

MODERATOR: Again, welcome everyone, to today's webinar. Today's webinar is a joint collaboration between the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services. The National Coalition is comprised of over 30 national, state, and local organizations, whose members include the American Speech Language Hearing Association and the Council for Exceptional Children, who are the coalition co-chairs, as well as the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, NEA, AST, the National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of School Nurses, and many other organizations.

So all of these organizations have been working together to provide information and resources and raise awareness concerning the critical issue of personnel shortages in special education and related services, also known as specialized instructional support personnel. Together these organizations have been highlighting successful strategies that states and local districts have used to help recruit and retain qualified personnel in schools across the country.

This afternoon we will hear about one such successful strategy. Our speakers will describe two mentoring programs that have been highly effective in improving job satisfaction and increasing retention of school personnel. And now I'd like to introduce today's speakers.

Jean Blosser is a leading national expert, author, and presenter in school-based speech language service delivery. She has authored several books, articles, clinical materials, and resources for teachers and parents. In her role as vice president of progressive therapy, Jean provides leadership for many . . . progressive program development and quality initiatives.

Recognizing the importance of nurturing professionals for the future, Jean established several mentoring programs designed to provide support for therapists at various points along their career path. She will be describing one of those programs during today's webinar, the Progressive Career Launch program. She's a fellow of the American Speech Language Hearing Association, the Ohio Speech and Hearing Association, and the American Council on Education.

And our other speaker today is Fran Silverman. Fran Silverman is a speech language pathologist who has been serving students in Anne Arundel County Public Schools for the last 32 years. She received her bachelor's degree from Queens College and a master's degree from the University of Maryland. In August 2001, Fran brought her knowledge and experience to a newly-formed position that aims at recruiting and retaining qualified speech language pathologists.

As a mentor, she assists in accelerating the learning process of county policies and procedures, and increasing competence and confidence of first-year speech language pathologists. She is now celebrating ten years as a mentor in her position. And in her position, she touched careers of over 143 speech language pathologists and remains passionate in the goal to recruit and retain these dedicated professionals. I am pleased to turn the program over to our two wonderful presenters. Jean and Fran?

SILVERMAN: Thank you.

BLOSSER: Thank you very much. Well, welcome. Very exciting to be doing this presentation today and talking about our favorite subject of mentoring new professionals. As we know, school districts across the country really struggle to cope with the critical shortage of speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists, as well as other related service providers. Today we're going to use different terms, what we'll call, we'll refer to specialized instructional support personnel and related service providers, since we mean the same thing when we do that.

School services can be very challenging, especially to employees who are new to the school setting, such as people in their first year of employment, as well as individuals who've, who are moving from one employment setting, such as medical setting, to the school setting. And as well, there are people who have been working as teachers and other types of educators for many years in a school setting, and they've decided to go the path of becoming a speech pathologist or occupational therapist or physical therapist, and they often struggle as well.

That, viewing people going through their challenges, has encouraged both Fran and I in our different settings to embrace the idea of mentoring as a solution for helping people get oriented and succeed in the school setting. Here's a little vignette that you might have heard before.

Julie began her new position as a speech language pathologist in a large metropolitan school district, very eager to help students with moderate and severe disabilities. Her excitement soon turned to frustration as she tried to schedule a caseload of 75 students around 35 classroom teachers' schedules, as well as prepare for IEP meetings and speak with parents for the first time about their children's disabilities.

She was nearly ready to change directions and relocated to a clinical setting, when her mentor, Ann, gave her suggestions and new insight. Ann showed Julie how to analyze her caseload, configure her schedule using a three-to-one scheduling model, communicate with the principal and teachers, and take advantage of the support offered by her mentor. Within three weeks, her calls for help changed to reports of smoother days and progress. She's now convinced that schools are for her.

