

Helpful Hints
for a
Mentor Teacher
Program



MENTORING DEFINITION

A nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and protégé.

(Anderson and Shannon, 1987)

Adapted from TSS: Role and Responsibilities

Mentor Teacher Program

Purpose:

Provide peer support and guidance to beginning teachers to help ensure their success in local school systems

Goals:

- Assist beginning teachers in defining and developing effective instructional practices and classroom management techniques
- Assist beginning teachers with effective performance of their duties and responsibilities
- Increase teacher retention in the profession
- Recognize and strengthen the skills of veteran teachers who are rejuvenated by sharing their experience and expertise with beginning teachers

Sample Criteria for Selection of Mentor Teachers

- The mentor should possess exemplary teaching skills and interpersonal skills.
- School-based committees, comprised of a majority of teachers, are responsible for recommending persons to serve as mentor teachers.
- The mentor must consent to the assignment.
- The mentor should have at least three years teaching experience.
- The mentor must have the TSS certificate endorsement.
- The mentor must be a peer, not an administrator.
- Ideally, the mentor should be housed in the same school as the protégé and as close to the same location in the school as possible.
- The mentor should not be involved in the protégé's annual performance evaluation.

A Mentor Teacher needs to be . . .

- Perceived by the principal and other members of the faculty as being a successful teacher.
- Open to having observers visit the classroom and willing to explain reasons for making certain teaching decisions.
- Patient and considerate in guiding the development of teachers over a designated period of time.
- Tactful in handling matters related to the personal and professional welfare of others.
- A trusted role model who values the teaching profession and shows respect to colleagues.
- Committed to teacher support.
- Able to give constructive criticism.
- Aware of strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Knowledgeable of resources outside of the classroom.
- Professionally competent.
- Respected by colleagues.
- An effective classroom disciplinarian.
- Willing to devote the time needed and to perform the roles expected of a mentor teacher.

Adapted from TSS: Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Mentor Teacher

1. Giving information related to procedures, guidelines, and expectations of the school district.
2. Collecting, disseminating, or locating materials or other resources.
3. Giving information about teaching strategies or the instructional process.
4. Offering support by listening empathetically and sharing experiences.
5. Giving guidance and ideas related to discipline and student management.
6. Offering information about organizing and planning the school day.
7. Helping arrange, organize, or analyze the physical setting of the classroom.
8. Teaching while the new teacher observes (preceded by a conference to identify the focus of the observation and followed by a conference to analyze the observed teaching episode).
9. Critiquing and providing feedback on the beginning teacher's performance to the protégé, not as an evaluation instrument.
10. Giving help or ideas to conferencing or working with parents.

SOURCE: Odell, S. J. (1986). Induction Support of New Teachers: A Functional Approach. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 37 (1), 27

Nelda Bishop's Dissertation
Adapted from TSS: Roles and Responsibilities

Characteristics of a Mentor Teacher

1. Convey verbally/nonverbally their enthusiasm for teaching.
2. Show genuine interest in helping other teachers and willingness to spend the time and effort required.
3. Be willing to listen, be tolerant, and convey empathy toward the concerns and frustrations of others.
4. Have the ability to be secure, sensitive, confident, flexible, caring, and altruistic while working with others.
5. Be energetic, enthusiastic, and demonstrate positive approaches toward oneself, others, and life in general.
6. Demonstrate a sincere appreciation for the diverse professional, personal, social, cultural, and language skills that exist among educators.
7. Analyze their own and others' teaching.
8. Understand and apply research and knowledge about effective teaching and learning.
9. Exhibit and explain effective teaching and classroom management practices.
10. Understand and apply theories and models on supervision.
11. Understand and apply knowledge and research on supervision.
12. Become familiar with tools used for evaluation and observation.
13. Exhibit effective conferencing and communication skills.
14. Synthesize educational theory and practices as they reflect on their own teaching and as they develop reflective teaching capabilities in others' teaching.
15. Define ways and means of helping teachers understand and critique the purpose of education in this society.
16. Help other teachers to mature into teachers with high professional and ethical standards.
17. Have effective interpersonal skills.
18. Be able to apply adult education theories.
19. Maintain confidentiality and trust.
Demonstrate subject matter expertise.

