

Supporting the Mentor

In addition to the professional development that provides new understandings and skills of how to be a more effective mentor, novice and experienced mentors, guides, and coaches also need psychosocial support and recognition. Concern, encouragement, and celebrations with peers, teachers, officers and leaders of professional teacher organizations, administrators, and policy-makers are encouraging gestures of support. Extrinsic acknowledgement of their mentoring efforts are also appreciated by mentors. Successful strategies include supplying stipends on a per daily or protégé basis; providing complimentary tickets to cultural or sporting events; fully provided or reduced workshop or graduate credit fees and tuition; and if the mentors are still teaching, reduced supervisory or teaching loads. Friendly tokens of appreciation such as plaques, tee-shirts, and receptions with their entry-level teachers are also well-received.

Mentors, like all partners and induction staff member, need to be reminded that the primary purpose of the agricultural education induction programs, ultimately, is to improve student performance. Enroute to being more effective in their roles, mentors need to be provided with the information and skills to assist their entry-level teachers in becoming more effective. Topics that need to be addressed include: professional teaching standards; lesson planning; student management; student assessment; motivation strategies; content pedagogy; differentiated instruction; parental involvement and communications; individual professional development plans; collecting and analyzing data; effective reflection practices; managing an effective FFA program; establishing and managing a highly productive supervised agricultural experience/work-based learning program; and formative assessment of the teaching performance of ELTs.