

Whitney Sherman

Lifelines to the classroom: DESIGNING SUPPORT for BEGINNING TEACHERS

A third of beginning teachers quit within their first three years on the job. We don't stand for this kind of dropout rate among students, and we can no longer afford it in our teaching ranks. But what does it take to adequately support novice teachers? What lifelines can we offer so they will remain in the profession and develop into highly effective classroom educators?

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In education, as in any employment area, each year produces a certain number of newly minted professionals. But due to the particular circumstances of our time, the annual influx of newcomers to the teaching profession needs to rise dramatically in the coming decade. On one side of the profession's complex supply-demand equation is a fast dwindling reservoir of our most highly experienced teachers. Hired in large numbers in the 1960s and '70s to teach a booming student population, these veterans have started reaching the natural end of their careers. One increasingly typical result is the experience of a San Francisco elementary school that, last year, lost all three of its kindergarten teachers to retirement.

On the demand side of the equation is an expanding student population, coinciding with a proliferation of class-size reduction initiatives that require schools to lower their teacher-student ratio in certain grades. Many urban and rural schools, scrambling to hire coverage for additional classrooms, have had difficulty finding enough fully credentialed teachers. As a result, many students are being taught by someone with an emergency teaching credential.

Further complicating the picture is the profession's ongoing "brain drain," the steady loss of teachers who, after a relatively short time in the classroom, give up on the profession, opting instead for jobs that offer more financial reward or may simply appear less stressful.

By one estimate, U.S. schools will need to hire anywhere from 1.7 to 2.7 million new teachers within the next decade (Hussar, 1999). Others argue that the numbers are far smaller. But either way, many districts and schools throughout the country can look forward to a significant influx of new teachers in the coming years — a situation that presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

The challenge, of course, is to give these newcomers the kind of support needed if they are not only to remain in the profession, but to develop into the kinds of educators able to teach to today's high standards. The definition of effective teaching has changed greatly in recent years. Today's teachers are expected to help the most diverse student population in our history meet the highest education standards we have ever set. And, in the process, they are expected to serve *all* students equally well.

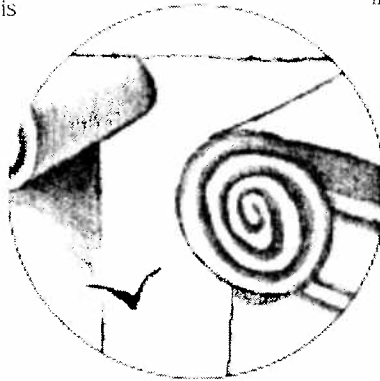
The opportunity lies in the fact that updating old skills or unlearning old habits — a necessity for many veterans — is not an issue for these fresh-on-the-scene teachers. Still in the early stages of learning their craft, they have the opportunity to begin their careers using the best of what we know from research and practice about effective teaching.

Beginning teacher support programs, also referred to as teacher induction programs, can help schools and districts meet this challenge and take advantage of the opportunity it presents. Minimally, such programs can improve teacher retention rates by enhancing new teacher satisfaction. More importantly, a well-designed and implemented effort can improve practice, helping new educators apply the theoretical knowledge acquired in their teacher preparation programs to the complexity of real-life teaching. Not incidentally, such support programs can also serve as a drawing card in the increasingly competitive market for hiring new teachers.

Some educators have also come to think of beginning teacher support as a simple fairness issue. One district superintendent now working with the local teachers' union to develop a support program explains its genesis: "We'd been hiring a lot of new teachers, expecting a lot, and then holding them accountable *after* the fact — when we evaluated them at the end of the year. The list of things new teachers are expected to know and be able to do has only grown in recent years, but they usually don't get any attendant support."

A great deal of research literature documents the extent to which beginning teachers struggle in their early classroom years. Veenman's (1984) classic international review of perceived problems among beginning teachers found remarkable consistency, across both time and differently structured education systems. Among the greatest challenges perceived by rookie teachers were classroom management, motivation of students, dealing with the individual differences among students, assessing student work, and relations with parents.

In a current international study funded by the National Science Foundation, WestEd researchers Ted Britton and Senta Raizen, along with Lynn Paine of Michigan State University, are finding that, in countries as different as China, New Zealand, and Switzerland, today's new teachers express these very same problems as being the most pressing difficulties they face (Britton, Paine, & Raizen, 1999).



In teaching, new entrants, fresh out of professional training, assume the exact same responsibilities as 20-year veterans. In doing so, they are also undertaking a remarkably complex endeavor, involving as it does the simultaneous management of multiple variables, including student behavior, intellectual engagement, student interaction, materials, physical space, and time. While many novice teachers have had terrific intellectual preparation and an outstanding student teaching experience, their limited experience generally yields an equally limited repertoire of classroom strategies — far more limited than the variety of teaching challenges a new teacher invariably encounters. It's a situation ripe for frustration.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the attrition rate for beginning teachers has always been extremely high, with nearly a third of novice teachers leaving the profession within their first three years. Inner-city and rural schools find it especially hard to retain teachers. This revolving door creates a permanent core of inexperienced teachers who are learning their craft by, essentially, practicing on the students before them. At the schoolwide level, high teacher turnover drains energy and resources as well, requiring that administrators and teaching colleagues constantly focus on bringing newcomers up to speed on everything from operating the copy machine to participating in major reform efforts.

When new teachers turn away from their profession, their years of teacher preparation are rendered useless, a waste both of their personal resources and of the governmental resources that subsidize such training. At the same time, of course, their departure further exacerbates existing teacher shortages.

The 1980s and '90s generated a growing number of teacher induction programs aimed at helping beginning teachers make a successful

transition from their teacher preparation experience to being the teacher-of-record in a classroom. Among the common goals of such programs are:

- ▶ improving teaching performance;
- ▶ increasing the retention of promising beginning teachers;
- ▶ promoting the personal and professional well-being of beginning teachers;
- ▶ satisfying mandated requirements for induction and/or licensure; and
- ▶ transmitting the culture of the system to beginning teachers (Huling-Austin, 1990).

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Most such programs identify beginning teachers as those who are either fresh out of a teacher preparation program or who have been teaching only one or two years. But, increasingly, districts and schools recognize the need to also offer some degree of support for teachers who, while not new to the classroom per se, are new to the school, the district, or the state.

For districts or schools undertaking — or expanding — an organized support effort for beginning teachers, it helps to understand the range of strategies that have been tried in the past and what the available data, limited as they are, suggest about the effectiveness of such strategies. This brief outlines the general types of support that can be offered to beginning teachers, strategies of varying intensity for offering such support, institutional conditions that increase the effectiveness of these strategies, and typical challenges in the implementation of teacher induction programs. (Note: This brief focuses on support for teachers who have completed a formal preparation program, not on the increasing number of "alternative-route" teachers who have been hired without such preparation and are expected to receive their initial teacher training while on the job.)

Types of Support

Beginning teacher support should be looked at as a continuum, starting with personal and emotional support, expanding to include specific task- or problem-related support and, in the ideal, expanding further to help the newcomer develop a capacity for critical self-reflection on teaching practice. Each aspect of support serves a different purpose.

Personal and Emotional Support

The first years of teaching are especially stressful as beginning teachers face the emotional challenges of adapting to a new workplace and new colleagues — from simply figuring out where things are located to learning policies and procedures, finding kindred spirits, and, generally speaking, getting the lay of the land. Fatigue is another constant for new teachers. “Free” time during their official workday is scarce, and planning and other preparation invariably spills over into their personal time. The effort of planning every lesson from scratch, teaching with unfamiliar materials, and, often, teaching at an unfamiliar grade level drains even the most energetic new teachers. Compounding all this is the inherent isolation of individual teachers sequestered in their individual classrooms.

At this emotionally challenging time, more experienced colleagues can play an important role, serving as a sounding board and assuring beginners that their experience is normal, offering sympathy and perspective, and providing advice to help reduce the inevitable stress. While this type of support does little to directly improve teaching performance, it does much to promote beginning teachers’ personal and professional well-being and to transmit the culture of teaching. In the process, such support also improves the likelihood that new teachers will stay the course long enough to have the *opportunity* to become more effective teachers.

Task- or Problem-Focused Support

Beginning teachers also need help in knowing how to approach new tasks and in solving specific problems that crop up in their teaching. They are usually undertaking even the most basic teaching tasks for the very first time: developing lesson plans, planning what to say at back-to-school night, deciding what goes in the gradebook to determine grades at the end of nine weeks, and structuring parent-teacher conferences. Seasoned teachers can guide beginners in planning and accomplishing these tasks effectively; with the help of a veteran teacher, the beginner doesn’t have to reinvent the wheel for such standard activities. Veterans can also share the sometimes-unwritten expectations associated with such tasks in a given school, district, or state.

Critical self-reflection can lead directly to improved learning in a new teacher’s classroom.

In similar fashion, attentive mentors can alert new teachers to the customs of the broader school community — everything from expectations about how quiet the corridors should be when students pass between classes to the prevailing expectations of local parents regarding parent participation in the classroom. For example, in one school, teachers might consider the faculty lounge completely off-limits to parents, while at another the lounge might double as a meeting room for parent-teacher conferences. While such conventions might not be “make-or-break” issues

for new teachers, understanding them can go a long way toward making life easier.

Beginning teachers also need help in dealing with teaching challenges specific to their own students: What materials are appropriate for Maria who always finishes the assigned tasks early? What can be done to help Jeff, a special needs student, and Ming Lee, an English learner, while keeping the rest of the class productively engaged? And what can be tried when a new teacher has exhausted his or her repertoire for teaching students how to add fractions — when, for example, manipulatives, pictures, and even step-by-step instruction have achieved only limited success? By looking at such challenges from

the perspective of experience or by drawing from a larger repertoire of instructional strategies and materials, veteran teachers can help beginners identify a larger range of possible solutions. This type of problem-specific support can improve teaching performance in specific instances and, as a by-product, reduce new teachers' stress levels.

Critical Reflection on Teaching Practice

Veterans' support in dealing with specific problems can help beginners expand their repertoire of strategies — from instructional delivery to classroom management to assessment — and help broaden the perspective from which newcomers view problems. But problem-specific support may do little to foster rookie teachers' independent problem-solving abilities. If teachers are to become skilled at independently identifying and addressing the idiosyncratic learning problems of their students, they must learn to reflect critically on student work, as well as on their own teaching practices.

Efforts to support such self-reflection often start out with a relatively directive approach. In some instances, veteran teachers may need to help identify and then prioritize issues that warrant new teachers' reflection. Left to their own devices, novices may not even recognize the most pressing issues on which to focus their attention.

For beginners who have not developed the habit of reflecting on their own teaching, the veteran may model self-reflection: identifying a problem and proposing and analyzing *for* the beginner a variety of solutions. In doing so, the veteran can help the beginner think in terms of being guided by evidence, for example, how will you *know* that your students have learned what you're trying to teach? Then, as the novice begins to develop more self-confidence and efficacy, the veteran may continue to propose solutions, but prompt the beginning teacher to analyze them himself or herself. Eventually, the beginner will be expected to autonomously propose

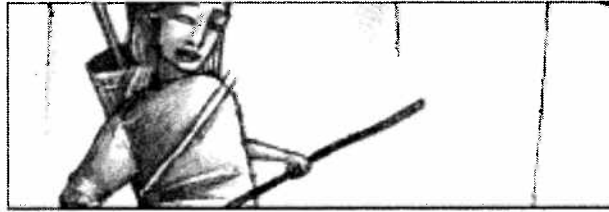
and analyze various options for addressing a particular issue. Over time, the veteran reduces the amount of guidance offered and engages more as an interested and sympathetic colleague, shifting from a directive to collaborative to facilitative role.

The overall aim is to build beginning teachers' autonomous ability to prioritize the most challenging aspects of their teaching experience; consider alternative approaches to dealing with a given challenge; identify and analyze the evidence that provides the most information about a particular problem; and consider alternative solutions that can be quickly implemented. (One specific and well-

known technique for providing this type of support is "cognitive coaching.") In the short run, beginning teachers profit by solving *particular* problems; but in the long run, they profit by knowing

how to think constructively about *any* problem that comes up in their teaching.

The critical self-reflection engendered by this type of coaching can lead directly to improved teaching and learning in the beginning teacher's classroom. In the best-case scenario, such coaching can also have a broader impact, fostering in both coach and new teacher a bent toward action-oriented collegial discussion. When a critical mass of teachers at one school are comfortable talking with each other about their teaching, the school's capacity to identify and address problems in student learning and other important issues rises dramatically. This kind of dialogue allows everyone at the school to transcend the details of individual classrooms and to see the big picture of what's going on at a school or across a particular grade level. One teacher who notices that her fifth graders don't understand place value may assume the problem is idiosyncratic to her classroom. But when all the fifth grade teachers at a school come together to discuss teaching and learning in their classrooms and realize that a disproportionate number of their students don't understand place value, the school can more effectively address both the immediate problem and its causes.



Specific Support Strategies

New-teacher support programs may be operated by school districts or by consortia of districts, either on their own or, sometimes, in partnership or association with the local teachers association. A state department of education may also offer a beginning teacher support model, as is true of California, which provides some implementation funding as well. But schools can also do much on their own. One Nevada high school principal, who has implemented a fairly complex teacher induction program at her school, notes, "we can do most of the things we need to do to support our new teachers with only the tacit support of the district — although it would be nice to have its active involvement."

The amount of resources schools and districts are able and willing to devote to beginning teacher support varies, of course. Some states give districts funds specifically for teacher induction programs or for a specific type of mentor teacher program in which mentor responsibilities focus on beginning teacher support rather than on curriculum development or special projects, for example. Often, mentor monies are used to release mentor teachers from their own classrooms part-time, but some districts have found it more effective to target the funds differently. In California, for example, the state has given waivers that allow a district to support a smaller number of mentor teachers but have each of them work full time to support new teachers. Veteran teachers who do not have to balance both classroom and mentoring responsibilities have more time to focus on the beginning teachers, are more flexible, and, often, can respond to problems in a more timely way.

Not surprisingly, the amount of available funding often affects the choice of activities that are included in a teacher induction program. Some activities are low intensity and relatively low cost, being either one-shot or low-frequency events. As such, they require short-term but focused coordination. Others are higher intensity, tend to be costlier, require sustained attention, and, often, must be coordinated with other school or district activities.

Low Intensity Support Strategies

Low-intensity support strategies make minimal demands on district and school resources. Some are simply procedural, such as providing formal orientation or protecting new teachers from extracurricular responsibilities. Others require the involvement of veteran teachers in mentoring or collegial roles. When veteran teachers' involvement can be structured in ways that do not impinge on their regular teaching time — in grade-level meetings, for example — districts consider such strategies to be low intensity. Even strategies that pay stipends are considered low intensity so long as the veterans are not pulled from their classrooms. Beginning teachers, on the other hand, experience even low-intensity efforts as highly valuable when those strategies feature lots of contact with veteran teachers, contact that generally provides personal or emotional support and that helps them address the unfamiliar tasks and problems they encounter as first-time teachers. Studies suggest that such support from veteran teachers results in higher job satisfaction and higher retention rates for beginning teachers (Dianda et al., 1991; Wong-Park, 1997).

All of the activities below qualify as low-intensity support and can be implemented in some form by a school with little or no district involvement or funding.

Orienting new teachers. The week before school, beginning teachers receive a formal orientation to the community, district, curriculum, and school. One district uses school buses to give a tour of the community, with special attention to community agencies and the neighborhoods where students live. Orientation is also an opportunity to give an overview of curricular and school/district philosophy, share special emphases for the year, and point out important features of curriculum materials. Some districts include advice on setting up the classroom and/or classroom management. Also helpful are booklets or other handouts that document in ready form some important information, such as district policies or a calendar of key events.

Matching beginning and veteran teachers. The pairing of a beginning teacher with a veteran teacher is a hallmark of most teacher induction programs. Whether this pairing is considered to be a low- or high-intensity effort depends on the degree of support the veteran teacher is expected to provide. In low-intensity programs, the experienced teacher is likely to function primarily as a buddy or, as one superintendent describes it, “a cheerleader,” providing emotional support. In many such instances, the veteran teacher receives no release time and, therefore, doesn’t have the opportunity to actually observe the new teacher in action. Even so, some offer enormous amounts of time and attention, often well beyond that for which they are compensated — assuming they receive any compensation at all.

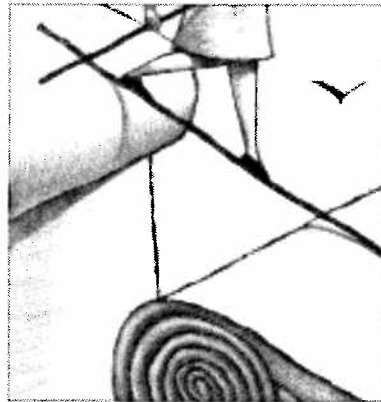
Typically, novice teachers are urged to contact the veterans with any problems that arise. But some beginners are reluctant to bring problems to the attention of their support providers, either because they are embarrassed or because they don’t want to be a burden, especially if novices know that the providers are receiving little or no compensation. Any type of pairing strategy is strengthened when the veteran teacher receives a stipend and the pair is expected to set aside a regular time each week to meet together. Studies suggest that without regular, structured time set aside, paired teachers have less interaction. Matching the pair by grade level or content area also increases both the likelihood of regular interaction and the effectiveness of the support.

Clarification of veteran teachers’ responsibilities is important. One Arizona school district operates both a one-on-one “buddy” program and a mentor program. In the low-intensity buddy program, new teachers are matched with veteran teachers whose job it is to “show them the ropes,” such as how to obtain supplies or send down the lunch count. By contrast, mentors must be endorsed by their principals as “master teachers,” and they are trained in specific coaching techniques. In this high-intensity

program, mentors are then matched with and receive release time to observe and work with several new teachers.

Adjusting working conditions. Unless specific administrative steps are taken to protect them, beginning teachers often end up with the toughest assignments. To make life less stressful for them, administrators can reduce the number of students in beginners’ classrooms, refrain from assigning them the most challenging students, and minimize their extracurricular and committee assignments. At the elementary school level, in particular, administrators can avoid assigning combination grades. At the secondary school level, administrators can make sure

that new teachers’ course schedules require as few separate preparation efforts as possible. They can also avoid assigning schedules that require new teachers to change classrooms during the day. In this era of tight resources, it must also be said that beginning teachers, especially, suffer when classrooms are not adequately stocked with textbooks, desks, supplementary materials, and basic supplies.