Adapted from TSS: Roles and Responsibilities

Suggestions for Building Administrators of a Mentor Teacher Program

1. Make every effort to match mentor and protégé by grade level, subject area, and certification area.
2. Conduct a special program during preplanning or orientation session to inform new teachers about the mentor program.
3. Assign a mentor teacher to no more than one or two protégé teachers at the same time.
4. Provide time for protégé and mentor teachers to meet during the school year.
5. Meet with protégé and mentor teachers to develop plans and timelines for activities.
6. Provide time for protégé and mentor teachers to conduct classroom observations.
7. Make arrangements for protégés to videotape their classroom performance.
8. Monitor relationships between protégé and mentor teachers and make necessary adjustments.
9. Ensure that documentation including logs, portfolios, and reflective journals are maintained to keep track of mentoring activities such as meetings, conferences, etc.

Other Possible Considerations*

- Select classrooms located in close proximity to one another.
- Assign common planning periods to mentor and protégé teachers.
- Consider the age/gender relationship between the mentor/protégé pair.
- Consider the mentor's interests and the time the mentor has available.
- Pair teachers with compatible professional ideologies.
- Pair teachers with compatible personalities.

*Adapted from Nelda Bishop's Dissertation

Mentor Teacher Program Suggestions

- Recognition Programs
 - Implement Mentor Teacher of the Year programs or other types of recognition programs for mentor teachers
 - Organize occasions for mentor and protégé teachers to reflect, celebrate successes, and plan for the future.

- Release Time
 - Consider providing release time to mentor/protégé teachers for observations, conferences, meetings, etc.

- Orientation
 - Include an informational session or written material during preplanning or orientation meetings to inform new teachers about the mentoring program in your school system.
 - Conduct an orientation session on the Mentor Teacher Program for all new teachers.

- Mentor Notebook
 - Develop a large notebook and divide into several sections for ready reference. Include items to be copied, items to use as a springboard for conferences, articles to read, etc.

- Data Collection
 - Consider using surveys, questionnaires, journals, case studies, interviews, focus groups, etc. for collecting information.

- Organize periodic systemwide mentor teacher meetings for sharing items.

- Ask the mentor and protégé pairs to develop and implement action plans.

- Remember that the TSS endorsement does not, in and of itself, qualify one to serve as a mentor teacher. Many other important attributes must be considered.

- Mentor Teacher Selection Process
 - The following quote was taken from the literature review on the mentor teacher selection process completed by Dr. Nelda Bishop: “Based on the research which suggests that the mentor should be respected by his or her peers, many programs include peer nomination in the selection process.”
 - The program may operate more effectively if the entire faculty is involved in the identification of the Mentor Teacher Selection Committee.

Sample Topics, Activities, Tasks for Mentor Programs

- Evaluating students' work
- Planning for student differences
- Management of paper grading
- Classroom management
- Stress management
- Appropriate teacher and student conduct
- Professional conduct
- Chain of command
- Emergency procedures
- Security procedures
- Lunch tickets/cards
- Locating resources
- Who to "call/ask" for assistance
- Grading policies and procedures
- Record keeping/documentation
- Report cards
- Parent contact
- Parent conferences
- Regularly scheduled conferences to discuss and monitor needs/problems
- Lesson plans
- Discipline strategies
- Motivating students
- GTEP manual
- Teacher handbook
- Student handbook
- Teacher/student dress code
- Model lessons
- Management of instructional time
- Instructional presentation
- Peer observations
- Course content and alignment
- Scope and sequence
- Quality Core Curriculum (QCC)
- Field trips
- Parent volunteers
- Reflective journals
- System/state testing program
- Student permanent records
- Professional reading
- Professional development opportunities
- Community and professional memberships
- System expectations
- Classroom arrangement
- Pre- and post-planning
- System policies and procedures
- School policies and procedures
- Current trends in education
- Development of staff relations
- Extra duty management
- Establishing rapport
- SST referral process
- Lesson delivery
- Effective communication
- Individualizing instruction
- Legal issues
- Creating a positive attitude
- Student use of technology
- Teacher use of technology

*Ideas are in no particular order.