This is a story that Fran and I participate in on a daily basis, and it's an exciting one. Today we have three, four outcomes that we would like to achieve. We'd like you to be able to describe how a structured mentoring program supports new instructional support personnel, we'd like you to be able to list the essential components of an effective mentoring program, we'd like you to identify why mentoring programs would be beneficial for your district, and finally, we'd like you to leave the session and create or enhance a mentoring program for your related service providers in your district.

SILVERMAN: There is a webinar attached to this presentation that could either be downloaded by you or, as you will see on the next slide, is a part of this presentation. It is provided to assist you with thinking about our comments and recommendations in relation to your school district and your school's needs. We would like you to be able to think about your related services staff, your challenges, and your ideas. This is an example of the webinar guide. And just make sure that, you know, as we go through it, you could either look at it or download it at a later time.

Five stressors for principals. Many stressed, there are many stressors in the life of a principal, but many of them revolve around hiring and acclimating related service providers to their school buildings. And as you look at these stressors, be thinking about, do they match the stressors that you think about each day?

What is mentoring? Mentoring is a one-to-one relationship, which has its goal of helping another individual achieve self-directed goals. It is confidential and mutual beneficial, and it promotes staff development, recruitment and retention, and also the ultimate goal, to create satisfaction among education partners.

BLOSSER: So how does mentoring look in our district or your building? We'd like you to, as we're going through the presentation today, to take some time to think about what kinds of mentoring is occurring in your district or in your building, and then be comparing as we're going through, to see if there are nuances of your program that you'd like to share with your participants here today later on, or something you'd like to add and enhance your program.

We look at mentoring from a continuum, as based on our experience and what we've observed in school districts that we associate, we see a continuum of mentoring options that range from no mentoring in some locations, to a model where the staff, new staff come on, and they seek experience from an experienced colleague on an informal basis. It may be somebody down the hall, it might be somebody that they sit next to at a meeting, it might be somebody that befriends them. It's a very informal sort of mentoring structure.

There are also models where administrative staff or supervisors are asked to provide mentoring as part of their role in interacting with the staff. And then in other locations, there's a designated experienced staff member paired with a new staff member on a more formal basis. And finally, there are formal induction programs for new staff.

So based on that continuum, if you could take a look at this slide and sort of indicate for yourselves where on the continuum is your program, and what, as we're listening, what would it take to modify or change your mentoring structure? We've identified several essential components of a structured mentoring program.

First and foremost is administrative leadership and support. And that's why I think this was such an exciting webinar to be able to do, because there are so many administrators attending today. Next, we need to have defined goals with the mentoring program, and depending on what the challenges and needs and culture and climate are, the goals may be different.

We also have to suggest focusing on one area, so whether it's focusing on a grade, focusing on a discipline, focusing on a particular subject matter. There need to be standardized guidelines and milestones. Eligibility guidelines, who gets mentored, who provides the mentoring, should be well defined. We need a mentoring selection and matching process, matching mentors and mentees. We call them mentor partners. And a training element so that people know what to do. And finally, an accountability, to ensure that the mentoring is taking place.

SILVERMAN: Now we're going to look at our profile of two different mentoring programs, and you will see that in many cases we have similar goals and outcomes. I

would like to tell you a little bit about the Anne Arundel County school system. For those who don't know where we are located, it is the fifth largest school district in the state of Maryland.

It is located on the western side of the Chesapeake Bay, and it is between Baltimore and Washington, which makes us very . . . it ranks as 39th largest school district in the U.S., with a population of approximately 75,000 students. And there are 7,881 students currently receiving special education services, and 3,769 students receive speech and language services. So as I mentioned before, we are a large system.

Currently we have 152 speech language pathologists filling part-time and full-time positions. These SOPs serve our infant and toddler, elementary, middle, high school, developmental centers, and student assessment teams. Our issue in our county, one of our big issues, is that approximately 40% of our 152 speech language pathologists are eligible or have been eligible for retirement.

This school year, there are 18 new speech language pathologists and SOPs seeking ASHA certification and full licensure. Okay. Thank you.