Given the abundance of school reform efforts, a common hazard for today’s beginning teachers is the sheer number of professional development activities in which they’re expected to participate. At one California school, for example, beginning teachers have been expected to participate in regularly scheduled workshops aimed specifically at beginning teachers, in intensive early literacy training over several weeks, and in weekly staffwide discussions about how to collaborate with a university in transforming their school into a professional development school. The importance of each of these specific activities notwithstanding, the demands of so many commitments can be tiring even for veteran teachers; for beginners they can be overwhelming, undermining both the effectiveness and morale of a teacher.

Principals can protect beginning teachers from getting spread too thin by helping them prioritize their time spent in professional development and by excusing them from all but the most essential activities. They can also help beginning teachers choose and focus on a single, important theme, such as literacy instruction in the example above, that might run through multiple events.

Promoting collegial collaboration. Some schools have existing structures that foster collaboration between beginning and veteran teachers, such as grade-level teams that coordinate instructional planning. Such teams provide some degree of structure and support for beginners who are just learning how to plan curriculum and instruction. For some schools, class size reduction has ended up creating another natural opportunity for ongoing collaboration between veteran and novice teachers. Rather than creating multiple classes with 20 students each, schools with limited space often respond to class-size-reduction mandates by forming one class of 40 taught by two teachers. When one of those two is a veteran and the other a beginner, it's an ideal opportunity for a mentor-like relationship. Principals can also simply ask a veteran teacher to plan together with a beginner who is teaching the same grade or the same course. At the secondary school level, this joint planning can be facilitated by common prep periods.

Study groups focused on specific topics, such as using running records or improving mathematics instruction, provide beginning teachers with collaborative problem-solving models. In such groups, novices hear how veteran teachers think about using and adapting instructional techniques.

It's helpful to remember that beginning teachers can also serve as important resources for a school. New teachers may well know more than veteran teachers about certain instructional approaches, having studied new techniques in their teacher

preparation coursework and used them in student teaching. In certain disciplines — the sciences, for example — a new teacher may also have more current content knowledge than a colleague who has been teaching for 10 or 15 years. Here, again, collaboration profits everyone.

High-Intensity Support Strategies

Research from the California New Teacher Project, a varied set of induction programs, indicates that high-intensity support strategies, such as those described below, are more effective than the less

intensive strategies at improving beginning teaching performance (Dianda et al., 1991). For this research, teaching performance was measured on a number of dimensions, including the complexity of academic assignments, percentage of students engaged, long-term planning of curriculum and instruction, range of instructional materials used, use of state/district guidelines and frameworks, and ability to reflect on teaching practices.

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As with low-intensity efforts, here, too, veteran teachers are a key ingredient. In high-intensity support efforts, however, much more is expected of them. But if they are to operate as anything more than buddies or cheerleaders, they must be chosen carefully, receive appropriate training, and be given adequate time away from their own classroom responsibilities — all of which requires a greater commitment on the part of the school or district.

Selecting and training effective support providers. Minimally, support providers should be teachers who are successful in their own classrooms and articulate about their practice. But these are only minimum requirements. Because working with beginning teachers is different from working with children and youth, even the most outstanding K-12 teacher is not automatically suited by skill or temperament to collegial work with other adults. Regarding temperament, for example, some extremely

competent teachers seem to forget how long it took *them* to develop into such effective practitioners. They find it difficult to appropriately downshift their expectations when working with beginning teachers who, with rare exception, cannot possibly teach as well as highly skilled 20-year veterans. Some experienced teachers, accustomed to having their students do what they ask, also find it frustrating to work with adults, who may or may not follow the guidance they offer.

However, if they are temperamentally suited to mentoring, many potential support providers can profit from training in observation skills and specific strategies for working with adults. In cognitive coaching, for example, teachers learn to initiate collegial conversations rather than combative exchanges and to support colleagues in constructing and extending their own analysis of a teaching or learning event. Support providers also benefit from training in how to collect and analyze the different types of evidence that provide insight into the degree of learning taking place in a classroom and, therefore, the effectiveness of the teaching.



Support providers must also recognize the importance of helping beginners identify and understand their teaching strengths. Beginners — and especially the more perceptive beginners — often become fixated on the areas in which they need to improve, losing sight of those things that are working well in their classrooms. Recognizing and understanding their successes not only provides an enormous boost in confidence, but helps beginning teachers build on those strengths.

Providing release time. Release time can be used in a number of ways to support beginning teachers. For starters, the beginning teachers themselves can be released to attend seminars, to work with support providers to analyze their students' work and the instruction it reflects, or to observe other teachers for a specific purpose. Support providers can also be released from their own teaching duties to provide

demonstration lessons in beginners' classrooms, which allows novices to see how certain techniques might be used with their own students. Veteran teachers might also use their release time to simply observe beginning teachers in action and document issues for later discussion. All of these professional development activities and more are used in New Zealand, where the national government provides funding that requires schools to provide 0.2 release time for every new teacher along with a locally developed program to develop their abilities (Britton, Paine, & Raizen, 1999).

Schools with a number of beginning-veteran teacher pairs sometimes use a "roving sub" who moves from classroom to classroom, releasing classroom teachers for an hour or two of focused work. Another option is for support providers to work half time with beginning teachers and half-time in classrooms they share with another teacher who wants to work only half-time.

Interactive journals shared by veteran and beginner pairs can facilitate communication between them, while reducing the amount of face-to-face time they need. Veterans use the journal to document classroom observations and to raise issues for reflection and later discussion. Beginners can use it to respond in turn or to pose questions, which the veterans can then address in the journal as well. Such journals may be kept in written form in notebooks or orally, using a small tape recorder.

Mini-courses addressing common challenges. Many of the issues that frustrate, stymie, or simply scare beginning teachers are predictable. Some, such as planning for back-to-school night or parent conferences, are relatively easy to address in a quick workshop. Others, such as student discipline, teaching English language learners, and assessment, are thornier and worthy of more attention.

Schools and districts can offer mini-courses or seminars during release time, after school, in the evening, or on weekends, and on their own or in

partnership with universities, county offices of education, or a consortium of small districts. One Arizona district holds a five-day "rookie camp" in the week before school starts. When universities are involved, they can package a series of seminars that earn district credit or credit toward a master's degree. In fact, the same Arizona district that sponsors a rookie camp also has a partnership with the local university, which has developed its master's program in education based, in part, on the content needed by district teachers.

Mini-courses and seminars are most effective when beginning teachers receive support in applying the knowledge learned.

Opportunities for relevant role play can be built into the course. Participants can also develop action plans for applying their new knowledge, and those plans can then be critiqued by their classmates. If support providers also attend the mini-course or are informed of its contents, they can then provide relevant support as beginners start applying what they have learned.

Examining the evidence.

Veteran teachers can help beginners collect evidence of their teaching practice and analyze it to identify both strengths and areas for improvement. This strategy is most effective when the veteran and beginner pairs take a particular focus, either on a classroom problem or perhaps on competencies the beginner is expected to exhibit. Evidence may come from a veteran's observations of a beginner's interactions with his or her own students, from joint analysis of student work, or even from an examination of the arrangement of classroom materials and furniture. Universities can often provide training or expertise in collecting and interpreting evidence, such as through observation or portfolio documentation. In some instances, universities collaborate with districts by actually conducting the observations to provide evidence. Often, an examination of evidence results in a

professional development plan for the beginning teacher, with activities targeted to specific areas of growth.

The natural question that comes up when analyzing evidence of teaching competency is, of course, "what competency are we talking about?" Teaching standards adopted by a state or district identify expected competencies, although rarely at a beginning level. As an articulation of what experienced teachers should know and be able to do, such standards alone are not especially helpful for the novice. However, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium publishes a

model set of standards that are widely used by teacher preparation programs. These standards are intended to serve as a basis for discussion and adaptation by states, but can also be adapted to district needs.

The California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers, now being piloted in that state, goes further, providing rubrics, or performance levels, for each competency. These rubrics can help the beginner and the veteran interpret the evidence they collect regarding the beginner's own practices. The rubrics also provide solid ideas about what's

reasonable to expect for the teacher's next stage of development. In setting goals for the beginning teacher, it's important that they be challenging, but also attainable. Teacher assessment instruments, such as the California Teaching Portfolio, developed by WestEd, or Pathwise, developed by the Educational Testing Service, also have rubrics built into them. *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, provides competencies, suggested evidence, and criteria that can be used to guide the collection and interpretation of evidence. Helping beginning teachers collect and analyze evidence related to the effectiveness of their teaching has high potential for promoting reflective

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teaching practice and for improving teaching performance. But, as noted before, it's important that veteran teachers receive training in strategies for collecting and interpreting evidence, in talking about evidence with a beginner, and in understanding the teaching competencies and criteria used. This type of support also helps pinpoint the areas in which assistance should be targeted for a struggling beginner. While some argue that dealing with evidence can be too overwhelming for a new teacher, this strategy can succeed if the veteran is sensitive to the individual beginner's capacity for processing information and provides commensurate support for assisting growth in the identified areas.

Additional Strategies From Abroad

The United States is not alone in its tendency to put new teachers into place without much support. Among 13 countries recognized as having good mathematics and science education, researchers recently found that 9 provide no or negligible support for new teachers (Britton, Paine, & Raizen, 1999). However, in 4 countries concerted policies, programs, and practices are in place to develop beginning teachers. These efforts include all of the above-mentioned strategies, as well as some other approaches that remain largely untried in the United States.

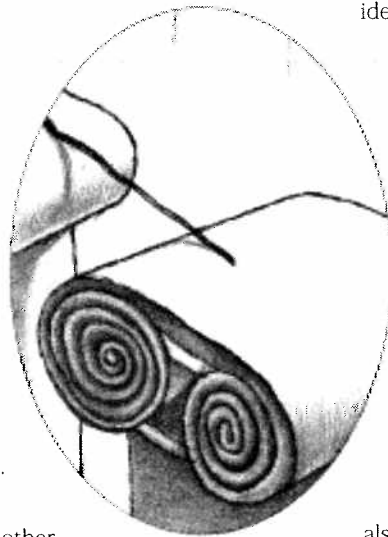
Networking new teachers. In some Swiss states, districts arrange for new teachers to organize across schools into reflective practice groups. A group meets twice a month with an experienced teacher who is extensively trained to facilitate members' exploration of the perennial problems of novice teachers. In New Zealand, regional teacher centers convene new teachers for one to two workshops, in which they can exchange views on problems, break through their isolation, and get "safe" advice from experts who are not associated with their districts.

Group observation and advice. In Japan, all teachers — including new ones — are asked to

periodically prepare and deliver a best possible lesson to their students while being observed by many colleagues (Padilla, Riley & Bryan, 1999). While this may feel like an especially pressured situation for a new teacher, most novices subsequently find that the advice and critique from the rest of the faculty is tremendously helpful for their growth.

Institutional Role in Beginning Teacher Support

Certain institutional policies and practices strengthen all beginning teacher support efforts — starting with having an effective method for identifying new teachers and maintaining realistic expectations for these newcomers.



Early identification of beginning teachers by the personnel office. Few personnel offices are set up to formally identify new teachers (whether new to the profession, the state, or the district) and provide that information to their principals or to the coordinator of an induction program. Early identification does, however, aid in planning for specific support activities, such as orientation. It also allows support to begin much earlier in the year.

Realistic expectations for beginners. It takes time for teachers to learn their craft. Induction programs can accelerate beginning teacher growth, but most newcomers will still need an extended period before they look like strong veteran teachers. Yet most teacher evaluation systems do not distinguish between beginning and veteran teachers. No one wants to see incompetent teachers in classrooms, but in this era of rising expectations, care must be taken that beginning teachers are not continually hired and then let go in the name of raising standards. Sustained investment of support in beginning teachers who are consistently improving their teaching is a wise policy, especially for districts that are at a disadvantage in hiring teachers.

Cooperative agreements with unions. While teacher unions and associations are generally supportive of teacher induction practices, they are wary of setting any undesirable precedents. For example, because issues related to compensation for time spent in required activities are important to all teachers, teacher representatives may also want to negotiate clear limits to the amount of uncompensated time contributed by veteran teachers and beginning teachers in the course of a support program. They are also typically interested in how support providers are selected, especially if a stipend is involved. Having union representatives participate in the planning of support programs or discussion of particularly thorny issues ahead of time can help avoid grievances and divisive struggles.

Coordination of efforts. Even when adopting low-intensity support strategies, a district or school needs someone who is paying attention to implementation, dealing with obstacles, and ensuring consistency with other district policies. Whether considering beginning teacher orientations, seminars, coursework, or even pairing beginners with veteran teachers, someone with administrative authority must lay the groundwork. Dates and facilities must be scheduled to avoid conflicts with other school and district activities. Veteran teachers who are willing to work with beginners must be identified, recruited, and trained. Both support and training for these mentors must be ongoing. If the support strategies for beginning teachers are planned at a district level, someone needs to ensure that principals are aware of the nature, timing, and purpose of the various activities. Experience suggests that this is unlikely to happen unless the person responsible for doing all this also has a realistic amount of time set aside for it.

Protected time. Protected time makes it more likely that classroom observations will take place, that veterans and beginners will actually meet and have discussions that are not rushed, and that beginners

will attend seminars at times when fatigue does not interfere with their ability to pay attention. The creative use of substitutes and staff development days can enhance the effectiveness of support activities.

Inevitable Challenges for Support Programs

Like beginning teachers themselves, teacher induction programs face some predictable challenges. These include identifying and preparing support providers, providing time for support activities, managing the relationship between support and evaluation, and securing resources for struggling teachers.

Choosing and preparing support providers. Finding teachers to serve as support providers is a constant challenge, especially if few incentives are available and support is provided by volunteers. Even when stipends are available, the dollars are rarely commensurate with the amount of time required.

One California induction program attempts to generate future support providers by asking beginners to identify teachers other than their support providers who were helpful; these supportive teachers then receive certificates of appreciation along with information about becoming an official support provider. A school or district can also identify potential support providers by soliciting nominations from principals, staff developers, and teachers.

Larger districts may create full-time positions for support providers, although this is expensive unless subsidized by state or federal entitlement funds or by a special grant solicited specifically to fund new-teacher support.

The selection process is further complicated by the fact that, as noted earlier, excellent classroom teachers do not always make the best support

**When keeping
new teacher support
and new teacher
evaluation separate,
confidentiality is
critical.**

providers for beginning teachers. In districts and schools with few opportunities for teachers to work collegially, it may be difficult to predict who has the temperament and skills to work with beginners. Another selection challenge is the uneven distribution of effective support providers across schools. Meetings between beginners and support providers are more effective when the paired teachers teach at the same grade level or in the same content area, and the meetings generally occur with greater frequency when the paired teachers are at the same school. However, it's not always possible to match both teacher focus and teacher location.

Preparation of support providers is also an issue. Typically, there is not enough time to provide all the preparation that might be desirable, so induction programs are forced to concentrate on the training believed to be most important. Some programs focus preparation on coaching skills; others focus on collecting and interpreting evidence of teaching. The most extensive preparation does both. The issue is further complicated if the induction program is expected to address a set of teaching standards, as in the California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program. In that case, support providers must become familiar with the teaching standards.

Occasionally, a district finds a way to make a real financial commitment to new-teacher support. Another Arizona district has solved the "find and prepare" problem by maintaining a cadre of carefully trained master teachers, known as Instructional Program Specialists. These are classroom teachers employed on teacher contracts but deployed on "special assignment," a significant portion of which is to support new teachers through a three-year formal mentoring relationship. These specialists work directly with new teachers in their classrooms, assessing their practice and doing demonstration teaching. Their basic training covers clinical supervision, cognitive coaching, group facilitation strategies, cooperative learning, essential elements of

instruction, classroom management strategies, multiple intelligences, and district curriculum standards, as well as training in various software programs aligned with district curriculum. In addition, they receive ongoing training as the curriculum is revised and new instructional materials are adopted for student use.

Providing time for support activities. Every education reform effort struggles with the issue of time. Every support activity is more likely to happen if time is provided during regular working hours or if

teachers are paid for attendance. However, this imposes a tremendous logistical and financial burden on teacher induction programs. Programs manage this challenge by reserving time within the

school day or with paid time for the activities deemed most important. Beginning teachers are especially busy, since they typically spend nights and weekends planning lessons. So any after-school support activities further cut into the time left for any personal life. In addition, beginning teachers need time to think about their teaching in order to grow in their craft. Induction programs must make sure that beginners' time is not filled with formal activities that have little relationship to their teaching, that leave little room for their immediate concerns, or that deny them a reasonable personal life.

Managing the relationship between beginning teacher support and beginning teacher evaluation. Beginning teacher support programs focus on improving practice. In contrast, evaluation programs focus on comparing a teacher's practice to a standard that must be met if beginners are to keep their jobs. Many believe that in fairness to new teachers, the two efforts must be kept entirely separate. Naturally, this separation precludes the principal, who is the teachers' primary evaluator, from participating closely in support efforts.

A few induction programs have successfully combined the support and evaluation of beginning



teachers. These programs provide high levels of intensive support to beginning teachers in areas that have been clearly identified to them as requiring growth. The most publicized programs — in Rochester, New York; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Poway, California — are sponsored by American Federation of Teachers affiliates.

Most induction programs, however, separate support and evaluation, due either to a belief that evaluation interferes with support or to concerns about losing union support. In keeping support and evaluation separate, confidentiality is a critical issue, requiring explicit understanding about what support providers will or will not share with principals.

In programs that separate support and evaluation, support providers can usually respond to principals' request to target assistance in a particular area, but they do not report on the perceived success of that effort. Some induction programs ask support providers and beginning teachers to keep the principal informed of general areas in which they are working, such as classroom management or lesson planning. However, when it comes to providing specific information about a beginner's practice to anyone conducting an evaluation, the mentor must refuse. And in keeping such information confidential, they must be supported by district administrators.

