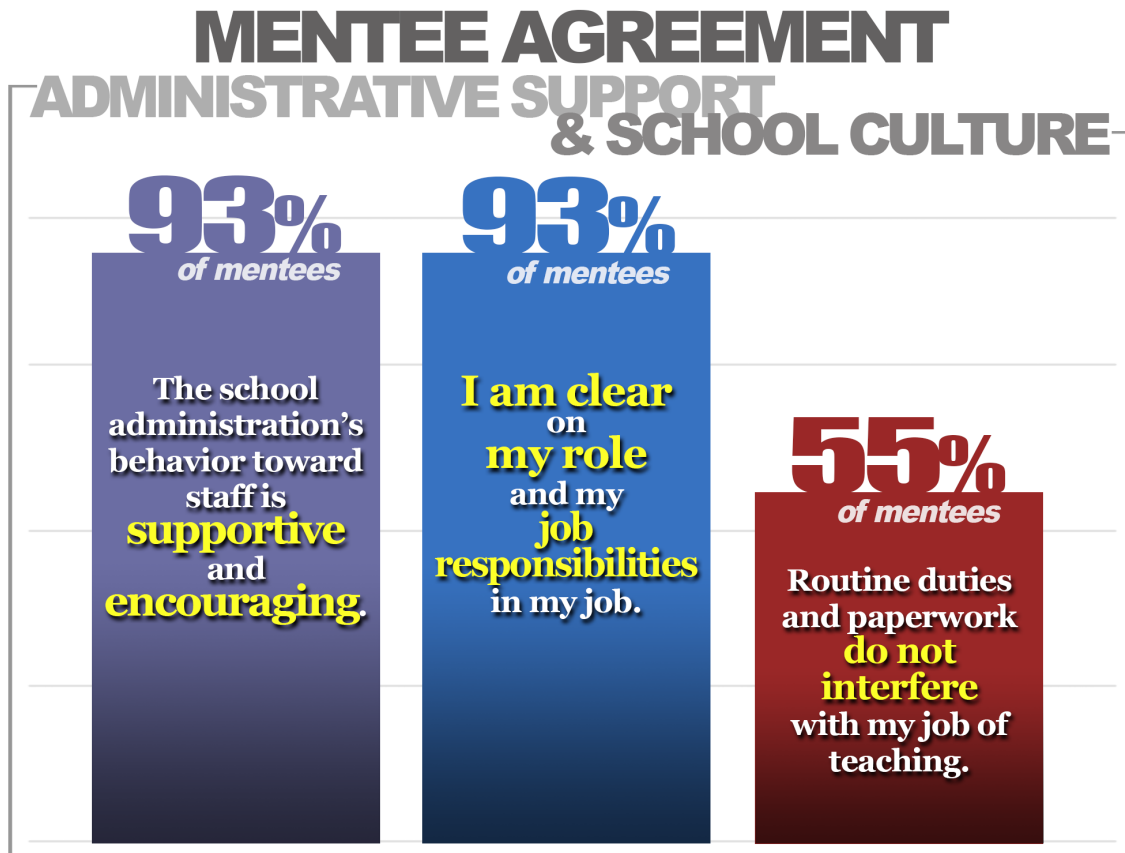
“ I think you have a wonderful team of people who are dedicated and knowledgeable in their fields. ”
Mentor

“ I knew that if I had an issue then I would have someone that I could turn to for advice. ”
Mentee

The survey items were grouped into three domains: Administrative Support and School Culture, Student Engagement and Parent Involvement, and Job and Life Satisfaction. Overall, responses indicated that mentees felt very positive about their roles and supports provided. The average percent of mentees indicating agreement (i.e., ratings of five or above on the seven-point scale) with the statements are shown by domain in the the chart below.