So that's one profile, and that is a school district, which I'm sure many of you are representing. Second profile is progressed therapy. And we are a large national education solutions organization. We provide outsourced services to school districts across the country. The way I explain the progressed system of our size is that we cover the smile of the United States, from Washington up to Massachusetts and very many states in between.

We have school-based SOPs, OTs and PTs. And we provide total program management, as well as staffing. Our regional managers and area coordinators provide supervision to a community of clinicians in their regions. And we have very many regions across the country. That represents 600 professionals, and you can see the breakdown, about 60% speech language pathologists, 30% OTs, and 10% PTs. We bring innovative service-delivery models and staff for special education instructional support.

So we cover all different types of school districts, approximately 250 districts, 27 states. And that means that we're providing services to about 33,000 students, and we partner with school districts in order to do that. So you can see the challenges in terms of the spread of clinicians and the need to try and create a way of providing mentoring at a very distributed workforce. Sorry.

We have two different approaches to mentoring that we're going to talk about today. And those two approaches enable us both to achieve very similar goals and outcomes, but we are established and set up in very different ways. So Fran, what'll first tell you about her program in Anne Arundel.

SILVERMAN: Our program has a name called SLIPS, which stands for Speech Language Induction Program, and it was initiated in Anne Arundel County in August 2001. I am a part of a trio, as we have two special education mentors, one for elementary and one for secondary, and their program is called TIPS.

The reason that mentoring became a possibility in Anne Arundel County was that we wanted to deal with the 10% to 15% yearly attrition rate that we were always dealing with, and the induction program was started to recruit and retain SLPs. Initially, SLIPS

was a part-time program, and became full-time after approximately three years of documenting its success.

SLIPS is a structured mentoring program that mentors all new SLPs, regardless of their years of experience, and those recent grads working to obtain their certificate of clinical competence from the American Speech and Hearing Association. In Anne Arundel County, the mentoring program focuses on the following.

Number one, ensuring quality services. And this occurs through trainings, on-site visits, and visitations and observations, providing on-the-job staff-embedded assistance in areas such as IEP development, assessments, lesson planning, service delivery and service delivery options, computerized web-based programs, and data collection. And our ultimate goal also is to increase SLP confidence and competence and to accelerate the learning process of county policies and procedures.

Our school year gets underway very, very quickly, and our SLPs need to hit the ground running. And we even provide some early trainings, prior to the beginning of the school year, to get them ready for the professional roles and responsibilities that lay ahead.

BLOSSER: And now a little bit about Progress Assist. We have a national mentoring program. As I said, we have clinicians spread across the country, and we have many different types of therapists who come to us with a very wide range of background and understanding school-service delivery. We first established the program in 2004. It's a nine-month program, so it follows the school year. Occupational therapists and physical therapists who've been new to the school setting have participated in the program since its inception.

And so as I said before, it encompasses anyone who is new to the school setting. So we can have someone who may have been in the field for ten years but working in a hospital setting, and we know that when they come to the school setting, they're challenged by the differences in recordkeeping and report writing and educational goals versus medical goals. So we very quickly realized that we wanted to expand our mentoring program beyond just the support for getting the certificate in RK.

The focus is on three main areas. One is to build a very positive mentoring relationship between the mentor partners, or the mentor and the mentee. A second is to establish a foundation for effective services within the school setting. And third, we want our therapists to have fun, have fun helping children. And when, as a story that I told at the beginning, with Julie, who is so overwhelmed, she wasn't having fun. And when we see that, we fear that people will make a change and leave the schools and never come back, and have some pretty bad things to say about their experience.

And so, you know, enjoying what you do is really critical to a successful career. In building the Career Launch Program, we wanted to establish eligibility criteria, not only in terms of the beginner clinicians, that was a given, but we also needed to establish eligibility criteria for who would serve as a mentor, because it was such an important role. And the impact that the individuals have on shaping a person's career is very, very important to us.