Whatever a school's rules about confidentiality related to teacher support, if a beginning teacher and support provider are to work together effectively, the new teacher must trust the intentions of the provider. For that reason, the beginning teacher, the support provider, and the principal must all have the same understanding of those rules from the outset.

Another area for concern relates to aligning evaluation criteria — those used by support providers to help beginning teachers improve and those used by school administrators to evaluate beginners for retention. The criteria should be the same for both purposes. Such alignment helps avoid the kind of awkward situations — and potential lawsuits — that can come about when beginning teachers receive contradictory feedback from support providers and evaluators. Both support providers and school administrators evaluating beginners should receive

training aimed at developing shared understandings about the minimum criteria and standards beginners must meet as a condition of continued employment.

Getting resources to struggling teachers. While many beginners will perform adequately even with minimal assistance, some will struggle. These teachers require more support than that provided in most low-intensity strategies; in fact, even programs using high intensity strategies will need to determine how to strategically focus support. Ideally, programs can be flexibly designed to allow some resources to be shifted from beginners who are doing fine to those who are not. In some instances, a new teacher may be so needy that a single mentor cannot fully meet his or her needs — especially if the mentor is working with multiple beginners or is working only part time as a mentor and has other responsibilities. In such cases, it may be more effective to have a mentor serve as coordinator of individualized services for the beginner, putting him or her in touch with others who can also help. Thus, in working with very needy newcomers, mentors must understand what additional resources, if any, are available. They must also understand how effective support for this population of beginning teachers differs from that for more competent newcomers.

Equally important, mentors should understand that, despite their best efforts, not all beginning teachers will be successful because, simply put, not everyone is suited to teaching. In these cases, support providers may need strategies for counseling beginning teachers out of the teaching profession.

Conclusion

School and district administrators can select strategies from those described above to create or strengthen an induction program to support beginning teachers. Whether they provide personal and emotional support, task- or problem-related support, or stimulate beginners to reflect on their teaching, all are valuable. Less intensive support strategies have been found effective at increasing retention and promoting personal and professional

well-being, but the more intensive strategies are more effective at improving beginning teaching practice.

In creating an induction program, however small, thought should also be given as to how to manage the challenges identified in this brief. While the list of issues and support strategies can be laid out in a simple, straightforward way, implementation of the strategies and management of the challenges require close attention to context and available resources. Some support strategies may reopen previously contested institutional policies and

practices, such as compensation for additional work, release time priorities, and lack of professional, collegial conversations.

As with any program, the first year or so of a beginning teacher support effort is likely to be bumpy; success requires a commitment to learn from mistakes and to identify necessary changes in resources, policies, and practices. The potential payoffs — lower teacher attrition, higher teacher morale, and, most importantly, improved teaching and learning — make the effort worthwhile.

WestEd would like to hear more about schools' and districts' successful efforts, as well as their continuing challenges, in supporting beginning teachers. We would also like to know if and how you have found this brief to be helpful. Please send e-mail to <Lifelines@WestEd.org>, or write Communications at the WestEd address on the back.

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RESOURCES

American Federation of Teachers affiliate-sponsored support programs. For information about: the Rochester [New York] Teachers Association (RTA) mentor program for first-year teachers, visit the RTA Web site at <rochesterteachers.com/cit.htm>, or call Carl O'Connell at 716/262-8541; the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers' program, contact Denise Hewitt by e-mail at <hewittd@cpsboe.k-12.oh.us> or call 513/475-6042; the Poway Professional Assistance Program sponsored by the Poway Federation of Teachers, call 858/748-0010, X2324 or e-mail <ppappusd@sdcod.k-12.ca.us>.

(continued on next page)

more resources

Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment. This California program supports individuals in their first and second years of teaching through mentoring and coaching, professional development and training activities, and assessment of professional growth. For information, contact Terry Janicki with the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing at 916/322-2305 or <tjanicki@ctc.ca.gov> or Suzanne Riley with the California Department of Education at 916/657-3393 or <sriley@cde.ca.gov>; or visit the BTSA Web site due on line in Spring 2000 <www.btsa.ca.gov>.

Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching. Danielson, C. (1996). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. A framework of components of teaching practice, together with suggested data sources and descriptive scales to guide either self-reflection or support.

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Model standards for beginning teacher licensing and development: A resource for state dialogue. Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (1992). Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers. A copy can be obtained by calling Jean Miller at 202/336-7048.

The New Teacher Center at University of California, Santa Cruz, offers support and assistance to school districts, universities, and other educational entities in development of teacher induction programs. For more information, call 831/459-4323 or e-mail <ntc@zzyx.ucsc.edu>.

The Pathwise Induction program, available from Educational Testing Service (ETS), is a support and formative assessment process designed to assist beginning teachers' growth as reflective practitioners. For information, contact ETS at 800/297-9051.

For more information about WestEd, contact the National Office, Educational Research and Training, One Delaware Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94102-4000. For more information, call 415/365-3004 or visit our Web site at www.wested.org.

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MENTORING HANDBOOK:

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I: WHAT IS A MENTOR ?

Mentors play many roles.

A Mentor, in the historical sense, is seen as someone who:

- is a loyal friend, confidant and advisor
- is a teacher, guide, coach and role model
- is entrusted with the care and education of another
- has knowledge and advanced or expert status and who is attracted to and nurtures a person of talent and ability
- is willing to give away what he or she knows in a non-competitive way
- represents skill, knowledge, virtue and accomplishment

The most effective mentors:

- welcome newcomers into the profession and take a personal interest in their career development and well-being
- want to share their knowledge, materials, skill and experience with those they mentor
- offer support, challenge, patience and enthusiasm while they guide others to new levels of competence
- point the way and represent tangible evidence of what one can become
- expose the recipients of their mentoring to new ideas, perspectives and standards, and to the values and norms of the profession
- are more expert in terms of knowledge but view themselves as equal to those they mentor

The Concept of Mentoring

The concept of mentoring has a long history, one that comes to us from Greek mythology. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Mentor was the teacher of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. But Mentor was more than a teacher. Mentor was half-God and half-man, half-male and half-female, believable and yet unreachable. Mentor was the union of both goal and path, wisdom personified (Daloz, 1983).

Today, some 3500 years later, mentoring relationships are still valued. In many professions mentors are thought to enhance if not ensure the professional development and success of talented newcomers. Increasingly, mid-career professionals seek mentors when they wish to develop new levels of expertise and to advance in the profession.

Yet, if mentoring were only a means for aspiring young professionals to gain a career foothold or to be given a boost up the career ladder, mentoring would be a one-way street. Common experience tells us that one-sided relationships do not work as well as reciprocal relationships where there is an even exchange of some kind. In fact, mentoring relationships most likely are reciprocal if they achieve their fullest potential.

What does a mentor derive from mentoring? Erickson's description of the Eight Stages of Man sheds some light on the question:

"For the mentor, Erickson's seventh stage of 'generativity' adds further substance to the mentoring relationship. The desire that one's work and influence 'live on' is an important life goal. The nurturing and influencing of young adults and the facilitation of their efforts to form and live out their hopes and wishes can fulfill the generative needs of the mentor" (Rodriquez, et. al., 1984).

Thus, among the strongest and most compelling reasons for serving as a mentor may be the desire to fulfill one's own felt need to contribute to the growth, development and wish fulfillment of an aspiring professional. The act of mentoring allows one to repay, in some measure, the intrinsic benefits he or she has derived from the profession.

A Special Note to Mentor Teachers

Many mentor teacher programs have expanded the concept of mentoring to include activities such as curriculum development projects and staff development workshops. These activities are crucial services in school districts and deserve to be supported. However, such activities have not been included in the definition of mentoring presented here. In this handbook, mentoring is defined as the individualized support, assistance, guidance and optimum amount of challenge which one professional gives to another - whether newcomer or mid-careerist in the profession. The decision to more narrowly define mentoring here is consistent with the recommendation of the California Commission on the Teaching Profession (Commons, 1985).

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II: HOW TO SELECT PROMISING MENTORS

Effective mentors share a number of characteristics. The profile sketched below is based on a synthesis of observations described by many mentors and authors. While any single mentor may not possess all of the characteristics, effective mentors have many of these qualities:

Knowledge of Their Field

- They are considered by peers to be experts in the field.
- They set high standards for themselves.
- They enjoy and are enthusiastic about their field.
- They continue to update their background in the field.

Demonstrated Skills in Their Field

- Their work demonstrates superior achievement.
- They use a variety of techniques and skills to achieve their goals.

Earned Respect of Colleagues

- They listen to and communicate effectively with others.
- They exhibit a good feeling about their own accomplishments and about the profession.
- They recognize excellence in others and encourage it.
- They are committed to supporting and interacting with their colleagues.
- They are able to role-play others and understand their views.
- They enjoy intellectual engagement and like to help others.
- They are sensitive to the needs of others and generally recognize when others require support, direct assistance or independence.
- They exercise good judgment in decisions concerning themselves and the welfare of others.

"SHOULD I BECOME A MENTOR?" CHECKLIST

As one considers the possibility of serving as a mentor, it is time to stop and ask "Should I become a mentor?" The checklist below is designed to guide the self-reflection of individuals who are thinking about becoming mentors. The checklist provides a description of the qualities that are most often thought to be conducive to successful mentoring. Successful mentors generally have many of the qualities listed here, along with some other valuable qualities that are not listed but that are unique to them as individuals. Space is provided at the conclusion of this checklist for respondents to add those qualities that represent their unique or special assets to mentoring.

To use the checklist, respondents should read each statement and place an X in the appropriate column which represents the degree to which the statement characterizes the way the respondent sees himself or herself. After ranking each statement (1) Strongly Agree that the statement is representative; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral; (4) Disagree; and (5) Strongly Disagree, respondents may reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses. Items 1-10 and 15-20 apply to many professional fields while items 11 -14 focus exclusively on the teaching profession.

There is no single "ideal profile", but respondents who possess many of these qualities are likely to serve well as mentors. If one has serious doubts about the strength of his or her own qualifications, it might be useful to get a second opinion from a colleague who knows the respondent well. It is also important to recognize that many of the qualities listed here are developed or learned and the result of practice.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

1. I see myself as being people-oriented;
I like and enjoy working with other
professionals.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

2. I am a good listener and respect my
colleagues.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

3. I am sensitive to the needs and feelings
of others.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

4. I recognize when others need support or
independence.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

5. I want to contribute to the professional
development of others and to share
what I have learned.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

6. I am willing to find reward in service to
someone who needs my assistance.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

7. I am able to support and help without
smothering, parenting or taking charge.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

8. I see myself generally as flexible and
willing to adjust my personal schedule to
meet the needs of someone else.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

9. I usually am patient and tolerant when
teaching someone.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

10. I am confident and secure in my knowledge
of the field and make an effort to remain
up-to-date.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

11. I enjoy the subject(s) I teach.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I set high standards for myself and my students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I use a variety of teaching methods and my students achieve well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Others look to me for information about my subject matter and methods of teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Overall, I see myself as a competent professional.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I am able to offer assistance in areas that give others problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I am able to explain things at various levels of complexity and detail.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Others are interested in my professional ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

* Items 19 and 20 are reserved for descriptions of one's unique and special assets for mentoring.

III: ESTABLISHING PRODUCTIVE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Once a person has decided to become a mentor, thoughts quite naturally turn toward questions about how to establish a productive mentoring relationship. "Will I choose the right person?" "How can I get off to a good start?" These and many other questions are typical first thoughts. In this section readers will find practical answers to such questions.

The Nature of Mentoring Relationships

Establishing a positive mentoring relationship is very much like establishing other valued human relationships in a number of respects. Both parties usually have a genuine desire to understand the values and expectations of the other person, and to respect and become sensitive to one another's feelings and needs.

At the same time, mentoring relationships differ in an important way from other personal relationships because they are professional in nature. Mentors are responsible for conveying and upholding the standards, norms, and values of the profession. They are responsible for offering support and challenge to the recipient of their mentoring while the recipient strives to fulfill the profession's expectations.

Healthy mentoring relationships are evolutionary rather than static in nature. They change because the purpose of the relationship is to enable the recipient to acquire new knowledge, skill, and standards of professional competence. The perceptions of both members of the relationship evolve as the recipient's performance evolves to new levels of competence under the mentor's guidance and support. The person who once said, "No man steps into the same stream twice," could very well have been describing the changing nature of mentoring relationships.

Stages in the Development of Mentoring Relationships

One way to view the evolutionary nature of mentoring relationships is to think of them in terms of stages of development.

Stage 1: The mentor and recipient become acquainted and informally clarify their common interests, shared values and professional goals. Occasionally matchmakers who assign mentors to recipients can foresee "mentor marriages made in heaven," but more often mentors and recipients prefer to choose one another. Taking time to become acquainted with one another's interests, values and goals (Stage 1) seems to help mentoring relationships gain a better start than when such activity is given a low priority. (More will be said shortly about situations which do not offer choice of mentors or mentees.)

Stage 2: The mentor and recipient communicate initial expectations and agree upon some common procedures and expectations as a starting point. In the very few cases where a major disparity is found to exist between the needs and expectations of the two individuals--and where neither party can accommodate to the other--the pair is able to part company on a friendly basis before the actual mentoring and inevitable frustration begins.

Stage 3: Gradually, needs are fulfilled. Objectives are met. Professional growth takes place. New challenges are presented and achieved. This stage may last for months or years.

Stage 4: The mentor and recipient redefine their relationship as colleagues, peers, partners and/or friends.

Clarifying Expectations in Mentoring Relationships

Most professionals place a high value on taking the initiative to clarify their own expectations and to understand the expectations of others. This quality contributes to the establishment of strong and positive mentoring relationships.

What are examples of expectations that might be communicated during the exploratory stages (Stages 1 and 2) of a mentoring relationship?

- The frequency of contact, the availability and the accessibility of the mentor and recipient.
- The amount and kind of support that are needed by the recipient or that can be provided by the mentor.
- The various roles the mentor finds comfortable: listener, supporter, advisor, guide, counselor, role model, friend, nurturer or resource in the background. Many other roles might be identified.
- The range of roles the recipient will find natural: listener, observer, initiator of requests for help or guidance, need for nurture or autonomy, self-expectations as peer or co-equal. Many other roles might be communicated.

Can experienced professionals mentor to one another? Certainly they can and with great success. For example, highly skilled teachers called "cross-over" teachers who wish to teach in new content areas or take on administrative duties benefit from mentoring relationships. In cases where the mentors and the recipients see themselves as equal and share many common interests and values, Stage 3 is the starting point for their relationship.

The Importance of Matching in Mentoring Relationships

Historically, individuals who have desired to become mentors have looked over aspiring newcomers in their profession or field--such as law, medicine, business, painting, dance, writing, or teaching -- and have selected promising young protégés to nurture. Most of the time, these mentoring relationships work out very well. Occasionally they do not, and the protégé moves on in search of another mentor or the mentor seeks another protégé. What should individuals who are contemplating a mentoring relationship look for during the exploratory stages of getting to know one another and sharing expectations? Several important factors are considered below.

Degree of eagerness
to have a mentoring
relationship

Similarity in personal styles:
gregarious, animated, spontaneous,
vs. low-key, retiring, reflective

Similarity of expected
professional assignments
and responsibilities

Similarity in preference
for nurture vs. autonomy
when establishing
expectations for support

Academic preparation
courses, majors, alma mater
and previous experience

It is difficult to predict the combination of personal and professional qualities that attract individuals to one another in mentoring relationships. Large numbers of experienced mentors say there is no magic combination. Some individuals are attracted to opposites; others are attracted to similar interests, styles and backgrounds.

What if choice is not an option? Most professionals view the term "professional" to mean, among other things, that one is able to rise above personal considerations, differences or desires when providing service to those who need one's professional help or expertise. Thus, among professionals, any match in a mentoring relationship should be productive. While some freedom of choice is desirable if choice is possible in mentoring relationships, many employment situations do not offer this opportunity. Where mentors are not free to choose the recipient of their mentoring, they might expect--with preparation or training for the role--to be equally as effective as mentors who choose their protégés but who have no preparation for this role.

IV: IS TRAINING REALLY NECESSARY?

Mentors can have a significant effect upon the professional development of aspiring young or mid-career adults in their profession. Whether a mentor's impact is positive or negative depends in large part upon how well informed and skilled the mentor is, and upon the mentor's commitment and availability. It seems only natural to ask: Is training to be a mentor really necessary? Research at the University of California, Irvine, suggests that training is not only important to the success of mentoring relationships but that it can be directed toward the most difficult challenges faced by mentors.

When mentor teachers of one, two and three years of experience as mentors were asked "Do you think mentors need to be trained?", one in five (20%) thought training was unnecessary. Their comments, which are illustrated here, generally reflect the view that mentoring is a natural extension of teaching. They suggest that mentoring essentially is normal teacher-talk, but talk that takes place between two people in a mentoring relationship.

- "The best mentoring is on a one-to-one basis where neither party thinks of himself as a mentor (or recipient). Untrained mentors are probably less threatening."
- "Enthusiasm is difficult to infuse or train someone to have. If a teacher is good, he will have fun teaching others, even teachers."
- "Teaching comes naturally so I suppose mentoring does too."

Yet the majority of mentor teachers (80%) surveyed expressed the view that training would be helpful.

- "Where do teachers get the skills to work with adults? Very few people are 'natural' mentors. Training would be valuable, especially to have others share what works for them."
- "The personality for mentoring--that nurturing personality--comes naturally, but the nurturing quality becomes focused by training."
- "Mentors need training so that they can feel more confident about helping others. They need to know how to help teachers who need help but will not actively seek help."

But "helpful" doesn't mean "necessary." A better way to understand the need for mentor training is to examine the difficulties that mentor teachers encounter while fulfilling their roles. When asked, "What are the most difficult aspects of mentoring for you?" most mentor teachers cited examples which illustrated the need for basic information and training:

- "Making the initial contact and building trust. Sharing my ideas at first....I don't want to sound like a know-it-all even when I am asked for help."
- "Overcoming my hesitation to tell (the recipient) that he is wrong and to suggest alternatives. I feel like I am offending him."

- "Trying to explain (to the recipient) that her material was too difficult. I helped her revise it but certain parts were still too difficult. When do you stop correcting and revising? When does helping become hurting?"
- Rejection, I offered help at her convenience but my help wasn't wanted.... It's hard to help people."
- "Working with someone for a whole year and then finding that he can't make it."