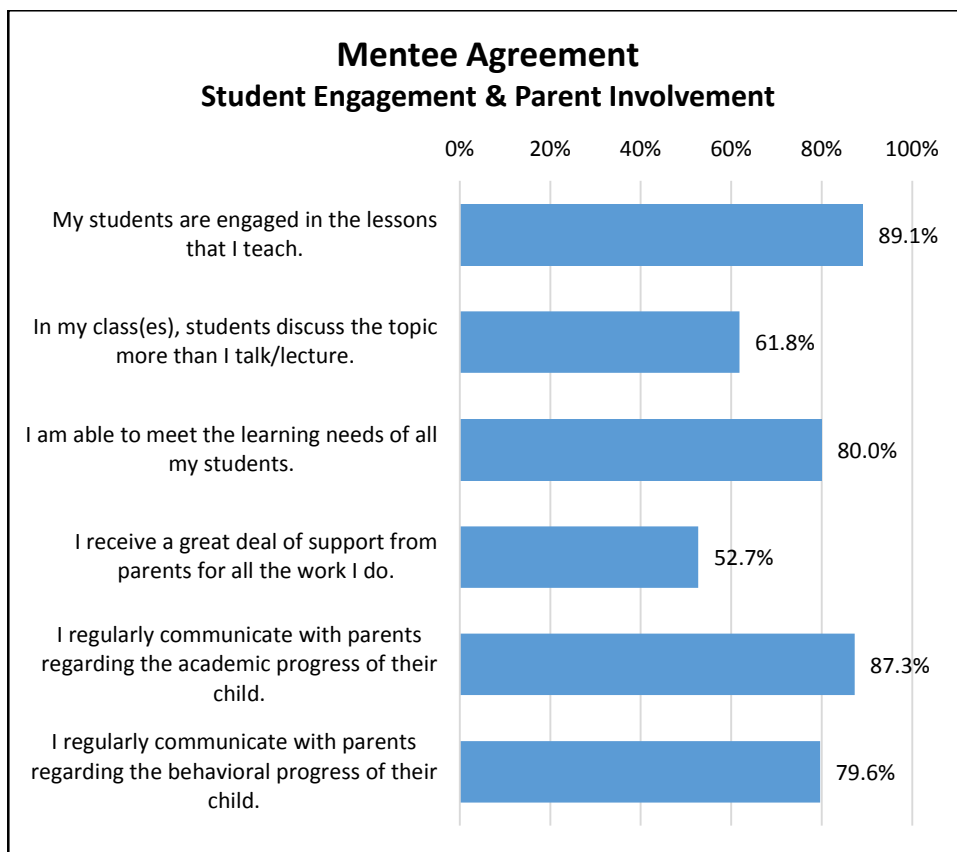
Administrative Support and School Culture was the highest-scoring domain overall. Echoing the results from 2014, mentees felt very supported and encouraged by their school administration's behavior toward them, and felt they were clear on their role and responsibilities as teachers. However, many struggled with routine duties and paperwork interfering with their teaching.



“ My mentor was very understanding and encouraging. It was incredibly helpful and validating to have that support and flexibility. ”
Mentee