For the mentor partners, we match each new clinician with a seasoned peer mentor. And most of the time, there is a therapist who's within the same school district, maybe in a different building, or they may be in a geographical location that's very

similar. But we try and look for a rationale, a reason, and something that fits in terms of the match-up with the professionals. It could be that the populations that they're serving, very often it's the age groups or the types of disabilities that they're serving. It could very well also be personality types. So we have a series of criteria and selection process in trying to match up.

In our program, we provide a standardized, structured, and very systematic experience, and it parallels the school year. So we know that the first month of school, setting up that caseload, getting the, meeting with teachers and getting their programs established is a very important part of the process. And then getting into the end of the school year, the wrap-up and the planning of the programs for the following year is the focus. So we help map out goals and acquire, help them acquire knowledge and skills about their profession and about service delivery, and about the resources that can be used to succeed. And evidence-based practice is the focus of all of this.

The benefits of a structured mentoring program, of course we have mentioned that recruitment, retention, quality services, and proactive problem solving are keys to running a structured mentoring program. And it's critically important to be able to increase communication within the school building and to handle issues quickly, as they arise, when there are some issues coming up with new personnel. Of course, we look for increased recruitment and retention. And we always, in following through with this, work to get quality services.

The benefits listed below is that we meet requirements for national and state credentialing, so that as we have our ASHA state license, national board certified occupational therapist, that mentoring, we serve as mentors, we serve as ASHA supervisors, so that all personnel can meet their requirements. We can clarify the expectations for roles and responsibilities. As we know, every school has its own culture, and that walking into a culture that's unfamiliar to you can sometimes be a very difficult thing, so we assist them with that.

We offer instructional support services that are educationally relevant. And we ensure that they can meet the multiple challenges that face them as they enter a school. As Jean has mentioned before, the high caseloads, the excessive paperwork, trying to schedule these kids, are all challenges that we assist them in facing as they start their school year.

BLOSSER: As you can see, ah, anti-climactic as it is there. Relief. Headache relief for our administrators, when we have a program in place that can enable people to succeed and to experience success. So what skills do your instructional support personnel need? Think about your school and your setting and the instructional support, individuals that are working right now in your, that are new to the field or new to the district as well. There are several things that you may be seeing them struggle with.

We've mentioned the school culture and the expectations. But things like the educational team relationships and collaboration, and how to collaborate, when to make time and how to facilitate that are often complex. The assessment tools and interpreting them and translating them into, translating the findings into goals and developing an IEP that makes sense, and then making a plan around implementing it with all of the specific needs and trying to create a partnership with the educational team, as well as the parents, in order to get that IEP working the way we want it to, to support the children.

And finally, there are compliance requirements that people could face, in terms of dates and the technology and so-forth, that are used for preparing IEPs and doing the reporting and maintaining deadlines and due dates. Continuing to think about the skills that your instructional support personnel may need, you might want to think about what types of therapy planning or service-delivery planning is needed, what kind of data collection and formats and types of data points are, is the district looking for, those mount up to be challenges that are, often confront new individuals, as well as how to make informal observations at the classroom.

Often times therapists are very comfortable in the therapy room, but fitting what they do into the classroom or relating what they do to determining whether a child is succeeding in the classroom requires some observation of that setting and being able to then discuss it in a way that will help others understand the impact of a child's disability on his learning.

Linking therapy to the curriculum and the curriculum standards, such as the state standards, and also using materials and technology for instruction, as well as for monitoring service delivery. So there's a whole lot of responsibilities that professionals have when delivering special education services. And any one of those are the types of skills that will go better if a person is introduced to the skill area and given some tips from a professional on how to implement that process, or procedure.

SILVERMAN: What does mentoring look like day to day? My answer is busy. From day one, from all of the listings on your slide, a new SLP-orientation is definitely scheduled prior to the beginning of the school year, as well as ongoing professional development is scheduled, so that they could be put into their calendars and anticipate being, having availability to attend these professional developments as the school year progresses.