All of these responses suggest a need for basic information about mentoring relationships or for mentor training. The candid and sensitive responses of these mentors point to the value of some preparation for their role as mentors and the value of specific skills that allow mentors to feel confident and successful as they fulfill their expectations and goals as mentors.

V: WAYS OF MENTORING

When most people think of mentoring, they think of experts sharing technical knowledge with less experienced individuals in a profession. Certainly sharing one's expertise is a large part of mentoring, but so is the communication of support, challenge, feeling and many other kinds of information. A brief glance at the opening page of this handbook, I: What Is A Mentor? is a helpful reminder of the multiple dimensions of mentoring. Here we focus on sharing expertise and communication of support and challenge.

Sharing Expertise

Every mentor has a specific body of professional knowledge and skill to share. To illustrate, in the teaching profession a part of this pedagogical knowledge is referred to as "content." The content or subject matter to be taught to students--for example, history or mathematics--must be transformed from the teachers' university level knowledge of the subject into a form that is appropriate for the readiness level of each particular group of students. In other words, the subject matter must be repackaged to fit the students' maturational, developmental or grade level, and the range of previous experiences the students are likely to have had. Experienced teachers develop a sense of how well various groups of students will understand specific subject matter when the content is presented at different levels of complexity. They are able to "repackage" the content to fit different needs. Similarly, teachers use a variety of teaching methods, each adopted to achieve a specific outcome. Every profession has its own content or body of knowledge in the field and the variety of methods practiced when professionals utilize their knowledge in service to others.

Suggestions for Sharing Expertise on Planning

- Find out how you can be the most helpful in the area of planning.
- Team up during the orientation week before school begins and schedule regular times to meet for discussion and planning sessions.
- Discuss goals for the year or semester and objectives for units or lessons.
- Describe various classroom climates and environments you have observed or created and how these variations worked out.
- Review the State or district curriculum guidelines together and discuss how they can be woven into the curriculum.
- Share catalogs for ordering instructional materials and equipment.
- Show how you organize your planning for the year, the semester, the week and the day.
- Share your ideas about planning for contingencies.
- Talk about how and where to anticipate students' errors and misconceptions.
- Describe the labor saving steps you use in planning that pay off later in reduced workload.
- Talk about the patterns of students' physical, social and academic development in your classes; and demonstrate your understanding and valuing of differences among cultural, ethnic and linguistic groups of students in your school.
- Describe alternative strategies that are successful for teaching in classrooms where students have diverse or conflicting needs.
- Collaborate on a special unit of instruction or a project.
- Work together to design a new lab or learning centers.
- Share syllabi, units of study or lessons that have worked well for you.
- Offer to share your computer software or show where other software can be found.

Suggestions for Sharing Expertise on Instruction

- Structure times at noon or the end of the day to share reactions to the day's teaching.
- Provide opportunities for the mentee to talk about any teaching concerns and to ask questions.
- Listen with interest when he or she talks about teaching a particular lesson or unit, and if asked, offer your own reaction or analysis and support.

- Be willing to share information about your own teaching successes and failures, if appropriate.
 - Volunteer to receive an evening or early morning phone call in an emergency.
 - Talk about timing, pacing and sequencing in teaching concepts that are difficult for students to master.
 - Offer to demonstrate lessons or labs--live or on videotape.
 - Discuss several kinds of lessons and the teaching methods that work best with various groups of students; explain the rationale for using various approaches.
 - Brainstorm a wide range of solutions that might be fitting for common problems.
 - Describe strategies you use to increase student attention, motivation or participation .
 - Talk about "brick walls" and "roadblocks" that particular groups or all students encounter, and share your strategies for helping students move forward.
 - Offer to prepare to videotape lessons or classes and offer to give feedback if he or she has any questions.
-

Suggestions for Sharing Expertise on Management

- Take time to listen to concerns about management.
- Ask what kinds of feedback on classroom management would be most useful.
- Discuss standards for classroom management and share strategies for meeting those standards.
- Talk about the importance of organizational routines and describe the routines that contribute most to classroom management.
- Describe ways to let students know you understand their needs and concerns, and demonstrate ways to link that knowledge with long-range and short-term planning.
- Share examples of ways to enhance students' self-concepts.
- Talk about the most difficult management problems you have encountered and various ways to address them.
- Describe techniques you tried that didn't work and analyze why they didn't work, demonstrating an experimental orientation.
- Talk about standards of school wide conduct.

- Demonstrate a wide range of classroom management techniques--either live or on videotapes.
- Offer to analyze (as a colleague and peer) the videotape of a new teacher's performance in the area of classroom management, and be willing to share your own videotapes.
- Share exemplary professional books or workshop materials on classroom management techniques.

Suggestions for Sharing Your Expertise on Evaluation

- Listen to the mentee's concerns about evaluation and share ideas about the overall purposes of evaluation in the classroom and the school.
 - Talk about the variety of ways (formal and informal, verbal and nonverbal) that one can evaluate student learning and attitudes in specific subjects or at specific grade levels.
 - Share your own system for grading and record keeping, and describe other models that you know about.
 - Collaborate on the development of tests that might be used in identical or similar classes.
 - Offer to share a collection of tests or other evaluation measures you have developed.
 - Offer to give feedback on the mentee's evaluation instruments and their results.
 - Review the standardized test program used by the school or district, and talk about its role in relation to curriculum planning and evaluation of student learning in the classroom.
 - Describe various strategies to handle the expected paperwork associated with students' assignments.
 - Explore various approaches for sharing evaluation results with students, site administrators and parents.
 - Discuss and compare various techniques for evaluation of one's own teaching effectiveness.
 - Help the new teacher to prepare for the review and evaluation of his or her first year of teaching.
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Communicating Support and Challenge

The effectiveness of verbal and nonverbal communication is high on the list of important factors that contribute to the success of mentoring relationships--and of all professional and personal relationships. Mentors have a special responsibility for effective communication because they are a primary source of information, support and challenge to the recipients of their mentoring.

Professional organizations and offices depend so much upon effective communication to accomplish their missions that they frequently provide training in communication skills for their staff members. Such training may focus on the enhancement of specific communication skills or a wide variety of them.

The essence of schools is communication: of knowledge, of skills, of values, of attitudes and of expectations. Thus, the quality of communication in schools affects all that happens in schools and the achievement of their goals and objectives. Everyone associated with schools including students, teachers, administrators, parents, the school board, the community and governmental agencies depend upon the clear expression of goals, objectives and points of view in order to engage in any cooperative activity.

As mentors think about the importance of communicating support and challenge to recipients of their mentoring, it is helpful for them to review a checklist that focuses on the key features of effective communication. Such checklists are most meaningful when individuals make them up for themselves. An example of a communications checklist appears next.

COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST FOR MENTORS

1. How do I perceive myself in the many roles a mentor plays?
2. How well do I understand the recipient's overall expectations for our mentoring relationship?
3. In general, is my communication with him or her effective, including verbal and nonverbal communication?
4. What is my objective in this specific conversation or message?
5. Does my delivery mode (face-to-face, phone, written communication) fit my purpose?
6. Am I too formal or informal for the purpose of this communication?
7. What assumptions have I made or shared in this communication?
8. What kind of response do I expect from the recipient?
9. Am I prepared for a very different kind of response?
10. Have I given him or her enough time to respond, to ask questions or to ask for clarification?

11. If I think I have been misunderstood, can I clarify and paraphrase?
12. Am I willing to set aside my own communication agenda to listen to his or hers at any time?
13. How should I react to his/her communication to further our mentoring relationship?

While the checklist above identifies a number of features of effective communication training at a general level, targeted communication training also is available. Examples of training which is available in many school districts include Peer Coaching and Conference Skills.

Support can be communicated in many ways. Mentors find it helpful to make a list of the various kinds of support they are comfortable providing as they share their expertise. The examples below illustrate a few ways that mentors communicate support.

- A nod of the head, a smile, or a wink at a tense moment.
- A compliment, a pat on the back, or a hug after a challenge has been met.
- A coffee break or lunch together at a time when the mentee needs to talk.
- An opportunity to spend an evening together reviewing the results of a task or planning for the next one.
- An invitation to visit a resource center together, a map to a good bookstore across town, or a shared ride to some event.
- Information about ways to gain the support of key individuals.
- Suggestions for acquiring scarce resources.
- An invitation to a weekend barbecue or small get-together with other colleagues.

Mentors also need to offer their protégés challenges that stimulate professional growth and cause them to stretch. Challenges lead to the development of new levels of expertise. When the amount of challenge is well matched to the mentee's readiness for growth, the tasks become motivating. Challenges that are not matched well with the individual's level of development can be overwhelming and create feelings of being unable to cope. Then, rather than producing growth, the challenge may lead to frustration, panic or feelings of failure.

It becomes important then, for mentors to become sensitive to the growth needs of those to whom they mentor, and attempt to offer optimal challenges for their protégé's professional development. Some mentors develop mentoring plans to help maintain optional levels of challenge for the protégé. The primary function of a mentoring plan is to focus on the developmental nature of becoming a professional and to establish mileposts or markers which will guide and serve as reminders that the recipient is growing in knowledge and skill. Since the perceptions of both mentors and recipients alike change as mentoring evolves, mentoring plans help the observant mentor to keep one eye on the recipient's development and the other eye on his or her readiness for the next challenge.

VI: AVOIDING THE RISKS OF MENTORING

Are there risks associated with mentoring? The answer is, "Relatively few," if risks are thought of as the lack of predictability and personal control over events that could harm us in some way. Fortunately the major risks associated with mentoring can be avoided or reduced through knowledge and planning.

Risk Awareness and Prevention

What are the risks and how can they be avoided or reduced? Four of the most commonly mentioned risks--or fears of risks--are identified below and illustrated by examples of comments often made by mentors and would-be mentors. Brief descriptions are offered of the kinds of knowledge or actions that help to avoid such risks or to reduce fears of them.

Mismatch between mentor and recipient/protégé/mentee

Mentors express this fear with statements like: "Our personal styles may clash. We may not be able to work together. I'm afraid I will overpower or threaten him. She has become too demanding and too dependent. Can he take honest, well-intentioned criticism?"

Knowledge/Action: Individuals who take time at the outset to become acquainted with one another's interests, shared values, professional goals and expectations greatly enhance the development of a strong foundation for a mentoring relationship, as pointed out earlier in III: Establishing Productive Mentoring Relationships. Such knowledge allows individuals to deal with major differences in expectations, to prevent unwelcomed surprises later on, and to recognize those relatively rare instances where serious personal clashes are foreseeable and avoidable.

Threat to one's professional image

This concern is expressed by statements like: "I may be misunderstood; he, she, or my colleagues may think I'm a know-it-all. If she fails to make the grade in spite of my mentoring, people may begin to wonder about my own competence. I could be responsible for his success or failure!"

Knowledge/Action: Individuals who are familiar with the multiple roles that mentors can play (see I: What Is a Mentor? and III: Establishing Productive Mentoring Relationships) avoid stereotyped perceptions of mentors and their protégés, and can help to dispel misconceptions about the degree of responsibility a mentor has for the success or failure of the recipient of the mentoring. It is always helpful to remember that many persons contribute to the development of any new or advancing professional. Wise mentors encourage such broadly based support and avoid over-identifying with the success or failure of their mentee.

Failure as a mentor

Mentors express this fear or concern with statements like, "I might get in over my head. I'm trying to help, but maybe I'm hindering her. What works for me may not work for anyone else. Should I let him make mistakes that can be avoided so that he can profit from them?"

Knowledge/Action: Knowledge of successful mentoring techniques contributes to the professional growth of both individuals in a mentoring relationship, and thus, decreases the likelihood of frustration, failure or fear of failure for either member. More than 50 mentoring techniques are suggested in V: Ways of Mentoring.

The development of a mentoring plan can increase the sense of personal control that both members of the relationship have or may need. Such plans can identify in a systematic way the frequency and times of regular meetings or get-togethers and the topics or issues to be covered. A mentoring plan helps to remind everyone concerned that becoming a professional is a developmental process. And at the end of a year, both members can look back at the plan and recognize the protégé's growth.

Competition or rivalry

Fear of competition or rivalry is evident in statements like: "He may be more talented than I am--can I handle professional jealousy? I have shared my best secrets and strategies with her and now she is surpassing me! How will his or her success affect my status, perquisites or income?"

Knowledge/Action: Competition or rivalry can be destructive to any mentoring relationship. Knowledge of the evolutionary nature of mentoring relationships helps to prepare everyone for changes in a relationship (See again III: Establishing Productive Mentoring Relationships). Occasionally a few mentoring relationships last for a professional lifetime; but more often mentoring relationships are of much shorter duration because of other changes in professional careers and organizations. When the mentor's guidance no longer seems to be needed and the emerging or advancing professional begins to demonstrate expert competence and knowledge, the wise mentor takes the lead in redefining the relationship. Such leadership generally leads to a mutually rewarding respect for one another, and the mentor can then take justifiable pride in his or her contribution to the professional development of another individual.

VII: THE JOYS OF MENTORING

Since childhood many of us have been reminded that:

"It is better to give than to receive."

And in many languages and cultures, the idea has been expressed that:

"It is not what we give but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare."

Both ideas capture an important aspect of mentoring: that many joys and benefits result from sharing one's expertise, one's time, and one's self. The most obvious of these joys come bounding in the form of appreciation that others express for mentoring assistance. A different kind of joy accrues when others value our expertise so much that they incorporate our ideas into their own thinking and behavior. And then quite unexpectedly still a third kind of joy emerges when, in the midst of sharing our expertise with others, we rediscover long-buried feelings of pride and accomplishment that were forgotten--feelings that occurred when we first mastered our craft for ourselves. These are just a few of the joys of mentoring.

When mentor teachers were asked what their most rewarding experiences were as mentors, and whether they were glad they had served as mentors, they replied with statements like those that follow.

As a mentor, what were your most rewarding experiences?

- "Seeing her excitement and enthusiasm--watching her gain insights into concepts that are difficult for a student to learn."
- "His comments, his requests for assistance, and the fact that he returned week after week was incentive enough for me to prevail in the face of countless hours of my own preparation."
- "Helping a beginning teacher so that he decided to stay in the profession for a second year."
- "They (new teachers) told me that I unknowingly role-modeled a lesson idea and classroom management techniques, and they voluntarily and successfully adapted these ideas."
- "Demonstrating the proper use of science equipment in her 6th grade class, and hearing the 'oohs' and 'aahs'."
- "Watching him try out and expand the ideas that we planned together!"

- "The greatest reward was helping him to understand where the pitfalls are in the material and how to get the ideas across to the students."
- "Having her report how well her kids responded to or learned from materials I had shared with her."
- (And from a high school teacher who mentored to an elementary teacher:) "I just attended her open house last week. She had on display the science fair project that resulted from my consultation. A speech given by one of her students was one of the best...! She is developing into a first-class teacher!"
- "The overwhelming appreciation I receive! And watching them grow into colleagues."
- "Getting her to realize and accept the idea of teaching being an art of communication: knowledge without communication skills to establish two-way communication between teacher and student is less productive."

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The Good Mentor

As formal mentoring programs gain popularity, the need for identifying and preparing good mentors grows.

James B. Rowley

Can you name a person who had a positive and enduring impact on your personal or professional life, someone worthy of being called your mentor? Had he or she been trained to serve in such a role or been formally assigned to help you? I frequently ask veteran teachers these questions. As you might guess, most teachers with 10 or more years of experience were typically not assigned a mentor, but instead found informal support from a caring colleague. Unfortunately, not all teachers found this support. In fact, many veterans remember their first year in the classroom as a difficult and lonely time during which no one came to their aid.

Much has changed in the past decade, however, because many school districts have established entry-year programs that pair beginning teachers with veteran, mentor teachers. In the majority of such cases, the matching occurs before they meet and establish a personal relationship. This prevalent aspect of school-based mentoring programs presents special challenges that are further exacerbated when mentor teachers receive no or inadequate training and only token support for their work.

Qualities of a Good Mentor

During the past decade, I have helped school districts design mentor-based, entry-year programs. In that capacity, I have learned much by carefully listening to mentor and beginning teachers and by systematically observing what seems to work, and not to work, in formal mentoring programs. As a result of these experiences, I have identified six basic but essential qualities of the *good mentor* and the implications the qualities have for entry-year program design and mentor teacher training.

The good mentor is committed to the role of mentoring. The good mentor is highly committed to the task of helping beginning teachers find success and gratification in their new work. Committed mentors show up for, and stay on, the job. Committed mentors understand that persistence is as important in mentoring as it is in classroom teaching. Such commitment flows naturally from a resolute belief that mentors are capable of making a significant and positive impact on the life of another. This belief is not grounded in naive conceptions of what it means to be a mentor. Rather, it is anchored in the knowledge that mentoring can be a challenging endeavor requiring significant investments of time and energy.

What can be done to increase the odds that mentor teachers possess the commitment fundamental to delivering effective support? First, good programs require formal mentor training as a prerequisite to mentoring. Veteran teachers unwilling to participate in a quality training program are often indicating their lack of dedication to the role. Second, because it is unreasonable to expect a teacher to commit to a role that has not been clearly defined, the best mentoring programs provide specific descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of mentor teachers.

Third, good mentoring programs require mentors to maintain simple logs or journals that document conferences and other professional development activities involving the mentor and mentee. But such record-keeping devices should keep paperwork to a minimum and protect the confidentiality of the mentor-mentee relationship.

Finally, although the majority of mentor teachers would do this important work without compensation, we must not overlook the relationship between compensation and commitment. Programs that provide mentors with a stipend, release time from extra duties, or additional opportunities for professional growth make important statements about the value of the work and its significance in the school community.

The good mentor is accepting of the beginning teacher. At the foundation of any effective helping relationship is empathy. As Carl Rogers (1958) pointed out, empathy means accepting another person without making judgments. It means setting aside, at least temporarily, personal beliefs and values. The good mentor teacher recognizes the power of accepting the beginning teacher as a developing person and professional. Accepting mentors do not judge or reject mentees as being poorly prepared, overconfident, naive, or defensive. Rather, should new teachers exhibit such characteristics, good mentors simply view these traits as challenges to overcome in their efforts to deliver meaningful support.

