

Mentor Preparation

Becoming an effective mentor, like becoming a teacher, takes considerable time, preparation, experience, reflection, and on-going professional development. Earlier teacher induction literature focused more upon the needs, experiences, and challenges of the entry-level teacher with limited attention provided to the selection, preparation, and support of mentors. Recently, however, given the importance of the protégé and mentor, more efforts have been focused upon describing and understanding the experiences, needs, required skills, and challenges of the mentors. The following sub-sections will provide topical ideas for workshops, seminars, and private consultations for the initial preparation of mentors.

Providing for the Initial Professional Development Needs of Mentors. The goals of a mentoring induction program for an entry-level mentor are not unlike those for a teacher induction program. Goals to consider include acculturating the mentors into the induction program; involving them in the professional development efforts of the teacher education leadership team; and, preparing them to be effective and successful mentors.

The importance of initiating a quality relationship with the new mentor is critical. Though they are likely honored and excited to serve in such an important role in the development of teachers, early experience mentors need to develop strong relationships with induction team members. Therefore, in designing mentor seminars, substantial effort and reasonable time must be provided for initiating long-term relationships. As relationship building is an on-going experience, initial time for seminars should attend to this important experience.

What follows are topics for an initial mentor preparation program. Combined with team and relationship-building activities, the program may require 1-1/2 – 2 days of time along with follow-up time for revisiting topics for further clarification.

Initial Senior Mentor Training Topics: A Sampling of Topics

A Case for Preparing and Inducting Effective Teachers: What the Research Reveals

The Experience of ELTs: How it Changes!

Needs and Challenges of Entry-Level Teachers: Research and Anecdotal

Initial Year and Career Teacher Development Models

Considerations When Working with ELTs

1. Adult Learners
2. Developmental Characteristics
3. Transitions from Student to Teacher and Other Adult Function Changes

Needs of Selected Senior Mentors

1. Professional Development Needs
2. Flexibility
3. Recognition

Roles of Senior Mentor, Area, and Local Mentor, Coach, and/or Guide

1. Relationship Building – Psychosocial Needs
2. Professional Needs
3. Technical and Pedagogical Needs

Strategies for Conducting Senior Mentor Roles in An Effective Manner

1. Using androgogical – sound approaches to effective mentoring and guidance
2. Proven strategies that are effective
3. Materials to use to facilitate effective mentoring

Activities of Senior Mentors

1. Informing administration about program
2. Promoting program within Profession
3. Determining Unique Needs of Protege
4. Delivering for psychosocial needs, technical assistance, and technical and pedagogical issues not addressed through local programs
5. Assisting with data-gathering
6. Attending, participating and leading sessions at seminars and workshops
7. Communication options as desired by ELT
8. Reporting of experiences of ELTS – Digital
9. Attend professional development sessions for Senior Mentors

Using Summative and Formative information to Enhance Mentoring Practices

1. Interpreting and establishing field practices from data

Administrative Functions

1. Reports for mileage and consultancy
2. Informing area coordinator and state agency leader of changes in teacher corp due to separation, new openings, etc.

A number of organizations invest considerable resources upon teacher development. One organization that has invested considerable time into understanding beginning teacher and mentor needs is the New Teacher Center (NTC). The NTC, which was established in 1988 at the University of California-Santa Cruz, currently provides induction program design and mentor training to schools throughout the world. Their mission is "...to improve student learning by supporting the development of an inspired and dedicated, and highly qualified teaching force...". The NTC provides 6 training seminars (10 days) for mentors which are optimally completed by mentors over a period of two years. The initial 2 day seminar, Foundations in Mentoring, is designed to help mentors respond to their protégé's developmental and contextual needs and promote scrutiny of the classroom instructional practices. Topics addressed in the first mentor workshop are: create a vision for quality teaching, define mentoring roles, identifying new teacher needs, understand attitudinal phases of teacher development, establishing a mentoring relationship, selecting support strategies, establish an environment for professional growth, highlighting the role of professional teaching standards, and assess the level of practice of beginning teachers. Topics of the other seminars offered by the NTC include Coaching and Observation Strategies (2 days); Mentoring for Powerful Teaching:Using Student Work to Guide Instruction (1 say); Coaching in Complex Situations (1 day); Designing and Presenting Professional Development for Beginning Teachers (2 days); and Mentoring for Equity (2 days).