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Introduction

Beginning teachers who do not participate in an Induction Program are twice as likely to leave as those who do participate. (NEA Today, Vol. 19, No. 8, May 2001)



The journey new teachers embark upon when they enter the educational profession offers exciting challenges that stimulate personal growth. The adrenaline flows when a first-year teacher encounters her first group of students without being under the watchful eyes of the supervising teacher sitting quietly in the back of the room. New teachers quickly realize, however, that they must take control of the classroom and make hundreds of decisions affecting the lives of the children entrusted to their care. Even though many first-year teachers have observed other teachers and experienced student teaching in college, the academic and classroom management challenges faced by first-year educators can be overwhelming. According to statistics from the National Education Association (NEA), 30 percent of new teachers leave within the first five years! In big cities, the percentage leaving within the first five years is even higher: 50 percent.

In some schools new teachers are assigned a “buddy” teacher to show them around the school and help them get their books and supplies. Often, the buddies teach the same grade level or content area so they also help the new teachers plan their curriculum. Usually the arrangement is informal and neither party receives any official training. A more formal type of mentoring program may be required, however, because of the retirement of so many Baby Boomer generation educators and the subsequent need to recruit and train new teachers to

The articles in this book provide key components for mentors to help their protégés gain confidence in their teaching and develop trust in the mentoring process.

fill growing numbers of vacancies. Statisticians predict a need to hire between 0.5 million and 2.5 million new teachers over the next decade. In addition to teacher retirements, the demand for so many new teachers is the result of the increasing numbers of students and the call for class-size reduction programs (Schultz as cited in Scherer 1999, p. 99). Recruiting, training, and retaining qualified teachers are important priorities in many cities as districts struggle to hire certified teachers and to attract people from business and overseas to fill teaching vacancies. Schools and districts across the country are creating or expanding formal mentoring programs to help new educators become committed, competent, and confident professionals who enjoy teaching.

The term *mentoring* comes from classical literature. In the Greek epic, the *Odyssey*, the poet Homer describes how the young hero Odysseus gave the responsibility of raising his son, Telemachus, to Mentor, his trusted friend and advisor, before he sailed to Troy to fight in the Trojan War. Mentor guided Telemachus while Odysseus was away by educating him in all of the physical, social, and intellectual facets of life. When Odysseus returned to Ithaca after ten years of fighting the Trojan war and ten years of wandering in search of his homeland, Telemachus had grown into an independent thinker who readily helped his father reclaim his property and rescue his wife from ambitious suitors.

The term *mentor* today usually refers to someone with more experience who teaches someone with less experience. The person with less experience could be called a *mentee*, a *beginning teacher*, a *novice*, or a *protégé*. Protégé is derived from a French term and means “one who is protected . . . by a person with experience, prominence, or influence” (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth ed.).

Just as Mentor assisted young Telemachus on his life’s journey, so too do mentor teachers assist new teachers as they begin their teaching careers. The excerpts in this book provide critical components mentors can use to help their protégés gain confidence in their teaching and develop trust in their mentor relationship. This book also provides important concepts and lessons to help educators shape the social and academic lives of their students. Mentoring is a process

that requires dedication, commitment, and an openness to a trusting, ongoing relationship on the part of both the mentor and the protégé. One goal of any mentoring program is to empower veteran teachers to become skillful coaches who help beginning educators gain confidence in their abilities to meet the diverse needs of their students. I hope this guidebook will help start the journey toward providing a positive and stimulating learning environment for the mentors, protégés, and students.

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SECTION I: DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP

Teaching is an unusual profession because the first-year teacher in most cases is assigned to the same tasks in and out of the classroom as a long-term veteran.

—Heidkamp and Shapiro 1999

By working together, mentors and protégés forge a strong foundation.



Before embarking on a journey, it is always helpful to meet and get to know one's traveling companions. Schools and school districts engage in a wide variety of formal and informal social activities before school starts to help the seasoned travelers, the mentors, work with the first-time travelers, the protégés, to set the course for the new school year. Sometimes the activities are very structured and form the basis of the first steps in a formal two- to -three-year new teacher induction program. The formal induction program may include an orientation program, professional development training, mentor training, peer support groups, classroom observations, professional development plans, and a professional portfolio.

In Selection 1, **Structures for Induction and Mentoring Programs**, Barry Sweeny shows how all the puzzle pieces of an induction program fit together to form a coherent and integrated long-term development program to initiate new teachers. He defines a common vocabulary for all involved in the process and provides guidance in deciding whether to take an informal approach to mentoring beginning teachers or to establish a formal mentoring program to ensure more accountability.

Sweeny defines the roles of the mentor and the evolving picture of the protégé. He also describes the differences between the traditional one-to-one mentoring relationship and the team approach where a group of teachers shares the mentoring duties and their multiple talents and strengths with the protégé. Based upon his extensive experience working with mentoring programs, he includes checklists to cover many first- and second-week responsibilities of new teachers.

In Selection 2, **The Heart of Mentoring: Trust and Open Communication**, Debra Pitton reviews what she calls the “heart of mentoring”—the necessity of open communications. Both verbal and nonverbal signals should provide nonjudgmental feedback that allows the mentee (i.e., protégé) to discover and solve problems independently whenever possible.