How can we encourage mentor teachers to be more accepting of new teachers? A training program that engages prospective mentors in reflecting on the qualities of effective helpers is an excellent place to begin. Reading and discussing passages from the works of Rogers (1958) and Combs, Avila, and Purkey (1971), for example, can raise levels of consciousness about this important attribute. Equally important in the training protocol is helping prospective mentors understand the problems and concerns of beginning teachers (Veenman, 1984; Fuller & Bown, 1975) as well as stage and age theories of adult development (Loevinger, 1976; Sprinthall & Theis-Sprinthall, 1980). Training exercises that cause mentors to thoughtfully revisit their own first years of teaching in light of such research-based and theoretical perspectives can help engender a more accepting disposition toward beginning teachers regardless of their age or prior life experiences.

The good mentor is skilled at providing instructional support. Beginning teachers enter their careers with varying degrees of skill in instructional design and delivery. Good mentors are willing to coach beginning teachers to improve their performance wherever their skill level. Although this seems obvious, many mentor teachers stop short of providing quality instructional support. Among the factors contributing to this problem is a school culture that does not encourage teachers to observe one another in their classrooms. I often ask mentors-in-training whether they could imagine helping someone improve a tennis serve or golf swing without seeing the athlete play and with only the person's description of what he or she thought was wrong.

Lacking opportunities for shared experience, mentors often limit instructional support to workroom conversations. Although such dialogue can be helpful, discussions based on shared experience are more powerful. Such shared experiences can take different forms: mentors and mentees can engage in team teaching or team planning, mentees can observe mentors,

mentors can observe mentees, or both can observe other teachers. Regardless of the nature of the experience, the purpose is to promote collegial dialogue focused on enhancing teacher performance and student learning.

What can we do to prepare mentors to provide instructional support? The quality of instructional support that mentor teachers offer is largely influenced by the degree of value an entry-year program places on such support. The mentor training program should equip mentors with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions prerequisite to effective coaching. Such training helps mentors value description over interpretation in the coaching process; develop multiple methods of classroom observation; employ research-based frameworks as the basis for reflection; and refine their conferencing and feedback skills. Finally, we need to give mentors and mentees time and opportunity to participate in the preconferences, classroom observations, and postconferences that lead to quality clinical support.

The good mentor is effective in different interpersonal contexts. All beginning teachers are not created equal, nor are all mentor teachers. This simple fact, when overlooked or ignored by a mentor teacher, often leads to relationship difficulties and diminished support for the beginning teacher. Good mentor teachers recognize that each mentoring relationship occurs in a unique, interpersonal context. Beginning teachers can display widely different attitudes toward the help offered by a mentor. One year, a mentor may work with a beginning teacher hungry for advice and the next year be assigned a beginning teacher who reacts defensively to thoughtfully offered suggestions.

Just as good teachers adjust their teaching behaviors and communications to meet the needs of individual students, good mentors adjust their mentoring communications to meet the needs of individual mentees. To make such adjustments, good mentors must possess deep understanding of their own communication styles and a willingness to objectively observe the behavior of the mentee.

How can we help mentors acquire such self-knowledge and adopt a positive disposition toward adjusting their mentoring behaviors? Mentor training programs that engage mentors in completing and reflecting on self-inventories that provide insight into their leadership or supervisory styles are particularly helpful.

The Supervisory Beliefs Inventory (Glickman, 1985) offers an excellent vehicle for introducing mentors to the challenges of interpersonal communication. In similar fashion, *The Leadership Adaptability and Style Inventory* (Hersey & Blanchard, 1974) can provoke mentors to reflect on the appropriateness of their mentoring behavior given the maturity and commitment of their mentees. In my own mentor training, I follow discussions of such theoretical perspectives with the analysis of videotaped conversations between mentors and mentees from the *Mentoring the New Teacher* series (Rowley & Hart, 1993).

The good mentor is a model of a continuous learner. Beginning teachers rarely appreciate mentors who have *right* answers to every question and *best* solutions for every problem. Good mentor teachers are transparent about their own search for *better* answers and *more effective* solutions to their own problems. They model this commitment by their openness to learn from colleagues, including beginning teachers, and by their willingness to pursue professional growth through a variety of means. They lead and attend workshops. They teach and enroll in graduate classes. They develop and experiment with new practices. They write and read articles in professional journals. Most important, they share new knowledge and perplexing questions with their beginning teachers in a collegial manner.

How can we ensure that mentors continue their own professional growth and development? Quality entry-year programs establish clear criteria for mentor selection that include a commitment to initial and ongoing mentor training. In addition, program leaders work hard to give veteran mentors frequent opportunities to participate in high-quality professional-growth experiences that can enhance their work as a mentor teacher. Some programs, for example, reward mentors by giving them additional professional development days or extra support to attend professional conferences related to their work.

The good mentor communicates hope and optimism. In "Mentors: They Simply Believe," Lasley (1996) argues that the crucial characteristic of mentors is the ability to communicate their belief that a person is capable of transcending present challenges and of accomplishing great things in the future. For mentor teachers working in school-based programs, such a quality is no less important. Good mentor teachers capitalize on opportunities to affirm the human potential of their mentees. They do so in private conversations and in public settings. Good mentors share their own struggles and frustrations and how they overcame them. And always, they do so in a genuine and caring way that engenders trust.

What can we do to ensure that beginning teachers are supported by mentors capable of communicating hope and optimism? Quality programs take the necessary precautions to avoid using veteran teachers who have lost their positive outlook. If teachers and administrators value mentoring highly and take it seriously, mentoring will attract caring and committed teachers who recognize the complex and challenging nature of classroom teaching. It will attract teachers who demonstrate their hope and optimism for the future by their willingness to help a new teacher discover the same joys and satisfactions that they have found in their own career.

The Mentoring Leadership and Resource Network

The Mentoring Leadership and Resource Network is an ASCD network dedicated to supporting educators everywhere with best practices in mentoring and induction. For six years, the network has provided assistance and free advice to mentors and mentoring programs. In addition, the network sponsors a Spring Symposium each May and an annual meeting at the ASCD Annual Conference in March.

The Mentoring Leadership and Resource Network has five main purposes:

- To provide an organizational vehicle for a mentoring initiative;
- To increase the knowledge base and general awareness of best practices in mentoring and induction;
- To promote and provide effective training for new teacher mentors;
- To establish mentoring of new teachers as the norm in schools; and
- To establish, through mentoring, the norms of collegiality, collaboration, and continuous professional development in schools.

For more information, visit the mentoring Web site (<http://www.mentors.net>).

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MENTORS PLAY MANY ROLES

A mentor typically functions as:

- A Counselor – Mentors provide a confidential, candid, and supportive environment that gives the psychological support necessary to help new teachers stay committed to teaching.
- A Teacher – Mentors help new teachers refine their teaching practices and understand the learning needs of all students, especially those students at risk, with special needs, and from diverse cultural and linguistic homes.
- A Challenger – Mentors challenge new teachers to do their best, by assisting them in content areas and helping them obtain professional development training.
- A Coach – Mentors help new teachers improve their classroom teaching, by offering assistance with classroom management and discipline strategies.
- An Observer – Mentors observe new teachers in action and provide timely and ongoing coaching and support.
- A Facilitator – Mentors help new teachers access a broad variety of professional experiences, by arranging meetings with other new teachers and observations of master teachers in action.
- A Trainer – Mentors conduct workshops and other professional development training for new teachers, other mentor teachers, and building administrators.
- A Master – Mentors use current education techniques and are proficient with education technology.
- A Tour Guide – Mentors help orient new teachers to both the workplace and the culture of the community, by supporting and facilitating meaningful parent and community involvement in and with the school.
- An Advocate – Mentors advocate for new teachers by offering their thoughts and ideas in ongoing and annual assessments of the mentoring program.
- A Role Model - Full-time mentors demonstrate to new teachers the importance of "classroom connection" by returning to their own classrooms within three years.
- A Reporter – Mentors share the success of the mentoring program with all who will listen and report frequently to the joint oversight committee.
- An Equal – Mentors do not supervise. They serve as peers and colleagues to new teachers.

MENTORING

PROCESS STAGES	MENTORING ACTIVITIES	THE PURPOSE
INTRODUCTION	Introduction, sharing of backgrounds, Interests & personal information	CREATE A CONNECTION
FOUNDATION	Explain mentor-protégé roles, relationship & the mentoring process; Explain expectations	CLARITY OF PURPOSE
ORIENTATION	Orientation to the school, grade, Department, staff, district & community	REDUCE THE STRESS & INCREASE THE TEAM FEELING
COLLABORATION	Orientation to new job responsibilities, curriculum & expectations Work together to prepare classroom for start of school	GOOD START, BUILD TEAM, MENTOR SEEN AS A CARING HELPER
PROBLEM SOLVING	Mutual sharing of ideas, discovering how room layout, management plan, and good instructional environment support each other & promote learning Joint analysis of issues and problems	DEVELOPMENT OF THINKING & KNOWLEDGE
PERSONAL FRAMEWORK	Development of options, strategies & plans to implement & evaluate results Building a strong mentor-protégé relationship Reinforce protégé self-esteem & confidence	MENTOR IS SEEN AS TRUSTWORTHY & AN OPENNESS IS CREATED
PROFESSIONAL FRAMEWORK	Explore each others dreams for teaching, views & strengths as teachers & as persons Discovering the “big picture” such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. planning activities as a sequence 2. assessing learning and adjusting instruction 3. worrying less about following lesson plans & more about accomplishing a lesson’s purpose 	MENTOR SEEN AS A MODEL & PROTÉGÉ IS INCREASING SKILL, INSIGHT
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Building a 2-way coaching relationship where mutual feedback and support for learning is the norm	PROMOTE MENTOR & PROTÉGÉ GROWTH
TRANSITION	Building a peer relationship, promoting the protégé’s ability to work independently, but maintaining support for each other’s growth Promoting learning & support links with other staff, creating a broader team concept	PROMOTING MENTOR & PROTÉGÉ INTER-DEPENDENCE

For additional mentoring information, please visit www.mentors.net

MENTOR'S EXPECTATIONS FOR THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

As your mentor:

- I will be available to you.
- I will help support and encourage you in managing your workload, and setting up routines.
- We will work together to solve problems related to your care-giving career that are important to each of us.
- We will treat each other with respect, for example, by keeping appointments, completing assignments, and meeting other agreed-upon expectations.
- I will observe your interactions with children and provide you with feedback that will help inform your teaching practice.
- Although I do not have "all the answers," I will help you frame the questions that will lead you to your own answers and questions.
- I will share with you and demonstrate what I have learned about working with young children.
- I will treat everything that occurs in our mentoring relationship with confidentiality.
- We will learn from and with each other.
- I will not interfere with your relationships with your supervisor or clients.

Source: Adapted with permission from Saphier, J. and R. Gownier (1987), *The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills*. Carlisle, MA: Research for Better Teaching.

Questions to Promote Reflection

- Can you talk more about that?
- Why do you think that happened?
- What evidence do you have about that?
- What do you need?
What have you tried before?
- Why did/didn't it work?
- What does this remind you of?
- What if it happened this way?
- How else could you approach that?
- What do you want to happen?
- How could you do that?
- When is the concern most pronounced?

Affirmations to Support Reflection

- You can find a way that works for you when you are ready.
- You can change if you want to.
- You can grow at your own pace.
- You can know what you need and ask for help.
- You can experiment and explore. I will help you.
- Your needs and reflections are important.
- I like talking to you.

Adapted with permission from Newton et al.
(1994, "Activity 1-11, Handout," 1-115.



How Do I Prepare to Be a Mentoring Coach?

To coach means to convey a valued colleague from where he or she is to where he or she wants to be.

—Arthur L. Costa and Robert J. Garmston, *Cognitive Coaching*

A coach usually sits on the sidelines and provides encouragement and advice to the players on the field. During timeouts, the coach helps the players to see the “big picture” of what is happening on the field.

In a similar way, mentors can coach beginning teachers to connect theory with practice. Costa and Garmston (1994) advocate “cognitive coaching” as a way for teachers to become conscious of their own teaching practices and philosophies. Rather than use the metaphor of the athletic coach, however, they perceive a “coach” as a wagon or a vehicle that moves people from one location to another. They encourage goals of trust, mutual learning, and “holonomy,” which they define as acting independently and interdependently at the same time, thus assisting teachers to feel at ease in making independent choices while also being able to work cooperatively within a team (p. 3).

Others, such as Little (1988), refer to peer coaching, one-on-one interactions in which reciprocal partners learn from each other. Although peer coaching usually involves two equally experienced teachers helping each other, it can also encompass mentoring situations, which can become reciprocal learning situations. Both cognitive and peer coaching require you, as the mentor, to think more about your own classroom practice and how students

THINKING LIKE A MENTORING COACH

Resisting their perceived role as "experts," mentors have adopted a more collegial stance in their work with less-experienced teachers. Effective mentoring requires a philosophy that encourages questioning, recognizes territoriality, and models continual learning.

Since many educators acknowledge that there are multiple learning and teaching styles, the emphasis has shifted from the "what" of teaching (the many different strategies) to the "why" of teaching ("why" a particular teaching strategy is useful and in what context). You will need to be prepared to describe the "whys" and "hows" of your own practice, even if beginning teachers do not ask you about them directly.

The beginning teacher may observe, or view on videotape, your teaching practices but be unaware of your underlying teaching purposes. You may want to explain, for example, that in order to set a certain tone in the classroom, you emphasize the rule that students must show respect for each other. Or you may wish to describe a quick first-day writing activity you use to learn more about students individually. Similarly, you may need to discuss the rationale for particular teaching practices. Veteran teachers are often naturally intuitive and will choose a particular strategy or select certain materials because "they feel right" or because "I just know they will work." Less-experienced teachers need a more concrete reason for these decisions. As a mentor, you will need to make the implicit explicit by explaining the theory behind your practice.

You also need to realize that beginning teachers can have problems or concerns that are completely unknown to you. New teachers often feel reluctant to question a mentor's classroom practices because they fear their questions will be construed as criticism. It is extremely helpful to state explicitly that the beginning teacher has permission to ask questions and should feel free to do so. You may find these questions surprising or momentarily unsettling, but value them as opportunities for self-analysis and professional growth.

In addition, recognize the territorial nature of classrooms and the school environment. Beginning teachers may hesitate to address their needs or they may feel uncomfortable in a new school setting. Mentors, especially those working with student teachers, often feel invaded because they share physical space in the room and teaching space in the curriculum. To lessen the

How Do I Prepare to Be a Mentoring Coach?

problem of shared physical space, you might map out the classroom and talk about "ownership" issues. For instance, Mark, a speech teacher, informed Suzanne, a beginning teacher, "You're welcome to look through my file cabinets at any time and take an extra copy or photocopy something. Just make sure that the files are placed back in alphabetical order so I can find them. Supplies like a stapler and scissors are in this top drawer of my desk in case you need another pair. Otherwise, I'd prefer that you not touch things on my desk or in the other desk drawers. I don't have anything too personal here, but I just like my own space. You'll probably feel the same way about your desk, and I'll respect that."

The two also mapped out the curriculum. Mark asked direct questions: "What teaching strategies have worked for you and your students? Are there any areas of teaching that make you feel uncomfortable?"—which allowed Suzanne to admit, "I don't feel that I'm ready to teach debate. Could I observe first and then team teach with you before taking over the course?" Mark's questions promoted open communication that made both more honest and forthcoming in their discussions.

"Curriculum territory" refers to both what is taught and how it is taught. Occasionally a veteran teacher hands a unit folder over to a student teacher expecting it to be taught without deviation. This, of course, may put a novice teacher at an unfair disadvantage. Allowing beginning teachers freedom to balance their ideas with yours may force you to see your teaching from a new angle. New teachers often prefer a choice: "Here is the unit I have been using. You're welcome to use whatever is helpful to you, add your own ideas, and discuss your plans with me."

A note of caution: Mentoring conversations occasionally venture into psychological territory by discussing family issues or romantic relationships. We have found that if beginning teachers disclose too much personal information, mentors may view them in a different—sometimes negative—light. Encourage you to treat mentoring as a professional relationship.

Although territoriality implies boundaries, you will also want to display your openness to new ideas and your conviction that learning, including teacher learning, has no boundaries. Whether you are working with a student teacher or a first-year teacher, demonstrate your own active learning. Ask them, "What strategies or materials do you think we should add to this unit?" After a class period in which a student teacher has observed your teaching, you might make a comment such as, "The students didn't seem involved

the discussion I was leading today. What do you think was happening?" By asking the beginning teacher for her opinion and by acknowledging that some days are not even for you, optimally successful, you can demonstrate how you might pinpoint a weak spot and shift gears next time by trying a different approach. We know from our own mentoring experiences that beginning teachers are more comfortable experimenting when they have watched their mentor review less-than-productive as well as successful practices.

Virginia, a student teacher in English, offered to teach a new novel that had recently been added to the curriculum. Her mentor, Marjorie, gladly accepted, recognizing that preparing a completely new unit would give Virginia greater freedom. When Virginia shared her ideas for the unit, Marjorie added a few suggestions and concluded, "I can't wait to see how the students respond to your creative ideas."

During Virginia's lesson, one of Marjorie's students said, "Wow, look, Mrs. Felstone is taking notes, too."

"Yes," Marjorie explained, "I like Ms. Nugent's ideas, and I would like to use some of them next semester."

By openly taking notes, Marjorie validated Virginia as a teacher and indicated her own willingness to reverse roles and again become a learner. Without jealousy or hesitation, she graciously conceded the power in the classroom to her student teacher, demonstrating that learning is a lifelong process.

By thinking like a mentoring coach, you can set the tone for a successful relationship. Mentors often realize that since beginning teachers are usually recent university graduates, they may have technological expertise, may know innovative strategies, or be aware of effective multicultural resources. As your mentoring relationship progresses, you may rediscover the joy of learning from the beginning teacher.

These three steps—encouraging questioning, recognizing territoriality, and being a continuing learner—will enable you to become a more effective mentor, and your mentoring relationship a reciprocal partnership.



BECOMING A REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE COACH

To make the mentoring relationship an enriching experience for the beginning teacher, you must first become a reflective dialogue coach. This involves creating a safe space for open communication and mutual learning.