But all of the others are very individualized. We have many new SLPs that are recent grads and need many, many more visits, as well as to meet the requirements for ASHA, as well as other SLPs that come with a variety of experience and need less of these experiences as they go on through the year. This is a typical day in the life of a mentor and mentee. And you can see that, just from the few that are listed on the calendar, busy is the word.

As the mentoring program was implemented, the one thing that we needed to make sure that we were doing from day one is that we were collecting data and feedback to determine whether our program was being successful. And I know that Jean's program, as well as my own, worked very hard to obtain feedback, both written and verbal, as well as doing guided observations to make sure that what we are setting out to do is actually working.

And as a result, listed below are the indicators of a successful mentoring program. You know that you were successful if you see the look of happy faces on the people that you deal with day to day, and that's your colleagues, your students, your administration, and your parents. And you want to make sure that as you are progressing with your mentoring program, that you are making sure that the goals, milestones, and tasks that you have set out for your mentees are being accomplished.

Anne Arundel County, since 2001, 143 SLPs have been mentored. We have currently a 92% retention rate in the county, which is definitely improved since the

beginning of our program, and that typically, when we look at resignations at the end of a school year, typically they are due to SLPs relocating, getting married, or they are contractual personnel that we have hired for the school year, and typically do not hire back if we are able to hire Anne Arundel County employees.

What I wanted to do is give you a sampling of the surveys that are completed by mentees, parents, and principals. It is a Likert scale from one to five, and each person fills out a survey. Mentee surveys, here are some of the questions that you can look at, but other questions are related to knowledge of county procedures, lesson planning, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness of the mentoring program.

The parent surveys, all those surveys are either nine to ten questions in length, the parents' survey, there are other questions related to increased communication with the SLP. In regards to the principal survey, they are asked these questions in addition to, how was your assimilating new skills, IEP process, assessment interpretation, lesson planning, verbal and written communication, and overall effectiveness of the mentoring program.

As you can see, our trend data from 2004 to 2010 indicates that 90% of SLPs mentored report increased competence and confidence in understanding the IEP process, interpreting assessment information, and planning effective lessons. Ninety percent of principals reported increased competence and confidence in collaborating with school personnel and working as a member of a team. And 94% of the parents we reported increased communication with the SLP, as well as participating in their child's programming.

So our Anne Arundel County results show increased job satisfaction, increased competence, confidence, and as I indicated before, a decreasing attrition rate.

BLOSSER: Now our results are similar. We conduct three-month reviews of each new therapist, and we also conduct an annual performance evaluation. And so we monitor the feedback that we are getting from the mentors as well as from district personnel that have our clinicians in their school district, either conducting programs or working as a contractual staff member. We also have the mentees do a self-evaluation, so that we make sure that they're on target with understanding and in agreement with the areas where they need additional support.

And also understanding where their strengths are, because the importance of building a career means that you start figuring out what it is that you like about it, what do you want to pursue in the future in terms of developing expertise and for their skills. And so the support is as much about creating a path for the future and some strengths as it is providing support at the beginning, in terms of policies and procedures.

We have specific tasks and milestones that need to be achieved by the mentors as well as the mentees, and so we are monitoring that. We conduct surveys as well. But mostly we look at school success and district satisfaction, because districts are outsourcing our contracting to us, and we want to make sure that we've brought clinicians to them that can get the job done and don't create headaches. And so we want to look for student success, that the students are performing better in their therapy rooms and classrooms, and that the district is satisfied with the results.

As I said, we've had 500 people complete the program since 2004. We have better retention rates of this group. And we also have increased manager awareness of

challenges, so that we know what our therapists are doing, because we've got a lot of touch points. We are able to provide resources, like sort of just-in-time resources for the therapists. And we are able to develop new resources as new problems or challenges arise.

