



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Library Services Mentoring Program
Program Category: Organizational Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Victoria Davis
Title: Public Relations Specialist
Department: Public Relations
Telephone: 804-501-4933 Website: www.henrico.gov
Email: dav127@henrico.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Monica Smith-Callahan
Title: Deputy County Manager for Community Affairs
Signature: 

Program Overview

Henrico County Public Schools' Library Services Mentoring Program offers new librarians valuable professional collaboration and support. New librarians are paired with seasoned mentors to provide role models for effective teaching, learning, information access, program administration and overall guidance. Monthly meetings, regular conferences and observations give new librarians time to ask questions, seek guidance, learn new techniques and obtain feedback. This ensures that new librarians feel confident in delivering optimal instruction and support to students and staff. The program has positively impacted hundreds of librarians, fostering a rich tradition of mentorship in the library community.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

The focus is on supporting and retaining librarians by enhancing job preparedness. Often, librarians find themselves as the solitary staff member — or one of two — in their respective school buildings handling the librarian role. Navigating this unique position can be overwhelming without adequate assistance. The mentorship program provides robust support for new staff members, ensuring that they are well-equipped to meet the distinctive demands of the job. This initiative not only helps with the retention of librarians within the school division but also emphasizes the importance of understanding library services procedures, efficient ordering processes, effective vendor collaboration and meeting expectations. There is also a commitment to fostering an understanding of the diverse communities within Henrico County, empowering librarians to serve these varied populations with excellence.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The HCPS Library Services Department initiated this mentoring program 20 years ago and its enduring success has made the coordinators and education specialist sought-after resources on

its effectiveness. The program's triumph lies in the unwavering dedication of carefully chosen mentors committed to supporting new librarians and each other. Remarkably, these mentors and coordinators, driven by passion and care for the profession, receive no financial stipend for their immense hard work and commitment. Their efforts, however, deserve recognition for the extraordinary impact they have on the program's success.

What sets this program apart is the genuine investment of coordinators and mentors in making school libraries and librarians the absolute best they can be. It goes beyond a mere checklist item; it is a life-changing experience. Bonds formed between mentors and mentees, as well as among fellow librarians, extend beyond professional development — they last a lifetime. In a profession where mentoring programs are commonplace, this initiative stands out as a testament to the transformative power of nurturing those new to the profession.

How the Program Was Carried Out

Monthly meetings are held throughout each school year. Each month, a mentor hosts the meeting at their school, so that new librarians can see how other libraries are set up to gain ideas for their own spaces. During the summer, a new agenda is planned for each meeting, but space and time is provided in the monthly agenda if topics need to change. The co-chairs and education specialist meet to finalize each month's agenda. A typical agenda schedule:

- September: Management and building relationships, meeting with vendors.
- October: Lesson planning, circulation.
- November: Collection development.
- December: First semester check-in, sharing collaboration tools.
- January: Planning for second semester, research and databases.

- February: Collaboration, reading promotion, prepping for Read Across America and School Library Month.
 - March: Library professional learning.
 - April: Readers advisory, library assessment.
 - May: End-of-year closeout, summer professional development.
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- Mentors are selected with precision, matching them to mentees based on school level (elementary, middle or high), educational experience and location. Our mentors include several current and past Librarian of the Year award-winners, Teacher of the Year winners and local and state conference presenters. This meticulous approach ensures that mentees receive guidance tailored to their specific needs and circumstances.
 - “Support and reflection time” is offered each school year for new librarians to observe their mentors in the mentors’ school library settings.
 - New employee training from central office personnel by the department’s head cataloger and data systems supervisor.
 - Follow-up visits from library education specialists.
 - Observation visits to other school libraries.
 - Mentor visiting mentee’s library.

Financing and Staffing

This role is voluntary, with hours contributing toward recertification points. Professional learning points are granted upon completion of the end-of-year survey in May. The program comes at no financial cost, yet it provides an invaluable service to new and veteran librarians.