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conversations, establish a collegial relationship by conferring, questioning, mirroring, and reflecting.

Mentoring Through Conferring

Effective mentoring requires time. Giving the beginning teacher a quick solution to a problem takes an exchange of only a few sentences; coaching the beginning teacher into a deeper understanding of what is happening in the classroom demands longer, more structured sessions together. Helping beginning teachers to discover a solution for themselves builds self-confidence.

Raymond: I'm having trouble getting kids to do their daily assignments in algebra class. What do you think I should do?

Gayle: What have you tried?

Raymond: I've tried lowering their grades and giving them detention, but it doesn't seem to help. One time I even doubled their homework as a punishment.

Gayle: Did that help?

Raymond: No, the same kids didn't do their homework.

Gayle: Why do you think they're not doing their work?

Raymond: I have no idea. I suppose I could ask them.

Gayle: Do you think they understand the homework?

Raymond: Well, I think so. Sometimes, though, my explanation of a new math lesson lasts until the bell rings. Then we don't have time for in-class work. Maybe some of them don't understand the homework problems.

Gayle: Do you think it's easier for them to finish homework at home if they can start it in class and get help on what they don't understand?

Raymond: Probably.

Gayle: What do you think you might try?

Raymond: Tomorrow I think I'll ask them to write down anonymously why they do or don't do their algebra homework. Then I could give them work time in class, and I could walk around the room and check their first two answers.

Gayle: Well, you've analyzed the problem and thought of a few possible solutions. I'll be eager to hear what you discover.

Gayle could have given Raymond an easy answer: "What usually works for me is..." Instead, she coached him through the situation, encouraging him to talk to her as he analyzed the reasons for the homework problem and considered possible solutions. She showed Raymond another way to approach the situation—maybe it isn't an "attitude"; maybe the students simply don't understand the material and are reluctant to ask questions. Next time, he will know that an "effect" can have a number of possible causes and attend more closely to his students' needs.

Gayle and Raymond found that talking after school for a few minutes several times a week was a good way to stay in touch. In the same way, you and your beginning teacher can decide on an effective way to communicate, such as chats or notes. Some mentors like the informality of talking together while walking to the lunchroom or faculty lounge; others prefer a formal meeting time. Work out a format and schedule that best accommodates your teaching and communication styles.

If your school day does not allow enough time for in-depth discussions with your beginning teacher, consider sharing a dialogue journal. This could be as simple as posing and replying to a list of questions in writing, or it could involve a longer statement of your teaching philosophy, style, and methods. If you talk with a student about disrespectful behavior in class, for example, you might also discuss the incident with the beginning teacher, explaining your approach and your reasons for it. Here, Rhonda explains to Sheri, a beginning teacher, how she worked through a troublesome situation:

Rhonda rubbed her forehead in frustration. "Sheri, today I had to talk to a student about cheating."

Sheri leaned forward. "What did you do? Did you tear up the paper?"

Rhonda shook her head. "That's what I used to do. Then I realized that it didn't solve anything. Instead, I asked the boy why he had cheated."

"What did he say?"

"He told me that he didn't understand the chapter, so it was easier to look at another student's paper."

"Are you going to fail him?"

"What I learned is that I failed. He didn't understand some of the basic eco-

nomics principles covered in the chapter. When I looked at the other papers, realized that many of the other students didn't understand them either."

"Are lots of students going to fail?"

"No, that wouldn't be fair. They need to understand these basics before we move on. I'm going to have to reteach one section of the chapter."

"Aren't you concerned about getting through the textbook?"

Rhonda smiled. "What I'm concerned about is that they haven't been learning. To me, learning is more important than covering the material."

"OK, so will you teach it the same way?"

"I think I might try something different. Tonight I'm going to think about how these economic principles apply to their teenage lives, so I can try to connect with them tomorrow." Rhonda paused a few moments and then added, "Maybe I'll also ask them to do a three-minute quick write at the end of the period telling me what they've learned. Then I can see if they understand the principles now instead of waiting until the test."

Curious, Sheri asked, "Then you'll give the test?"

"I might even change the test. Maybe I'll give students time in class to write their own business scenario, applying the economic terms. That will eliminate any chance of cheating, and besides, I'll be better able to assess whether they've really learned them."

"That almost sounds fun."

"You're right," Rhonda agreed. "Maybe we could cut out the scenarios. After they've seen different examples, they're more likely to get the big picture. Besides," she added, "that will reinforce what they have learned." She smiled reassuringly at Sheri. "Talking to you makes me more excited about it. I can't wait to try it."

During their conference, Rhonda modeled how she thought through a problem and arrived at viable strategies to resolve it. By admitting that even an experienced teacher can fail, Rhonda may have opened the door for Sheri to be more forthcoming about her own problems. The situation also allowed Rhonda to illustrate that education can encompass both teacher and student learning.

Down the hall from Rhonda and Sheri, Jon and Phyllis found that Jon's coaching schedule made it difficult to schedule adequate time for talking. At first they decided to meet once every week and later, once every two weeks. During the week, they both used Post-it notes to jot down single comments

or questions during class. Then they chose one comment and one question to exchange with each other on the day before their conference. That evening, each considered the other's question in order to come to their meeting with questions or examples. For many mentors and beginning teachers, this technique helps to focus attention on specific issues of concern.

How you respond and what types of feedback you decide on depend on your mutual needs or individual preferences. Some mentors may prefer direct conversations rather than written journal exchanges, but written feedback from a mentor can be helpful to the beginning teacher in referring back to the exchange. Novices often recall only your constructive criticism and forget your positive statements. Written praise may serve as a reminder and an esteem-builder.

Whatever your conference style or your timetable, make the conferences work for you and your beginning teacher. Try various techniques to see which seem most productive.

Mentoring Through Questioning

Encouraging the beginning teacher to ask questions, both procedural and theoretical, can be an important part of mentoring. An inexperienced teacher may feel uncomfortable asking questions that could be interpreted as signs of ignorance or construed as criticism. Convey your interest with comments like these:

- What do you consider the most effective teaching moment in your class today? Why? How did you achieve it? What signaled you that students were learning?
 - I'm eager to hear any questions you might have. What would you like to ask?
- Asking open-ended questions offers the beginning teacher and you a way to identify and discuss issues that might not occur to you on your own. The following questions are useful in initiating mentoring discussions:
1. What was one of your successes as a teacher during the past week?
 2. What do you see as your teaching strengths? What are the best things you have to offer kids?
 3. How are you attempting to create a warm, friendly learning environment in your classroom? How are you forming a learning community?

4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate this day (week)? Why?
5. During what part of today did you feel that "real" teaching and learning was going on in your classroom?
6. How do you know when students are learning?
7. Which accomplishments as a teacher are you most proud of?
8. What is your greatest concern at this time?
9. What seems to be going well in your classroom management? What problems do you see?
10. Have you made any changes in your teaching strategies recently? What new techniques have you tried?
11. What factors make some of your lessons flow better than others?
12. If you could get beyond the day-to-day planning, what areas would you like to work on?
13. What successes have you experienced in working with parents? How could you expand your interaction with them?
14. Which aspects of teaching make you feel least comfortable?
15. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Formulating and asking questions helps beginning teachers develop critical thinking skills to analyze their own teaching.

Because of their inexperience, beginning teachers may not see or respond to situations like veteran teachers. Westerman's (1991) research identified four major differences between expert and novice decision making. First, experienced teachers integrated present learning with past and future learning and drew connections to other disciplines. Beginning teachers, however, tended to rely on grade-level curriculum objectives and had more difficulty in making cross-disciplinary connections, most likely because they were unfamiliar with the curriculum at other grade levels.

Second, the study noted a difference in classroom management strategies. To motivate students and engage their attention, experienced teachers used a whole repertoire of techniques combining voice, gestures, and their reading of students' body language. Novice teachers, on the other hand, ignored off-task behavior until it escalated and then interrupted the lesson with a verbal reprimand or a punishment such as detention. In essence, veteran teachers

tended to use proactive strategies to prevent management problems, while beginning teachers waited for the problem to arise and then used reactive techniques.

Third, experienced teachers were more likely to see the "big picture." In planning lessons, they employed different thinking strategies—visualizing the lesson, predicting problems, and preparing alternatives. Novice teachers, on the other hand, had a "maybe it will work-maybe it won't" attitude. They waited for problems to arise instead of trying to anticipate how the activities they planned would play out in the classroom.

Fourth, experienced teachers evaluated their lessons according to their students' needs and growth in understanding, whereas novice teachers judged their lessons according to students' reactions and their achievement of the original objective. Once again, the veteran teachers were more tuned in to what their students needed and how they could meet those needs.

As these four points indicate, veteran teachers may use approaches to teaching that are more proactive, integrated, and perceptive than those employed by beginning teachers who, in struggling to survive, may not be experienced in the "best teaching practices" (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde 1993). Some of your mentoring sessions should concentrate on these areas: how to ascertain students' prior knowledge, make connections to their future learning, use proactive management strategies, visualize lessons and predict problems, create alternative plans, determine what students need, and judge whether learning has occurred. Here Larry "walks" Jacob, a beginning teacher, through preparations for a field trip.

Larry: Next Friday, a week from today, you'll be taking the sixth graders to see the state capitol and the state historical building. What preparations have you made?

Jacob: We have a bus, four parent chaperones, and permission slips signed by parents or guardians. Jessica took care of the historical building arrangements and I have talked to Betsy, our tour guide at the capitol building.

Larry: That's great. How are you planning to prepare your social studies classes for the trip?

Jacob: Well, actually I was planning to use next week to finish a unit on the Civil War, so I wasn't planning to do anything.

Larry: Maybe this is a teachable moment. Let's think about how you can make

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this trip relevant to students. How could you discover what students already know about the capitol building?

Jacob: I suppose I could ask them who had already toured the capitol and what they remembered.

Larry: That sounds good.

Jacob: But when am I going to finish the Civil War unit.

Larry: It will be OK to do that next week. How can you connect this field trip to what they're learning now about the Civil War?

Jacob: Hmm, well, I'd like to see the capitol before the trip. I'm hoping to go there this weekend, but since it's a two-and-a-half-hour drive, if something comes up and I can't go, I may have to rely on Betsy, the tour guide. If I can get there, I could ask her to send me a layout of the building. Jessica is taking care of the historical building arrangements, and she has made this neat sheet of facts for the kids. I think she's been taking students there for the last ten years, so [chuckling] she probably knows about as much as the tour guides. I'll ask her what ideas she has to connect the trip to the Civil War unit. Maybe she could tell me which artifacts pertain to the Civil War so I could prepare the students a little before we go.

Larry: Great idea. You would then be integrating the field trip into the curriculum so it is part of it rather than an add-on. What else could you do to prepare the students?

Jacob: Well, I guess we could review other aspects of state history, and I could check with their previous teachers to find out what the students already know.

Larry: That sounds helpful. Now, how are you going to prevent management problems?

Jacob: I don't know. I guess I wasn't expecting any problems on the field trip. What do you think will happen?

Larry: Well, how can you prevent students at the back of the bus from throwing paper or "mooning" drivers on the road?

Jacob: You've got to be kidding! Would sixth graders do that?

Larry: I hope not, but it helps to think through possible problems in advance.

Jacob: Gee, maybe the teachers could sit at different places in the bus so the kids would be less likely to goof off.

Larry: OK, and what directions will you give students before they get off the bus?

Jacob: I can see that I need to do a lot more thinking about this. Let me think about it this weekend, and we can talk again on Monday. I didn't know there was so much to consider.

Larry's active planning and anticipation of potential problems showed Jacob that the field trip involved much more than simply moving sixth graders to and from the state capitol. He hadn't considered how it could tie in to their history unit, and he certainly hadn't prepared for behavioral problems. Larry might also find it necessary to summarize Jacob's perceptions of the tour's highlights and Jacob's own perspective on what they will now add why it is significant.

In Monday's conversation, Larry might find other ways to help Jacob see the "big picture." For instance, he might ask, "What aspects of the capitol and historical building tour do you think will most fascinate sixth graders?" to help Jacob visualize the trip through sixth-grade eyes. Larry might also ask, "After the trip, how will you know if this has been a good educational experience?" to help Jacob think about how to recognize when students' attention is engaged and they are learning.

Jacob has the disadvantage of inexperience: he does not fully realize what could happen—and what *should* happen—on the field trip. But some beginning teachers operate by instinct, by what "feels right." Already, they can be recognized as "natural teachers." To help these new teachers connect their instincts to their natural judgment, mentors can demonstrate ways of evaluating sudden inspirations. Here, Martha is encouraging Jared, her student teacher, to think about the "why" behind his teaching strategies:

Martha: I liked the partner groups you used today with the seventh graders.

Jared: Thanks. I thought they worked OK, too.

Martha: You didn't mention this activity earlier, during our planning period. Was this something you planned or a spur-of-the-moment idea?

Jared: I didn't plan to do it. It just seemed right.

Martha: What caused you to change the lesson? I'm curious.

Jared: Well, we were just wheeling along, and I thought I was doing an awfully

good job, and then I looked at them, and they had not one clue about what was going on. I thought, "They don't get it. Wait. What can I change here?" So I asked them to work with a partner and write down what they understood and what they were still confused about.

Martha: Why do you think it worked?

Jared: I had been the one doing all the talking, and then only job was to listen. I guess sharing with a partner made them become actively involved.

Martha: What skills did students get to use in the partner groups?

Jared: Well, instead of just listening to me, they had to summarize the lesson in their own words. Then we all summarized, and I think they enjoyed that. I didn't realize it then, but I guess they had to use listening, writing, and writing. They were also using both auditory and visual senses.

Martha: That's great. What messages do you think this sends to the students?

Jared: Well, I suppose it told them that I really wanted them to learn this, and that it was OK to ask questions. Wow, I didn't realize that I had done all that until just now in talking about it with you. That's pretty cool.

Through Martha's astute questioning, Jared proceeded to think through the elements of active involvement, using multiple senses, and respect for students that are part of the theoretical basis of his practice. By recognizing "why it worked" and seeing beyond the surface of his teaching strategies, Jared gave an intellectual structure to his natural instincts. The mentoring conversation prompted Jared to think reflectively, a skill he can now begin to pursue independently. His sudden shift in class activities was not a whim but an outgrowth of sound educational theory.

In addition to asking effective questions, mentors can help beginning teachers to formulate questions of their own. As the semester progresses, the beginning teacher's comments and questions should move from being self-centered to being more student-centered. Beginning teachers typically ask, "How am I doing?" As they realize the need to be sensitive to students' learning—or noncomprehension—they will start to ask, "How well are the students learning?" When beginning teachers shift from thinking about "me" to thinking about "them," they have made an important developmental step. Understanding that true education is not teaching but learning can be a mon-

ing to a class, doing so-called "teaching," but if the students cannot understand and apply the concepts, then the teaching has not been effective.

When beginning teachers watch a videotape of themselves teaching, they usually self-consciously notice their own appearance, speech patterns, and gestures. While these factors may be important, the "real" learning from the videotape may be in observing students' behavior. Through questioning, mentors can direct beginning teachers' attention to whether students are attentive, sleepy, or bored. A mentor might say, "What do you see students saying and doing that shows they have learned? Let's replay the tape and look for evidence of learning as we watch your lesson again."

Mentors can assist beginning teachers in making this professional leap from teaching to learning by first introducing the concept. Rick, a social studies teacher, told his student teacher, "When you start seeing student learning as your goal, then we'll really celebrate." Second, mentors can focus mentoring conversations on the question of how you know when students are learning. An extended discussion of this topic can direct beginning teachers to a focal point for each class period. Third, when beginning teachers do begin to express their thinking in terms of student learning, mentors can point out to them that this noticeable transformation is truly thinking "like a teacher." Then both, as Rick says, can "celebrate." This shift in perspective is an indication of the effectiveness of your mentoring.

Mentoring Through Mirroring

"Mirroring" is another effective mentoring strategy. You might

- Repeat one of the beginning teacher's previous sentences: "You said that student choice is important."
- Restate a comment: "I hear you saying that you think the students needed to be more actively involved today."
- Summarize dialogue and actions: "You said that you were upset with Simon because of his immature behavior, but by talking through the situation with him you indicated that you were more concerned about his future behavior."

During a mentoring conference, you might mirror a classroom interaction between a beginning teacher and a student by describing it and then reinforcing

ing the teacher's words: "I heard you tell Sally that her assignment was late and that the grade would be lowered. Then you said that you knew she usually was a responsible person and that you were sure her future assignment would be in on time. I liked your firmness about the present action and your positive view of her future behavior."

In the following example, Darrell, a history teacher, employs a variety of mirroring strategies with Chad, a beginning teacher:

Chad: I'd like to help the fifth graders really understand the transcontinental railroad. In college we were always taught to use hands-on stuff, so I thought maybe the students could build their own railroad.

Darrell: You're saying you want students to be actively involved? A student-centered approach?

Chad: Uh-huh.

Darrell: So what ideas do you have?

Chad: Well, first I thought maybe we could involve the entire building and have each classroom choose a name, like a town. They could make a mailbox outside their room and write letters to other classes. Some of my students could be Pony Express riders and deliver the mail.

Darrell: I hear you saying that you want this to be an all-school project. How are you going to get the cooperation of all of the teachers?

Chad: I hadn't really thought about it [pauses and thinks]. But I remember how the principal said he wanted us to do more interdisciplinary projects this year.

Darrell: We'll come back to how you're going to get support. What are you other ideas?

Chad: Then I want to show how the railroad took over for the Pony Express. I thought about having the students build a railroad along the edge of the hallway from one end of the building through the halls to the other end.

Darrell: So this will be another all-school project? What are the benefits?

Chad: That way every student in every grade—and everyone who visits the school—will see the railroad and might ask about it. It would be visual, you know. Each day two students from each railroad team could leave class for five minutes to lay down some tracks at each end. You could have the tracks

meet in the gym, and then we could have an all-school assembly to lay the golden spike. It would make history come alive for them.

Darrell: I hear you saying that you want to make your class into a Pony Express team and then two railroad teams. Then you're also going to encourage the entire school to be involved in a Pony Express, letter writing, transcontinental railroad, and an all-school assembly.

Chad: It sounds like a lot when you restate it like that. But I still think I can do it.