So we have, over the time since we've done, since the inception of the program, we've improved the efficiency of our mentoring, so that we've now got lots of resources that we share among the mentors, as well as using technology to do that. And we continue to get positive feedback from district personnel. But most of all, we're also watching our children's performance, and they are performing well as well.

I've got dueling arrows here. So, oh, there we go. So now who would you organize your resources to begin a structured mentoring program in your district? As part of today's discussion, we wanted you to begin to think about, what might you do to organize, restructure, or reinforce your mentoring program.

And if you have a very solid mentoring program already, we encourage you in the next few segments of our session today to share your structure and your ideas, as well as to, you know, to begin to think about, are all of the buildings in your district doing the same kind of mentoring program, and how to make something, you know, have greater, you know, increase in the structure to other buildings and other leaders in your district.

So here are some things to think about. Making good commitment, first of all, to understanding that mentoring is an important process that will help you achieve your goals as an administrator. And then, understanding that there are small steps that can be taken. Most of our programs have been in place for several years, and we improve upon them each year.

And so being able to step back periodically and take another step forward, so you have them designed so that they are, you know, dynamic. Identify time and resources available, and that's the hardest thing. And maybe Fran can tell sort of her story about how she was identified to do this program, because the school district recognized and identified as a resource.

SILVERMAN: Yes, at the time, we were looking at that 10% to 15% yearly attrition rate, and we wanted to see how we could go about decreasing that number. And it was through census-based staffing, and also the fact that we were, in our county at the time, looking at the decreasing number of students identified for speech and language services, that there would be. There was the ability to create at least a part-time position to go about mentoring these new SLPs that were coming to our county.

So what we did, as I indicated earlier, that we started out on a part-time basis, and wanted to see what kinds of differences the mentoring would make. But again it is very, very hard in small school districts to be able to assign either a part-time or full-time staff member to this position. So as Jean said, starting small, with even having a lead person to go to might be the way to begin. And again as time goes on, the mentoring program evolved, and as you begin to see things grow, my role has changed dramatically since 2001. And I think that would be happening in your school district, whether you start off with, you know, a tiny piece of a person doing that, or whether you have some position available to assign someone in that role.

BLOSSER: And because we are distributors, so our program is a distributed program, but with a centralized approach to, you know, how we coordinate it. But what we look for in mentors is people who are at a point in their career where they're passionate, they have demonstrated success in their own jobs, in their own programs, they have something different, that they are usually very organized people, they're very, they are good teachers, in terms of adult to adult teaching, they see it as part of their professional satisfaction, to be mentoring someone along and bringing a new person into the profession.

There's also people who are at a point in their career where they're a little itchy to do something different. And they want to, you know, explore different avenues themselves by being able to have a colleague to talk to and to teach. They themselves sometimes have to get ahead of the game and do research and translate the knowledge that they're going to another person. So we look for a particular quality in mentors, and then give them the tools to do that.

So as you can see, I have a little, like a fast-clicking finger here, sorry. So as some of the small steps, we need to designate someone to take that lead in either, in the development or the design of the mentoring program. So unless you're at the beginning of the continuum, where it really is person to person, if you want to formalize and standardize and structure your program, you need someone to get their arms around that, to, you know, maybe explore different options and different models. And then pick a model that works for your staff and your district.

Implementing the mentoring program is kicking it off and letting other people know that it's happening, that you're doing it. And finally, always evaluating effectiveness of the mentoring model and initiating improvements and tweaking it along the way.

So we've provided some resources for you. Most of you probably got an e-mail today, if you had registered early. You probably got an e-mail today that contains some materials that describe mentoring models. And so I'll just very quickly tell you what those are.

There's one called a practice brief, and it was developed by the Personnel Improvement Center, the national center to improve recruitment and retention of qualified personnel for children with disabilities. And that is a, it's a wonderful brief that talks about different mentoring models, from traditional mentoring, peer group mentoring, e-mentoring, as well as, you know, a blend of those things, those activities. And it also provides a high-level overview of essential elements of mentoring programs, and then gives some examples of different mentoring programs that fall into these categories. So that's one example that we provided access for you.