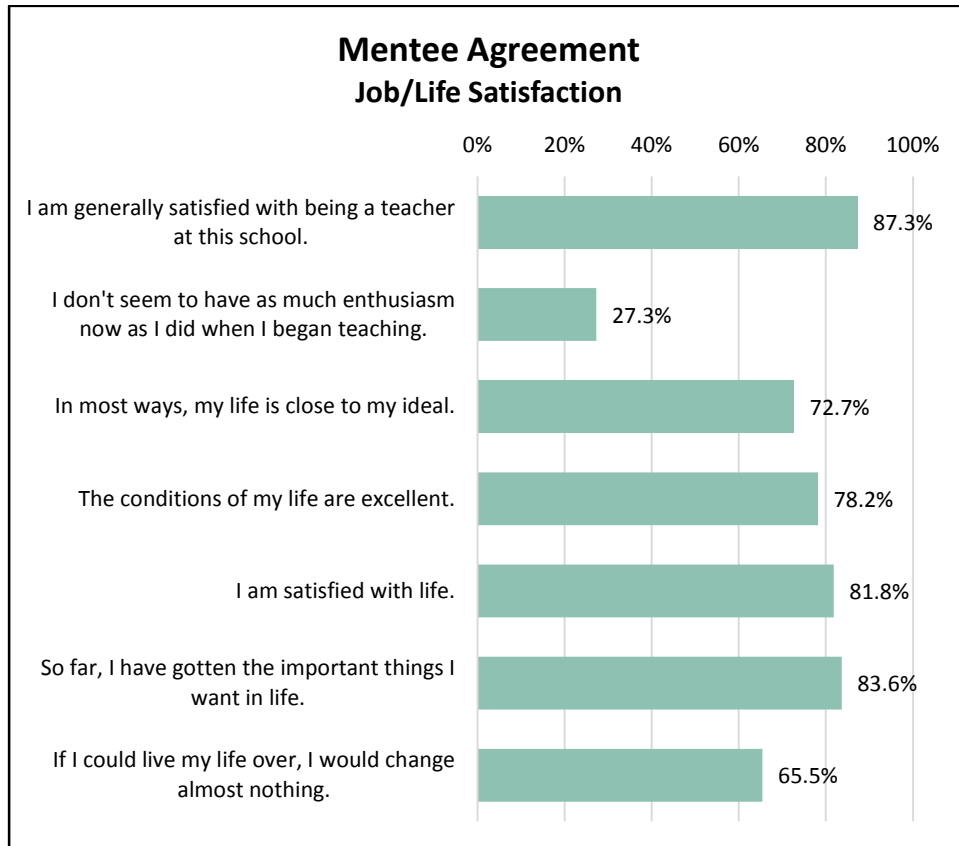
Student Engagement and Parent Involvement was the second highest-scoring domain overall. Mentees felt strongly that their students were engaged in their lessons, and they felt that they were able to meet the learning needs of all students. Mentees also reported high levels of communication with parents on their students' academic and behavioral progress. However, many did not feel supported by parents for their work, suggesting that communication between teachers and parents needs to be further developed.

“ I was able to ask questions and get answers from another teacher who understood what I was trying to do. ”
Mentee



“ My mentor was very good at communicating, following up, and checking in to see if there was anything she could do to help. ”
Mentee

Though the Job/Life Satisfaction domain was the lowest-scoring overall, 87.3% of teachers reported that they were generally satisfied being a teacher at their school, and 81.8% reported being satisfied with their lives. Mentees had also maintained their enthusiasm for teaching, with only 27.3% experiencing a decline in enthusiasm.



The Kansas Early Career Special Educator Mentoring Initiative has expanded substantially in the past three years and is now operating at full capacity. Through the project, special educators in 80 districts across Kansas have participated in mentoring. The project is showing positive impacts on the retention of special educators in Kansas schools, and it is clear that these educators are feeling supported in their roles and becoming proficient in establishing a classroom environment that is conducive to learning and effectively meeting the needs of their students.

“**Thank you. I care very much about teacher preparation, induction, and education/development and I think eMSS does a great job supporting that.**”
Mentor

Kansas Department of Education Early Childhood, Special Education and Title Services

www.ksde.org

Kansas Technical Assistance Systems Network (TASN)

www.ksdetasn.org

Kansas Education Employment Board

www.kansasteachingjobs.com

Kansas Parent Information Resource Center

www.kpirc.org

New Teacher Center

www.newteachercenter.org

Greenbush Southeast Kansas Education Service Center

www.greenbush.org

Kansas TASN Evaluation - Research Collaboration, University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning

www.researchcollaboration.org

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This report was developed by SPDG evaluators at the University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning. Contact Dr. Amy Gaumer Erickson at (785) 864-0517 or agaumer@ku.edu with questions about the project evaluation.