Darrell: And your reasons are active student involvement, visual reinforcement, and interdisciplinary teamwork.

Chad: I guess I should write those down so I could convince the faculty.

Darrell: So where do you go from here?

Chad: Gosh, when you say it like that, it sounds as if maybe I'd better get it all down on paper and plan it out. Then I can go talk to the principal, and if he goes for it, maybe he'll give me time to talk at a staff meeting. I could send letters home and...

Darrell: You said that you plan to write it all out. Has that helped you before?

Chad: [chuckling] If I've learned anything, it's that my strength is creativity but my weakness is planning. I don't dare fly by the seat of my pants. I'm going to write it all down first. Then I'll let you see it.

During their conference, Chad shared his creative ideas with Darrell, but he really hadn't thought them through. Darrell used mirroring combined with questioning to show Chad where he was in his planning and where he still needed to go. By the end, Darrell had helped Chad devise a more realistic plan for thinking about his project and determining the best way to proceed. Through mirroring, beginning teachers like Chad rehear their words and revisit their actions so they can center their classroom activities around student learning.

Mentoring Through Modeling Reflection

Modeling reflective thought is another way of mentoring. Just as you demonstrate your leadership role through interactions with students, communicating with parents, and conversations with colleagues, you can model thinking about teaching. Reflective thinking usually occurs silently, in your mind, but you can also think about it. Nancy Appleton (1990) wrote,

"taking off the top of your head." She models what she is thinking as she writes. Sometimes, for example, she stands at the overhead projector and talks about her ideas for an opening sentence. In this way, students observe how a writer thinks and see that good sentences may not appear magically but result from systematic thought.

It might be helpful to show the beginning teacher how you think when you are planning. To "take off the top of your head," you might list the ideas you considered in teaching an area such as percentages for a math lesson and explain why you abandoned some and kept others. ("We're covering percentages...can we start from fractions, or maybe we can look at the members of the class as equalling 100 percent and divide into groups to figure percentages of the whole....") In addition to showing how you think as you plan, you can illustrate how you evaluated and used what happened in the classroom.

Terrance told Shane, his student teacher, "I like the fact that the students actively participated in the review game I made up, but I wonder whether they were really thinking about their responses or just watching to see if their team was winning. It's fine that they enjoyed it, but what I really want is for all of them to be thinking the whole time." By speaking his thoughts aloud, Terrance demonstrated some of the ways an effective teacher thinks about and questions his teaching practices and his students' learning. The beginning teacher can see that teaching is an ongoing process, one of planning, doing, questioning, and thinking.

By revealing your "thinking about your own thinking," you demonstrate how to think like a teacher. Beginning teachers often know how to "act" like a teacher, but they don't always understand the internal processes necessary to "be" a teacher, to think in an ongoing way about student learning. By talking about the idea that materialized while you were in the shower, the concerns that kept nagging at you during your evening walk, or the creative strategy that occurred to you as you were driving home from school, you model the continuous nature of teacher-thinking, which doesn't stop when you walk out the school door.

Michael, a middle school art teacher, observed his mentor, George, a social studies teacher, and his interdisciplinary team members discussing a Native American unit planned for the following semester.

George looked around the group. "Last week," he reminded them, "we decided

last few days, I decided a great idea would be to go on a field trip to a Native American museum. Then I realized that, with our tight school budget, we probably don't have the money. We also don't have the money for mileage and a speaking fee for a guest speaker."

Michael watched as his team members nodded. George continued, "We could use some documentary films, but that seems to be what we always do. I've been thinking about this and rolling ideas around in my head. Then last night, when I saw my son playing video games, I wondered if we could create a virtual field trip."

Suddenly the room seemed to come alive as the team members asked one question after another. George shrugged, saying, "Well, that's as far as I got with my idea. I've noticed, though, that the students seem to lack research skills, so I wondered if there would be some way we could use research."

Francine, a language arts teacher, intervened, "I've been thinking about research, too. One part of me wants to have the students work together in groups, but another part of me wants to encourage the students to be individually responsible. Our team's mission statement emphasizes both. I was thinking about this while I was getting ready this morning, and I wondered whether we could have students grouped by Native American tribes, and each student could do individual research on one aspect of the tribe and compose a written paper. Then the group could work together on a presentation."

Vicki, a science teacher, linked the two ideas: "Maybe we could film their presentations. Showing the videotapes could be the virtual field trip."

At this point, the math teacher, Maria, entered the discussion. "Those are good ideas," she said, "but I've been thinking about it from a different angle. I wonder whether we want to show Native Americans of the past or today—or maybe both. I've also been thinking about how to work math into this project. I'll think about it some more and let you know."

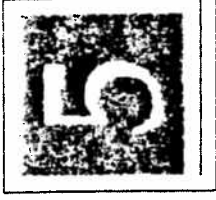
As Maria talked, Michael mused about how art could be interwoven into the project: Murals? Dioramas? Puttery? In listening to his team members, he realized that he would need to think about the unit at some length, set aside unfeasible ideas, determine the students' information and procedural needs, and connect the unit to the team's and school's standards. Before he became a teacher, Michael thought every idea came from a textbook; now he recognized the depth of teacher-thinking devoted to each unit. He looked forward to the next team meeting to see how the group would continue to plan and the creative ideas he might share.

By observing his interdisciplinary team, Michael noted that team members thought about their teaching not only during planning sessions but also well beyond the school day. This kind of insight lifts teaching to a higher level for beginners as they learn how to truly "be" teachers. The mentor who also lets the beginning teacher observe him or her keeping up with the field—by reading professional journals and books, sharing ideas and information with colleagues, and participating in professional associations—further enlarges the context of the educational enterprise (see Chapter 7).



SUMMARY

Conferring, questioning, mirroring, and reflecting all promote the beginning teacher's professional growth. These strategies offer ways to coach beginning teachers to "think like a teacher." By using these techniques, mentors help new teachers see beyond the superficial "fun times" of a field trip to the long-range educational benefits that accompany active student engagement. These mentoring strategies allow beginning teachers to get the whole picture. All take time, but the benefits to both mentor and new teacher are substantial: many enjoy a collegial relationship not only during the mentoring period but for many years to come.



How Do I Help with Classroom Management Challenges?

"I just don't know what else to do with these sixth graders. I've tried being nice, I've counted seconds waiting for them to pay attention to me, and I've kept some of them after class. I even yelled today, and that got their attention for, oh, about thirty seconds. I'm so mad at myself; other people—you, for example—handle your classroom fine all the time. What's wrong with me? Why can't I control the class? I just can't face going back into that room."

Jane, a first-year teacher, confessed her frustration to her mentor, Carolyn, who smiled sympathetically. "You should have seen me my first year. If you had talked to me then, you would probably have been amazed at how much like you I sounded. There's no magic answer. I've picked up a few management skills over the years, but you need to realize that there is no one formula that works for everyone in every situation. There are some basic principles to live by, but you have to adapt them to each individual situation."

For many of us, classroom conflicts with students sap the joy out of our teaching lives. We entered the profession because we wanted to share our love for our subject, to teach students and enable them to do something with this knowledge, and to make a positive difference in their futures. The reality, however, is that we will not be able to accomplish these goals unless we can manage our classrooms.

Managing the classroom. What does that really mean to the beginning teacher? Those of us who have taught extensively understand that classroom management is simply the level of organization and order necessary for both

This definition is intentionally flexible in order to allow for the great diversity of tasks and personalities, classrooms and contexts within which teachers and students find themselves. It also recognizes that teachers need different levels of calm or chaos to be comfortable—as do their students.

So why is a well-managed classroom often so hard for inexperienced teachers to achieve? We cannot dismiss the reality that we may have anywhere from twelve to thirty-five students, with distinct personalities, interests, and abilities, in our classrooms. This alone creates a huge challenge in lesson preparation, especially for the teacher who wants to acknowledge and accommodate various learning styles. Although Jane's frustration is a common one for student teachers and less-experienced teachers, seasoned professionals also have moments when their classroom management is less than perfect. In this section, we explore some reasons for management problems and suggest some principles that may help mentor teachers offer solutions to their less-experienced counterparts.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Challenges Associated with Student Populations

Few school districts today can afford class sizes under twenty students. For the majority of teachers, classes typically have twenty-five to thirty-five students, and some as many as forty. Too often, classrooms lack adequate seating and space for the number of students they must accommodate, and teachers suffer from the problems associated with overly large class sizes. Indeed, teachers who have been successful with smaller classes often begin to encounter management difficulties when class size grows.

Another challenge for teachers is the successful inclusion of students with exceptional needs. While most of us applaud efforts to mainstream students, we must also acknowledge that the success of this initiative has sometimes complicated management choices. The majority of these students create no more problems than their classmates. However, there are occasions when inclusion students have not been adequately prepared to enter the mainstream classroom. Teachers find that they need to spend more time getting to know them and their unique strengths and needs. But teachers with a large number of inclusion students who may receive little support from resource teachers may find themselves spread so thin that problems ensue.

Teachers also face unmotivated or angry students who are impervious to their planning and good intentions. Many of these students are wrestling with overwhelming personal problems. Some have had negative experience with other teachers or certain subject areas or feel that school does not offer them what they really need at this juncture in their lives. Naturally enough students with this profile tend to present greater management challenges even for sympathetic and concerned teachers.

Finally, some problems arise because students are young and emotionally volatile. Any classroom will include students who have disagreements, budding romantic relationships, or a desire to impress on another. Such interpersonal factors can be significant distractions even for otherwise well-adjusted students. Although these interactions are clearly normal, they can create every bit as much disruption as more serious problems.

Teacher-Generated Problems

Most teachers graduate from excellent degree programs that equip them with more than enough content knowledge, but they may have had less direct instruction in management strategies. Universities are often overwhelmed by this task because management is unique to the individual teacher and the teaching situation; however, universities and educators must confront the situation more proactively.

Management problems also arise in the classroom because of poor—or no—preparation on the part of the teacher. We've all heard horror stories of teachers whose lesson plans read "Do adverbs," *Warner's* page 362." Such plans are unlikely to generate lessons that captivate every student's attention. A teacher who devotes little time to preparation may well deserve the management problems she gets.

On the other hand, some less-experienced teachers see themselves as the "stars" of the class. They plan their own role extensively, but relegate students to the role of audience. Few students appreciate this role for long and are likely to assume the role of critic instead. In addition to planning concerns, newer teachers may give students few opportunities to contribute to class decision making. They may feel that they need to keep decision making in their own hands or students will take the class in directions with which the teachers are uncomfortable. In reality, however, students who sense no own

ership in the course and no place for their ideas are more likely to create disturbances than those who are included in decision making.

All teachers hope their students will treat them respectfully, but respect must be reciprocal. Unfortunately, some teachers fail to offer the same respect to their students, sometimes because they feel they are the authority in the classroom, but also because they simply do not take the time to become thoroughly attuned to their students. Teachers may be unfamiliar with students' cultural background, academic level, or interest in the subject, and this lack of audience awareness can also generate management problems.

Time management is closely related to classroom management. Most veteran teachers know that a class that begins promptly at the bell will be the class that holds its focus. However, inexperienced teachers often allow students to chat after the bell has rung while they take attendance, or talk to individual students about late homework, or organize papers for the beginning of class. Consequently, they may have difficulty redirecting students' attention to the task at hand.

It should go without saying—but doesn't—that setting rules and expectations for students early in the school year or semester is vital. Teachers are often responsible for these rules, and some collaborate with students to set expectations for the class. But Susan, a new middle school teacher, explained her rules and expectations quickly on the first day of class and failed to provide a poster or handout to reinforce these policies in her students' minds. Not surprisingly, when Phillip and Natalie turned in their project two days late without explanation, they insisted that they didn't realize they would be penalized. And when the two students' parents called to complain about the poor grade their children received on the project, Susan had no proof of her policy.

■ PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT

Management Matters

Linda sighed as she walked past Mark's old room. She would miss her former mentee; he had decided to resign after an especially difficult year with a group of rambunctious seventh graders. Although she had tried to support him by offering a variety of management suggestions, he had been unable or unwilling to adopt them.

Few people are drawn to teaching because it offers the opportunity to manage a classroom, but a great many people leave teaching because they can't or don't manage classrooms well. Despite our reluctance to encourage you to come across as excessively control-oriented when you are discussing management with the teacher you mentor, there is no escaping the fact that ignoring management decisions can lead to a situation in which neither student nor teacher goals can be accomplished. If you have the opportunity to work with your beginning teacher before classes begin, it is wise to encourage her to think carefully about behavioral expectations and classroom routines.

Classroom Management Strategies Should Be Developed Before the School Year Begins

Although we have already mentioned it, we want to reinforce the idea that proactive planning is critical to the success of less-experienced teachers. Lin Su, a second-year fourth-grade teacher, remembered last year's management decisions vividly. She had decided not to give the "rule talk" to her fourth graders on the first day of class because she did not want to come across as the "heavy." The students responded to Lin Su's lack of direction by making every effort to determine how far she would let them go before reacting. By the end of the first week, Lin Su was contemplating early retirement even as the students embarked on a year of anarchy. She eventually restored order, but the process was lengthy and difficult. This year, she would do things differently.

If a teacher goes into the classroom and has to make management decisions on the spot, without the aid of a previously developed policy, problems are inevitable. A disruptive student who is reprimanded in front of classmates has an even greater incentive to contest teacher actions in order to "save face" if there is no management policy in place. Teachers who make their policies clear early in the semester have the flexibility to enforce or to modify those policies because *the students already know the rules and what is expected of them.*

Classroom Policies Should Be Simple to Explain and Easy to Enforce

Stan, a first-year teacher, has already decided that he will not be caught unprepared when management problems arise. Before the school year began, he

spent hours developing policies for absences and tardiness, bathroom passes, late work, talking in class, respect for classroom furniture, respect for other students as well as the teacher, trips to the water fountain, and every other conceivable activity known to students. On the first day of class, he distributed a three-page management handout to every student and sent another copy home to parents. For each infraction, his management plan detailed the consequences for the first, second, and third occurrence. On his desk were individual infraction sheets that he intended to file by class period as well as the sheets he expected to use to keep track of how many points students lost for "one-day-late" work, "two-day-late" work, and so on.

Stan's is an example of the too-complex management plan. Prior preparation is admirable, but he has created a system so complicated that all his energies are likely to go into an unsuccessful attempt to maintain it. Stan instituted this management plan hoping that it would make his teaching life easier and convince his students that he was serious. However, the pressures of everyday school life and the inevitable exceptions that will arise will eventually make his professional life more difficult. In addition, he may inadvertently be communicating to his students and their parents that he expects frequent misbehavior and that he lacks confidence in his own ability to work with them—and they may be right.

Although a carefully thought-out management plan is essential, it is also essential that the plan be practical. Stan's mentor should remind him that a system requiring extensive and detailed record keeping traps the teacher by its inflexibility and is prone to failure. Even if the teacher is capable of maintaining such a system, his or her time is better spent grading papers or homework, planning lessons, or conferring with students. (See Resources for Teachers for more information on specific, easy-to-use management plans.)

Among the topics usually found in the basic management plans of experienced teachers are tardies and attendance, late work, and expectations for appropriate behavior. Certain disciplines may require attention to other types of behavior; for example, a science teacher may wish to delineate specific rules for lab day, or the wood shop teacher for running certain types of equipment. Mentors should also remind beginning teachers that students' age level will also determine the rationale for a management plan. Rules appropriate to high school students may be unrealistic for younger children. Obviously, a "one size" plan does not fit all grades, disciplines, or teacher personalities.

Management plans should also specify what the consequences are when students do not adhere to the rules. Experienced teachers know that rules are pointless if they are not backed up by reasonable consequences. Has the teacher planned what she will do if Sue leaves class to go to the bathroom without obtaining a hall pass from the teacher's desk? How will she handle Mark when he mysteriously appears at the class door thirty minutes after the bell has rung without a clear-cut explanation of where he has been? How will she respond when Betsy tries to turn in all her homework at the end of the grading quarter instead of when it was due? What will happen to Eugene class standing if he misses four days this week and three days next week at the absences are not excused? Although we prefer not to detail specific consequences here, it is critical that you encourage new teachers to decide well in advance how they will respond to situations of this nature.

Although management systems should emphasize consistency, they should also allow for some flexibility. While some parts of the management plan require a common approach from situation to situation, some issues may have to be handled on a case-by-case basis. Even teachers who rigorously adhere to a policy of tardiness would not penalize two tardy students who brought a pass from their chemistry teacher explaining that they had been cleaning up after a lab. You might encourage your beginning teacher to be lenient with a student who was not able to finish a homework assignment because she was involved in a minor collision the night before or a student who ran to the bathroom without asking because she thought she was going to be sick. When working with less-experienced teachers, it is important to encourage them to be flexible. Without a plan, however, they will lack credibility and exceptions will become the norm.

A Teacher's Personality Will Influence His or Her Management Plan

We are all unique as people so it is no surprise that we will also be unique as teachers. Some are extremely organized, while others thrive on piles of papers. Some feel that a fairly quiet classroom is necessary for student learning, while others positively enjoy an active, noisy environment. Some teachers prefer a highly structured classroom, while others may allow students to move from one activity to another without their intervention. Regardless of

where you or your new colleague fall along this continuum, encourage new teachers to feel at ease with the plan they choose and let them know they have the right to structure the classroom in ways they feel appropriate to their needs and those of their students. Inexperienced teachers may find this difficult, especially if students complain, "Your class isn't as much fun as Mr. Villanueva's class because he lets us sit where we want and doesn't make us follow a seating chart" or "I can't even think in this class because it's too noisy." No one wants a situation that feels out of control, yet beginning teachers need to be reassured that pleasing all the students all the time is an impossible goal.

Classroom Management Involves Choosing One's Battles

An important instinct, but one that is difficult for new teachers, is knowing when to make an issue of student conduct. You notice that Barbie and Thad are having a conversation, but are they helping one another clarify the assignment or are they simply discussing their date for Friday night? The less-experienced teacher may jump on the situation immediately, discouraging productive student interaction, while the more experienced teacher recognizes that this conversation will be short-lived and can be safely ignored. If the students are chatting about after-school plans, the new teacher may inadvertently create a greater problem by making too big an issue of the conversation, forcing the students to stand up for themselves in front of their peers—a no-win situation. In the classrooms of experienced teachers, students will often sense when the teacher is moving forward with the lesson and self-correct.