A second is a progressive therapy material that explains the Career Launch program in a little more depth, and it's called Innovative Solutions for Successful Outcomes. And that just sort of reiterates some of the things, topics that we've discussed today and gives a high-level, you know, sort of explanation, again, of each of the different topics.

A third thing is a link to the personnel center, where you can access different materials. And then finally, if you look at the resource reference list, there is a link there to an article by Fran and a colleague of hers, Tom Connor, who, titled Mentoring: Great Gains at Little Cost. And it basically talks about the early years of our mentoring

program in Anne Arundel County, the whys, the hows, some of the things that we were targeting. And it just kind of synthesizes a lot of the information that was presented today.

SILVERMAN: And also we've provided our contact information, if you would be interested in talking further about, you know, any of the details that we've shared today. So now we'd like to know, if I can get to the next slide here, what's on your mind? And what suggestions do you have for your colleagues? And I believe I'll turn the program over to Carol to field some questions for us.

MODERATOR: Yes, we do have a couple questions that have come through, and you may have answered them subsequently in the webinar, but I will share a few of them with you. One is, I work in a rural, very rural district, and do you have a model electronic mentoring program or online learning modules for mentors, so . . .

SILVERMAN: Mm-hmm.

MODERATOR: The question is about modeling or models that they can use for a mentoring program in a very rural district.

SILVERMAN: And I know that rural districts really have, you know, suffered from, you know, being able to find qualified mentors and the time, so there are some successful teleconferencing or tele-mentoring models that are being used on a, on one scale we have, in progressives, we've linked therapists who are in different locations with therapists in a rural area or someone who might be dealing with a difficult population, and so we've linked them to someone with those skills. And because we have a structured approach to it, they can follow along with the protocols and the steps that they need to.

There are other examples where people are using tele-mentoring at the university level, for example, in mentoring people who are maybe working on a degree, a master's degree. They may be a teacher, but they're working on a master's degree to become a therapist. And several universities have set up a model where those people can be supervised to get the, to qualify and get the hours of practice that they need in order to, you know, get their degree and meet their certification requirements.

So they're using everything from, you know, Skype to different kinds of, you know, web technology to do that. It's the connectivity between the mentor partners that really counts, and then having, you know, organized topics and things like that to discuss that makes it work.

MODERATOR: Great. Great answer, thank you. And I would imagine that individuals can get some resources off the website links that . . .

SILVERMAN: Mm-hmm.

MODERATOR: . . . and I think one of your handouts mentioned electronic mentoring, as well.

SILVERMAN: Yeah, the practice guide mentions web-mentoring.

MODERATOR: Great. Another question, I guess it's more about, more a comment, said, can you tell us a little bit more about linking therapy to curriculum, class curriculum.

SILVERMAN: We, in Analondo County, one of the things that we did several years back was, that was definitely one of the challenges of how to see, following the educational model, as well as the clinical model within the school system, and we always say that we kind of walk a fine line between the two. But what we decided to do to kind of assist people in making that link, and again it's not an easy link to make, because elementary school uses one curriculum, middle school uses a different curriculum, so you kind of have varied curriculums to work with.

But the one thing that we did target years back, and it has been extremely helpful, is that in the elementary school system, the speech pathologists work in small groups and large groups with our . . . series, which is in our area's called open court. And what we did is, the speech therapist, we went through every single grade, every single lesson, and we pulled out all of the language, speech, phonological awareness, concepts about, in vocabulary, we pulled out everything that would help us in the therapy room or in the classroom, to link to that curriculum.

And it has been extremely, extremely helpful. Unfortunately, we're due for a new reading series. So I guess what we'll be doing is meeting as groups again, because I think that what I have done is in a handbook that every new SLP gets. They get all of the curriculum guides with the hour language areas pulled out of it, so that they could always know at any time where that student is in the classroom, and what skills they need to target.