Program Results

The program's success has led to an expansion, with library assistants now serving as mentors for new library assistants. Remarkably, our retention rate stands at an impressive 65%, as mentees choose to remain within our school division as librarians for five years or more. The impact of the program is evident in the achievements of new librarians, who have not only won Virginia Association of School Librarians awards but have also presented talks at regional and state VAASL conferences and earned recognition as teachers of the year at their schools.

The ripple effect continues as mentees evolve into leaders within their schools, taking on roles such as positive behavioral interventions and support coordinators, project-based learning leaders, team leaders for cohorts seeking certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, grant-winners and even mentors themselves. Empowered by the program, mentees are better equipped to serve their schools, students and teachers, demonstrating the direct impact of comprehensive preparation.

This program's reach extends across all three educational levels—Elementary, Middle and High schools—creating a holistic and inclusive support system for librarians at every stage.

Statements from mentees:

- *“The mentor program was very important to me as a new librarian. I was overwhelmed and really had no idea where to begin. Meeting monthly with a group of people for ideas and support was great.” - N.L.*
- *“The mentor program has been extremely helpful for me, providing a mentor that has helped me to get started in my first year and a resource for me to bounce questions and ideas off throughout the year. The meetings are helpful as well, providing a space for new*

librarians to discuss ideas and issues within a smaller group and with their mentees.” - M.M.

- *“It was helpful to have an additional colleague dedicated to helping and guiding me with any concerns or questions, and the monthly meetings offered a forum to focus on specific concerns for new librarians.” - A.M.*
- *“The mentor/mentee program was vital to my first year as a librarian. I had someone knowledgeable to reach out to and I had peers in a similar boat as me. The program helped me feel like I wasn't drowning that first year.” - C.L.*

Statements from mentors:

- *“It allowed me to ensure relevancy with new educational theories and trends when mentoring new librarians.” - T.H.*
- *“I learned as much as the mentees. The best part for me was just communicating with other librarians each month either in person or virtually. I enjoyed talking with librarians each month about lessons, ideas and solutions to problems.” - L.B.*
- *“The program was a wonderful way to support new librarians and I found that I always learned new things from being a part of this special group.” - D.T.*

Statements from librarians who have served as both mentors and mentees:

- *“Being a part of the mentor/mentee program has had a great impact on my work as a librarian. This program enables experienced and new librarians to come together to talk and share ideas. This helps everyone gain new perspectives on how to run the library program. Sometimes being in the library is like working on an island. We are all doing our jobs at the same time, so we don't get to see what others are doing. The mentor program*

enables librarians to talk about and share things that are going on in individual schools and libraries.” - J.D.

- “It provided a safe, neutral place to share and be heard outside of my school. I also gained new ideas that don't fall under the ‘the way it's always been done’ category.” - L.C.
- “As a mentee, the program set a wonderful foundation for my work in Henrico. I've never felt so supported from the start. It is very thorough, covering everything you may encounter. As a mentor, I still learned at every meeting we had. I still got resources and useful stuff every time I went.” - M.P.
- “As a mentee, it was huge for me to learn the HCPS way! It was so reassuring to have someone to call on. As a mentor, it helped me be more purposeful in my approach to the role of librarian.” - D.C.
- “I love the option to share fresh ideas with both seasoned librarians and new librarians. Being able to observe other librarians my first year was an invaluable experience and provided insight into how libraries run and the day-in-and-day-out details that you don't learn in school.” - A.L.

Brief summary

Often, librarians find themselves as the solitary staff member — or one of two — in their respective school buildings handling the librarian role. Navigating this unique position can be overwhelming without adequate assistance. Henrico County Public Schools’ Library Services Mentoring Program offers new librarians valuable professional collaboration and support. New librarians are paired with seasoned mentors to provide role models for effective teaching, learning, information access, program administration and overall guidance. Monthly meetings, regular conferences and observations give new librarians time to ask questions, seek guidance, learn new techniques and obtain feedback. This ensures that new librarians feel confident in delivering optimal instruction

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