Student behavior can be frustrating, but experienced teachers know that displays of teacher anger, sarcasm, or irritation with the class are almost always counterproductive. Humor is often a far more effective way to resolve management issues before they become significant problems. Unfortunately, new teachers find it difficult to relax enough in the classroom to take full advantage of this strategy. They fear that laughing with students will be seen as a sign of weakness or that the class will dissolve into chaos if they are not vigilant. However, you probably know from your own experience that humor, sometimes at your own expense, can create a pleasant, even affectionate atmosphere in the classroom. For example, a teacher can choose to be offended when a student walks in and says, "I was absent yesterday. Did we do anything?" or he may choose to respond with a playful comment such as,

held our breath waiting for you to return." New teachers need to learn that they don't need an elephant gun to swat every mosquito that buzzes!

Classroom Disruptions, the Bane of Management Plans

Unfortunately, schools are prime places for interruptions and distractions. Attendance collection, assemblies, intercom messages from the office, fire drills, a visit from the vice-principal to retrieve Billy for absences in the first semester—these are the annoyances all of us deal with when we work in a school setting. While experienced teachers learn to take these disruptions in stride, a newer teacher's tenuous control of the class may be jeopardized by everyday interruptions and distractions. There is no way to prevent these occurrences, but you can recommend a few helpful strategies. One teacher puts her attendance sheets outside her firmly closed door and asks attendance aides to refrain from knocking on the door with questions. Another teacher keeps a Do Not Disturb sign handy and hangs it on her door on those days when tests or student presentations make interruptions particularly inconvenient. Office staff may also be amenable to a teacher request to limit the number of messages delivered by intercom or student aide.

Nevertheless, some disruptions will occur. Encourage new teachers to stay focused on the business at hand so they can pick up exactly where they left off. If they can do this, students will not have time to go off task and the lesson can proceed.

Special Students in Our Classrooms

Juan, a first-year third-grade teacher, really likes Matt, one of his students. Matt is creative, intelligent, and compassionate, and Juan knows that his high energy and inability to focus are due to the fact that he has attention deficit disorder (ADD). Surprising noises erupt from Matt's side of the room, and he seems unable to sit in his seat for more than five minutes. When Juan can find time to give Matt individual attention, his student thrives academically. But when Matt works unaided, his progress is slow because he is so easily distracted. And when Matt loses focus, he sometimes disrupts the class. Juan's concern about the educational progress of Matt and his classmates puts him in a difficult position.

Managing this type of situation is very difficult for all teachers. Special

really should not be scolded for behavior they cannot always control. Furthermore, it is frustrating to realize that there is rarely enough time to give to either the special needs students or their classmates.

Obviously, encouraging the beginning teacher to ask the principal for help—in the form of an aide, a parent volunteer, or a reduction in class size—is a first step. Realistically, however, these solutions may be unavailable or impractical. When you are working with the beginning teacher, you might suggest these strategies:

1. Knowing as much as possible about students with special needs and their condition is essential. Counselors familiar with these students may be aware of strategies used successfully by previous teachers to encourage their educational progress. Parents can be invaluable resources because they have an in-depth knowledge of their own children. Students themselves often have some insight into their own needs, and bringing them into the conversation may help them take more responsibility for their actions. Finally, a teacher's observations should not be discounted; they often reveal specific areas of student strength and weakness.
2. The teacher should make students aware of the consistent daily routine or schedule in the classroom. Such routines provide an overall structure, and with this in place, students can anticipate daily procedures. Writing a daily agenda or schedule on the board, for example, assists students in maintaining their focus.
3. Beginning teachers should recognize that special needs students do better when the classroom routine includes a variety of activities. All students need some variety, but special needs students often have a short attention span. Alternating between quiet, desk-centered individual work and less restrictive collaborative activities encourages student attention to the tasks at hand.

Working with the Hostile Student

Eva suspected that Cliff would be trouble from the first day of her student teaching. His cruel remarks, surly attitude, and teasing were clear indications that he had little regard for the feelings of his peers or his teachers. At first Eva couldn't pinpoint the reason for her uneasiness, because other students in the class often exhibited similar tendencies. But soon she noted that Cliff's remarks were more

cutting than theirs, and that while other students laughed and apologized peers called them on their remarks, Cliff glared at them until they dropped the eyes or turned away. Mac, Eva's cooperating teacher, was no more successful dealing with Cliff's disdain for authority. The counselor described Cliff's family as wildly dysfunctional and hinted that Cliff might also be abusing drugs. If behavior remained within the boundaries that allowed him to remain in school but his grades were poor and his motivation worse.

Cliff is one of those students dreaded even by highly experienced and successful teachers, since his obvious hostility and misbehavior are rooted in situations beyond their control although they are the ones who must defuse the results. For inexperienced teachers, knowing when and how to defuse these situations can be extremely difficult. As the mentor, you might suggest some of the following strategies:

1. Encourage beginning teachers not to put themselves at risk. Though no one likes to think about the possibility of physical confrontation with student it does occasionally happen. Hostile students, angry and upset about the life circumstances (often justifiably), can sometimes explode in aggressive and violent behavior; a teacher who gets in the way of such an eruption may be injured. Less-experienced teachers often hesitate to ask for assistance from the principal, counselor, or disciplinary officer because they fear it reflects poorly on their management skills. While understandable, this attitude is unrealistic and has potentially dangerous consequences—some students have problems severe enough to challenge even a veteran teacher.
2. It is easy, but unwise, to react with hostility to students like Cliff. Confrontation simply provides an opportunity for more public manifestations of a hostile attitude. To put it bluntly, if a teacher backs a student like Cliff into a corner, Cliff will come out fighting, possibly literally, or at the very least, spouting a litany of verbal abuse. The secret to handling a student like Cliff is to correct him quietly and firmly but without anger or personal accusation. He needs to know that you will not tolerate disruptive behavior in the classroom, that he can decide how he will behave, and that you would prefer to keep him in the classroom if possible.
3. Bring Cliff's parents into the discussion. Although the counselor may be able to provide some insight into Cliff's behavior, his parents probably know him best and can give you additional information. They are also i

source of support for your expectations about Cliff's behavior. Some parents may decline the invitation, but it is the teacher's obligation to at least extend it to them. Student teachers and less-experienced inservice teachers frequently dread parent contact because they feel they themselves may be blamed for students' misbehavior, but they need to understand that parental involvement is not an option but a necessary course when serious problems arise.

SUMMARY

"Ms. Dryden, I'm just letting you know that Marty will be out of your class for the next three days; he'll have in-school suspension with me in the office," announced Principal Hendricks.

Sarah felt a pang of guilty relief at the news. Marty had caused endless problems throughout the semester in her third-period history class, and yesterday he had crossed all the lines when he threw a weighted ballpoint pen across the room at another student. Fortunately, he had missed the student but hit the blackboard, shattering a large section of it. She was pleased not to have to deal with him for a few days but worried about his eventual return.

Like Sarah, most teachers quickly realize that, although they value the temporary intervention of an administrator, their management problems will not disappear permanently as a result. Mentors can remind beginning teachers that they can expect students like Marty to continue to challenge them. It is essential that teachers learn the management strategies that work best for them.

Management problems will always require attention, but mentors can reassure new colleagues that these problems are not a reason for teacher embarrassment. Given the wrong combination of students or circumstances, any teacher may experience management problems. In mentoring a beginning teacher, remind her that investing the time to sort out management procedures is worth it. When teachers don't have to worry about student behavior, they can concentrate on those aspects of learning that are more enjoyable to everyone.

Helping New Teachers Cope

Effective mentoring programs respond to the needs of new teachers by providing practical advice about the basics.

Cynthia Simon Millinger

Veteran teachers wear their first year of teaching as something of a "red badge of courage." Reminiscing about those times, we often romanticize the marathon workdays that led to laryngitis and the continuous exhaustion that made us susceptible to every cold, not to mention the student who never quite learned how to raise his hand or the parent who had our home phone number on speed dial. Luckily, there was also the mentor who helped us get through it in one piece.

Or was there?

Perhaps you, like so many other teachers, recall spending your first year overwhelmed and bleary-eyed day after day with no one to whom you could turn. In a qualitative study that looked at why first-year and second-year teachers migrate from one school to another or leave teaching altogether, one participant said she felt isolated, as though she had a "phantom mentor" at best (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). She, like many others in the study, found the lack of support so detrimental that it ultimately drove her to leave her school, and her students, behind.

Teacher Attrition

This situation is not unusual. In the 1999-2000 school year, approximately 500,000 public and private school teachers left the teaching profession, with more than 123,000 of them



attributing their departure to a lack of appropriate administrative support (Ingersoll, 2002). Nearly one-fourth of new teachers leave the profession after only two years, and one-third leave after three years (Ingersoll, 2002). With such a high rate of teacher attrition, administrators must continually work to fill their staff vacancies, a task that takes them away from other crucial areas of need, such as staff support. Principals find school culture difficult to establish, students consistently get inexperienced teachers, and the school community hesitates to make significant personal

and financial investments in people who may not stay long enough to give something back.

Currently, 16 states require and fund induction programs for new teachers (Ansell & McCabe, 2003), but not all such programs make a difference in new teacher satisfaction. A study of Massachusetts teachers found that school schedules often lack significant joint planning time for teacher and mentor and that the values of such collaboration are not embedded in the school culture, leaving many novice teachers on their own (Johnson et al.,

2001). Even when circumstances are more conducive to developing these partnerships, mentors are frequently given little more direction than to "help out" the new teacher, and many experienced teachers have been at the craft for so long that they have forgotten what they did not know at the beginning. Moreover, most programs ask mentors to make significant contributions of time and energy but fail to acknowledge their efforts with either monetary compensation or formal recognition.

A Principle-Based Program

Reversing this trend of new teacher attrition requires finding cost-effective ways to give teachers opportunities to grow, to learn from their mistakes, and, most important, to ask for help. Establishing a principle-based mentoring program can improve the level of support that new teachers receive, decreasing the likelihood of attrition. A study of new teachers in New Brunswick, New Jersey, found that 18 percent of teachers trained in traditional college programs left the profession after their first year of teaching, but only 5 percent of those whose induction programs included mentoring decided to leave (Gold, 1999).

An effective mentoring program requires great effort on the part of experienced teachers, but only five states currently pay mentors for their time (Ansell & McCabe, 2003). To attract experienced teachers to do this important work, schools need to demonstrate to mentors that there will be other advantages to offering their expertise, such as feeling like professionals and receiving respect for sharing ideas and resources (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

As a former mentor and mentee, I have experienced the benefits and challenges of both roles. In a yearlong teaching internship, I worked with two very different mentors. As English department chair in a school with no established mentoring program, I mentored three English teachers who were new to the profession. The tools that I created to address these teachers' emerging needs yielded a framework for

a mentoring program built on four basic principles: Codevelopment and collaboration, Observation and feedback, Policies and systems, and Encouragement and support (COPE). A review of research on the support needs of new teachers reveals that such a four-part structure ensures that new teachers are better able to "cope," and it helps them learn more quickly than the trial-and-error approach. Studies also show that by revisiting basic teaching principles with mentees, mentors often refresh their own instruction with successful strategies and techniques (Holloway, 2001).

Team teaching encourages new teachers to experiment without fear of serious consequences.

An effective mentoring program should meet two important conditions. First, both mentor and mentee must have clearly defined and actionable roles and responsibilities. Second, both mentor and mentee must stand to gain from investing themselves in the process.

Codevelopment and Collaboration

Using the first principle in the process—codevelopment and collaboration—colleagues can be effective peer teachers by working *with* one another rather than *for* one another. This kind of relationship enables the new teacher to more easily obtain the information that he or she requires. But such partnerships can be hard to come by.

For example, a few weeks before I started my first teaching job as a middle school English teacher, a soon-to-be colleague graciously offered to send me copies of his materials from the courses that I was scheduled to teach. It must have taken him days to compile the multiple four-inch binders filled to the

brim with worksheets, syllabi, quizzes and assignments. Although a second- or third-year teacher might have considered this a goldmine, I was flabbergasted by all the information that I was expected to learn and teach.

My colleague was trying to be helpful, but at that particular moment those binders were useless to me. Not only could I not conceive of the third quarter, I couldn't even think about the third week. Also, I had no context for using the materials. My colleague had spent a tremendous amount of time and energy collating resources for me when he could have been preparing for his own classes. Neither one of us was better off.

Codeveloping and collaborating on the learning process are far more helpful to the mentee and make wiser use of the mentor's time. For example, having a conversation about an appropriate curriculum for the first week of school is far less time-consuming for a mentor than gathering a year's worth of materials, and it is also far more useful to the mentee. Many new teachers are unaware that they are not expected to dive into curricular content the first day of school and that many effective teachers spend the first several days focusing on establishing expectations and classroom procedures and creating a positive environment (Wong & Wong, 1998).

As mentors help new teachers plan their classes in great detail by asking questions, soliciting ideas, and guiding them through potential problems, mentees will begin to grasp the process of planning effective instruction. New teachers may not realize that a good way to construct a lesson is by starting with the desired end result. They should ask themselves some important questions: What do I want my students to know when they leave class today? How will I know that they have learned it? What must they experience to understand this concept? How can I help guide them? How can they help each other? What will I do if a student group of students is not engaged in the lesson or does not understand the ideas?

In future interactions, the new teacher will likely ask for techniques and strategies as opposed to ready-made handouts and worksheets.

As mentees become more comfortable in their classrooms, they may have ideas for improving their instruction, but specific strategies may seem rather daunting to undertake. Mentors should offer relevant materials and guidance, but if new teachers still hesitate to implement these strategies, team teaching—which encourages new teachers to experiment without fear of serious consequences—can be an excellent solution. Codevelopment of resources for coteaching enables new teachers to see how experienced teachers organize their thinking and structure their lessons, whereas veteran teachers benefit by having the opportunity to deconstruct their own teaching and carefully reexamine a critical process that has perhaps become automatic.

Observation and Feedback

During their first few weeks and months of teaching, most new teachers are simply trying to stay afloat, generally being more concerned with content than process. The better they are at classroom management, however, the more their students will learn. Because new teachers may be reluctant to conduct a lesson under the eyes of a veteran teacher, mentors can invite mentees into their own classrooms to give the beginners an opportunity to see a lesson from another perspective. Before the class begins, the mentor should give the mentee a focal question and offer objective ways to record observations. For example, the mentor might be unsure of whether or not he or she is including all students in class discussions. The mentee can keep a tally of how often each student partici-

Mentors can share stories of difficult teaching days, times they made mistakes but bounced back.



pates during the lesson and, after class, the two teachers can analyze the data to determine how the mentor can improve his or her practice. Does the teacher favor students in the front of the classroom? If so, perhaps the students should sit in a circle instead of in rows. After the mentor implements this new strategy, the mentee should observe another lesson to see whether the strategy has the desired effect.

In this way, new teachers begin to view observation as an opportunity to be researchers in their own classrooms. They no longer perceive observers as threatening outsiders who subjectively critique their performance, but rather as resources that can aid them in exploring a particular aspect of their instruction.

Policies and Systems

Recognizing that new teachers will be unfamiliar with the school's procedures, administrators usually provide a school handbook for reference. Although these pages may explain what to do in case of a fire drill and when parent-teacher

conferences will be held, they rarely include the trivial, but nevertheless important, information new teachers should know—for example, what to do if the copier breaks or what most teachers do for lunch.

A school year abounds with a variety of unique events and unpredictable situations for which there are often particular rules and procedures. Policies regarding nonurgent matters should be discussed only when the related situation is imminent because people more readily absorb information when it is immediately applicable and useful. For example, where to line up one's students for the Thanksgiving assembly is not a helpful discussion in September. Because situations invariably will arise when new teachers can benefit

from information and support, it makes sense to sustain mentoring programs throughout the school year.

Mentors can also help new teachers by sharing systems for organization, management, and instruction. Learning how to collect homework, keep anecdotal notes, or create portfolios can take up a great deal of a new teacher's time. Instead, mentors could walk mentees through their current practices and let mentees use those templates as a starting point, to modify as needed.

Mentees will benefit from information about how to organize a grade book, keep track of attendance, or establish a discipline system. Mentors can benefit from this exchange as well. At the beginning of one school year, I shared with a mentee my method for recording class participation, grades, and missing assignments. The fact that I kept everything on paper made it time-consuming to calculate averages throughout the quarter, however, and if I decided after the fact to weight a project differently, I needed to recom-

pute the final grades. My mentee resolved these issues by locating an online grade book. I gained new skills, and she had the opportunity to share some of her knowledge.

Encouragement and Support

A special education teacher of my acquaintance recently left the public high school where she taught and started work at a private middle school. As is often the case for new teachers, she was simultaneously filling multiple roles. After only three weeks of teaching, she felt just as exhausted as she had felt her first year in the profession.

Her supervisor noticed both her hard work and her fatigue and told her to take the next day off. Her assignment was to rejuvenate. She was stunned. No administrator had ever acknowledged her contributions in this way. She was so grateful for this generous deposit into her "emotional bank account" (Covey, 1989) that when she came back the following day, she was energized to give her best.

Although getting a day off for personal rejuvenation may not always be feasible, new teachers can benefit from a number of similar support strategies. Mentors can help photocopy materials or decorate a bulletin board. They can share stories of difficult teaching days, times when they made mistakes but bounced back. New teachers often believe that they are the only ones who struggle in the classroom. Hearing from someone that they are not alone—especially, someone they respect and admire—can help them through difficult times (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

At one school in which I taught, administrators convened a monthly lunch for new teachers at which the novices could discuss their progress. Occasionally, a second-year teacher joined us to speak about how things got better—or, sometimes, about how things at least did not get worse. Regular meetings of this type help foster professional and personal relationships among new teachers and keep them in the classroom.

Learning to Cope

The first year of teaching is full of extraordinary challenges, and a Darwinist ideology only makes it more likely that novices will leave the field. Supporting new teachers requires significant time, energy, and other resources, but an effective mentoring program can benefit veteran teachers and novices alike. Teachers with greater job satisfaction are less likely to leave the field, and this increased retention will lead to a more stable school community and a climate of instructional improvement. ■

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