BLOSSER: So that's one model. And I, you know, it sounds exciting and very sort of organized around trying to make sure that therapy links up with the classroom curriculum. We have a different situation, because we're in so many different school districts. And so, you know, we have to kind of figure out a way to, you know, broadly provide therapists with guidance and skills.

And so one of the first things we tell them to do is see if their district has something like Fran just described. But we try and put tools in their hands that we've developed, and tools that are available that, you know, enable them to understand, you know, what are the state standards and guidelines, and what do they mean? Because most beginners really aren't used to thinking about those things, especially if they've been, you know, done their university education, you know, sort of as a therapist, they may not have covered that more than in a lecture or two.

We help them understand, you know, what communication strategies, for example, a student would need in order to succeed in the classroom, and to make sense of the school schedule and what would be required of a student, how to look at whether or not a disability's adversely affecting the student's performance, and then connect them with lots of resources and materials, such as what Fran just described,

that helps them see what IEP goals look like and sound like when they have an educational relevance to them.

So, you know, part of what we have to do, I think, is make sure that we're providing our beginners with the right tools, not only focusing on, you know, compliance requirements, but focusing on the, you know, implementing the services within that setting.

SILVERMAN: We also make sure that our therapists link up very often to our state curriculum. And right now in the state, we are going also to be looking at the Core Content Standards, ultimately, and our therapists are very familiar with those skills, and make sure that as they lesson plan, that they do reference the curriculum to make that they are making those connections whenever possible.

MODERATOR: Right, thank you. Just have one more question that we can answer quickly. I know we're getting close to 4:00. This one concerns responsibilities of a mentor and how it's viewed in different districts. So how would you respond to an administrator that is asking the mentor to possibly have some evaluation or reporting back to the school district responsibility? So I guess it's the relationship that the mentor has, and should they have any evaluation or reporting responsibilities?

SILVERMAN: I would like to just say that I think one of the, my successes in Anne Arundel County as being a mentor is that I am a colleague. I am not a supervisor, I do not evaluate. We do have a person, Lisa . . . in our county that serves as a manager and oversees the speech language pathologists. And I think what makes me so accessible and easily contacted is the fact that I am not in a position to evaluate. I am in the position to assist.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Thank you. I see that you have resources on the screen now.

BLOSSER: I do. These are articles that relate to mentoring. In addition, this is in addition to the ones that were downloadable and sent to you, you know, I wanted to point out the link to Fran's article here so that, that goes to *Advance Magazine*, will take you directly to the article. So and everything else that we discussed is included. I also want to share with the participants some professional organizations that support mentoring programs, and on their websites address mentoring and provide many ideas and resources and models for mentoring.

And so I wanted to make sure that the participants have those links as well. And there's a second group in here, the National Association for Elementary School Principals, which is this group here. And we thank you, Carol, for working on this presentation and bringing it to the principals group. And then the National Center to Improve Recruitment and Retention is a part of NASDSE, and that's the group that did the practice guide.

So with these resources, we think it's a very good beginning, to get a conversation going or a dialogue going among participants in your school districts about

directions that you may want to take to establish a very solid mentoring program that meets your needs.

MODERATOR: Well, thank you. Thank you very much. And the information that you have shared with us, the ability for us to reflect on the theory and the practice that you have so professionally described, I think, is a benefit to everybody who has been a part of this webinar, for our attendees. We had over 100 individuals join us this afternoon. So I want to recognize all of those people for taking time out of very, very busy days to be a part of this, and hope that you will join us for any future webinars.

So finally, thank you to Jean and Fran and Susan Carr, who was instrumental in making this happen for such a wonderful, informative, and thoughtful presentation. I would also like everyone to know that this webinar will be accessible on any of the websites that are listed within this, in the webinar, so that it can be downloaded and shared and shown to other colleagues as well. So with that, thank you, everyone, and I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday. And that concludes today's webinar.